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JANUARY 2026

CA from 1st January to 31st January, 2026

BUDGET 2026



10 MONTHS TO CLAT 2027

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Polity & Governance

Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act 1967

News Highlights:

- On 5 January 2026, the **Supreme Court of India** denied bail to student activists Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam in the 2020 Northeast Delhi riots "larger conspiracy" case while granting conditional release to five co-accused- Gulfisha Fatima, Meeran Haider, Shifa Ur Rehman, Mohd. Saleem Khan, and Shadab Ahmad.
- The bench comprising Justices Aravind Kumar and N.V. Anjaria characterized Khalid and Imam as "principal architects" of the alleged conspiracy, distinguishing their central roles from the facilitative involvement of others.
- All seven accused had remained in continuous judicial custody for over five years without charges being framed, making the bail determination significant in light of the stringent provisions under **Section 43D(5)** of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA).

Case Background

Genesis of the 2020 Northeast Delhi Violence

- The February 2020 Northeast Delhi riots erupted amid protests against **the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA),** which commenced following the passage of the citizenship law in December 2019, resulting in the deaths of at least 53-54 people and injuries to over 200 individuals.
- The communal violence occurred between 23 and 26 February 2020, coinciding with the visit of then-United States President Donald Trump to India on 24-25 February 2020, prompting scrutiny of the government's handling of the situation.
- Delhi Police filed 758 First Information Reports (FIRs) into the riots, including a major case related to an alleged "larger conspiracy" registered under the UAPA, naming several student activists, civil society members, and political figures as accused.
- Investigations alleged that the riots were planned rather than spontaneous, with the prosecution claiming conspiracy for regime change through armed rebellion and disruption of essential supplies to internationalise the issue during the US presidential visit. Twenty individuals, including former AAP councillor Tahir Hussain and activists Sharjeel Imam, Umar Khalid, and Khalid Saifi, were arraigned as accused in the larger conspiracy case.
- Umar Khalid was arrested in September 2020, while Sharjeel Imam was arrested in August 2020, with both remaining incarcerated in Tihar Jail for nearly six years awaiting trial.

Umar Khalid



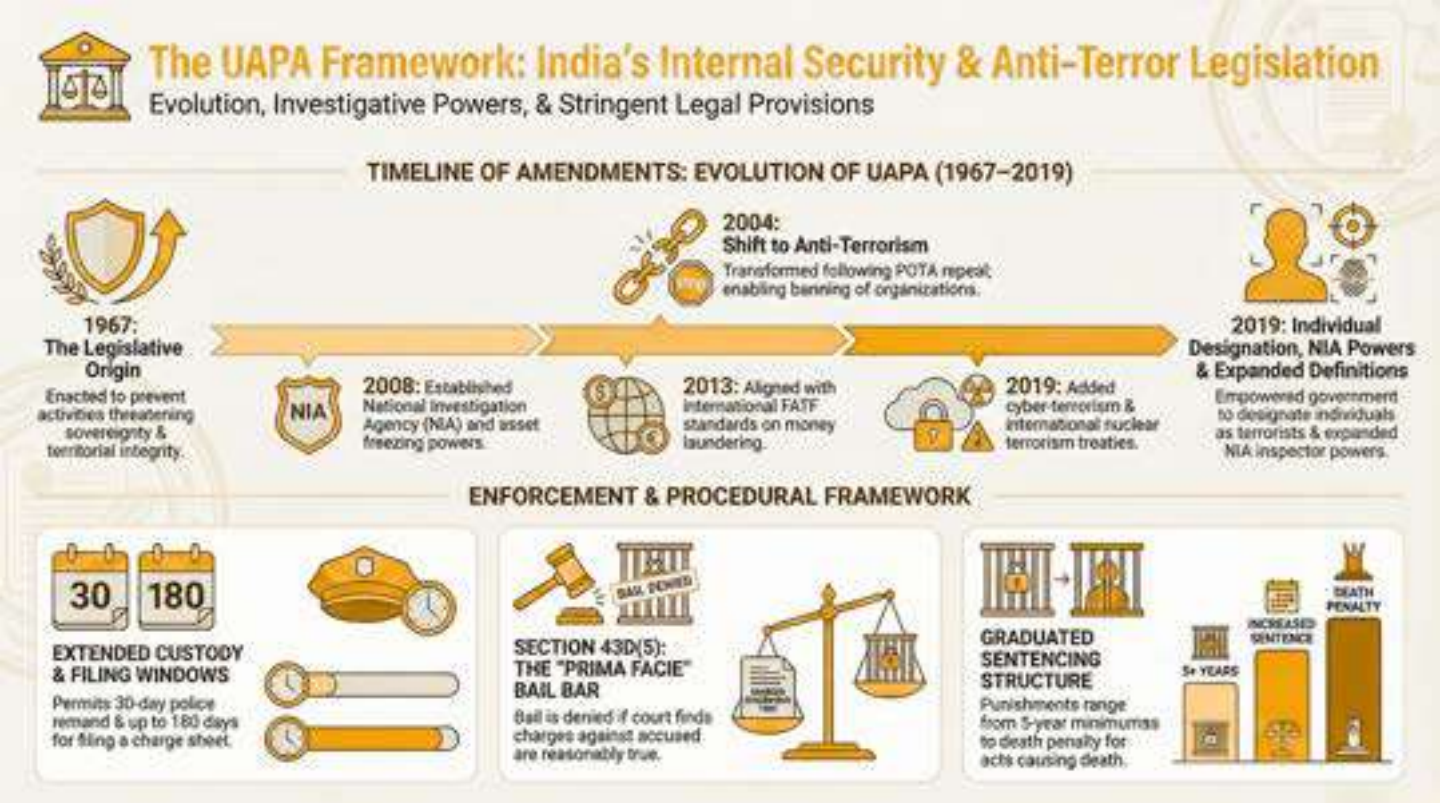
- Syed Umar Khalid, born on 11 August 1987 in Jamia Nagar, New Delhi, is a student activist and former research scholar at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) who submitted his PhD thesis titled "Contesting Claims and Contingencies of the Rule on Adivasis of Jharkhand" in 2018.
- He served as a former leader of the Democratic Students' Union (DSU) at JNU and co-founded the campaign "**United Against Hate**" in July 2017 alongside Nadeem Khan in response to rising communal violence and lynching incidents.
- He gained national prominence during the 2016 JNU sedition case and describes himself as an atheist and Marxist-Leninist despite his Muslim family background.
- Delhi's Karkardooma Court granted brief interim bail from 16-29 December 2025 to attend his sister's wedding.

Legislative Framework of the UAPA?

- The UAPA was originally enacted in 1967 following the Naxalbari peasants' uprising, with the objective of effectively preventing activities by associations threatening India's territorial integrity and sovereignty.
- The **Constitution (Sixteenth Amendment) Act, 1963**, was enacted following recommendations from the **Committee on National Integration appointed by the National Integration Council,** empowering Parliament to impose reasonable restrictions on Article 19 freedoms for matters concerning sovereignty and integrity.
- Unlawful activity is statutorily defined as any action undertaken by individuals or associations intended to disrupt India's territorial integrity and sovereignty through secessionist or cessionary claims.

Definition of Terrorist Act

- Section 15 of the Act defines "**terrorist act**" as any act done with intent to threaten or likely to threaten the unity, integrity, security (including economic security), or sovereignty of India, or with intent to strike terror in the people of India or any foreign country.
- The Act defines terrorist acts to include acts committed within the scope of international treaties listed in a schedule, including the Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings (1997) and the Convention Against Taking of Hostages (1979).
- Both Indian and foreign nationals can be prosecuted under UAPA provisions, with extraterritorial application extending to offences committed on foreign soil by Indian nationals.
- **Punishment Structure:** The Act prescribes the following graduated sentencing: Death penalty or life imprisonment for terrorist activities resulting in loss of life, Five to ten years imprisonment with monetary fines for organizing terrorist camps, conspiracy, or recruitment and Minimum five years imprisonment with financial penalties for acts preparatory to the commission of terrorist acts.
- **Investigating Authority:** The **National Investigation Agency** (NIA), established in 2008 as a statutory body under the NIA Act following the Mumbai terror attacks, possesses statutory authority to investigate cases registered under UAPA provisions. Before the NIA was formed, state investigating agencies and the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) handled terror-related cases.



UAPA Evolution Through Successive Amendments!

- **2004 Amendment:** The UAPA was not an anti-terror law until 2004 when Parliament introduced Chapter IV through the UAP Amendment Act, bringing terrorist acts under statutory purview following the repeal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act, 2002 (POTA). Prior to 2004, terrorist activities fell under the now-repealed **Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act**, 1987 (TADA) and POTA, 2002. The 2004 amendments gave effect to various anti-terrorism resolutions of the United Nations Security Council, with 34 organizations subsequently banned for terrorist activities.
- **2008 Amendment:** The 2008 amendment to the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), enacted in the wake of the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks, introduced Section 43D(5). This provision significantly restricted the grant of bail by mandating that a court must deny bail if there are reasonable grounds to believe that the accusations against the person are "prima facie true". The amendment empowered the central government to freeze, seize, or attach funds and financial assets belonging to listed entities or individuals suspected of terrorism engagement. The NIA was established after this amendment to investigate terror activities.
- **2013 Amendment:** This amendment aligned UAPA with **Financial Action Task Force** requirements addressing money laundering and terrorism financing concerns.
- **2019 Amendment:** Parliament enacted the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment Act, 2019, introducing provisions for cyber-terrorism, terrorist financing, property seizure, and individual terrorist designation. The Union Government was granted power to designate individuals as terrorists without following a formal judicial process, marking a significant change from the earlier framework where only organizations could be so designated. NIA officers holding the rank of Inspector or above received investigation powers, supplementing existing authority vested in Deputy Superintendents of Police or Assistant Commissioners of Police. The International Convention for Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism (2005) was added to the schedule of treaties incorporated within UAPA's statutory framework.

UAPA Key Procedural Provisions!

- The central government possesses the power to declare an association "unlawful" through official gazette notification if deemed threatening to national integrity, with bans extendable up to five years.
- The Central Government may constitute a tribunal called the "Unlawful Activities Prevention Tribunal," comprising a High Court Judge, to review bans on organizations involved in terrorist acts.
- Over the past five years, the government has designated 23 organizations as "Unlawful Associations," several linked to terrorism in Jammu & Kashmir and the Northeast regions.
- Remand orders under UAPA permit detention for 30 days instead of the usual 15 days.
- The maximum period of judicial custody before filing a charge sheet extends to **180 days** compared to the ordinary 90 days.
- The investigating agency is empowered to file charge sheets within 180 days following arrests, with provisions for court-sanctioned extensions.
- Under Section 43D(5), bail cannot be granted to suspects if the court finds reasonable grounds to believe that the charges are prima facie true.
- The onus is effectively placed on the accused to demonstrate that the case is false, making obtaining bail virtually impossible until trial completion in most cases.

Supreme Court's Interpretation of Terrorism

- The Supreme Court clarified that statutory intent behind the UAPA was deliberately expansive, designed not to restrict the definition of terrorism exclusively to conventional violent methods involving bombs, firearms, and explosives.
- Justice Kumar's bench referred to Section 15(1)(a) of the 1967 Act, emphasizing the residuary phrase "by another means" in the statutory definition, which extends beyond conventional weapons to include other methods of destabilization.

Scope of Terrorist Activities

- The Court ruled that terrorist activities under UAPA extend to disruption of essential commodity supplies causing economic insecurity and civic destabilization, even when direct physical violence is not perpetrated during the process.
- The judgment characterized terrorist acts as culminations of organized, sustained, and conspiratorial activities unfolding progressively over time rather than isolated or solitary incidents.
- The Court held that culpability under the Act is not limited to the final execution of a violent act but extends to preparatory conduct, facilitation, abetment, and the conspiracy itself.

Bail Jurisprudence Under Section 43D(5)

- The judgment clarified that Section 43D(5) neither denies judicial scrutiny of bail applications nor mandates automatic bail, with stringent restrictions operating only when courts find accusations prima facie true after disciplined examination.
- The Court held that a bail hearing under UAPA is not a forum for evaluating defences or weighing evidence, limiting the Court's role to determining whether the prosecution's material prima facie discloses essential ingredients of the alleged offence.

Three-Pronged Test: The Court laid down the following test for Section 43D(5) application:

- Whether the material discloses a prima facie case satisfying the statutory ingredients.
- Whether the accused's role reflects a "**real and meaningful nexus**" to the prescribed activity rather than mere association.
- Whether the statutory threshold is crossed qua the individual accused.

Differentiated Treatment of Accused in this case

- The Court adopted an "accused-specific" approach, examining individual roles and attributes played by each accused person rather than applying blanket determinations collectively.
- Khalid and Imam were characterized as "principal architects" with central and directive roles in the alleged conspiracy.
- The five co-accused granted bail were described as having facilitative rather than directive roles, with continued incarceration deemed disproportionate. Fresh bail applications may be filed after one year or after examination of protected witnesses.

Relevant Precedents

Union of India v. K.A. Najeeb (2021)

- The Supreme Court granted bail to an accused who had spent over five years in custody with 276 witnesses yet to be examined, citing prolonged incarceration despite the restrictive nature of Section 43D(5).
- The three-judge bench decision established that statutory bail rigors must yield when trials cannot be completed within reasonable timeframes and incarceration exceeds substantial portions of prescribed sentences.

Bhima Koregaon Case – Shoma Sen (April 2024): Bail was granted on grounds of extended pre-trial detention, with the Court reaffirming that **Article 21** requires any deprivation of liberty to be reasonable, just, and proportionate.

Sheikh Javed Iqbal Case (July 2024): A Nepali national incarcerated for over nine years under UAPA with only two witnesses examined was granted bail on grounds of violation of the right to a speedy trial.

Gurwinder Singh v State of Punjab (2024): A two-judge bench held that "jail is the rule and bail is the exception in UAPA cases," a precedent relied upon in the present judgment. The reliance on this two-judge bench decision to qualify Najeeb's categorical holdings has been questioned on doctrinal hierarchy grounds.

Article 21 and Personal Liberty

- The protection under Article 21 is available to "persons", which includes citizens as well as non-citizens.
- The Article operates primarily as a limitation on the State, meaning deprivation of life or personal liberty must have legal authority and follow the prescribed procedure.
- The phrase "procedure established by law" means a deprivation can occur only through a procedure laid down in a valid law.
- Article 21 is enforceable through constitutional remedies, and a person can approach the Supreme Court under Article 32 or a High Court under Article 226 for its protection.
- The Supreme Court has held that the procedure under Article 21 must be fair, just, and reasonable, and not arbitrary (as developed in constitutional jurisprudence).
- Article 21 has been interpreted to include the right to live with human dignity, and not merely a physical or animal existence (as recognised in Supreme Court jurisprudence).
- Article 21 has been interpreted to include procedural safeguards in matters involving arrest, detention, and criminal justice, alongside protections in Article 22 and related laws.
- Article 21 has been judicially expanded to cover several rights treated as part of "life" and "personal liberty," such as the right to privacy (recognised as a fundamental right through Supreme Court interpretation).
- Article 21 is part of Part III (Fundamental Rights) and is among the most frequently invoked provisions in constitutional litigation because it applies broadly to State action affecting life and liberty.



MIND MAP

- SC order dated **5 Jan 2026** on bail in the **Delhi riots "larger conspiracy"** case.
- Bail **denied** to **Umar Khalid** and **Sharjeel Imam**.
- **Conditional release** granted to **five co-accused**.
- Custody crossed **5+ years** with **charges not framed**, bringing focus on **Section 43D(5)**.

Evolution Through Amendments

- **2004**: Added Chapter IV; UAPA became key **anti-terror framework** after **POTA repeal**.
- **2008**: Enabled freezing/attachment of **terror funds**; strengthened investigation architecture.
- **2013**: Aligned with **FATF** standards on terror financing.
- **2019**: Allowed **individual terrorist designation**, expanded cyber/financing/property provisions, and broadened **NIA officer powers**.

Terrorist Act (Section 15)

- Includes intent to threaten **unity**, **integrity**, **security** (including economic security), or **sovereignty**.
- Includes acts under listed **international conventions** like **Terrorist Bombings (1997)** and **Hostages (1979)**.
- Applies to **Indian + foreign nationals**, including **extraterritorial conduct**.

Supreme Court's Reading of "Terrorism"

- Statute is **broad by design**, not limited to bombs or firearms.
- Reliance on wording like **"by another means"** to widen coverage.
- Terror acts can include **economic destabilisation**, including disruption of **essential supplies**.
- Liability extends to **preparation**, facilitation, abetment, and **conspiracy**, not just final violence.

2020 Northeast Delhi Violence

- Riots occurred **23–26 Feb 2020** amid **CAA protests**.
- Death toll reported as **53–54** with **200+ injured**.
- Violence coincided with **Donald Trump's India visit (24–25 Feb 2020)**.
- Delhi Police registered **758 FIRs**, including a major **UAPA "larger conspiracy"** case.

Origin + Objective

- Enacted in **1967** to curb threats to **sovereignty** and **territorial integrity**.
- Context linked to stronger limits on **Article 19 freedoms** after **16th Constitutional Amendment (1963)**.

Unlawful Activity

- Covers acts intended to disrupt India's **integrity/sovereignty** via secessionist or cessionary claims.

Precedents Referenced

- **Union of India v. K.A. Najeeb (2021)**: Long custody + slow trial can justify bail despite Section 43D(5).
- **Shoma Sen (Bhima Koregaon, Apr 2024)**: Article 21 proportionality in prolonged detention.
- **Sheikh Javed Iqbal (Jul 2024)**: Bail due to extreme delay and minimal witness progress.
- **Gurwinder Singh v State of Punjab (2024)**: "Jail rule, bail exception" line relied upon; hierarchy concerns noted.

Connected Topics

Preventive Detention Laws in India (NSA, PSA, COFEPOSA)

- Under the National Security Act, 1980 (NSA), the detaining authority must communicate the grounds of detention to the detenue ordinarily within 5 days (extendable in exceptional circumstances up to 15 days) and must give the earliest opportunity to make a representation to the appropriate Government.
- Under the NSA, the appropriate Government must place the detention case before an Advisory Board within 3 weeks of detention. The Advisory Board must submit its report within 7 weeks of the date of detention (including hearing the detenue in person if the detenue requests it).
- Under the NSA, the detenue is not entitled to appear through a legal practitioner in matters connected with the Advisory Board reference. If the Advisory Board finds sufficient cause, the Government may confirm and continue detention; if it finds no sufficient cause, the Government must revoke and release the detenue. The maximum period of detention after confirmation is 12 months from the date of detention (subject to revocation/modification earlier).
- The Jammu & Kashmir Public Safety Act, 1978 (PSA) requires that the grounds of detention be communicated ordinarily within 5 days, and in exceptional circumstances not later than 10 days, and in a language understandable to the detenue, along with the opportunity to make a representation to the Government.
- Under the PSA, the Government must refer the case to the Advisory Board within 4 weeks of detention; the Board must report within 6 weeks of detention; and the detenue is not entitled to appear through a legal practitioner in matters connected with the Board.
- Under the PSA, the maximum detention after confirmation is structured by ground: for public order, detention is 3 months in the first instance, extendable up to 12 months; for security of the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, detention is 6 months in the first instance, extendable up to 2 years.
- Under the Conservation of Foreign Exchange and Prevention of Smuggling Activities Act, 1974 (COFEPOSA), detention is aimed at conservation/augmentation of foreign exchange and prevention of smuggling activities; the Advisory Board process includes a bar on appearance by legal practitioner, and the maximum detention is 1 year in ordinary cases and 2 years where the special Section 9 regime applies.

International Human Rights Standards on Pre-Trial Detention

- ICCPR Article 9(3) states that anyone arrested/detained on a criminal charge must be brought promptly before a judge and is entitled to trial within a reasonable time or release.
- ICCPR Article 9(3) further provides that pre-trial detention should not be the general rule, and release may be subject to guarantees to appear for trial and proceedings. The UN Body of Principles (1988) requires that detention measures be ordered by, or subject to effective control of, a judicial or other authority.
- The UN Body of Principles states that a person must not be kept in detention without an effective opportunity to be heard promptly by a judicial/other authority, and the detained person has the right to defend themself or be assisted by counsel as prescribed by law. The UN Body of Principles requires prompt and full communication of the detention order and reasons to the detained person (and counsel, if any).
- The UN Body of Principles recognizes the right to challenge the lawfulness of detention before a judicial/other authority to obtain release without delay if detention is unlawful, with proceedings that should be simple and expeditious.
- The UN Body of Principles requires that unconvicted detainees be treated consistent with presumption of innocence, and that detention pending investigation/trial be used only for purposes of administration of justice under legal grounds/procedures. The UN Body of Principles indicates that, except in special cases, a person detained on a criminal charge should be entitled to release pending trial unless a judicial/other authority decides otherwise, and that authority must keep the necessity of detention under review.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Which of the following pairs of accused were denied bail by the Supreme Court of India on 5 January 2026 in the 2020 Northeast Delhi riots "larger conspiracy" case?
   (a) Kanhaiya Kumar and Anirban Das
   (b) Jignesh Mevani and Hardik Patel
   (c) Natasha Narwal and Dev Kalita
   (d) Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam

2. Who among the following was granted conditional release by the Supreme Court in the 2020 Northeast Delhi riots "larger conspiracy" case?
   (a) Gulfisha Fatima (b) Kanhaiya Kumar
   (c) Natasha Narwal (d) None of the above

3. Which legal provision played a crucial role in the Supreme Court's bail determination in 2020 Northeast Delhi riots "larger conspiracy case?
   (a) Section 12A(6) of the IPC
   (b) Section 43D(5) of the UAPA
   (c) Section 16C(4) of the CrPC
   (d) Section 19A(3) of the PMLA

4. Which of the following judicial benches described Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam as the "principal architects" of the alleged conspiracy in the 2020 Northeast Delhi riots case?
   (a) Justices Aravind Kumar and N.V. Anjaria
   (b) Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Bela Trivedi
   (c) Justices U.U. Lalit and Indira Banerjee
   (d) Justices D.Y. Chandrachud and Hima Kohli

5. Which of the following events led to the enactment of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act in 1967?
   (a) Telangana peasant uprising
   (b) Tebhaga peasant movement
   (c) Bardoli agrarian farmer revolt
   (d) Naxalbari peasants uprising

6. Which of the following constitutional amendments was enacted on the basis of recommendations made by the Committee on National Integration?
   (a) The Constitution (Fifteenth Amendment) Act, 1951
   (b) The Constitution (Sixteenth Amendment) Act, 1963
   (c) The Constitution (Twenty-One Amendment) Act, 1971
   (d) The Constitution (Forty-Two Amendment) Act, 1976

7. Which of the following Articles dealing with fundamental freedoms was modified through constitutional amendment to protect national integrity?
   (a) Article 19 (b) Article 21
   (c) Article 15 (d) Article 30

8. Which of the following best defines the term "unlawful activity" under Indian statutory law?
   (a) Acts disturbing public order only
   (b) Actions violating ordinary penal law
   (c) Actions threatening sovereignty of India
   (d) Offences punishable under local laws

9. Which of the following provisions of the Act defines a "terrorist act" as one threatening the unity, integrity, security, or sovereignty of India?
   (a) Section 13
   (b) Section 14
   (c) Section 15
   (d) Section 16

10. Which of the following categories of persons can be prosecuted under the provisions of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act?
    (a) Only Indian state citizens
    (b) Both Indian and foreign nationals
    (c) Only foreign state citizens
    (d) Neither Indian nor foreign nationals

11. Which of the following punishments is prescribed for terrorist acts resulting in loss of life under the Act?
    (a) Rigorous imprisonment up to ten years
    (b) Life imprisonment with fines only
    (c) Fixed term imprisonment with seizure
    (d) Death penalty or life imprisonment

12. Which of the following agencies currently possesses statutory authority to investigate cases registered under UAPA provisions?
    (a) National Investigation Agency
    (b) Central Bureau of Investigation
    (c) State Police Departments
    (d) Intelligence Bureau

13. Which of the following amendments first brought terrorist acts explicitly within the statutory framework of UAPA?
    (a) 2004 Amendment
    (b) 2008 Amendment
    (c) 2013 Amendment
    (d) 2019 Amendment

14. Which of the following changes was introduced through the 2008 amendment to the UAPA?
    (a) Individual terrorist designation
    (b) Establishment of the NIA
    (c) Cyber-terrorism provisions
    (d) Bail restriction framework

15. Which of the following amendments aligned the UAPA with Financial Action Task Force requirements?
    (a) 2013 Amendment
    (b) 2004 Amendment
    (c) 2008 Amendment
    (d) 2019 Amendment

16. Which of the following changes was introduced by the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment Act, 2019?
    (a) Repeal of Chapter IV
    (b) Removal of bail restrictions
    (c) Individual terrorist designation
    (d) Reduction of custody period

17. Which constitutional Article was central to the Court's analysis of personal liberty in UAPA cases?
    (a) Article 21
    (b) Article 19
    (c) Article 32
    (d) Article 14

18. Which of the following tests was laid down by the Supreme Court for applying Section 43D(5) of UAPA?
    (a) Probability of conviction
    (b) Real and meaningful nexus
    (c) Public interest assessment
    (d) Severity of punishment

19. Which of the following cases established that prolonged incarceration can override statutory bail restrictions?
    (a) Gurwinder Singh case
    (b) Shoma Sen case
    (c) Sheikh Javed Iqbal case
    (d) Union of India V. K.A. Najeeb

20. Which of the following regions accounted for the highest number of UAPA arrests between 2019 and 2023?
    (a) Uttar Pradesh
    (b) Maharashtra
    (c) Jammu and Kashmir
    (d) Northeast India

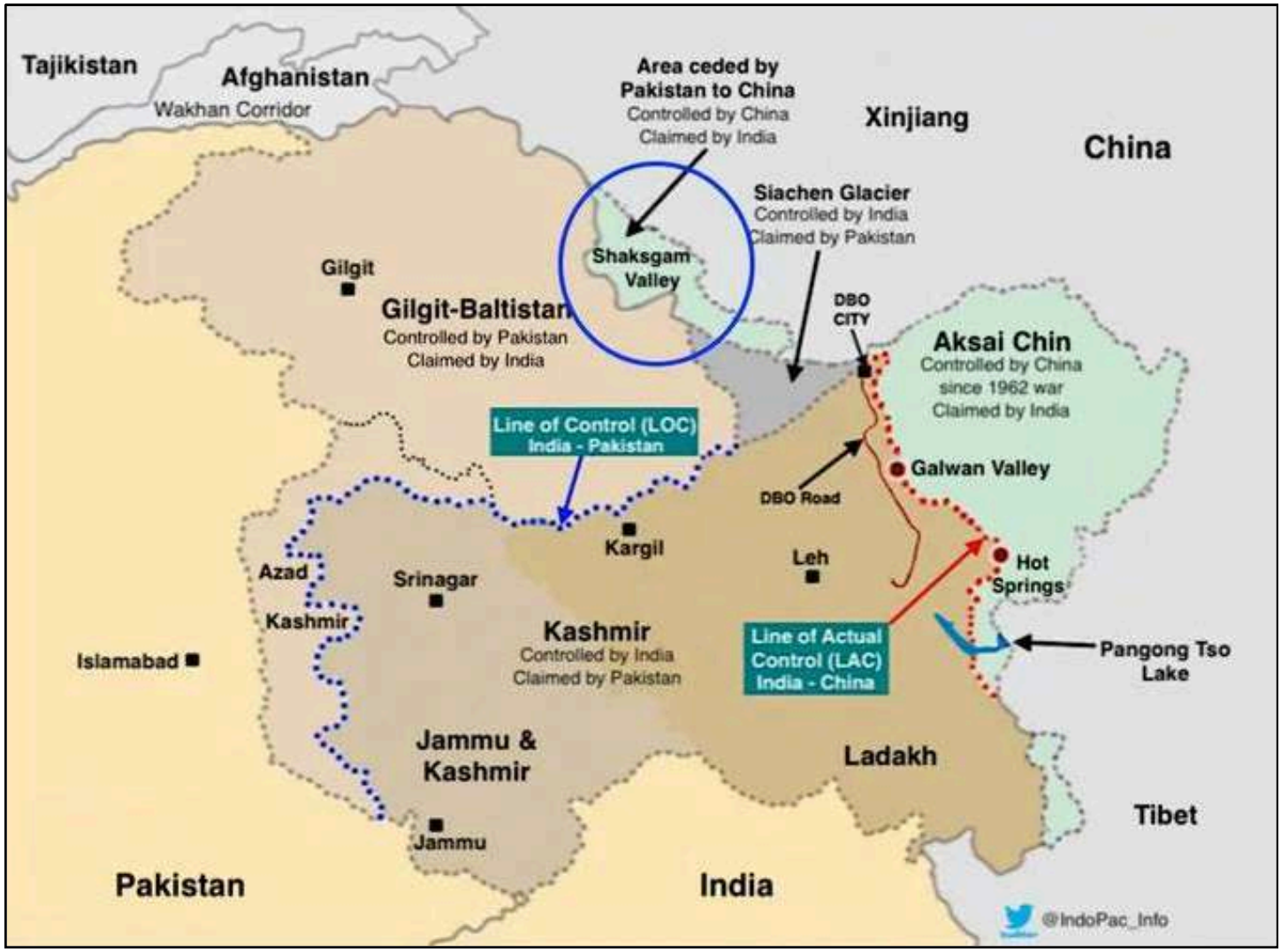
ANSWER KEY

1. (d)	2. (a)	3. (B)	4. (a)	5. (d)	6. (b)	7. (a)	8. (c)
9. (c)	10. (b)	11. (d)	12. (a)	13. (a)	14. (d)	15. (a)	16. (c)
17. (a)	18. (b)	19. (d)	20. (c)				

Shaksgam Valley Dispute

News Highlights:

- On 12 January 2026, China rejected India's territorial claim over the **Shaksgam Valley** in Jammu & Kashmir, asserting that the territory belongs to China and defending its ongoing infrastructure construction as legitimate.
- India, on 9 January 2026, strongly opposed China's infrastructure development activities in the region, terming the 1963 Sino-Pakistan Boundary Agreement and the **China-Pakistan Economic Corridor** (CPEC) as "illegal and invalid."
- The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) reiterated that the entire Union Territories of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh are an integral and inalienable part of India, reserving the right to take necessary measures to safeguard national interests.



Geographical Profile of Shaksgam Valley

- The Shaksgam Valley, also known as the **Trans-Karakoram Tract**, is a high-altitude, sparsely populated region situated in the eastern Karakoram mountain range, lying between the Karakoram and Kunlun mountain ranges.
- The valley is located north of the Siachen Glacier, forms part of the Hunza-Gilgit region of Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (POK), and borders China's Xinjiang Province to the north.
- The region covers approximately 5,180 square kilometres of territory and lies within the former princely state of Jammu and Kashmir.

- The Shaksgam Valley geography comprises high mountains, large glaciers, and narrow river valleys, making the terrain extremely challenging to access.
- The Shaksgam River flows through the region and later joins the Yarkand River in China, shaping the land and supporting glacial formations.
- The climate is extremely cold with snow covering the region for most of the year, resulting in no permanent human settlements in the valley.
- The valley is currently administered by China as part of the **Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region**, specifically within Taxkorgan and Yecheng counties.
- India claims the territory as part of its Union Territory of Ladakh, while Pakistan no longer controls it but defends the 1963 agreement.

Historical Evolution of the Dispute



Pre-Independence Period

- Prior to 1947, the Shaksgam Valley was part of the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir, with historical ties to Baltistan and Ladakh reflected in Balti and Ladakhi place names.
- British-era maps and surveys showed the region as part of Kashmir, though the boundary with China remained undefined.
- In 1936, under British influence, the Mir of Hunza, a vassal of the Maharaja of Kashmir, surrendered rights over the Taghdumbash Pamir and Raskam Valley, while the Shaksgam Valley and Aghil range remained under his control.

Post-Independence Developments

- After Jammu & Kashmir acceded to India in October 1947, the Shaksgam Valley legally became Indian territory under India's position.
- Following the 1947-48 Indo-Pak conflict, Pakistan occupied parts of this territory, preventing India from exercising control over the valley.
- During the 1950s, China began moving into eastern Hunza, worsening India-China relations and prompting Pakistan under President Ayub Khan to seek closer ties with Beijing.

The 1963 Boundary Agreement

- Pakistan and China signed the Sino-Pakistan Boundary Agreement on 2 March 1963 to settle their border differences.
- Under this agreement, Pakistan ceded 5,180 square kilometres of the Shaksgam Valley to China, formally transferring the Yarkand River region and the valley.
- Article 6 of the agreement states that the boundary is provisional and must be renegotiated after settlement of the Kashmir dispute between Pakistan and India.

Key Provisions of Article 6

- The Article clearly stated that "the two parties have agreed that after the settlement of the Kashmir dispute between Pakistan and India, the sovereign authority concerned will reopen negotiations with the Government of the People's Republic of China."
- The negotiations would concern the boundary as described in Article Two of the agreement, leading to a formal Boundary Treaty replacing the present agreement. The agreement was crucial for both Pakistan and China as it provided a common boundary between the two countries, which otherwise would not have shared a border.

India's Official Position

Rejection of the 1963 Agreement

India has never recognised the so-called China-Pakistan Boundary Agreement signed in 1963 and has consistently maintained that the agreement is "illegal and invalid." India asserts that Pakistan had no legal authority to transfer territory belonging to Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, as the transfer occurred without India's consent. MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal stated on 9 January 2026 that the entire Union Territories of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh are an integral and inalienable part of India. India does not recognise the so-called China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, which passes through Indian territory under forcible and illegal occupation of Pakistan. India has consistently protested with the Chinese side for its attempts to alter the ground reality in the Shaksgam Valley through infrastructure development. India reserves the right to take necessary measures to safeguard its interests in the region.

China's Counter-Claims

Assertion of Sovereignty

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson **Mao Ning** stated on 12 January 2026 that the territory mentioned by India belongs to China. Beijing defended that it is fully justified for China to conduct infrastructure construction on its own territory. China maintained that the boundary agreement signed in the 1960s delimited the boundary between China and Pakistan, which is the right of both countries as sovereign nations. China's official stand on the Kashmir issue, as reiterated by Beijing, is that "Jammu and Kashmir dispute is left over from history." Beijing maintains that the dispute should be properly and peacefully resolved in accordance with the UN Charter, relevant UN Security Council resolutions, and bilateral agreements. China stated that neither the China-Pakistan boundary agreement nor CPEC affects its position on the Kashmir issue, and the position remains unchanged.

Strategic and Military Significance

- **Proximity to Critical Areas:** The Shaksgam Valley's proximity to the **Siachen Glacier**, the world's highest battlefield, allows for oversight of Pakistani positions. Access to the Karakoram Pass through this region enables monitoring of Chinese military movements. The valley sits near Aksai Chin and CPEC routes, making it strategically vital for regional security.
- **Infrastructure Development Concerns:** China has developed infrastructure in the valley, including roads linked to CPEC, with the pace of development accelerating since the 2017 Doklam standoff. A recent all-weather road through the Shaksgam Valley runs close to the Siachen Glacier, challenging India's hold over the region. Satellite imagery shows that the road, estimated to be around 10 metres wide, branches from an extension of Highway G219 in China's Xinjiang and ends approximately 50 km from Indira Point, India's northernmost point near the Siachen Glacier.
- **Two-Front Security Challenge:** By mid-2024, China reportedly completed a road across the 4,805-metre **Aghil Pass** into Lower Shaksgam Valley, bringing Chinese construction teams—and potentially military patrols—within 50 km of India-controlled Siachen at Indira Col. Historically, India's defence focus in Siachen was oriented mainly toward Pakistan from the south; China's new access from the north alters this equation. This raises the possibility of a two-front contingency on the world's highest battlefield, reinforcing India's concerns about China and Pakistan jointly pressuring Indian positions.

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)

- China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a portfolio of infrastructure and economic projects intended to connect Pakistan with China's Xinjiang region and the Arabian Sea (via Gwadar), and it is widely treated as a flagship corridor under China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).
- The corridor concept was discussed before the BRI and was publicly advanced in 2013 during high-level China–Pakistan engagement, with an emphasis on linking China to the Chinese-invested port of Gwadar through transport and related infrastructure.
- CPEC was formally launched in 2015, and it is often described as an approximately 3,000 km network/corridor spanning multiple Pakistani provinces and linking onward to Xinjiang.



- The project portfolio is commonly described in the $62–65 billion range in public reporting, reflecting different reference years and inclusions across phases/projects.
- Key focus areas include transport connectivity (highways/road upgrades, rail modernization), energy projects (power generation and related infrastructure), development of Gwadar Port, and Special Economic Zones (SEZs) to support industrial activity.
- Within transport, Pakistan's Main Line-1 (ML-1) rail upgrade is repeatedly described as a major CPEC-linked initiative, aimed at upgrading and reconstructing Pakistan's railway system; reporting in 2024 indicated plans to split ML-1 into phases.
- CPEC alignments are commonly discussed as eastern and western routes inside Pakistan (often called "alignments"), reflecting alternative corridor pathways through different provinces for road/rail connectivity.
- Official project tracking by Pakistan's CPEC authority lists multiple "early harvest" and ongoing projects; for example, it reports completion of the Suki Kinari Hydropower Project in September 2024.



MIND MAP

- China on **12 Jan 2026** rejected India's claim over **Shaksgam Valley** and defended infrastructure work.
- India on **9 Jan 2026** opposed Chinese construction and called the **1963 Sino-Pak Boundary Agreement** and **CPEC** "illegal and invalid."
- MEA reiterated **J&K and Ladakh** as integral parts of India and reserved the right to safeguard interests.

Historical Timeline

Pre-1947

- Part of the princely state of **Jammu and Kashmir**.
- British maps showed ties to Kashmir, but the China boundary was unclear.
- 1936: Mir of Hunza surrendered some rights, while **Shaksgam** remained linked to Hunza control.

Post-1947

- After **J&K accession (Oct 1947)**, India treats it as Indian territory.
- **1947–48 conflict** led to Pakistan occupying parts, limiting Indian control.
- 1950s: China moved into eastern Hunza, increasing regional tension.

Administrative Status

- Administered by China under **Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region**.
- Reported within **Taxkorgan** and **Yecheng** counties.
- India claims it as part of **UT of Ladakh**.
- Pakistan no longer controls it but defends the 1963 agreement.

1963 Sino–Pakistan Boundary Agreement

- Signed on **2 March 1963** between China and Pakistan.
- Pakistan ceded **5,180 sq km** (Shaksgam/Yarkand region) to China.
- Created a direct China–Pakistan boundary that otherwise would not exist.

Location

- Also called the Trans-Karakoram Tract in the eastern Karakoram.
- Lies between Karakoram and Kunlun ranges.
- North of Siachen Glacier, bordering Xinjiang.

Area + Terrain

- About 5,180 sq km, high-altitude and sparsely populated.
- Features glaciers, narrow valleys, and extreme cold.
- No permanent settlements due to harsh climate.

Rivers

- Shaksgam River flows through the valley.
- Joins the Yarkand River in China.

India's Official Position On 1963 Agreement

- India has never recognised it as valid.
- India argues Pakistan had **no legal authority** to transfer the territory.

On CPEC

- India rejects **CPEC** as it passes through **POK**.
- India protests attempts to change ground reality via infrastructure.
- India reserves the right to take measures to protect interests.

Military Statement

- Army Chief **Gen Upendra Dwivedi** stated India does not accept activities in disputed region.
- CPEC described as an illegal project by India.

Connected Topics

Strategic Importance of Aksai Chin

- Aksai Chin is a high-altitude plateau region in the wider Kashmir dispute; it is administered by China and claimed by India, and it remained a core point of contention after the 1962 conflict. The area under Chinese control in Aksai Chin is commonly described as roughly ~38,000 sq km (order of magnitude).
- A key strategic factor is that Aksai Chin sits on the direct land corridor between Xinjiang and western Tibet that China built out for all-weather connectivity. China's National Highway 219 (G219) (often described as the Xinjiang–Tibet road) was completed in September 1957 and runs for about ~180 km through Aksai Chin (as described in major references).
- The construction of the Xinjiang–Tibet road through this region is widely recorded as a major trigger of the India–China border crisis that culminated in the 1962 war, because it altered the ground situation and raised the stakes around the disputed alignment.
- Chinese logistics value comes from the fact that this corridor supports movement and sustainment (supplies, reinforcements) between two sensitive frontier regions—Xinjiang and Tibet—via a single strategic axis.
- In India's security calculus, Aksai Chin matters because it lies opposite the Ladakh sector along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), where India and China have had repeated military stand-offs, including since 2020.
- The region's terrain is often described as sparsely populated and harsh (high altitude, limited habitation), meaning its strategic value is driven more by lines of communication and military geography than by civilian-economic density.
- Because Aksai Chin is tied to a critical infrastructure spine (G219) and sits at the junction of China's Xinjiang–Tibet frontier management, control over it has enduring strategic salience in bilateral negotiations and force postures.

Two-Front War Doctrine in Indian Defence Planning

- In Indian defence discourse, "two-front" planning refers to preparing for simultaneous security challenges on the western and northern borders, typically involving Pakistan and China as the principal contingency set.
- Senior military leadership has publicly referenced the "two-front threat" and the need to be prepared for it; for example, a reported statement by the Army Chief (Jan 2021) emphasized China–Pakistan cooperation and the need to prepare for a two-front threat.
- A key driver is the assessment of China–Pakistan collusivity, i.e., coordination or complementary pressure during crises, which Indian security discussions treat as a planning assumption rather than a theoretical possibility.
- Some recent reporting has highlighted claims about information/intelligence-sharing dynamics in India–Pakistan conflicts, which feeds the broader "collusive threat" narrative in planning debates (even while verification details may be contested in public reporting).
- The push for jointness (integrated planning and operations across services) is repeatedly linked to multi-front readiness; the Ministry of Defence and senior leadership have emphasized breaking service silos and improving integration.
- India's ongoing work on integrated theatre commands is frequently discussed as an organisational response to coordinated threats, with "two-front" readiness often cited as a rationale in commentary around theatre command design.
- The Indian Army has released/updated doctrine that frames deterrence and response across a complex threat environment, including challenges involving both China and Pakistan in different domains and intensities.
- Parliamentary oversight material has noted an increasingly assertive China and persistent external security challenges, which supports the institutional context in which two-front planning is discussed.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Which of the following terms is also used for the Shaksgam Valley?
   (a) Shyok-Pangong Valley
   (b) Trans-Karakoram Tract
   (c) Nubra-Karakoram Valley
   (d) Shaksgam-Pangong Tract

2. Where is the Shaksgam Valley located in relation to the Siachen Glacier?
   (a) South of the Siachen Glacier
   (b) West of the Siachen Glacier
   (c) East of the Siachen Glacier
   (d) North of the Siachen Glacier

3. Which of the following Article of the 1963 agreement makes the boundary provisional?
   (a) Article 2 (b) Article 4
   (c) Article 6 (d) Article 9

4. Which river flows through the Shaksgam Valley and later joins the Yarkand River?
   (a) Indus River (b) Shaksgam River
   (c) Sutlej River (d) Jhelum River

5. Which of the following states exercises present-day administrative control over the Shaksgam Valley despite overlapping claims and a contested historical background?
   (a) India (b) Pakistan
   (c) Nepal (d) China

6. Which of the following authorities continued to exercise control over the Shaksgam Valley despite the surrender of other frontier regions in 1936?
   (a) Raja of Leh (b) Mir of Hunza
   (c) Mir of Nubra (d) Sultan of Gilgit

7. Which of the following agreements resulted in the formal transfer of the Shaksgam Valley and the Yarkand River region from Pakistan to China?
   (a) Sino-Pakistan Boundary Agreement
   (b) China-Indian Border Agreement
   (c) Indo-Pakistan Boundary Agreement
   (d) China-Afghanistan Border Agreement

8. Which of the following provisions of the 1963 agreement declares the boundary arrangement to be temporary and subject to future revision?
   (a) Article 5 (b) Article 6
   (c) Article 7 (d) Article 8

9. Which of the following initiatives is rejected by India on the grounds that it passes through territory under unlawful occupation?
   (a) Bangladesh-China Economic Corridor
   (b) India-Myanmar-Thailand Corridor
   (c) China-Pakistan Economic Corridor
   (d) China-Nepal Trans-Himalayan Corridor

10. Which of the following provisions of the agreement defines the boundary that would later be renegotiated through a formal Boundary Treaty?
    (a) Article 1 (b) Article 2
    (c) Article 3 (d) Article 4

11. Which of the following years marks the signing of the boundary agreement between China and Pakistan that India has consistently rejected as illegal and invalid?
    (a) 1947 (b) 1954
    (c) 1962 (d) 1963

12. Which of the following Chinese officials publicly stated in January 2026 that the territory referred to by India belongs to China?
    (a) Mao Ning (b) Zhao Wei
    (c) Wang Wen (d) Chen Lei

13. Which of the following locations is identified as India's northernmost point near the Siachen Glacier, located about 50 km from the end of the newly observed road?
    (a) Indira Point (b) Daulat Beg
    (c) Siachen Base (d) Karakoram Pass

14. Which of the following passes has altered India's security calculus by enabling northern access toward the Siachen region?
    (a) Migla Pass
    (b) Aghil Pass
    (c) Gilgit Pass
    (d) Zoji La Pass

15. Which of the following locations serves as the starting point in Pakistan for the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor connecting to China's Xinjiang region?
    (a) Gwadar Port (b) Karachi Port
    (c) Pasni Port (d) Ormara Port

16. Which of the following pairs of countries lies along the maritime chokepoint that China seeks to bypass through the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor?
    (a) Egypt and Jordan
    (b) Turkey and Greece
    (c) Malaysia and Indonesia
    (d) Vietnam and Thailand

17. Which of the following initiatives links Gwadar Port with China's broader strategy of integrating land-based and maritime trade routes?
    (a) Belt and Road Initiative
    (b) Indo-Pacific Initiative
    (c) North South Corridor
    (d) Regional Trade Pact

18. Which of the following infrastructure projects connects Kashgar in China with Pakistan and was constructed jointly by Chinese and Pakistani engineers?
    (a) China Pakistan Corridor
    (b) Karakoram Highway
    (c) Trans Himalayan Route
    (d) Silk Road Express Way

19. Which of the following locations is identified as India's northernmost point situated near the Siachen Glacier, around 50 km from the end of a road linked to Highway G219?
    (a) Daulat Beg
    (b) Nubra Valley
    (c) Kargil Town
    (d) Indira Point

ANSWER KEY

1. (b)	2. (d)	3. (c)	4. (b)	5. (d)	6. (b)	7. (a)	8. (b)
9. (c)	10. (b)	11. (d)	12. (a)	13. (a)	14. (b)	15. (a)	16. (c)
17. (a)	18. (b)	19. (d)					

77th Republic Day 2026

News Highlights:

- India observed its **77th Republic Day** on 26th January 2026, celebrating the anniversary of the Constitution coming into force in 1950, with this year's festivities centred around the theme "150 Years of Vande Mataram."
- The grand parade at Kartavya Path featured 30 tableaux from States, Union Territories, and Ministries under the sub-themes "Swatantrata ka Mantra – Vande Mataram" and "Samriddhi ka Mantra – Atmanirbhar Bharat."
- This celebration marked the first Republic Day following **Operation Sindoor**, with a special seven-aircraft "Sindoor Formation" comprising Rafale, Su-30 MKI, MiG-29, and Jaguar jets flying over the parade route.
- The newly raised **Bhairav Battalion**, a specialised assault infantry unit of the Indian Army, made its historic parade debut, marching for the first time on Kartavya Path.
- A military contingent from the **European Union** participated in the event, marking the EU's first appearance at such a celebration outside Europe, with European Council President Antonio Costa and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen serving as chief guests.

Historical Context of Republic Day

- After gaining independence from **British rule on August 15, 1947**, India was governed by **the Government of India Act 1935.**
- Recognising the need for a comprehensive constitution, **a Constituent Assembly** was formed to draft a document that would reflect the aspirations of its people.
- The **Assembly adopted the Constitution on November 26, 1949**, but it was decided to implement it on **January 26, 1950**, to honor **the Purna Swaraj.**
- The Indian National Congress declared **'Purna Swaraj' (Complete Independence)** as its goal during **the Lahore Session held in December 1929.** This historic session was presided over by **Jawaharlal Nehru.**
- On **December 31, 1929**, Nehru hoisted the tricolor flag on **the banks of the Ravi River in Lahore**, symbolising the commitment to **complete self-rule.** The Congress then proclaimed **January 26, 1930**, as **'Purna Swaraj Day'** and urged Indians to celebrate it as Independence Day.

Journey from Purna Swaraj to Constitutional Republic

- The foundation for Republic Day was laid during the Lahore Session of the Indian National Congress in December 1929, where the historic "Purna Swaraj" (Complete Independence) resolution was adopted under the presidency of Jawaharlal Nehru.
- Following this declaration, 26th January 1930 was designated as "Purna Swaraj Day" across India, with citizens pledging to reject British dominion status and pursue complete self-governance.
- From 1930 until independence in 1947, this date was commemorated annually as "Independence Day" or "Poorna Swaraj Day" throughout the country.
- When framing the new Constitution, 26th January 1950 was deliberately selected for its enforcement to honour the significance of the 1930 Purna Swaraj Declaration.

Constitutional Transition Process

- The **Constituent Assembly** convened for its inaugural session on 9th December 1946 at Constitution Hall (now Central Hall of Parliament), formally initiating India's constitution-making process.
- Although India achieved freedom from colonial rule on 15th August 1947, the country remained a British Dominion with King George VI as head of state until the Constitution took effect.
- The Constituent Assembly formally adopted the Constitution on 26th November 1949, a date explicitly recorded in the Preamble and now observed as Constitution Day or Samvidhan Divas.
- On 26th January 1950, the Constitution came into force, replacing the Government of India Act, 1935, and

- transforming India into a Sovereign Democratic Republic with the President replacing the British Monarch as Head of State.
- The **42nd Constitutional Amendment** enacted in 1976 subsequently added the words "Socialist" and "Secular" to the Preamble.

77th Republic Day Parade 2026

Theme and Cultural Showcase

- The Republic Day 2026 theme was officially announced as **"150 Years of Vande Mataram,"** celebrating the enduring legacy of the national song and India's rich cultural heritage.
- Approximately 2,500 cultural artists drawn from every State and Union Territory performed on Kartavya Path, presenting a programme themed **"Vande Mataram – The Eternal Resonance of Bharat."**
- Around 10,000 special guests from diverse societal backgrounds witnessed the parade, including top performers in income generation, employment, technology, innovation, and startups.
- The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting presented a tableau designed by filmmaker Sanjay Leela Bhansali showcasing the theme **"Bharat Gatha: Shruti, Kriti, Drishti,"** featuring a song performed by Shreya Ghoshal.

Military Display and Operation Sindoor Legacy

- This parade introduced a dynamic new format where the Indian Army showcased capabilities in a phased **Battle Array Formation**, displaying military assets sequentially as deployed in actual combat operations.
- Mock-ups of major weapon systems deployed during Operation Sindoor were prominently displayed, including the BrahMos cruise missile, S-400 air defence system, HAROP loitering munitions, and Rafale jets equipped with SCALP missiles.
- The newly raised Bhairav Light Commando Battalion made its Republic Day debut, comprising approximately 250 elite soldiers trained for swift, surprise, and high-impact operations following their formation after Operation Sindoor.
- Army Chief General Upendra Dwivedi announced plans to raise 25 such Bhairav battalions within six months, with five battalions already established.
- Specialised units including the Shaktibaan Regiment (fully UAS-driven artillery) and Divyastra batteries (combining traditional artillery with drones and loitering munitions) were also showcased.
- The display featured India's long-range anti-ship hypersonic glide missile (LRAShM) with approximately 1,500 kilometres range, signalling India's entry into the exclusive group of nations developing hypersonic weapons.

Flypast Formations

- A total of 29 aircraft participated in the flypast, including 16 fighter aircraft, four transport aircraft, and nine helicopters from six different air bases.
- The highlight was the special "Sindoor Formation" comprising two Rafale aircraft, two MiG-29 aircraft, two Su-30 MKI aircraft, and one Jaguar aircraft flying in a "Spearhead" formation.
- The flypast commenced with the "Dhwaj Formation," where four Mi-17 IV helicopters carried the National Flag alongside the flags of the three services.
- Additional formations included the "Prahar Formation" and "Garud Formation" featuring Advanced Light Helicopters from the Indian Army and Air Force, with the lead aircraft carrying the Operation Sindoor flag.
- The aerial display concluded with the "Vijay Formation" featuring a single Rafale executing a vertical manoeuvre over Kartavya Path at 900 km/hr.
- Strategic assets displayed included C-130 and C-295 transport aircraft, the Indian Navy's P-8i maritime patrol aircraft, and attack helicopters such as Apache and Light Combat Helicopter (LCH).

State and Ministry Tableaux

- A total of 30 tableaux rolled down Kartavya Path, with 17 representing States and Union Territories and 13 from Ministries and Departments.
- The **Department of Military Affairs** presented a special tri-services tableau themed "Operation Sindoor – Victory Through Jointness," showcasing India's integrated military capabilities.
- **Gujarat's** tableau paid tribute to Madam Bhikaji Cama and depicted the evolution of the Indian National Flag from 1906 to 1947, concluding with a sculpture of Mahatma Gandhi with the Charkha.
- **West Bengal** honoured the origins of Vande Mataram composed by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, featuring statues of freedom fighters including Subhas Chandra Bose, Matangini Hazra, and Khudiram Bose.
- **Maharashtra** showcased Ganeshotsav as a social movement initiated by Lokmanya Tilak for national unity, depicting the creation and visarjan of Lord Ganesh idols.
- **Punjab** paid tribute to Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib Ji on the 350th year of his martyrdom, honouring him as "Hind Di Chadar" (Protector of India).
- **Kerala** featured the Kochi Water Metro, India's first water metro system, and celebrated the state's achievement of 100% digital literacy.
- The **Ministry of Home Affairs (NDMA & NDRF)** commemorated recovery after the 2001 Bhuj Earthquake, marking 25 years of resilience.
- **Himachal Pradesh** depicted the theme "Dev Bhoomi, Veer Bhoomi," while Manipur showcased products that have attained Geographical Indication (GI) tag status.

Best Marching Contingents & Tableaux of Republic Day 2026

1

First Position: Maharashtra's Winning Tableau

Theme and Concept

- The Maharashtra tableau was designed around the theme "**Ganeshotsav: A Symbol of Aatmanirbharta**," presenting the festival as a powerful embodiment of India's self-reliance philosophy.
- The presentation emphasised the deep-rooted cultural heritage associated with Ganesh Chaturthi celebrations, which originated as a public festival in Maharashtra under the leadership of Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak.
- The tableau highlighted the festival's role in fostering community participation and social cohesion, demonstrating how traditional celebrations contribute to national unity.

Cultural Elements

- The display showcased the grandeur of Ganeshotsav festivities, including the creation of Lord Ganesh idols and the traditional visarjan (immersion) ceremony that marks the culmination of the festival.
- A **dhol-tasha group from Nagpur** participated in the tableau presentation, adding authentic cultural appeal through traditional percussion performances.
- The tableau effectively conveyed how the festival has evolved from a religious observance into a platform for social unity and artistic expression across communities.

Best Marching Contingents & Tableaux of Republic Day 2026

2

Second Position: Jammu and Kashmir

- The Jammu and Kashmir tableau secured the second position for its presentation depicting the region as a seamless cultural continuum.
- The display focused on the theme "**Handicrafts and Folk Dances of Jammu and Kashmir**," showcasing the intricate craftsmanship and vibrant performing arts traditions of the Union Territory.
- The tableau highlighted the diverse cultural heritage spanning both Jammu and Kashmir regions, emphasising their unique artistic traditions.

3

Third Position: Kerala

- Kerala's tableau claimed the third position for its innovative presentation themed around modern developmental achievements.
- The display prominently featured the **Kochi Water Metro**, which holds the distinction of being India's first water-based urban mass transit system.
- The tableau also celebrated Kerala's remarkable accomplishment of achieving 100% digital literacy, positioning the state as a model for technological empowerment in governance and citizen services.

Marching Contingent Awards

4

Armed Services Category

- The **Indian Navy** was recognised as the Best Marching Contingent among the three armed services comprising the Army, Navy, and Air Force.
- The Naval contingent comprised 144 young personnel led by Lt Karan Nagyal as Contingent Commander, demonstrating exceptional discipline and coordination during the parade.
- The recognition reflects the Navy's commitment to ceremonial excellence and precision in representing the maritime forces of the nation.

Central Armed Police Forces Category

- **Delhi Police** emerged as the winner among Central Armed Police Forces and other paramilitary organisations.
- The award acknowledges the force's outstanding performance in marching discipline, synchronisation, and overall presentation during the Republic Day parade.

Ministry of Culture Tableau

- The **Ministry of Culture** received the best tableau award among central ministries and departments participating in the parade.
- The winning presentation was titled "**Vande Mataram – The Soul Cry of a Nation**," artistically tracing the 150-year journey of the national song. The tableau commemorated the significant milestone of 150 years since the composition of Vande Mataram, highlighting its pivotal role in India's freedom struggle and national consciousness.
- Approximately 2,500 cultural artists drawn from every State and Union Territory performed alongside this thematic presentation at Kartavya Path.

150 Years of Vande Mataram

- **Vande Mataram** was composed by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and first published in the literary magazine Bangadarshan in 1875, later incorporated into his novel Anandamath published in 1882.
- The song was set to music by Rabindranath Tagore, emerging as a powerful symbol of India's cultural and political identity embodying unity, sacrifice, and devotion to the motherland.
- On 24th January 1950, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the first President of India, announced that while "Jana Gana Mana" would serve as the National Anthem, Vande Mataram would be honoured equally as the National Song for its significant role in the freedom movement. The Indian Constitution does not explicitly mention a national song, though Article 51A(a) directs citizens to respect the Constitution, National Flag, and National Anthem.
- In 1896, Rabindranath Tagore sang Vande Mataram at the Kolkata session of the Indian National Congress, marking its first major public performance.
- At the Varanasi session of the Indian National Congress in 1905, the song was formally adopted for all-India occasions. The Bande Mataram Sampradaya was formed in 1905 in North Calcutta to promote devotion to the motherland and spread the song's message.
- The English daily "Bande Mataram" was launched in 1906 under Bipin Chandra Pal and later joined by Sri Aurobindo, propagating ideas of Swadeshi, unity, and resistance against British rule.
- Vande Mataram was first used as a political slogan on 7th August 1905 during student processions at Calcutta Town Hall, becoming the rallying cry of the Swadeshi and anti-partition movement.
- In 1907, Madam Bhikaji Cama raised the tricolour flag for the first time outside India in Stuttgart, Germany, with the words "Vande Mataram" inscribed upon it.
- In August 1909, Madan Lal Dhingra uttered "Bande Mataram" as his final words before execution in England.
- In October 1912, Gopal Krishna Gokhale was welcomed in Cape Town, South Africa, with a grand procession chanting "Vande Mataram."

Awards and Honours Conferred on Republic Day 2026



- A total of 131 **Padma Awards** were announced, comprising 5 Padma Vibhushan (exceptional and distinguished service), 13 Padma Bhushan (distinguished service of high order), and 113 Padma Shri awards.
- These awards were instituted in 1954 and are presented by the President on the eve of Republic Day to individuals who have made significant contributions to various fields.
- 70 Armed Forces personnel received gallantry medals, including **Ashok Chakra**, **Kirti Chakra**, **Shaurya Chakra**, and Sena, Nao Sena, and Vayu Sena Medals.
- The President conferred 301 defence decorations including Param Vishisht Seva Medals (distinguished service of exceptional order), Uttam Yudh Seva Medals (distinguished service during war), Ati Vishisht Seva Medals, and Yudh Seva Medals.
- The **President's Tatrakshak Medal (PTM)** and **Tatrakshak Medal (TM)** were conferred on Indian Coast Guard personnel for acts of conspicuous gallantry and exceptional devotion to duty.
- A total of 982 personnel from Police, Fire Services, Home Guard and Civil Defence, and Correctional Services received Gallantry and Service Medals.
- The President's Medal for Gallantry recognises exceptional courage in saving lives or preventing crime, while the Police Medal for Gallantry acknowledges bravery during duty.
- The President's Medal for Distinguished Service (PSM) and Medal for Meritorious Service (MSM) were awarded for outstanding service records.



MIND MAP

- India celebrated the **77th Republic Day** on **26 Jan 2026**.
- Central theme: **"150 Years of Vande Mataram."**
- Parade held at **Kartavya Path** with major cultural and military showcases.

Parade Theme and Format

- Sub-themes: **"Swatantrata ka Mantra – Vande Mataram"** and **"Samriddhi ka Mantra – Atmanirbhar Bharat."**
- **30 tableaux** participated from States/UTs and Ministries.
- **2,500 artists** performed a unified cultural programme.
- About **10,000 special guests** invited from diverse backgrounds.

State and Ministry Tableaux

- **17** from States/UTs and **13** from Ministries/Departments.
- Tri-services tableau: **"Operation Sindoor – Victory Through Jointness."**
- **Gujarat**: Bhikaji Cama + evolution of National Flag (1906–1947).
- **West Bengal**: origins of Vande Mataram + freedom fighters displayed.
- **Maharashtra**: Ganeshotsav as a movement for unity initiated by Tilak.
- **Punjab**: 350th martyrdom year of Guru Tegh Bahadur as "Hind Di Chadar."
- **Kerala**: Kochi Water Metro + 100% digital literacy milestone.
- **MHA (NDMA & NDRF)**: resilience after **2001 Bhuj earthquake** (25 years).
- **Manipur**: GI-tag products showcased; **Himachal**: "Dev Bhoomi, Veer Bhoomi."

Flypast Highlights

- Total **29 aircraft**: **16 fighters**, **4 transport**, **9 helicopters**.
- Opening: **Dhwaj Formation** with Mi-17 IV carrying service flags.
- "**Sindoor Formation**" had **7 aircraft** in spearhead pattern.
- Included "**Prahar**" and "**Garud**" helicopter formations
- Finale: "**Vijay Formation**" with Rafale vertical manoeuvre at **900 km/hr**.
- Strategic platforms included **C-130**, **C-295**, **P-8i**, **Apache**, **LCH**.

Battle Array Display

- Army displayed assets in a phased **Battle Array Formation** style.
- Showcased equipment as used in operational deployment order.

Key Systems Displayed

- **BrahMos** cruise missile.
- **S-400** air defence system.
- **HAROP** loitering munitions.
- **Rafale + SCALP** missile integration.

New Units and Tech

- **Bhairav Battalion** debuted as a specialised assault infantry unit.
- Plan announced to raise **25 Bhairav battalions** within six months.
- **Shaktibaan Regiment** presented as fully UAS-driven artillery.
- **Divyastra batteries** showcased drone + loitering munition integration.

Tableau Awards 2026

Top Three

- **1st: Maharashtra** — "Ganeshotsav: A Symbol of Aatmanirbharta."
- **2nd: Jammu & Kashmir** — handicrafts and folk dances theme.
- **3rd: Kerala** — Kochi Water Metro + digital literacy achievement.
- Best among Armed Services: **Indian Navy**.
- Best among CAPFs/paramilitary: **Delhi Police**

Best Ministry Tableau

Winner: **Ministry of Culture** with "Vande Mataram – The Soul Cry of a Nation."

Connected Topics

Women in Constitution-Making and Republican Institutions

- During the full tenure of the Constituent Assembly, 15 women were members, and 10 of them participated in debates.
- Women's interventions accounted for about 2% of the discussions in the Assembly debates.
- G. Durgabai had the highest recorded participation among women in the debates (about 23,000 words, per PRS analysis).
- A Rajya Sabha Secretariat compilation (based on Constituent Assembly proceedings) lists all 15 women members, including Ammu Swaminathan, Annie Mascarene, Begum Aizaz Rasul, Dakshayani Velayudan, and Hansa Mehta, etc.
- Fundamental Rights debates specifically included contributions from Ammu Swaminathan, Begum Aizaz Rasul, and Dakshayani Velayudan.
- The Government of India's Legislative Department publicly acknowledged the role of the 15 women members through a dedicated publication released on 8 March 2025.
- Sarojini Naidu was appointed Governor of (then) United Provinces in 1947, and is widely recorded as India's first woman Governor.
- Pratibha Patil became the first woman President of India, assuming office on 25 July 2007.
- Meira Kumar served as Speaker of the Lok Sabha from 4 June 2009 to 4 June 2014, and is listed among former Speakers on the Lok Sabha's official site.
- V. S. Ramadevi served as Chief Election Commissioner from 26 November 1990 to 11 December 1990, as per an Election Commission of India list of former CECs/ECs.

National Symbols under the Constitution of India

- Article 51A(a) makes it a Fundamental Duty "to abide by the Constitution and respect its ideals and institutions, the National Flag and the National Anthem."
- Part IVA (Fundamental Duties), including Article 51A, was inserted by the Constitution (Forty-Second Amendment) Act, 1976 (as reflected in standard constitutional texts/annotations).
- Article 51A(a) refers to the National Flag and National Anthem, but does not refer to the "National Song" as a Fundamental Duty.
- The Third Schedule prescribes oaths/affirmations for constitutional offices that include "bear true faith and allegiance to the Constitution" and "uphold the sovereignty and integrity of India."
- The Constitution text itself does not set out penal consequences for disrespect; statutory law does that (for example, the Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971).
- The Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971 criminalises specified "insults" to the Indian National Flag and the Constitution, and also deals with preventing the singing of the National Anthem.
- The State Emblem is governed through legislation—e.g., the State Emblem of India (Prohibition of Improper Use) Act, 2005, administered under the Ministry of Home Affairs framework.
- The State Emblem Act (2005) is specifically aimed at prohibiting improper use of the State Emblem for professional/commercial purposes and related matters.
- The Ministry of Home Affairs has issued executive instructions/orders relating to the National Anthem, explicitly referencing Article 51A(a).
- The Supreme Court has noted that there is no legal provision obliging a person to sing the National Anthem; Article 51A(a) instead enjoins a duty of respect (e.g., standing respectfully).

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Republic Day 2026 celebrations were officially themed around:
   (a) Vande Mataram (b) Amrit Kaal
   (c) Digital India (d) Atmanirbhar Bharat

2. The highlight flypast formation on Republic Day 2026 was called:
   (a) Dhwaj (b) Sindoor
   (c) Garud (d) Vijay

3. How many tableaux rolled down Kartavya Path on Republic Day 2026?
   (a) 28 (b) 29
   (c) 30 (d) 31

4. First position in "Best Tableaux" (Republic Day 2026) was won by:
   (a) Kerala (b) Jammu & Kashmir
   (c) Punjab (d) Maharashtra

5. Winner in the Central Armed Police Forces/paramilitary category for marching was:
   (a) Delhi Police (b) CRPF
   (c) BSF (d) CISF

6. The Republic Day 2026 parade was held on which ceremonial route?
   (a) Kartavya Path (b) Rajpath
   (c) Vijay Chowk (d) India Gate

7. Republic Day is observed on 26 January primarily to mark what event?
   (a) Federation of India
   (b) Independence of India
   (c) Partition of India
   (d) Constitution of India

8. Republic Day 2026 had a participating contingent from which international grouping?
   (a) ASEAN
   (b) European Union
   (c) SAARC
   (d) AU

9. Which armed service won the Best Marching Contingent award in the Armed Services category on Republic Day 2026?
   (a) Indian Navy
   (b) Indian Army
   (c) Indian Air Force
   (d) Indian Coast Guard

10. Which Ministry won the Best Tableau award among Central Ministries/Departments on Republic Day 2026?
    (a) Ministry of Defence
    (b) Ministry of Home Affairs
    (c) Ministry of Culture
    (d) Ministry of Railways

11. The Constitution of India was drafted and finalised by which body?
    (a) Parliament
    (b) Cabinet
    (c) Constituent Assembly
    (d) Supreme Court

12. The Constitution of India was adopted on which date?
    (a) 15 Aug 1947
    (b) 26 Nov 1949
    (c) 26 Jan 1950
    (d) 02 Oct 1950

13. Who takes the salute at the Republic Day parade as the Supreme Commander?
    (a) President
    (b) Prime Minister
    (c) Defence Minister
    (d) Chief Justice

14. Republic Day 2026's theme marked 150 years of which national song?
    (a) Vande Mataram (b) Jana Gana Mana
    (c) Sare Jahan
    (d) Vaishnav Jan

15. Who was sworn in as India's first President on 26 January 1950?

(a) Zakir Husain
(b) S. Radhakrishnan
(c) V. Giri
(d) Rajendra Prasad

16. How many Articles did the Constitution originally have in 1950?
(a) 395
(b) 390
(c) 400
(d) 370

17. How many Schedules did the Constitution originally have in 1950?
(a) 08
(b) 10
(c) 12
(d) 06

18. "Jana Gana Mana" was adopted as the National Anthem of India in:
(a) 1947
(b) 1950
(c) 1952
(d) 1965

19. The Constitution of India was adopted in which city?
(a) Ahmedabad
(b) Mumbai
(c) Kolkata
(d) New Delhi

ANSWER KEY

1. (a)	2. (b)	3. (c)	4. (d)	5. (a)	6. (a)	7. (d)	8. (b)
9. (a)	10. (c)	11. (c)	12. (b)	13. (a)	14. (a)	15. (d)	16. (a)
17. (a)	18. (b)	19. (d)					

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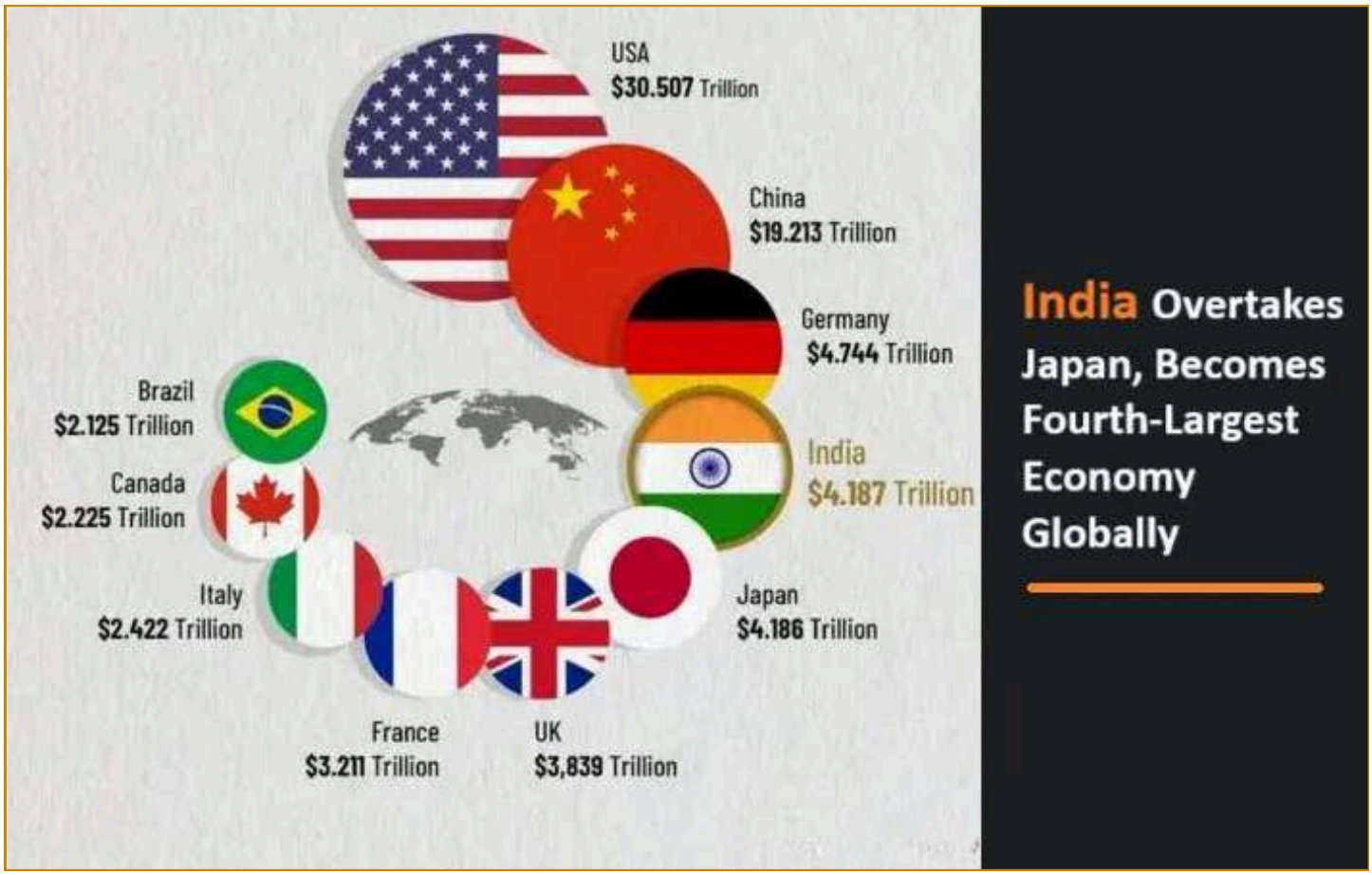
India as the World's Fourth Largest Economy

News Highlights:

- The Government of India announced on 31 December 2025 that India has surpassed Japan to become the world's **fourth-largest economy** with a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) valued at USD 4.18 trillion, making it the fastest-growing major economy globally.
- India's real GDP expanded by 8.2% in the second quarter of 2025-26, marking a six-quarter high, with projections indicating the country could displace Germany from the third rank by 2030 with an estimated GDP of USD 7.3 trillion.
- In Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) terms, India already ranks third globally at approximately USD 14-17 trillion, trailing only China and the United States.



Current Global Economic Standing

- With GDP valued at USD 4.18 trillion, India has moved from the fifth position in 2022 to claim the fourth spot in 2025, based on the latest **International Monetary Fund** (IMF) and World Bank-aligned estimates.
- The United States remains the world's largest economy with a GDP of approximately USD 30.6 trillion, followed by China at USD 19.4 trillion and Germany at approximately USD 5 trillion.
- Japan's economy, once valued at USD 6 trillion in 2010, has contracted to approximately USD 4.11-4.186 trillion due to an aging population, stagnant productivity, and deflation.

- India's nominal GDP has grown 105% in just a decade, more than doubling from approximately USD 2.04 trillion in 2014 to the current estimate of USD 4.18 trillion in 2025.

Purchasing Power Parity Position

- India's economy ranks third globally in **Purchasing Power Parity** (PPP) terms at approximately USD 14-17.65 trillion, behind China (USD 33-35 trillion) and the United States (USD 25-28 trillion).
- The IMF projects India's GDP (PPP) could reach USD 20.7 trillion by 2030 and potentially become the world's second-largest PPP economy by 2038 with a GDP of USD 34.2 trillion.
- India contributes 8.53% of the entire world's GDP (PPP) and shares almost 17.4% of total Asia's GDP (PPP).
- The GDP at purchasing power parity is 4.22 times India's GDP at nominal value, reflecting the country's lower cost of living compared to developed economies.

India's Growth Story Since Independence

Phase 1: 1947–1955 — Post-Partition Stabilisation and the Launch of Planned Development

In the immediate years after Independence, India faced severe structural and economic challenges arising from Partition, including the rehabilitation of refugees, acute food shortages, inflationary pressures, and an extremely weak industrial base. In response to these conditions, India adopted a centrally planned model of economic development, viewing the State as the primary agent for economic reconstruction and growth. To institutionalise this approach, **the Planning Commission** was established in **March 1950**, and the country embarked on systematic economic planning with the launch of the **First Five-Year Plan in 1951.**



The First Five-Year Plan (1951–1956) placed primary emphasis on agriculture, irrigation, power generation, transport infrastructure, and price stability, as food security and macroeconomic stability were considered the most urgent national priorities. The plan was framed using **the Harrod–Domar growth model**, which linked economic growth to levels of investment and savings. The plan set a modest growth target of **2.1 per cent,** but due largely to favourable monsoons and improved agricultural performance in the later years of the plan period, the economy achieved an actual average growth rate of about 3.6 per cent. This phase firmly embedded a developmental State model, in which public institutions and public investment played a central role in expanding basic productive capacity and stabilising the economy.



Phase 2: 1956–1965 — Nehruvian Industrialisation and Import Substitution under the Licence-Permit Regime

From the mid-1950s, India consciously shifted its development strategy away from agriculture-led recovery toward state-led industrialisation, particularly in heavy and basic industries. This strategic change was formally articulated in the **Second Five-Year Plan (1956–1961)**, which was based on the Mahalanobis model and emphasised rapid expansion of the capital goods sector to achieve long-term self-reliance. The plan targeted an annual growth rate of 4.5 per cent and achieved an actual growth rate of approximately 4.3 per cent, indicating moderate success in output expansion.





The industrial strategy of this period was reinforced by the **Industrial Policy Resolution of 1956**, which declared that the State would control the "commanding heights" of the economy and assigned a dominant role to the public sector in key industries such as steel, heavy engineering, mining, and power. While this approach succeeded in creating a diversified industrial base, it also led to extensive industrial licensing, import controls, and foreign exchange restrictions, which later came to be known collectively as **the Licence-Permit Raj**. The rapid industrial expansion also generated serious macroeconomic pressures, particularly foreign exchange shortages and rising prices, which constrained the achievement of plan targets.

The **Third Five-Year Plan (1961–1966)** sought to consolidate earlier gains and aimed at transforming India into a self-reliant and self-sustaining economy, with agriculture receiving renewed priority as a limiting factor for overall growth. However, the plan period coincided with severe external and internal shocks, including the **1962 Sino-Indian conflict,** the 1965 Indo-Pakistan war, and successive droughts. As a result, the plan achieved only 2.8 per cent growth against a target of 5.6 per cent, and the entire planning process entered a phase of disruption.

Phase 3: 1965–1974 — Plan Break, Macroeconomic Shocks, and the Green Revolution

Following the failure of the Third Five-Year Plan, India entered a period of acute economic stress marked by wars, droughts, food shortages, inflation, devaluation of the rupee, and erosion of foreign exchange reserves. Due to these conditions, the Fourth Five-Year Plan was postponed, and India operated through Annual Plans between 1966 and 1969, a period commonly described as the "Plan Holiday". During this phase, economic policy was focused primarily on short-term stabilisation rather than long-term development planning.

A decisive structural shift occurred during this period with the adoption of a new agricultural strategy, later known as the Green Revolution. Beginning in 1966–67, this strategy involved the large-scale introduction of high-yielding variety (HYV) seeds, expanded irrigation, increased fertiliser use, and assured procurement and price support mechanisms. The Green Revolution initially benefited regions with better irrigation facilities but succeeded in significantly raising foodgrain production and reducing India's dependence on food imports and aid.

The Fourth Five-Year Plan (1969–1974) was eventually launched with the objectives of achieving growth with stability and promoting the progressive attainment of self-reliance. The plan targeted a growth rate of 5.7 per cent, but actual growth remained limited to about 3.3 per cent due to adverse monsoons, inflationary pressures, and the economic burden of the 1971 Indo-Pakistan war, which also resulted in a large influx of refugees from Bangladesh. Although agricultural production initially showed improvement, the overall performance of the plan fell well short of expectations, highlighting the vulnerability of growth to external and climatic shocks.



Phase 4: 1974–1980 — Oil Shock, Inflation, Poverty Alleviation, and Policy Discontinuity

The mid-1970s were dominated by global economic turbulence triggered by the oil price shocks, which led to sharp increases in import costs, inflationary pressures, and balance-of-payments constraints for India. Against this backdrop, the **Fifth Five-Year Plan (1974–1979)** was formulated with a strong emphasis on poverty removal **(Garibi Hatao) and self-reliance.**

The Fifth Plan achieved an actual growth **rate of approximately 4.8 per cent**, marginally exceeding its target of 4.4 per cent, despite operating in a highly adverse global environment. However, the planning process was disrupted by major political changes. Following the **declaration of the Emergency in 1975**, policy priorities shifted toward **the Twenty-Point Programme, and in 1978**, the incoming Janata Party government terminated the Fifth Plan before its completion. The government introduced **a Rolling Plan (1978–1980)**, which emphasised employment and criticised earlier strategies for promoting inequality and concentration of economic power. This period was characterised by policy instability and lack of continuity in long-term planning.



Phase 5: 1980–1991 — Gradual Liberalisation, Higher Growth, and the Build-up to Crisis

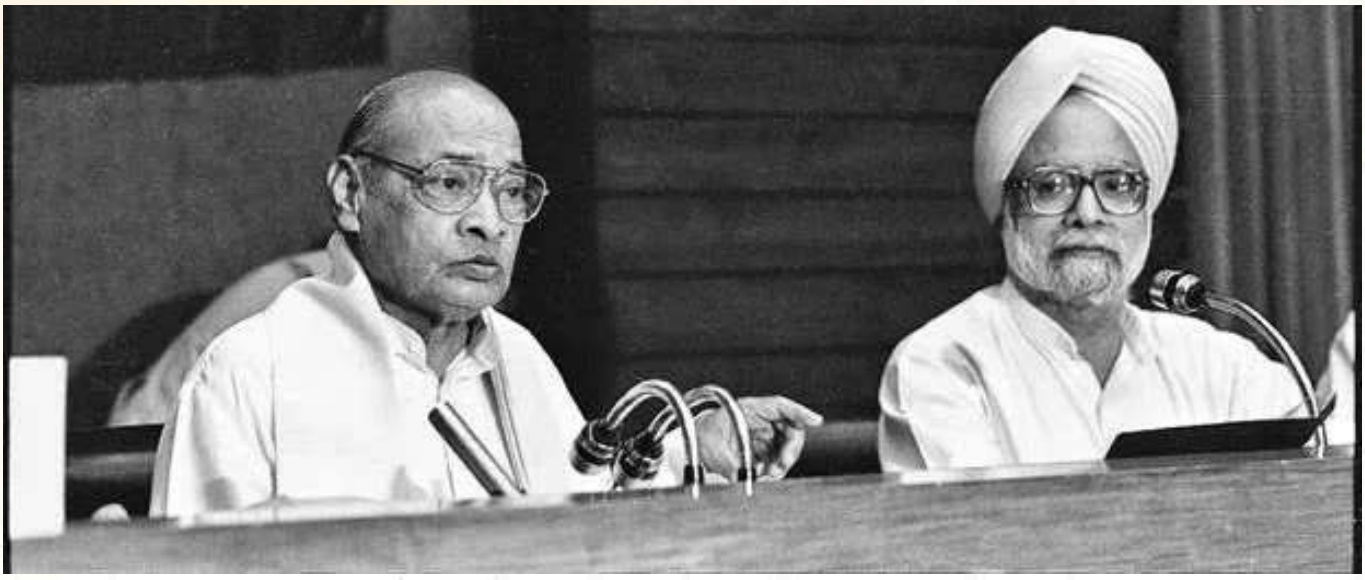
During the 1980s, India experienced a noticeable improvement in growth performance compared to earlier decades. This phase is often described as a **"pro-business"** shift, marked by selective relaxation of industrial controls, higher public expenditure, and modest trade liberalisation. While the fundamental structure of state intervention remained intact, economic policy became more growth-oriented, leading to improved industrial and services sector performance.

However, the acceleration in growth during this decade was accompanied by rising fiscal deficits, increasing external borrowing, and a growing current account imbalance. These macroeconomic vulnerabilities culminated in a **severe balance of payments crisis in 1991**, when India's foreign exchange reserves fell to critically low levels. This crisis exposed the structural weaknesses of the existing economic framework and forced a fundamental rethinking of development strategy.

Phase 6: 1991–2000 — Balance of Payments Crisis and Structural Reform

The 1991 balance of payments crisis marked a historic turning point in India's economic trajectory. In response, India undertook comprehensive structural reforms, commonly referred to as Liberalisation, Privatisation, and Globalisation (LPG). The planning process was temporarily suspended, with Annual Plans in 1990–91 and 1991–92, and the Eighth Five-Year Plan was launched only in 1992, after the initiation of reforms.

This phase witnessed the dismantling of industrial licensing, liberalisation of trade and exchange rate management, reform of the financial sector, and progressive opening of the economy to foreign investment. These measures reoriented India from a controlled, inward-looking economy toward a more market-based and globally integrated system, laying the foundation for higher growth in subsequent decades.



Phase 7: 2000–2011 — High-Growth Phase, Services Expansion, and Fiscal Institutionalisation

The early 2000s marked a period of sustained high growth, supported by rising investment, productivity gains, and rapid expansion of the services sector. To strengthen macroeconomic discipline, India enacted **the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act in 2003,** which aimed to contain fiscal deficits, improve transparency, and ensure long-term debt sustainability. This phase also saw deeper integration with the global economy, increased capital flows, and a growing role for services such as information technology and business process outsourcing. However, the Global Financial Crisis of 2008 disrupted this trajectory, forcing counter-cyclical fiscal measures and leading to a subsequent moderation in growth.

Phase 8: 2012–2019 — Institutional Reforms, Tax Restructuring, and Inflation Targeting

In the post-crisis period, India faced slower growth and rising macroeconomic constraints, prompting a renewed focus on institutional reform. A major structural change occurred when the Planning Commission was replaced by **NITI Aayog on 1 January 2015**, signalling a shift from centralised planning to cooperative federalism and policy coordination. In 2016, India formally adopted a flexible inflation targeting framework, setting a 4 per cent CPI target with a tolerance band of ±2 per cent, thereby institutionalising a rules-based approach to monetary policy. This period also witnessed the implementation of **the Goods and Services Tax (GST) on 1 July 2017**, which unified the indirect tax system and created a common national market.

Phase 9: 2020 onwards — Pandemic Shock, Recovery, and Renewed Growth Strategy

The COVID-19 pandemic caused an unprecedented disruption to economic activity, resulting in a sharp contraction in output. The post-2020 phase is characterised by efforts at macroeconomic stabilisation, recovery through public capital expenditure, and renewed emphasis on resilience, competitiveness, and strategic integration with global value chains.

Understanding National Income Measures

Gross Domestic Product: Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is the single standard indicator used across the globe to indicate the health of a nation's economy. It measures the monetary value of all "final" goods and services—those that are bought by the final user—produced in a country in a given period. GDP is the sum of private consumption, gross investment in the economy, government investment, government spending, and net foreign trade (difference between exports and imports).

Four Key Engines of GDP Growth

- **Private Final Consumption Expenditure (PFCE):** All the money Indians spent for their private consumption.
- **Government Final Consumption Expenditure (GFCE):** All the money the government spent on its current consumption, such as salaries.
- **Gross Fixed Capital Expenditure**: All the money spent towards investments to boost the productive capacity of the economy, including business investments in factories and government infrastructure like roads and bridges.
- **Net Exports (NX):** The net effect of exports (what foreigners spent on Indian goods) and imports (what Indians spent on foreign goods).

GDP = Private Consumption + Gross Investment + Government Investment + Government Spending + (Exports – Imports)

Gross Value Added: Gross Value Added (GVA) calculates the same national income from the supply side by adding up all the value added across different sectors. According to the RBI, the GVA of a sector is defined as the value of output minus the value of its intermediary inputs. This "value added" is shared among the primary factors of production—labour and capital. By examining GVA growth, one can understand which sector of the economy is robust and which is struggling.



MIND MAP

News Trigger:

- India announced on **31 Dec 2025** that it overtook **Japan** to become the **4th largest economy**.
- India's nominal GDP was stated at about **USD 4.18 trillion**.
- India recorded **8.2% real GDP growth in Q2 2025–26**, a six-quarter high.
- Projections suggest India could overtake **Germany** by **2030**.

Recent Performance

- Real GDP growth: **8.2% in Q2 2025–26** (Jul–Sep).
- Growth trend: **7.8% in Q1 2025–26** and **7.4% in Q4 2024–25**.
- Key support: strong **private consumption** and firm **urban demand**.

PPP Position

- India ranks **3rd in PPP GDP** at about **USD 14–17.65 trillion**.
- Ahead of India in PPP: **China** and **United States**.
- India's PPP GDP is about **4.22 times** its nominal GDP due to lower cost levels.
- India contributes about **8.53%** of world GDP (PPP) and about **17.4%** of Asia's GDP (PPP).

Current Global Rankings
Nominal GDP Standing

- India moved from **5th (2022)** to **4th (2025)** in nominal GDP rank.
- Top three remain **USA**, **China**, and **Germany** as per aligned IMF/World Bank estimates.
- Japan declined from about **USD 6 trillion (2010)** to about **USD 4.11–4.186 trillion**.

India's Decade Jump

- India's nominal GDP grew about **105%** from ~**USD 2.04T (2014)** to ~**USD 4.18T (2025)**.

India shifted from **10th (2014)** to **4th (2025)** in about **11 years**.

India's Growth Story Since Independence

- 1947–55: Stabilisation + start of planning (First Plan: agriculture).
- 1956–65: Heavy industry + import substitution; Third Plan disrupted by wars/droughts.
- 1965–74: Plan holiday + Green Revolution; slower Fourth Plan outcomes.
- 1974–80: Oil shock era; poverty focus (Garibi Hatao) + rolling plan.
- 1980–91: Higher growth with partial deregulation; deficits culminate in 1991 BoP crisis.
- 1991–2000: LPG reforms; licensing dismantled, trade/FX opened.
- 2000–11: High growth; FRBM (2003); post-2008 slowdown.
- 2012–19: NITI Aayog + inflation targeting + GST.
- 2020–: COVID shock; recovery led by capex and competitiveness push.

Understanding GDP and GVA
GDP Basics

- GDP measures value of all **final goods and services** produced in a period.
- GDP components: consumption, investment, government spending, and net exports.

Four Engines

- **PFCE**: household consumption spending.
- **GFCE**: government current consumption spending.
- **Gross Fixed Capital Expenditure**: investment in productive capacity.
- **Net Exports (NX)**: exports minus imports.

Connected Topics

Per Capita Income Paradox in High-GDP Economies

- Per capita income (GDP per capita) is calculated by dividing a country's GDP by its population, so a country can have a very large GDP but still have a modest per-person average if its population is very large.
- GDP per capita is an average measure of output/income per person; it does not directly show how income is distributed across people.
- Large-population economies can rank high in total GDP while ranking much lower in GDP per capita, because population is the denominator in the per-capita calculation.
- The World Bank reports that in 2024, India's GDP (current US$) was about $3.91 trillion, while its GDP per capita (current US$) was about $2,694.7—illustrating the high-GDP/low-per-capita pattern.
- GDP per capita in current US$ is affected by current prices and exchange rates, so cross-country comparisons can shift even without changes in real domestic living standards.
- Because nominal GDP per capita is exchange-rate sensitive, analysts often also look at PPP-based GDP per capita (purchasing power parity) to adjust for cost-of-living differences across countries.
- The paradox is strongest where population size is very high and productivity gains are uneven, causing national output to be large in aggregate but diluted on a per-person basis (mathematically).
- High total GDP can be driven by the scale of the domestic market, but per-capita income depends more on output per worker and the share of people productively employed, not just population.
- Per-capita averages can mask regional differences within large countries, where high-output regions raise the national average even if large populations remain at lower income levels (a limitation of the metric).
- Global datasets such as the International Monetary Fund's WEO data mapper show that countries' positions can differ substantially between GDP and GDP per capita rankings because these are fundamentally different indicators.

Demographic Dividend and India's Long-Term Growth Potential

- A demographic dividend refers to the potential growth boost that can arise when the working-age share of the population rises relative to dependents, lowering the dependency burden and potentially increasing output per capita. The United Nations's World Population Prospects 2024 notes that in many countries the share of population in working ages (20–64) will continue to increase for a period—this is the demographic condition that underpins a "window" for dividend gains.
- The dividend is not automatic; it depends on whether the growing working-age population is healthy, educated, and productively employed, so labour-market absorption is central to turning demography into growth.
- A key channel is higher labour supply: a larger working-age cohort can raise total output if the economy generates sufficient jobs and raises worker productivity.
- A second channel is higher savings and investment: with fewer dependents per worker, households can (in principle) save more, supporting capital formation—provided institutions and financial systems enable productive investment.
- A third channel is higher human-capital returns: when cohort size rises, the pay-off to education/skills can be substantial if the economy transitions workers into more productive sectors.
- Peer-reviewed research notes India reached replacement-level fertility (TFR ~2.1) around 2020, which is consistent with a demographic transition that can temporarily increase the working-age share.
- India's long-term growth potential from demography is constrained if employment ratios fall or if job creation does not keep pace with entrants; international reporting on World Bank analysis has highlighted this risk for India/South Asia.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Which of the following best describes India's global economic position announced on 31 December 2025?
   (a) Fourth-largest economy globally
   (b) Fifth-largest economy globally
   (c) Sixth-largest economy globally
   (d) Seventh-largest economy globally

2. Which of the following metrics places India as the third-largest economy globally?
   (a) Nominal GDP
   (b) Per capita income
   (c) Purchasing Power Parity
   (d) Export volume

3. Which of the following institutions' estimates were aligned in declaring India the fourth-largest economy?
   (a) IMF and World Bank
   (b) OECD and ADB
   (c) WTO and UNDP
   (d) BIS and ECB

4. Which of the following countries currently ranks third in nominal GDP ahead of India?
   (a) Japan
   (b) Sweden
   (c) Germany
   (d) France

5. Which of the following factors is identified as a major reason for Japan's economic contraction?
   (a) High defence spending
   (b) Rising immigration
   (c) Export overdependence
   (d) Aging population

6. Which of the following was India's real GDP growth rate in 2025–26?
   (a) 7.4% (b) 8.2% (c) 6.5% (d) 5.9%

7. Which of the following components primarily supported India's recent growth momentum?
   (a) Private consumption
   (b) Export surplus
   (c) Capital inflows
   (d) Agricultural subsidies

8. Which of the following plans marked the shift toward heavy industrialisation?
   (a) First Five-Year Plan (b) Second Five-Year Plan
   (c) Fourth Five-Year Plan (d) Sixth Five-Year Plan

9. Which of the following models guided India's First Five-Year Plan?
   (a) Harrod–Domar model
   (b) Mahalanobis model
   (c) Lewis dual-sector model
   (d) Solow growth model

10. Which of the following events disrupted the Third Five-Year Plan?
    (a) Global oil shock (b) Sino-Indian conflict
    (c) Asian financial crisis (d) COVID-19 pandemic

11. Which of the following strategies significantly increased foodgrain production?
    (a) Import substitution (b) Green Revolution
    (c) Industrial licensing (d) Fiscal consolidation

12. Which of the following characterised the "Plan Holiday" period?
    (a) Structural reforms (b) Rolling plans
    (c) Annual plans (d) Export liberalisation

13. Which of the following GDP components represents household spending on final goods and services?
    (a) Government Consumption Expenditure
    (b) Private Final Consumption Expenditure
    (c) Net Gross Fixed Capital Expenditure
    (d) Net Gross Foreign Trade Balance

14. Which of the following plans was terminated before completion?
    (a) Fourth Five-Year Plan (b) Sixth Five-Year Plan
    (c) Fifth Five-Year Plan (d) Seventh Five-Year Plan

15. Which of the following crises triggered India's 1991 reforms?
    (a) Balance of payments crisis
    (b) Banking sector crisis
    (c) Food security crisis
    (d) Currency convertibility crisis

16. Which of the following replaced the Planning Commission?
(a) Finance Commission
(b) National Development Council
(c) NITI Aayog
(d) Economic Advisory Council

17. Which of the following laws institutionalised fiscal discipline?
(a) FRBM Act (b) GST Act
(c) RBI Act (d) FEMA

18. Which of the following reforms unified India's indirect tax system?
(a) Direct Tax Code
(b) Customs Act
(c) Goods and Services Tax
(d) Income Tax Amendment

19. Which of the following best explains the GDP–PPP gap?
(a) Exchange rate volatility
(b) Capital account openness
(c) Export competitiveness
(d) Lower cost of living

20. Which of the following indicators measures sectoral value addition?
(a) Gross Value Added
(b) Gross Domestic Product
(c) Net National Income
(d) Per Capita Income

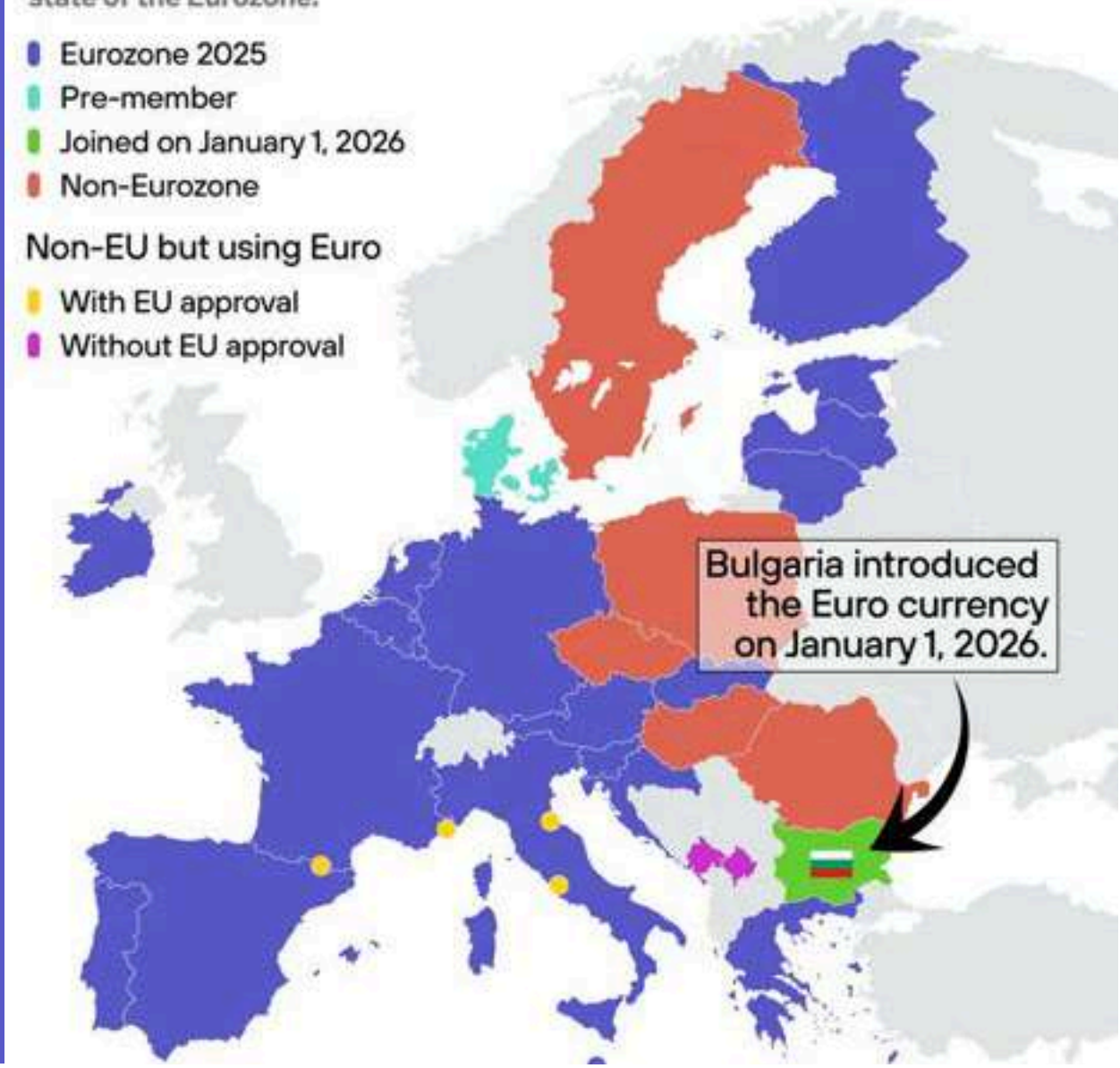
ANSWER KEY

1. (a)	2. (c)	3. (a)	4. (c)	5. (d)	6. (b)	7. (a)	8. (b)
9. (a)	10. (b)	11. (b)	12. (c)	13. (b)	14. (c)	15. (a)	16. (c)
17. (a)	18. (c)	19. (d)	20. (a)				

Bulgaria officially becomes 21st Member of the Eurozone

News Highlights:

- On 1 January 2026, **Bulgaria** officially adopted the euro, becoming the 21st member of the Eurozone nearly two decades after joining the European Union in 2007.
- The country abandoned the lev currency, which had been in circulation since the late 19th century, with the conversion rate fixed at 1.95583 lev per euro.
- The adoption brings the total number of Europeans using the euro to over 350 million people, though domestic opinion remains divided, with concerns about inflation and political instability persisting amid what officials termed a "historic milestone" in Bulgaria's EU integration.



Transition Timeline

- At midnight on 31 December 2025 (2200 GMT), Bulgaria gave up the lev currency, and images of Bulgarian euro coins were projected onto the central bank's building in Sofia as thousands gathered in sub-zero temperatures to celebrate.
- From 1 January to 31 January 2026, both the lev and the euro remain legal tender, allowing consumers and businesses to use either currency in cash transactions.
- From 1 February 2026, the euro becomes the sole legal tender in Bulgaria.
- Bulgarian lev banknotes and coins can be exchanged free of charge at commercial banks and certain post offices until 30 June 2026, and indefinitely at the **Bulgarian National Bank**.

Approval Process

- On 4 June 2025, the European Commission and European Central Bank (ECB) published their off-cycle convergence reports, confirming Bulgaria fulfilled all five convergence criteria.
- On 19 June 2025, the finance ministers of the Eurogroup member states unanimously recommended Bulgaria's approval to adopt the euro.
- On 8 July 2025, the European Parliament endorsed Bulgaria's bid by 531 votes in favour, 69 against, and 79 abstentions.
- The Council adopted the final three legal acts on 8 July 2025, setting the conversion rate at 1.95583 lev per 1 euro, corresponding to the central rate of the lev in the Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM II).



- The **Maastricht Treaty** of 1992 (also known as the Treaty on European Union) established the European Union and laid the foundation for the European Economic and Monetary Union (EMU).
- The treaty paved the way for adoption of a common currency (the euro), creation of a unified central banking system through the European Central Bank (ECB), and establishment of a common economic region.
- The eurozone was officially launched on 1 January 1999 in 11 countries, with physical euro banknotes and coins first rolled out on 1 January 2002 in 12 countries.

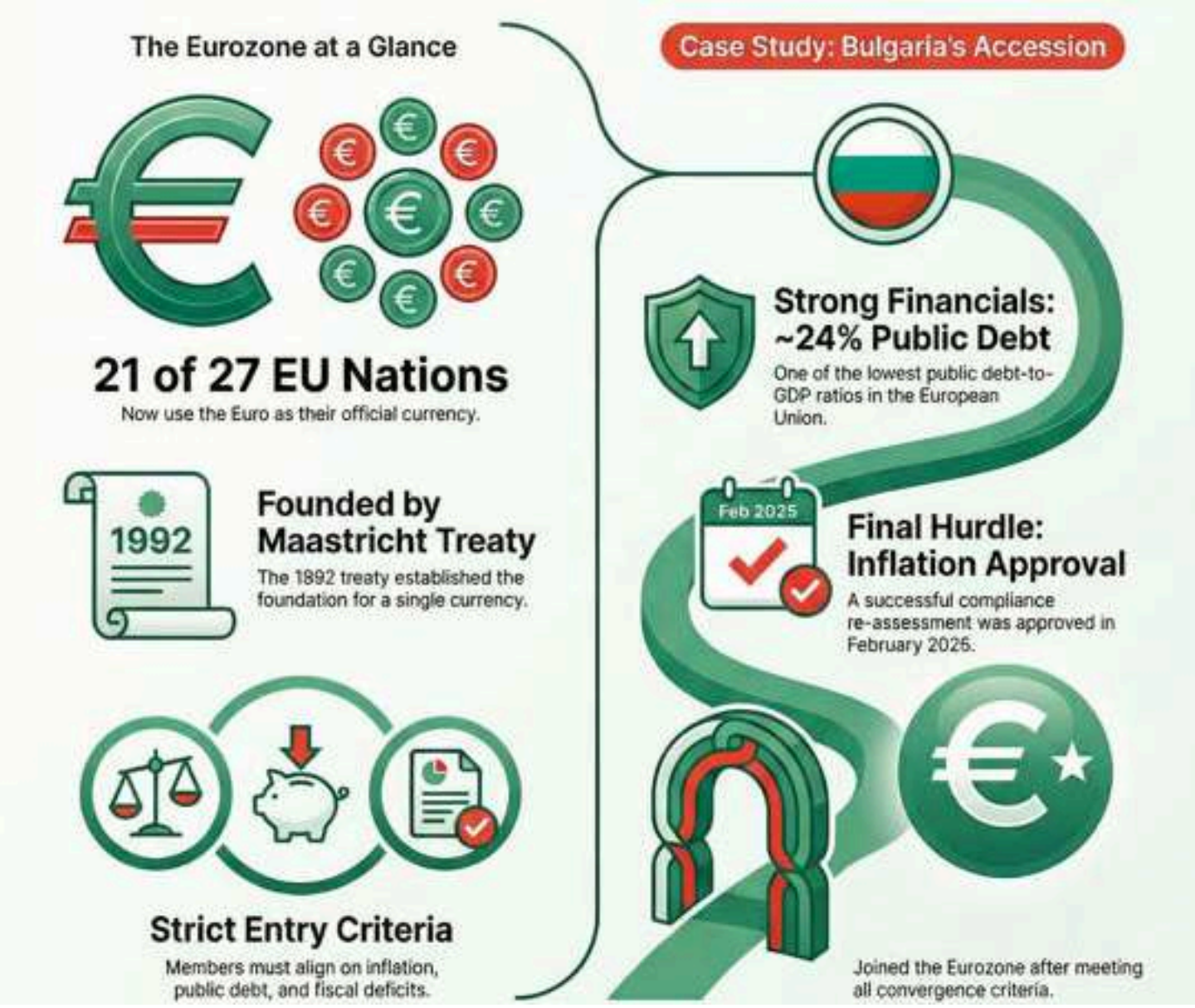
- **Current Membership:** The Eurozone comprises European Union Member States that have fully adopted the euro as their official currency. With Bulgaria's accession, 21 of the 27 EU members now use the euro. Six EU countries retain their national currencies: Sweden, Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, and Denmark (which has a formal opt-out). Croatia was the previous country to join, adopting the euro in 2023.
- **Non-Member Euro Users:** Microstates such as Andorra, Monaco, Vatican City, and San Marino use the euro through formal agreements with the EU. Kosovo and Montenegro use the euro unilaterally despite not being EU members. None of these territories are regarded as official eurozone members.

Eligibility and Convergence Requirements

- All EU members are required to adopt the euro eventually, except Denmark, which has a formal opt-out.
- Countries must meet the convergence criteria established under the Maastricht Treaty, including economic alignment with eurozone members on inflation, public debt, fiscal deficit, and interest rates.
- Legal and institutional alignment is required, particularly central bank independence. Social, political, and economic readiness must be demonstrated to ensure smooth integration.

Bulgaria's Compliance

- Bulgaria entered the eurozone with relatively strong macroeconomic credentials, with public debt at roughly 24% of GDP—among the lowest in the EU.
- The budget deficit remained close to the 3% threshold set by European fiscal rules.
- The country had initially targeted 1 January 2024 for euro entry, later delayed to 1 January 2025, and finally achieved adoption on 1 January 2026 after meeting all convergence criteria.
- In February 2025, Bulgaria officially requested an off-cycle compliance re-assessment, which was approved following successful inflation reduction.



Institutional Integration

- **Central Bank Changes:** With Bulgaria joining the euro area, the Bulgarian National Bank becomes part of the **Eurosystem**. The Governor of the Bulgarian National Bank gains a seat on the Governing Council of the ECB. The Bulgarian National Bank also becomes a full member of the Single Supervisory Mechanism, having been part of the close cooperation framework since October 2020. The ECB directly supervises four significant institutions in Bulgaria and oversees 17 less significant institutions.
- **Market Integration:** Bulgarian counterparties of the Eurosystem are now able to participate in ECB open market operations. The Bulgarian market has joined the Eurosystem's TARGET services, ensuring free flow of cash, securities, and collateral across Europe. Assets located in Bulgaria that fulfil necessary requirements have been added to the euro area's list of eligible collateral.
- The conversion rate between the euro and the Bulgarian lev was fixed at 1.95583 lev per 1 euro, corresponding to the central rate of the lev in the Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM II), as adopted by the EU Council on 8 July 2025.
- Bulgaria can exchange lev banknotes and coins for euro free of charge at the Bulgarian National Bank indefinitely, while commercial banks and post offices offer free exchange until 30 June 2026.
- By 2 January 2026, the Association of Bulgarian Banks stated that over 1 billion leva in cash had been converted to euros through bank deposits, boosting economic transparency as previously untaxed savings entered the monitored financial circuit.
- Bulgaria joined the ERM II (Exchange Rate Mechanism) in July 2020 as a precursor to euro adoption, and has been part of the ECB's close cooperation framework for banking supervision since October 2020.
- The ECB marked Bulgaria's adoption by lighting up its main building in Frankfurt, symbolising the integration and unity of 358 million Europeans who now use the euro as their currency.
- Other euro area national central banks will exchange Bulgarian lev banknotes free of charge from 1 January to 2 March 2026, with a daily exchange limit of BGN 2,000 per transaction.

Schengen Zone Framework

- The Schengen Zone is named after a small village in Luxembourg, where the **Schengen Agreement** (1985) and Schengen Convention (1990) were signed. These agreements abolished internal border checks between participating countries, allowing for free movement of people across most EU states and some non-EU countries. The Schengen Area is the world's largest area without internal border controls.
- The Schengen Area guarantees free movement for over 425 million EU citizens and non-EU nationals legally residing in or visiting the EU. A uniform visa policy allows short-term stays of up to 90 days for tourists, business travellers, and other visitors. The area includes provisions for police cooperation, judicial collaboration, and the Schengen Information System (SIS)—the most widely used and largest information sharing system for security and border management in Europe. In exceptional circumstances, countries can temporarily reintroduce border controls for security reasons but must inform other member states and the European Commission.
- Bulgaria, along with Romania, was accepted into the Schengen EU free movement zone in January 2025, exactly one year before euro adoption. By welcoming the euro, Bulgaria essentially completes its EU integration process.



MIND MAP

News Trigger

- Bulgaria adopted the **euro** on **1 Jan 2026**, becoming the **21st** Eurozone member.
- The **lev** (in use since the late 19th century) was replaced at a fixed rate of **1.95583 lev = 1 euro**.
- The move expands euro users to **350+ million**, while domestic views remain mixed due to inflation and politics.

Transition Timeline

- **Midnight 31 Dec 2025**: lev phased out; celebrations in Sofia with euro coin projections.
- **1–31 Jan 2026**: **dual legal tender** (lev + euro) for cash use.
- **From 1 Feb 2026**: euro becomes the **sole legal tender**.
- Free exchange: commercial banks + post offices until **30 Jun 2026**; Bulgarian National Bank exchanges **indefinitely**.

Eurozone Basics

- Treaty base: Maastricht Treaty created the EU framework for Economic and Monetary Union.
- Eurozone launched **1 Jan 1999** (book money); notes/coins rolled out **1 Jan 2002**.
- With Bulgaria: **21 of 27** European Union states use the euro.

Approval and Legal Process

- 4 Jun 2025: European Commission + European Central Bank convergence reports confirmed criteria met.
- 19 Jun 2025: Eurogroup recommended approval unanimously.
- 8 Jul 2025: European Parliament endorsed entry (531–69–79).
- 8 Jul 2025: Council of the European Union adopted final legal acts + conversion rate 1.95583 (linked to Exchange Rate Mechanism II central rate).

EU countries not using euro

- Sweden, Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Denmark (formal opt-out).
- Previous entrant: Croatia (joined in 2023).

Non-members using euro

- Formal agreements: Andorra, Monaco, Vatican City, San Marino.
- Unilateral use: Kosovo and Montenegro.
- These are **not official eurozone members**.

Schengen Framework and Bulgaria

- Named after Schengen; built on **Schengen Agreement (1985)** and **Schengen Convention (1990)**.
- Tools include the Schengen Information System for security/border coordination.
- Bulgaria (with Romania) entered Schengen in **Jan 2025**, and euro adoption in 2026 is framed as completing EU integration.

Convergence Requirements

- Maastricht criteria cover: **inflation**, **fiscal deficit**, **public debt**, **interest rates**, and currency stability + legal alignment.
- Central bank independence and broader readiness are expected for smooth entry.
- Bulgaria's profile: public debt around **24% of GDP**; deficit near the **3%** threshold.
- Entry target shifted: 2024 → 2025 → **1 Jan 2026**, with an off-cycle reassessment requested in **Feb 2025**.

Connected Topics

Maastricht Convergence Criteria: Economic Discipline Behind the Euro

- The Maastricht Treaty created the rules for countries to qualify for joining the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) and adopting the euro.
- The convergence criteria were designed to ensure price stability, fiscal discipline, and exchange-rate stability among euro entrants.
- Price stability criterion: a country's inflation must be close to the best-performing member states (measured against the lowest-inflation countries).
- Public deficit criterion: the general government fiscal deficit should not exceed 3% of GDP (or must be close to that level under specified conditions).
- Public debt criterion: the general government gross debt should not exceed 60% of GDP, or should be sufficiently diminishing toward that level.
- Exchange-rate stability criterion: the country must participate in the Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM II) for a minimum period (commonly two years) without severe tensions or devaluation against the euro.
- Long-term interest rate criterion: long-term government bond yields must remain close to those of the best-performing member states on inflation.
- Compliance is assessed through convergence reports prepared by the European Commission and the European Central Bank (ECB).
- The criteria are entry conditions for euro adoption; once inside, the EU's fiscal surveillance framework (e.g., deficit/debt monitoring) continues through other mechanisms.

Role of the European Central Bank in Monetary Governance

- The European Central Bank (ECB) is the central institution of the Eurosystem, responsible for monetary policy for the euro area.
- Its primary objective is to maintain price stability in the euro area, which guides its monetary policy decisions.
- The ECB sets key policy rates and uses operational tools to influence liquidity, money-market conditions, and credit in the euro area.
- The ECB and national central banks together manage the issuance of euro banknotes, while euro coins are issued by member states under common rules.
- The ECB oversees and operates key market infrastructure and payment systems support functions that help ensure smooth monetary transmission.
- Under the Single Supervisory Mechanism (SSM), the ECB directly supervises significant banks in participating countries and coordinates supervision with national authorities.
- The ECB contributes to financial stability monitoring and can take measures within its mandate to address systemic risks in the banking sector.
- The ECB has a defined institutional structure: the Governing Council (main decision-making body), the Executive Board, and the General Council (with broader EU participation).
- The ECB is designed to be independent from political authorities, with legal protections intended to reduce political influence over monetary policy.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Which of the following developments occurred in Bulgaria on 1 January 2026?
   (a) Schengen entry
   (b) NATO expansion
   (c) Euro adoption
   (d) Treaty signing

2. Which of the following currencies was replaced by the euro in Bulgaria?
   (a) Bulgarian lev (b) Czech koruna
   (c) Polish zloty (d) Hungarian forint

3. Which of the following institutions confirmed Bulgaria met convergence criteria?
   (a) IMF WorldBank
   (b) Eurogroup Council
   (c) Commission ECB
   (d) OECD ADB

4. Which of the following bodies recommended Bulgaria's euro adoption unanimously?
   (a) Eurogroup ministers
   (b) European Parliament
   (c) European Council
   (d) Central bankers

5. Which of the following institutions endorsed Bulgaria's euro bid in July 2025?
   (a) European Council
   (b) European Parliament
   (c) European Commission
   (d) European Central

6. Which of the following treaties laid the foundation for the euro?
   (a) Lisbon Treaty
   (b) Rome Treaty
   (c) Amsterdam Treaty
   (d) Maastricht Treaty

7. Which of the following best describes the eurozone?
   (a) Political union
   (b) Military alliance
   (c) Travel zone
   (d) Monetary union

8. Which of the following countries joined the eurozone before Bulgaria?
   (a) Slovenia country (b) Latvia country
   (c) Croatia country (d) Slovakia country

9. Which of the following EU members has a formal euro opt-out?
   (a) Sweden country (b) Denmark country
   (c) Poland country (d) Hungary country

10. Which of the following non-EU states uses the euro formally?
    (a) Kosovo territory (b) Andorra state
    (c) Montena state (d) Albania state

11. Which of the following is NOT a Maastricht convergence criterion?
    (a) Inflation control
    (b) Debt recovery
    (c) Interest stability
    (d) Defence spending

12. Which of the following was Bulgaria's public debt level at entry?
    (a) 24 percent (b) 60 percent
    (c) 80 percent (d) 100 percent

13. When did Bulgaria join the Schengen Area?
    (a) 2024 (b) 2023
    (c) 2026 (d) 2025

14. Which of the following happened to the Bulgarian National Bank?
    (a) Lost autonomy
    (b) Joined Eurosystem
    (c) Became regulator
    (d) Was dissolved

15. Which of the following systems now fully includes Bulgaria?
    (a) Stability mechanism
    (b) Defence mechanism
    (c) Customs mechanism
    (d) Supervisory mechanism

16. Which of the following payment systems did Bulgaria join?
    (a) SEPA system
    (b) Visa network
    (c) TARGET services
    (d) Schengen payments

17. Which of the following is the world's largest border-free area?
    (a) Eurozone area
    (b) European Union
    (c) Schengen Area
    (d) Economic Area

18. Where is Bulgaria geographically located?
    (a) Southeastern Europe
    (b) Northcentral Europe
    (c) Southeastern Europe
    (d) Northwestern Europe

19. Which of the following is Bulgaria's capital city?
    (a) Plovdiv city
    (b) Sofia city
    (c) Varna city
    (d) Burgas city

ANSWER KEY

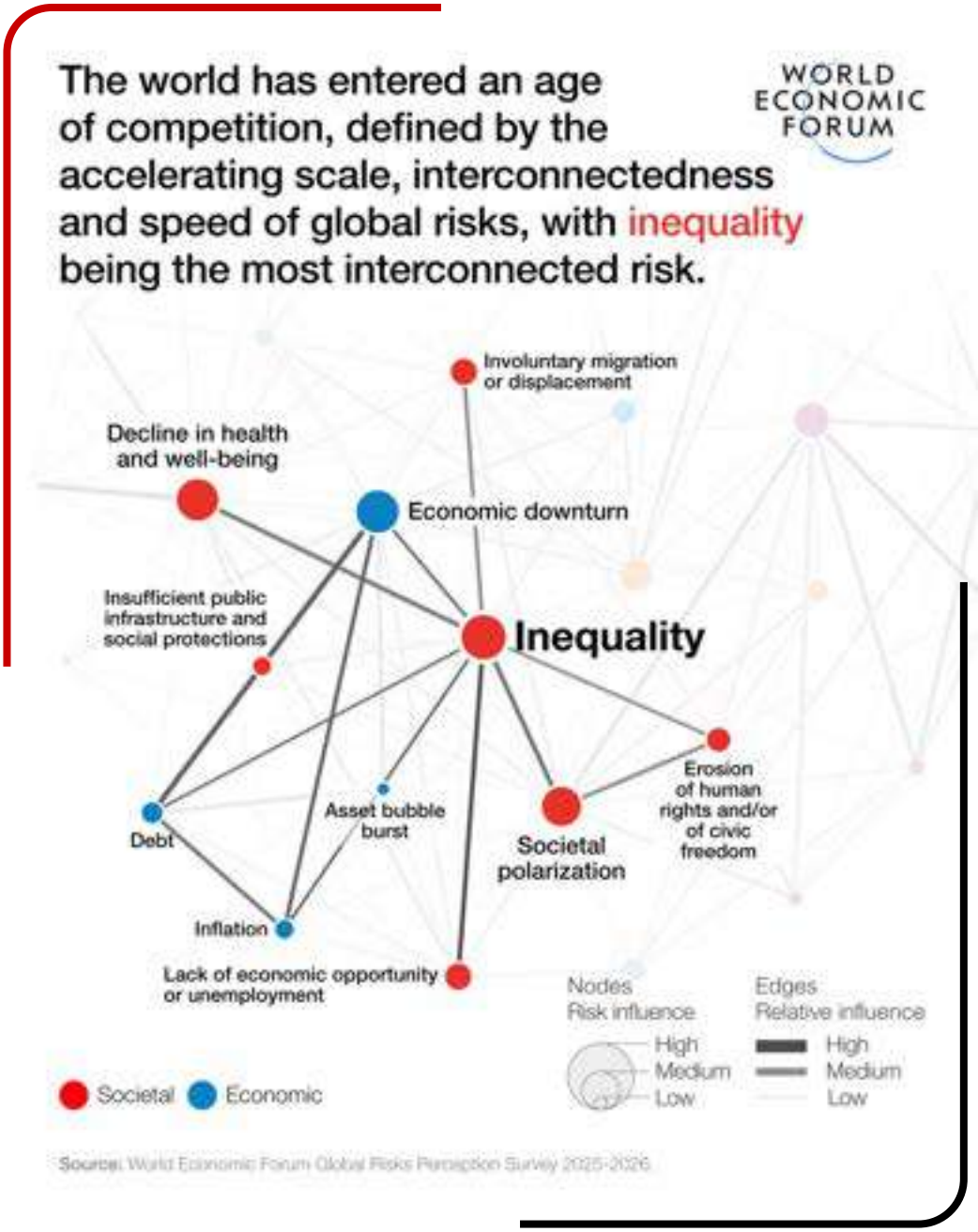
1. (c)	2. (a)	3. (c)	4. (a)	5. (b)	6. (d)	7. (d)	9. (c)
9. (b)	10. (b)	11. (d)	12. (a)	13 (d)	14. (b)	15. (d)	16. (c)
17. (c)	18. (a)	19. (b)					

WEF Global Risks Report 2026

News Highlights:

- The **World Economic Forum** (WEF) released **its Global Risks Report 2026,** the 21st edition of the annual publication, ahead of the 56th Annual Meeting commenced in Davos, Switzerland, identifying geoeconomic confrontation as the most severe global risk for the immediate term and characterising 2026 as an "age of competition" marked by crumbling cooperative mechanisms, retreating multilateralism, and the erosion of trust that has traditionally underpinned international cooperation.
- For India, **cyber insecurity** emerged as the most significant risk according to the Executive Opinion Survey 2025, followed by inequality in wealth and income, insufficient public services and social protections, economic downturn, and state-based armed conflict, reflecting a distinctive risk profile that emphasises societal and governance-related concerns compared to the global geopolitical emphasis.

- The Global Risks Report 2026 was released in Geneva Switzerland coinciding with the commencement of the 56th Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, providing a comprehensive assessment of the most pressing threats facing the global community at a critical juncture in international affairs.
- This edition marks the 21st iteration of the annual report, which has established itself as a seminal reference document for policymakers, business leaders, and academics seeking to understand and navigate the complex landscape of global risks.
- The report's findings are expected to serve as a foundation for discussions during the WEF Annual Meeting, where world leaders, corporate executives, and civil society representatives convene to address shared challenges and explore collaborative solutions.



Methodological Approach

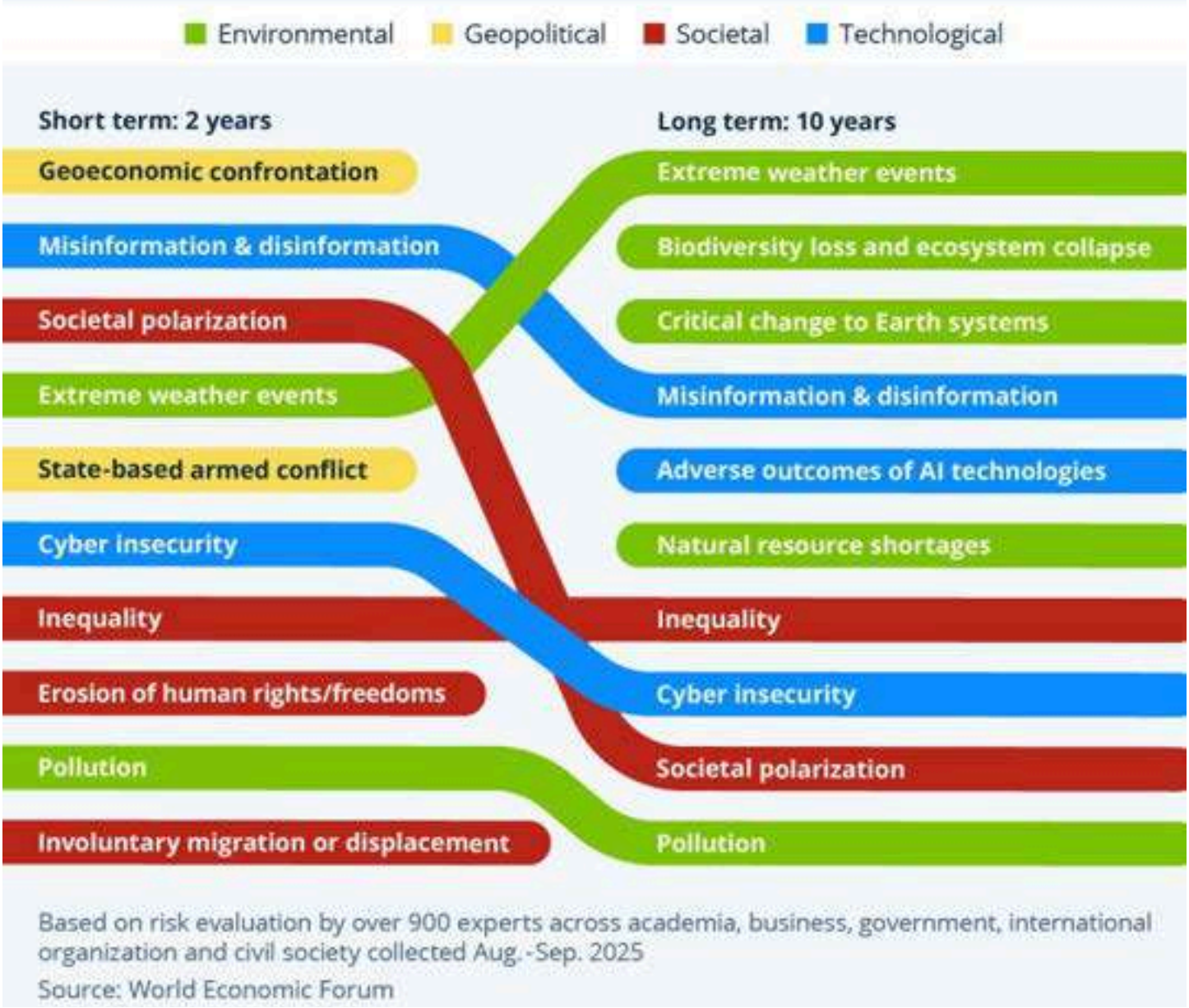
- The report employs a multi-temporal analytical framework that examines global risks through three distinct timeframes, enabling decision-makers to balance the demands of addressing current crises while simultaneously preparing for longer-term strategic priorities.
- The immediate-term analysis focuses on risks expected to materialise or intensify within 2026, providing actionable intelligence for near-term policy formulation and crisis management preparations.
- The short-to-medium term outlook extends to 2028, capturing risks that may evolve or emerge over a two-year horizon and requiring sustained attention and resource allocation from governments and institutions.
- The long-term perspective reaches to 2036, identifying structural and systemic risks that demand transformative policy interventions and fundamental shifts in how societies organise themselves economically, politically, and socially.

Immediate-Term Global Risk Assessment (2026)

- **Geoeconomic confrontation** has emerged as the top risk factor expected to trigger a material global crisis in 2026, representing a significant escalation from its position in previous years' assessments and reflecting the intensification of economic statecraft as a primary tool of international competition.
- This risk category rose eight positions compared to last year's ranking to claim the top position in the Global Risks Perception Survey (GRPS) 2025-2026, demonstrating a rapid deterioration in expert assessments of the global economic cooperation environment.
- Geoeconomic confrontation refers to the deployment of economic levers by global or regional powers to reshape economic interactions between nations, encompassing measures designed to restrict the flow of goods, knowledge, services, or technology with the strategic intent of building self-sufficiency, constraining geopolitical rivals, and consolidating spheres of influence.
- The instruments of geoeconomic confrontation include currency measures that weaponise monetary policy, investment controls that restrict capital flows, sanctions that isolate targeted economies, state aid and subsidies that distort competitive dynamics, and trade controls that fragment previously integrated markets.
- **State-based armed conflict ranks second** in the immediate-term risk assessment, reflecting continuing geopolitical tensions and active conflicts that possess significant escalation potential and could draw in additional parties or expand across geographical boundaries.
- This risk category topped the immediate-term list in the previous year's assessment, and its continued prominence in the rankings indicates that the underlying conditions driving armed conflict have not been adequately addressed despite international attention and diplomatic efforts.
- The close interlinkage between geoeconomic confrontation and state-based armed conflict creates a dangerous dynamic wherein escalation in the severity of one risk category directly affects the other, potentially creating cascading crises that overwhelm response capacities.
- **Extreme weather events rank third among** current global risks, representing the highest-ranked environmental concern in the immediate-term outlook and reflecting the increasing frequency and intensity of climate-related disasters affecting communities worldwide.
- Societal polarisation ranks fourth, indicating that rising political and social divisions within countries are intensifying pressures on democratic systems and threatening the cohesion necessary for effective governance and collective action.
- Misinformation and disinformation rank fifth in the immediate-term assessment, reflecting growing threats to democratic processes, social trust, and the shared factual basis necessary for informed public discourse and decision-making.
- Economic downturn ranks sixth among current risks, encompassing concerns about recession, stagnation, and the potential for financial instability to undermine economic security and social stability across multiple regions simultaneously.

The Largest Risks Faced by the World

Experts' assessments of the most severe global risks over the next two and ten years



Based on risk evaluation by over 900 experts across academia, business, government, international organization and civil society collected Aug.-Sep. 2025

Source: World Economic Forum

- Erosion of human rights and/or civic freedoms ranks seventh, indicating concerns about democratic backsliding and the restriction of fundamental liberties in multiple jurisdictions around the world.
- Adverse outcomes of AI technologies have entered the top ten global risks, highlighting concerns over job displacement resulting from automation, ethical misuse of artificial intelligence systems, and security challenges posed by autonomous technologies.
- **Cyber insecurity** ranks ninth globally, underscoring increasing digital vulnerability as economies and governance systems become more dependent on interconnected digital infrastructure that remains susceptible to malicious exploitation.
- Inequality rounds out the top ten immediate-term risks, reflecting concerns about wealth concentration, income disparities, and the social tensions that arise when economic gains are not broadly shared across populations.

Short-Term Risk Outlook (Two Years to 2028)

- Geoeconomic confrontation maintains its position as the most severe risk in the two-year outlook, indicating that expert assessments anticipate continued and potentially intensifying economic competition between major powers through 2028.
- Misinformation and disinformation ranks second in the short-term outlook, elevated from its fifth-place position in the immediate-term assessment, suggesting that information integrity challenges are expected to worsen as technological capabilities for creating and disseminating false content continue to advance.
- Societal polarisation ranks third, reflecting expectations that political and social divisions will continue to deepen within societies, potentially undermining democratic governance and social cohesion across multiple countries.
- Extreme weather events rank fourth in the two-year outlook, remaining a significant concern despite being displaced from higher positions by geopolitical and societal risks in the short-term assessment.
- State-based armed conflict ranks fifth, dropping from its second-place position in the immediate-term assessment but remaining a significant concern over the two-year horizon as ongoing conflicts continue and new flashpoints potentially emerge.
- Cyber insecurity ranks sixth in the short-term outlook, reflecting continued concerns about digital vulnerabilities and the potential for significant cyberattacks to disrupt critical infrastructure, economic systems, and governance functions.
- Inequality ranks seventh, indicating persistent concerns about economic disparities and their potential to generate social unrest and political instability over the coming two years.
- Erosion of human rights and/or civic freedoms ranks eighth, suggesting continued concerns about democratic backsliding and restrictions on fundamental liberties across multiple jurisdictions.
- Pollution ranks ninth in the short-term outlook, representing environmental degradation concerns that, while not ranking among the top immediate priorities, remain significant challenges requiring sustained attention.
- Involuntary migration or displacement ranks tenth, reflecting concerns about population movements driven by conflict, economic hardship, environmental degradation, and political persecution.

Long-Term Risk Projections (Ten Years to 2036)

- Over the long-term horizon extending to 2036, climate-related and environmental risks dominate the risk landscape, occupying three of the top five positions and indicating expert recognition that environmental challenges pose fundamental threats to human civilisation despite their relative deprioritisation in short-term assessments.
- **Extreme weather events** tops the long-term risk ranking as the most significant identified risk over the ten-year horizon, reflecting expectations of continued intensification in the frequency, severity, and geographical scope of climate-related disasters affecting human settlements and economic activities.
- The report defines extreme weather events comprehensively as encompassing the loss of human life, damage to ecosystems, destruction of property, and financial losses resulting from weather phenomena that exceed normal variability and overwhelm adaptive capacities of affected communities.

- **Biodiversity loss** and ecosystem collapse ranks second in the long-term outlook, reflecting scientific assessments that the ongoing mass extinction of species and degradation of natural systems pose existential risks to human wellbeing through disruption of ecosystem services upon which societies depend.
- Critical change to Earth systems ranks third, encompassing concerns about potential tipping points in planetary systems that could trigger irreversible and catastrophic changes in climate, ocean circulation, ice sheet stability, and other fundamental Earth processes.
- Misinformation and disinformation ranks fourth in the long-term outlook, indicating that challenges to information integrity are expected to persist and potentially worsen as technological capabilities for creating convincing false content continue to advance.
- Adverse outcomes of AI technologies ranks fifth, reflecting concerns that artificial intelligence development, if not properly governed, could generate significant negative consequences including widespread job displacement, autonomous weapons proliferation, and unforeseen systemic risks.
- Natural resource shortages ranks sixth, encompassing concerns about depletion of critical resources including fresh water, arable land, minerals, and energy sources necessary for sustaining modern economies and human populations.
- Inequality ranks seventh in the long-term outlook, indicating that economic disparities are expected to remain a persistent challenge with potential to generate social instability and political extremism if not adequately addressed.
- Cyber insecurity ranks eighth, reflecting expectations that digital vulnerabilities will continue to pose significant risks as societies become increasingly dependent on interconnected technological systems.
- Societal polarisation ranks ninth, suggesting that divisions within societies may continue to challenge democratic governance and social cohesion over the coming decade.
- Pollution ranks tenth in the long-term outlook, encompassing concerns about air, water, and soil contamination that affect human health and environmental quality across multiple regions.

Long-Term Risk Projections (Ten Years to 2036)

- As per the Executive Opinion Survey (EOS) 2025, **cyber insecurity** ranks as the most significant risk for India in 2026, reflecting the country's growing dependence on digital governance platforms, rapidly expanding fintech ecosystem, and critical digital infrastructure that has expanded faster than corresponding security capabilities.
- Inequality encompassing both wealth and income dimensions ranks as the second most significant risk for India, highlighting persistent social and regional disparities that constrain inclusive development and generate potential for social tensions.
- Insufficient public services and social protections, including concerns regarding education quality and access, infrastructure adequacy, and pension system sustainability, ranks as the third most significant risk, indicating challenges in delivering essential services to a large and diverse population.
- Economic downturn, encompassing fears of recession, stagnation, or significant slowdown in growth momentum, ranks as the fourth most significant risk for India, reflecting vulnerabilities in the macroeconomic environment and potential external shocks.
- State-based armed conflict, including proxy wars, civil wars, coups, and terrorism, ranks as the fifth most significant risk, indicating concerns about regional security dynamics and internal stability challenges.

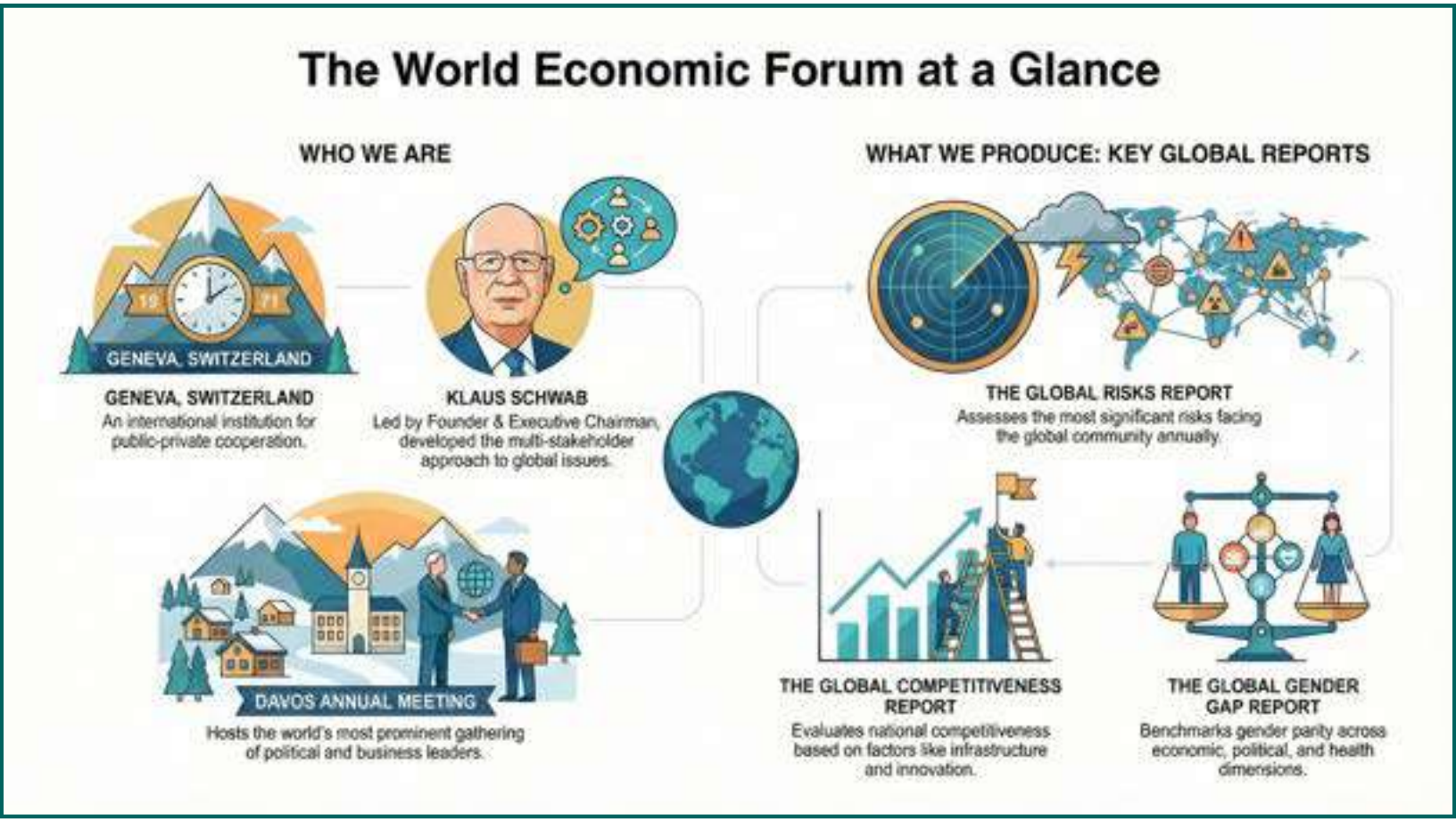
Distinctive Risk Profile

- India's risk profile demonstrates a stronger focus on societal and governance-related risks compared to the global emphasis on geopolitical confrontation, reflecting the particular development challenges facing a rapidly growing economy with significant infrastructure and service delivery gaps.
- The findings underscore the need for strengthening digital security frameworks and capabilities, pursuing inclusive growth strategies that address persistent inequalities, and building resilient public service delivery systems capable of meeting the needs of a diverse population.
- The prominence of cyber insecurity as India's top risk reflects the country's ambitious digital transformation agenda,

- which has expanded access to digital services while simultaneously creating new vulnerabilities that require sustained investment in security capabilities and frameworks.

Strategic and Geopolitical Dimensions

- The report notes that India is increasingly using natural resources as leverage in trade and strategic negotiations, reflecting a broader global trend toward resource nationalism and the strategic deployment of commodity access as a tool of international influence.
- Potential geopolitical flashpoints identified for India include water security issues in the **Indus River Basin** shared with Pakistan, where competing demands and climate change impacts could intensify tensions over this critical transboundary resource.
- Water diversion projects and resource pressures more broadly could increase geopolitical tension with neighbouring countries, particularly in contexts where upstream-downstream dynamics create zero-sum perceptions of resource allocation.





MIND MAP

News Trigger

- World Economic Forum released the **Global Risks Report 2026** (21st edition) as the **56th Annual Meeting** began in Davos, Switzerland.
- The report flagged **geoeconomic confrontation** as the most severe immediate-term global risk for **2026**.
- It described 2026 as an "**age of competition**" with declining trust and weaker multilateral cooperation.

Immediate-Term Global Risks (2026)

- **#1 Geoeconomic confrontation**: rising use of economic tools for strategic competition.
- **#2 State-based armed conflict**: active conflicts and escalation potential remain high.
- **#3 Extreme weather events**: top environmental risk in the immediate term.
- **#4 Societal polarisation**: deepening internal divisions affecting governance.
- **#5 Misinformation & disinformation**: threats to trust, elections, and civic discourse.
- **#6 Economic downturn**: recession/stagnation risks and spillovers.
- **#7 Erosion of human rights/civic freedoms**: democratic backsliding concerns.
- **#8 Adverse AI outcomes**: job disruption, misuse, and security concerns enter top risks.
- **#9 Cyber insecurity**: rising vulnerability of connected systems and infrastructure.
- **#10 Inequality**: wealth/income gaps feeding social stress.

2026 Risk Landscape "Age of Competition"

- Uncertainty is highlighted as the defining theme for 2026.
- National interests are increasingly replacing cooperative approaches.
- Risks are described as more interconnected and fast-moving.

Retreat from Multilateralism

- Multilateral institutions are portrayed as weakening under strain.
- Protectionism is disrupting trade, investment, and supply chains.
- Declining transparency and rule-of-law concerns are linked to higher instability.

Methodology and Time Horizons

- The framework uses three time windows for risk assessment.
- Immediate-term (2026): risks likely to intensify quickly and demand near-term action.
- Short-to-medium (to 2028): risks requiring sustained attention and resource planning.
- Long-term (to 2036): structural risks needing transformative policy shifts.

Top five risks for India

- **#1 Cyber insecurity** linked to rapid digital expansion and infrastructure exposure.
- **#2 Inequality (wealth and income)** reflecting persistent disparities.
- **#3 Insufficient public services/social protection** including service delivery gaps.
- **#4 Economic downturn** risk from shocks and growth slowdown concerns.
- **#5 State-based armed conflict** including proxy conflict, terrorism, and instability risks.

Top-ranked risks

- **#1 Geoeconomic confrontation** remains the leading risk.
- **#2 Misinformation & disinformation** rises further in importance.
- **#3 Societal polarisation** stays high as domestic divisions deepen.
- **#4 Extreme weather events** remains a major climate concern.
- **#5 State-based armed conflict** stays significant despite a lower rank.

Connected Topics

Evolution of Global Risks Since the 2008 Financial Crisis

- The 2008 crisis elevated systemic financial risk as a core global concern, leading to tighter bank-capital and liquidity rules in many jurisdictions and greater macro-prudential oversight.
- Post-2008, global risk perception expanded from "finance-first" shocks to a broader mix of geopolitical, environmental, societal, and technological risks tracked over short-, medium-, and long-term horizons.
- Sovereign and household debt vulnerabilities remained a recurring risk theme as economies used fiscal and monetary support to stabilize growth after major shocks.
- The COVID-19 shock (2020 onward) pushed pandemic preparedness and health-system resilience into the mainstream global risk agenda, linking health risk to economic and governance stress.
- Climate change and extreme weather increasingly became high-salience risks, with attribution science and observed events strengthening the view that climate hazards can drive humanitarian and economic disruption.
- A steady rise in cybersecurity threats (including critical-infrastructure risk) became a central risk category as economies digitized and interconnected supply chains expanded.
- Misinformation and information integrity risks intensified with social platforms, and more recently with generative AI enabling convincing, low-cost synthetic content at scale.
- The 2010s–2020s saw increased geoeconomic fragmentation (trade restrictions, sanctions, supply-chain "friend-shoring"), shifting risk from global integration toward competition among blocs.

Crisis of Multilateral Institutions in the 21st Century

- A key symptom of multilateral strain is decision paralysis in the United Nations Security Council, where veto power has repeatedly produced deadlock on major conflicts.
- Debates on reform have intensified because many states argue that current multilateral structures under-represent today's power distribution and regional interests.
- The World Trade Organization has faced a major governance challenge due to the non-functioning of its Appellate Body, weakening binding dispute settlement at the appeals stage.
- As a stop-gap, subsets of members created interim appeal arrangements (e.g., MPIA), but these do not fully replace system-wide appellate review.
- Multilateral institutions face legitimacy pressures when enforcement is uneven—stronger states can sometimes act outside agreed rules with limited consequence, while weaker states rely more on rules-based protection.
- The 21st century has seen repeated "multi-crisis" conditions (financial shocks, pandemics, wars, climate disasters), raising demand for coordination while simultaneously hardening national interest-driven policy.
- The World Health Organization became a focal point for debates on global health governance, including questions about compliance, information-sharing, and equitable access during health emergencies.
- Economic governance forums such as the G20 gained prominence after 2008, but coordination capacity can weaken when member priorities diverge sharply.
- There is a visible shift from universal rule-making toward minilateral and regional coalitions, reflecting both practicality (faster agreement) and fragmentation (less global uniformity).

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Which of the following organisations released the Global Risks Report 2026?
   (a) World Economic Forum
   (b) International Monetary Fund
   (c) United Nations Development Programme
   (d) Organisation Economic Cooperation

2. Where was the Global Risks Report 2026 released?
   (a) Geneva, Switzerland
   (b) New York, United States
   (c) Davos, Switzerland
   (d) Brussels, Belgium

3. Which of the following global risks was identified as the most severe for 2026?
   (a) Extreme weather events
   (b) State based conflict
   (c) Geoeconomic confrontation risk
   (d) Cyber insecurity threats

4. How did the report characterise the global environment of 2026?
   (a) Age of stability (b) Age of competition
   (c) Age of cooperation (d) Age of integration

5. Which of the following surveys identified India's most significant risk for 2026?
   (a) Global Risks Survey
   (b) Davos Leadership Survey
   (c) Executive Opinion Survey
   (d) Economic Outlook Survey

6. Which of the following risks ranked highest for India in 2026?
   (a) Cyber insecurity risk
   (b) Economic downturn risk
   (c) Armed conflict risk
   (d) Extreme weather risk

7. Which of the following risks ranked second for India according to the report?
   (a) Public service gaps
   (b) Inequality wealth income
   (c) Economic slowdown fears
   (d) Armed conflict risks

8. Which of the following risks ranked first globally in the immediate-term outlook?
   (a) Cyber insecurity risk
   (b) Extreme weather events
   (c) State based conflict
   (d) Geoeconomic confrontation risk

9. Which of the following risks ranked second globally in the immediate-term assessment?
   (a) Extreme weather events
   (b) Cyber insecurity threats
   (c) State based conflict
   (d) Inequality wealth gaps

10. Which of the following environmental risks ranked third globally for 2026?
    (a) Extreme weather events
    (b) Biodiversity ecosystem loss
    (c) Pollution contamination risks
    (d) Climate system change

11. Which of the following risks ranked fourth globally in the immediate-term outlook?
    (a) Cyber insecurity threats
    (b) Societal polarisation risk
    (c) Economic downturn risk
    (d) Human rights erosion

12. Which of the following risks ranked fifth globally for 2026?
    (a) Economic downturn risk
    (b) Misinformation disinformation
    (c) Cyber insecurity threats
    (d) Civic freedom erosion

13. Which of the following risk categories rose eight positions compared to last year?
    (a) Cyber insecurity threats
    (b) Armed conflict risks
    (c) Extreme weather events
    (d) Geoeconomic confrontation risk

14. Which of the following risks dominated the long-term outlook to 2036?
    (a) Extreme weather events

(b) Armed conflict risks
(c) Cyber insecurity threats
(d) Economic downturn risk

15. Which of the following risks ranked second in the long-term outlook?
(a) Extreme weather events
(b) Cyber insecurity threats
(c) Biodiversity ecosystem loss
(d) Armed conflict risks

16. Which of the following risks ranked third in the long-term outlook extending to 2036?
(a) Extreme weather events
(b) Biodiversity ecosystem collapse
(c) Misinformation disinformation risk
(d) Critical change Earth systems

17. Which of the following risks is expected to remain a major challenge over the long-term horizon till 2036?
(a) State based conflicts
(b) Cyber insecurity threats
(c) Misinformation and disinformation
(d) Economic growth slowdown

18. Who founded the World Economic Forum?
(a) Klaus Schwab
(b) Hans Keller
(c) Martin Vogel
(d) Ernst Weber

19. Which of the following reports benchmarks global gender parity?
(a) Global Gender Gap
(b) Global Risks Report
(c) Global Competitiveness
(d) Energy Transition Index

20. Which of the following editions of the Global Risks Report was released alongside the 56th Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos?
(a) 18th
(b) 19th
(c) 20th
(d) 21st

ANSWER KEY

1. (a)	2. (a)	3. (c)	4. (b)	5. (a)	6. (a)	7. (b)	8. (d)
9. (c)	10. (a)	11. (b)	12. (b)	13. (d)	14. (a)	15. (c)	16. (d)
17. (c)	18. (a)	19. (a)	20. (d)				

Export Preparedness Index (EPI) 2024

News Highlights:

- **NITI Aayog** released the Export Preparedness Index (EPI) 2024 on 14 January 2026, marking the fourth edition of this comprehensive assessment tool that benchmarks Indian States and Union Territories on their preparedness to drive and sustain export growth, with rankings based on performance during FY22 to FY24.
- Maharashtra emerged as the top-performing large state, overtaking Tamil Nadu which had held the first position in the EPI 2022 cycle, while Uttarakhand secured the leading position among small states, North-Eastern states, and Union Territories.
- The Index is strategically aligned with India's objective of achieving **USD 1 trillion** in merchandise exports by 2030 and the broader vision of Viksit Bharat @2047, providing an evidence-based framework to evaluate the strength, resilience, and inclusiveness of subnational export ecosystems across the country.

Background and Institutional Context

Origin and Evolution of the Index

- The Export Preparedness Index is a comprehensive tool designed to measure the export preparedness of States and Union Territories in India, recognising that exports are vital for stimulating economic growth and development in a country, which necessitates understanding the factors that influence export performance at the subnational level.
- The first edition of the EPI was published in August 2020, and the 2024 edition represents the fourth iteration of the Index, reflecting NITI Aayog's continued commitment to providing data-driven insights for enhancing export competitiveness across the country.
- The Index undertakes a comprehensive analysis of States and UTs across export-related parameters in order to identify their strengths and weaknesses, thereby enabling targeted policy interventions and strategic reforms.

Strategic Alignment with National Objectives

- The EPI 2024 is aligned with India's objective of achieving USD 1 trillion in merchandise exports by 2030, positioning the Index as a critical instrument for tracking progress toward this ambitious national target through systematic assessment of subnational capacities.
- The Index supports the broader vision of **Viksit Bharat @2047**, linking federalism with economic performance and highlighting the pivotal role that district-led export growth plays in achieving developed nation status by the centenary of independence.
- It reinforces national initiatives including Make in India, Atmanirbhar Bharat, MSME development, and trade competitiveness enhancement by identifying structural gaps and best practices that allow States to orient their export strategies toward national trade aspirations and global value chains.

Institutional Remarks at Launch

- CEO, NITI Aayog, B.V.R. Subrahmanyam highlighted at the release that India's export trajectory is increasingly shaped by the preparedness of States and districts, with emphasis placed on strengthening export infrastructure, improving cost competitiveness, building robust institutions, and fostering predictable and transparent policy environments.
- Dr. Arvind Virmani, Member, NITI Aayog, emphasised the role of States and UTs in sustaining and amplifying export momentum by identifying strengths, addressing structural gaps, and designing strategies to leverage new trade opportunities, while reiterating the Prime Minister's call for quality of products to achieve global competitiveness.
- NITI Aayog underscored that enhancing export readiness at the subnational level is essential for sustaining long-term growth, employment generation, reduction of regional disparities, and deeper integration into global value chains amid heightened global volatility and shifting international trade patterns.

Framework and Methodology

Pillar Architecture

- The EPI 2024 is structured around four core pillars—Export Infrastructure, Business Ecosystem, Policy & Governance, and Export Performance—further disaggregated into 13 sub-pillars and 70 indicators, enabling a granular and policy-relevant assessment of export preparedness that captures the multidimensional nature of export competitiveness.
- The Business Ecosystem pillar carries the highest weightage at 40%, highlighting the growing importance of cost efficiency, MSMEs, access to finance, and innovation in strengthening export competitiveness, while the other three pillars—Export Infrastructure, Policy & Governance, and Export Performance—each carry 20% weightage.
- The EPI evaluates States on parameters including export policies, business environment, quality of infrastructure, and export outcomes, providing a complete framework to measure subnational export performance across diverse economic and geographical contexts.

Detailed Sub-Pillar Structure

Export Infrastructure (20% Weightage)

- The Trade & Logistics Infrastructure sub-pillar assesses the availability and quality of physical infrastructure essential for moving goods efficiently from production centres to ports and international markets, including roads, railways, and logistics facilities.
- The Connectivity & Utilities sub-pillar evaluates the availability of reliable power supply, telecommunications infrastructure, and digital connectivity that enable seamless business operations and integration with global supply chains.
- The Industrial Infrastructure sub-pillar examines the presence and quality of industrial parks, special economic zones, export processing zones, and manufacturing clusters that provide the physical foundation for export-oriented production.

Business Ecosystem (40% Weightage)

- The Access to Finance sub-pillar evaluates the availability of credit and financial services for exporters, particularly for small and medium enterprises, recognising that adequate financing is critical for businesses to scale production, invest in quality improvements, and compete in international markets.
- The Human Capital sub-pillar assesses the availability of skilled workforce, vocational training infrastructure, and educational institutions that produce talent capable of supporting export-oriented industries across various sectors.
- The **MSME ecosystem** sub-pillar examines the density and vibrancy of micro, small, and medium enterprises that form the backbone of India's export sector, contributing significantly to employment generation and export diversification.
- The Macroeconomy sub-pillar evaluates the overall economic stability and growth environment of States, recognising that macroeconomic conditions significantly influence business confidence and investment decisions.
- The Cost Competitiveness sub-pillar assesses factors that affect the cost of doing business, including labour costs, energy prices, real estate expenses, and regulatory compliance costs, all of which directly impact export competitiveness.
- The Industrial and Innovation Environment sub-pillar examines the presence of research and development facilities, technology adoption rates, and innovation ecosystems that enable businesses to develop competitive products for global markets.

Policy and Governance (20% Weightage)

- The State Level Policy Support and Governance sub-pillar evaluates the quality and comprehensiveness of state export policies, providing strategic direction for exports and imports while assessing the effectiveness of institutional frameworks supporting export promotion.
- The Regulatory Environment and Compliance sub-pillar assesses the ease of regulatory compliance, transparency of administrative procedures, and effectiveness of trade facilitation measures that reduce transaction costs for exporters.
- The Trade Facilitation sub-pillar examines the efficiency of customs procedures, port operations, and documentary requirements that affect the time and cost of moving goods across borders.

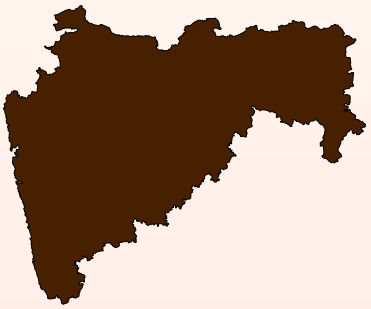
Export Performance (20% Weightage)

- The State Level Exports and Trends sub-pillar is the only output-based parameter in the Index, examining the actual export performance of States including export volumes, growth rates, and contribution to national exports.
- The Export Promotion and Facilitation sub-pillar assesses the effectiveness of state-level export promotion agencies, trade support services, and marketing initiatives that help local businesses access international markets.
- The Export Portfolio and Market Access sub-pillar examines the diversification of exports across products and destinations, recognising that a diversified export basket reduces vulnerability to demand shocks and enhances long-term sustainability.

Top Performing States and Union Territories

Large States Category Rankings

Maharashtra secured the top position among large states in the Export Preparedness Index 2024, overtaking Tamil Nadu which had ranked highest in the EPI 2022 cycle, marking a significant shift in the competitive landscape of India's export-oriented States.



Tamil Nadu moved to second position in the 2024 rankings, maintaining its status as a leading export hub despite ceding the top position to Maharashtra, with continued strength across multiple pillars of the assessment framework.

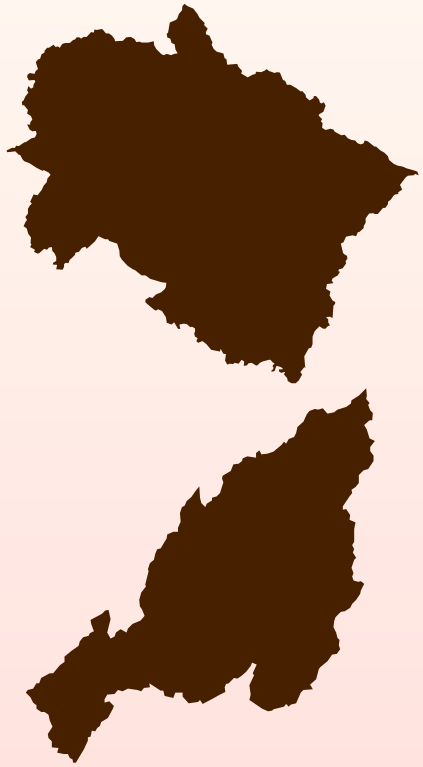
Gujarat climbed to third place from fourth position in the previous ranking, reflecting improvements in its export infrastructure and business ecosystem that have enhanced its competitiveness in international markets.



Uttar Pradesh achieved a significant rise from seventh position to fourth place, emerging as the highest-ranked landlocked state and demonstrating that export competitiveness can be built successfully without direct access to coastal ports.

Andhra Pradesh rose from eighth position to fifth place, completing the top five among large states and reflecting the state's progress in developing export infrastructure and enhancing its business ecosystem.

Small States, North-Eastern States, and Union Territories



Uttarakhand secured the top position among small states, North-Eastern states, and Union Territories, highlighting its robust export-oriented policies, improved business environment, and strong infrastructure development initiatives.

Jammu and Kashmir emerged as the second-ranked performer in this category, reflecting improvements in its export ecosystem despite the challenging geographical and security environment.

Nagaland ranked third among small states, North-Eastern states, and Union Territories, demonstrating the potential for export growth even in geographically remote regions with appropriate policy support.

Dadra and Nagar Haveli & Daman and Diu secured fourth position, leveraging their strategic location and industrial infrastructure to achieve strong export preparedness.

Goa ranked fifth, followed by Tripura, with these rankings reflecting not only established export hubs but also rising participation from less-traditional regions, signalling expanding export capacity across the country.

Significant Movements and Observations

- The first three positions among large states are held by coastal states—Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, and Gujarat—underscoring the traditional advantage that port access provides for export competitiveness through reduced transportation costs and faster delivery times.
- Uttar Pradesh reaching fourth position despite not having a sea coast is seen as a significant achievement, demonstrating that the expansion of export portfolio, entry into new markets, development of logistics support systems, and industry-friendly policies can overcome geographical constraints.
- Karnataka and Haryana slipped out of the top five compared to EPI 2022, reflecting the dynamic and competitive nature of India's export landscape where States must continuously improve to maintain their rankings.
- The Uttar Pradesh International Trade Show organised for the past three years has served as an important platform for the State's exporters, contributing to enhanced market access and business networking that has strengthened UP's position.

State-Specific Challenges Identified

- NITI Aayog flagged high operational costs, including labour wages, real estate, and energy, particularly in cities like Bengaluru, as significant challenges to Karnataka's export competitiveness, straining small and medium enterprises, reducing price competitiveness in global markets, and deterring new investments compared to lower-cost regions.
- Karnataka's exports are heavily concentrated in a few districts such as Bengaluru, Mysuru, and Tumakuru, leading to uneven regional development and limiting growth elsewhere, with this concentration increasing vulnerability to localised disruptions and underusing the State's broader resources and workforce.
- NITI Aayog emphasised that it is vital to expand export activities beyond concentrated hubs for more balanced and sustainable growth, recommending that States with geographically concentrated export activities develop strategies to spread export capabilities across more districts.


DECODING NITI AAYOG:
INDIA'S BLUEPRINT FOR COOPERATIVE FEDERALISM
THE CORE MISSION
OLD PLANNING COMMISSION (TOP-DOWN)
A Shift to Cooperative Planning
Replaced the top-down Planning Commission to treat States as equal development partners.
Powered by a 'Bottom-Up' Approach
Fosters maximum governance with minimum government by empowering states in policy formation.
Driven by Two Functional Hubs
TEAM INDIA HUB
(Centre-State coordination)
KNOWLEDGE & INNOVATION HUB
(Think-tank)
CHAIRPERSON: THE PRIME MINISTER
Provides the highest level of political leadership and direction.
VICE-CHAIRMAN
Appointed by the PM to provide day-to-day leadership of the institution.
GOVERNING COUNCIL
The primary platform for federalism, comprising all State Chief Ministers & UT Lt. Governors.
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER (CEO)
A Secretary-rank officer responsible for administrative functioning and implementation.



MIND MAP

News Trigger

- NITI Aayog released **EPI 2024** on **14 Jan 2026** (4th edition).
- Rankings are based on performance during **FY22–FY24**.
- **Maharashtra** topped the **Large States** category, overtaking **Tamil Nadu** (EPI 2022 leader).
- **Uttarakhand** led among **Small States, North-Eastern States, and Union Territories**.

What's New in EPI 2024

- Added five new dimensions: **macroeconomy**, **human capital**, **MSME ecosystem**, **financial access**, **cost competitiveness**.
- NITI Aayog stated EPI 2024 is **not comparable** with EPI 2022 due to framework changes.
- Indicators were refined for robustness and more actionable policy insights.

Rankings: Top Performers

Large States (Top 5)

1) Maharashtra
2) Tamil Nadu
3) Gujarat
4) Uttar Pradesh (rose from 7th; highest-ranked landlocked state)
5) Andhra Pradesh (rose from 8th)

Small States / North-East / UTs (Top Set Mentioned)

1) Uttarakhand
2) Jammu & Kashmir
3) Nagaland
4) Dadra & Nagar Haveli & Daman & Diu
5) Goa

Pillar Architecture

- 4 pillars: Export Infrastructure, Business Ecosystem, Policy & Governance, Export Performance.
- Total structure: 13 sub-pillars and 70 indicators.
- Weightage: Business Ecosystem (40%); others 20% each.

Assessment Focus

- Captures policy, infrastructure quality, business environment, and export outcomes.
- Uses indicator normalisation and statistical aggregation for scoring.

Institutional Context: NITI Aayog

- Planning Commission replaced by NITI Aayog on **1 Jan 2015** for bottom-up planning.
- PM is Chairman; Governing Council includes State CMs and UT LGs.
- Two hubs: **Team India Hub** and **Knowledge & Innovation Hub**.
- It is advisory and does **not allocate funds**, unlike the Planning Commission.

Background and Evolution

- First EPI edition published in Aug 2020.
- EPI 2024 is the fourth iteration.
- Designed to identify strengths, gaps, and policy priorities across States/UTs.
- Enables targeted reforms and strategic export planning at the subnational level.

Launch Remarks and Key Messages

- CEO NITI Aayog **B.V.R. Subrahmanyam** stressed district and State preparedness as a key export driver.
- **Dr. Arvind Virmani** highlighted State role in leveraging new trade opportunities and improving product quality.
- NITI Aayog emphasised export readiness for jobs, growth, and global value chain integration amid volatility.

Connected Topics

District as Export Hub (DEH) Initiative

- The Districts as Export Hubs (DEH) initiative was launched in August 2019 with the vision that each district has export potential comparable to a small country.
- The stated objective of DEH is to identify, brand, and promote district-specific products and encourage their sale in domestic and international markets.
- DEH is incorporated in India's Foreign Trade Policy (FTP) 2023 under the chapter on Developing Districts as Export Hubs.
- Each district is to constitute a District Export Promotion Committee (DEPC) chaired by the Collector/DM/DC and co-chaired by the designated DGFT Regional Authority, along with other stakeholders.
- The primary function of the DEPC is to prepare and implement district-specific Export Action Plans in collaboration with stakeholders at Central, State and District levels.
- The District Export Action Plan (DEAP) may include (among other items) identification of goods/services with export potential, allocation of responsibilities, and actions to address bottlenecks for export growth.
- FTP 2023 notes that DEPCs may facilitate buyer–seller meets, exhibitions, and trade fairs in the district to encourage showcasing products/services globally.
- A DGFT note states that State Export Promotion Committees (SEPC) and DEPCs have been constituted across 36 States/UTs under the initiative's institutional framework.
- The initiative has been presented in Parliament/official material as focusing on balanced regional development, by converting each district into a manufacturing and export hub through identification of products with export potential.
- Official releases state that ODOP has been operationally merged with DEH, positioning DEH as a flagship grassroots export-promotion framework under the DGFT.

Logistics Costs and India's Export Competitiveness

- India's National Logistics Policy (NLP) 2022 defines logistics as covering transportation and handling from production to consumption, along with storage and value addition.
- A DPIIT document describes logistics as the supply-chain component dealing with transportation, warehousing, inventory-carrying, information flow, and administration/management between production and delivery points.
- Government communication has acknowledged that logistics cost estimates were often cited at 13–14% of GDP, and that such figures were considered overestimates based on partial/external data.
- A current official assessment prepared by DPIIT with NCAER has estimated logistics costs at about 7.97% of GDP (FY 2023–24).
- The NLP's stated targets include reducing logistics cost and improving India's Logistics Performance Index (LPI) ranking, with an endeavour to be among the top 25 countries by 2030.
- Policy-facing material linked to NLP highlights a goal of bringing India's logistics costs closer to global benchmarks (often referenced around ~8% of GDP by 2030) as a competitiveness objective.
- The Government has framed logistics as central to international trade and industrial competitiveness; reducing costs and improving movement of goods are presented as mechanisms to enhance competitiveness of Indian industries/exports.
- The DPIIT–NCAER reporting summarized in public coverage notes major cost differences by transport mode, with rail much cheaper per tonne-km than road, and air transport the most expensive.
- NLP-linked government communication references a Comprehensive Logistics Action Plan (CLAP) as part of the framework for improving efficiency, coordination, and outcomes in the logistics ecosystem.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Which of the following institutions released the Export Preparedness Index 2024?
   (a) Ministry Commerce Industry
   (b) NITI Aayog India
   (c) Reserve Bank India
   (d) Directorate General Trade

2. In which of the following months the Export Preparedness Index 2024 officially released?
   (a) January 2026 (b) August 2025
   (c) January 2025 (d) March 2025

3. Which edition of the Export Preparedness Index is released in 2024?
   (a) Fourth edition Index (b) Third edition Index
   (c) Fifth edition Index (d) Second edition Index

4. Which large state ranked first in the Export Preparedness Index 2024?
   (a) Tamil Nadu State
   (b) Gujarat State
   (c) Maharashtra State
   (d) Andhra Pradesh State

5. Which state topped the small states, North-Eastern states, and Union Territories category?
   (a) Goa State
   (b) Uttarakhand State
   (c) Nagaland State
   (d) Jammu Kashmir

6. Which of the following pillars carries the highest weightage in the EPI 2024 framework?
   (a) Export Infrastructure Pillar
   (b) Policy Governance Pillar
   (c) Business Ecosystem Pillar
   (d) Export Performance Pillar

7. How many core pillars structure the Export Preparedness Index 2024?
   (a) Three core pillars
   (b) Five core pillars
   (c) Six core pillars
   (d) Four core pillars

8. Which pillar is the only output-based pillar in the EPI framework?
   (a) Business Ecosystem Pillar
   (b) Export Infrastructure Pillar
   (c) Export Performance Pillar
   (d) Policy Governance Pillar

9. Which state became the highest-ranked landlocked state in EPI 2024?
   (a) Uttar Pradesh State (b) Haryana State
   (c) Karnataka State (d) Telangana State

10. Which organisation partnered with NITI Aayog as knowledge partner for EPI 2024?
    (a) World Bank Group
    (b) Asian Development Bank
    (c) Deloitte India LLP
    (d) International Monetary Fund

11. Which pillar has a weightage of 20% in the EPI framework?
    (a) Business Ecosystem Pillar
    (b) Export Infrastructure Pillar
    (c) Innovation Environment Pillar
    (d) Macroeconomy Stability Pillar

12. Which of the following was added as a new dimension in EPI 2024?
    (a) Trade diversification
    (b) Cost competitiveness
    (c) Environmental sustainability
    (d) Digital governance

13. Which category group States for meaningful peer comparison in EPI?
    (a) Income level groups (b) Population size groups
    (c) Large small categories (d) Industrial sector groups

14. Which tier represents States with the highest export preparedness?
    (a) Aspirer tier States (b) Challenger tier States
    (c) Leader tier States (d) Transitional tier States

15. Which coastal advantage explains dominance of the top three large states?
    (a) Industrial clustering (b) Skilled workforce

(c) Export financing (d) Port access advantage

16 In which of the following years the Planning Commission was replaced by NITI Aayog?
(a) 2015 (b) 2014 (c) 2017 (d) 2019

17. Who serves as the Chairman of NITI Aayog?
(a) Vice Chairman NITI (b) Prime Minister India
(c) Cabinet Secretary India (d) Finance Minister India

18. Which of the following hubs of NITI Aayog functions as the policy think tank?
(a) Team India Hub
(b) Federal Coordination Hub
(c) Strategic Planning Hub
(d) Knowledge Innovation Hub

19. Which of the following states ranked third among small states and Union Territories?
(a) Nagaland State
(b) Goa State
(c) Tripura State
(d) Jammu Kashmir

20. What is the long-term export target aligned with EPI 2024?
(a) Five billion dollars
(b) One trillion dollars
(c) Two trillion dollars
(d) Ten trillion dollars

ANSWER KEY

1. (b)	2. (a)	3. (a)	4. (c)	5. (b)	6. (c)	7. (d)	8. (c)
9. (b)	10. (c)	11. (b)	12. (b)	13. (c)	14. (c)	15. (d)	16. (a)
17. (b)	18. (d)	19. (a)	20. (b)				

EU–Mercosur Trade Deal Explained

News Highlights:

- The **European Union** and the Mercosur bloc of South American countries formally signed a landmark free trade agreement on 17 January 2026 in Asunción, Paraguay, capping more than 25 years of torturous negotiations to strengthen commercial ties in the face of rising protectionism and trade tensions around the world.
- The signing ceremony, held at the Gran Teatro José Asunción Flores—the same venue where the founding treaty of **Mercosur** was signed in 1991—marks a major geopolitical victory for the EU in an age of American tariffs and surging Chinese exports, expanding the bloc's foothold in a resource-rich region increasingly contested by Washington and Beijing. The agreement creates one of the world's largest free trade zones, covering a market of more than 700 million consumers that accounts for approximately 30% of global gross domestic product, with the accord eliminating more than 90% of tariffs on goods and services between the European and Mercosur markets.

- **Historical Evolution of the Partnership**
- The EU-Mercosur relationship dates back to 1999 when the inter-regional framework cooperation agreement entered into force, establishing the foundation for subsequent negotiations on deeper economic integration between the two blocs.
- Negotiations between the EU and Mercosur on an association agreement have gone through different phases over nearly 26 years, reflecting the complexity of reconciling diverse economic interests across multiple countries with varying levels of development and sectoral sensitivities.
- The growing use of protectionist policies by national leaders globally is considered to have spurred the renewal of talks in 2016, with the EU hoping that an emerging deal would represent a significant break in the global renewal of protectionism and validate rules-based international trade.
- In 2018, the EU was already Mercosur's largest trading and investment partner, with 20.1% of the trade bloc's exports going to the EU, while Mercosur exports to the EU were worth €42.6 billion and EU exports to Mercosur countries were worth €45 billion.



Timeline of Recent Developments

- On 28 June 2019, the planned deal was announced at the G20 Osaka Summit after twenty years of negotiations, with both parties reaching agreement in principle on the key elements of the trade and political partnership.
- On 6 December 2024, the EU reached a political agreement with Mercosur on a comprehensive partnership agreement, which is made up of two pillars: one on political cooperation and one on trade and investment, formally concluded by European Commission President **Ursula von der Leyen**.
- The vote was delayed until early 2026 due to a request from Italy, which needed more time to assuage its farmers' concerns about the potential impact of South American agricultural imports on domestic producers.
- On 3 September 2025, the Commission proposed Council decisions on the signature and conclusion of two parallel but legally distinct instruments: the EU-Mercosur Partnership Agreement (EMPA) and the Interim Trade Agreement (iTA).

Approval and Signing Process

- On 9 January 2026, a qualified majority of EU member states in the Council gave the green light to the agreement by a vote of 21 to 5, with Austria, France, Hungary, Ireland, and Poland voting against it, and Belgium abstaining, reflecting persistent divisions within Europe over the deal's implications.
- The signing ceremony took place on 17 January 2026 in Asunción, Paraguay, attended by E**uropean Commission President Ursula von der Leyen** and **European Council President António Costa**, alongside the presidents of Mercosur members Argentina, Uruguay, and Paraguay.
- Brazil's President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, who played a leading role in advancing the deal during Brazil's rotating presidency of Mercosur, did not attend the signing ceremony, delegating his country's representation to Foreign Minister Mauro Vieira, in a move seen by observers as indicative of political tensions within Mercosur.
- Brazil had been gearing up to host the signing ceremony in the country's capital, Brasília, last month, when European countries called it off, demanding more concessions to farmers, which robbed Lula of his spotlight and caused outrage at what was widely seen in South America as the latest example of EU's bureaucratic intrusiveness.



Ursula von der Leyen

Dual Agreement Framework

- The EU-Mercosur relationship is now framed within two parallel but legally distinct instruments: the EU-Mercosur Partnership Agreement (EMPA), combining political dialogue, cooperation, and trade pillars, and the **Interim Trade Agreement** (iTA), containing trade and investment commitments to apply ahead of the EMPA's entry into force.
- The EMPA is a comprehensive partnership agreement that brings together political dialogue, cooperation, and sectoral engagement under a single framework, with trade and investment provisions becoming fully applicable once the agreement is concluded and enters into force.
- The iTA reflects the trade and investment liberalisation pillar of the partnership agreement and will function as a standalone agreement until the full partnership agreement enters into force, with the aim of delivering economic benefits of the negotiated trade commitments as early as possible.
- The iTA falls within the EU's exclusive competence and therefore does not require ratification by individual EU member states, unlike the EMPA which needs ratification by all member states before it can enter into force.

Political Cooperation Provisions

- The partnership agreement strengthens cooperation in areas such as sustainable development, environment and climate action, digital transformation, human rights, mobility, counter-terrorism, and crisis management, establishing comprehensive frameworks for ongoing dialogue.
- The political dialogue provisions foster closer coordination on global challenges such as climate change, peacekeeping, and migration, enabling both blocs to present coordinated positions in international forums.
- The framework facilitates a robust exchange of best practices on issues ranging from governance to technology innovation, allowing both regions to learn from each other's policy experiences and institutional developments.
- The EMPA reinforces EU-Mercosur coordination in multilateral fora and provides structured platforms for sectoral dialogue, enhancing the capacity of both blocs to shape international rules and norms.



Understanding Mercosur

Mercosur, or the **Southern Common Market**, is a major South American trade bloc created to promote economic integration through the free movement of goods, services, capital, and people among member states.

It was established in 1991 under the **Treaty of Asunción** with the founding members being Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay, with the goal of creating a common market comparable to the European Economic Community.

The Treaty of Ouro Preto (1994) gave Mercosur a legal identity and established it as a customs union, allowing common external tariffs and coordinated trade policies among member states.

- Bolivia became a full member of Mercosur in July 2024, although the country is not part of the EU-Mercosur agreements as the negotiations were largely concluded before its accession.
- Venezuela is a full member whose membership is currently suspended due to political developments, while several other South American countries participate as associate members with limited trade preferences.

Institutional Framework

- The official working languages of Mercosur are Spanish and Portuguese, reflecting the linguistic composition of its major member states.
- The bloc's headquarters are located in Montevideo, Uruguay, which serves as the administrative centre for the organisation's institutions and secretariat.
- An important provision of the Mercosur charter, which has been debated considerably, is that member countries are forbidden to sign any free trade bilateral agreements with non-member countries without the consensus of all members.
- Intra-Mercosur trade is duty-free, while there is a Common External Tariff (CET) for imports from other countries, with the average CET at 14% but ranging from 0 to 20%, with 800 exceptions including cars and sugar.

Global Economic Standing

- Mercosur is the fourth-largest integrated market or trade bloc globally, after the European Union, North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA, now USMCA), and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).
- Mercosur countries form the world's sixth-largest economy with a total population of approximately 270-290 million people and a combined GDP of more than two trillion US dollars.
- Together, the EU and Mercosur account for approximately 30% of global GDP and represent a market of more than

- 700 million consumers, making their combined free trade area one of the largest in the world.
- The EU is Mercosur's second-largest partner in trade in goods, accounting for almost 17% of Mercosur's total trade in 2024, demonstrating the significance of the European market for South American exporters.

India - Mercosur Relations



- India signed a Framework Agreement with Mercosur on 17 June 2003 in Asunción, Paraguay, with the aim of creating conditions and mechanisms for negotiations by granting reciprocal tariff preferences in the first stage and negotiating a free trade area in the second stage.
- As a follow-up to the Framework Agreement, a **Preferential Trade Agreement** (PTA) between India and Mercosur was signed in New Delhi on 25 January 2004, and five annexes to this Agreement were signed and incorporated on 19 March 2005.
- The India-Mercosur PTA became operational with effect from 1 June 2009, implemented in accordance with **World Trade Organization** (WTO) rules and providing the framework for preferential trade between India and the South American bloc.
- A PTA allows countries to give preferential tariff access on certain products, unlike FTAs which are broader and cover more goods, making the India-Mercosur arrangement more limited in scope than comprehensive free trade agreements.
- The India-Mercosur PTA is implemented through five annexes covering tariff concessions for Indian and Mercosur products (Annexes I and II), rules of origin (Annex III), preferential safeguard measures (Annex IV), and a dispute settlement mechanism (Annex V).
- By this PTA, India and Mercosur have agreed to give tariff concessions ranging from 10% to 100% to the other side, with India providing concessions on 450 tariff lines and Mercosur providing concessions on 452 tariff lines.
- The break-up of the number of tariff lines for different margins of preference on the Indian side is: 393 tariff lines at 10%, 45 tariff lines at 20%, and 14 tariff lines at 100%.
- The major products covered in the Indian offer list include meat and meat products, organic and inorganic chemicals, dyes and pigments, raw hides and skins, leather articles, wool, cotton yarn, glass and glassware, articles of iron and steel, machinery items, and electrical machinery and equipment.



MIND MAP

News Trigger

- Deal signed on **17 Jan 2026** in Asunción, ending **25–26 years** of negotiations. Seen as a strategic win for European Union amid protectionism and trade tensions.
- Creates a mega free-trade zone: **700M+ consumers** and **~30% of global GDP**. Targets removal of **90%+ tariffs** across goods and services

Mercosur Basics

- Founded **1991** under Treaty of Asunción by Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay.
- Legal identity/customs union strengthened by Treaty of Ouro Preto (1994).
- Intra-bloc trade is duty-free; common external tariff exists with many exceptions.
- Bolivia joined as full member (July 2024), but not part of the negotiated EU deal.

Background of EU–Mercosur Relations

- Cooperation framework dates back to **1999** (inter-regional agreement in force).
- Talks revived in **2016** amid a broader return of protectionism.
- Trade link already strong by 2018: EU was Mercosur's top partner for trade/investment.

Trade Provisions

Tariff Cuts

- EU calls it its largest FTA by tariff cuts: **€4B+ duties removed annually** on EU exports.
- Mercosur cuts duties on **91% of EU exports** over **15 years** (cars, dairy, wine etc.).
- EU cuts duties on **92% of Mercosur exports** within **10 years**.
- Adjustment windows of **10–15 years** help domestic sectors absorb competition.

Current Trade Profile

- Goods trade ~**€111B** (2024): EU exports ~€55.2B; imports ~€56B.
- EU exports: machinery, chemicals, transport equipment.
- Mercosur exports: agriculture, minerals, wood pulp, paper.
- Services trade (2023): **€42B+**.

Timeline of Recent Developments

- 28 Jun 2019: Agreement in principle announced at G20 Osaka Summit.
- 6 Dec 2024: Political agreement concluded by European Commission leadership.
- Italy's request delayed voting to early 2026 due to farm-sector concerns.
- 3 Sep 2025: Commission proposed Council decisions for two legal instruments.
- 9 Jan 2026: Council greenlight by QMV 21–5; Belgium abstained.
- 17 Jan 2026: Formal signing attended by Ursula von der Leyen and António Costa plus Mercosur leaders.
- Brazil's Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva skipped signing; represented by Mauro Vieira.
- 21 Jan 2026: European Parliament vote 334–324 to refer issues to European Court of Justice (provisional application/environment implications).

India–Mercosur Angle

Framework + PTA

- India–Mercosur Framework Agreement signed **17 Jun 2003** (Asunción).
- PTA signed **25 Jan 2004**; operational from **1 Jun 2009** under WTO rules.

Connected Topics

Free Trade Agreements in an Era of Protectionism

- Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) are a major subset of regional trade agreements (RTAs) notified by members to the World Trade Organization and have expanded in number and scope over time.
- FTAs legally create preferential market access among partners, typically by reducing or eliminating tariffs on specified goods and setting conditions for eligibility.
- In an environment where tariffs and trade-policy interventions have risen (including during 2025 and expectations for 2026), FTAs are used to secure predictable access for firms and investors.
- The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development has highlighted that protectionism and shifting trade strategies can disrupt trade and increase uncertainty, shaping how countries design and pursue FTAs.
- FTAs increasingly cover "behind-the-border" areas (such as services, investment, standards, digital trade, and regulatory cooperation) to reduce non-tariff barriers and improve market integration beyond tariffs.
- Rules of origin are central to FTAs because they determine whether a product qualifies for preferential treatment and help prevent trade deflection through non-member countries.
- Even in an FTA framework, countries often retain trade-remedy instruments (like anti-dumping/countervailing measures) and use safeguards under specified conditions, reflecting the coexistence of liberalisation with protective policy space.
- Global trade governance has seen a steady accumulation of trade-restrictive or trade-related measures among major economies since 2009, which strengthens incentives for countries to use FTAs as "risk-hedging" arrangements.
- FTAs can support supply-chain restructuring (e.g., nearshoring/friendshoring dynamics) by setting stable tariff and regulatory conditions for intermediate inputs and cross-border production networks.
- The net result is a dual trend: rising protectionist tools at the global level alongside deeper, more complex FTAs that aim to preserve trade flows among trusted partners.

Geographical Indications as Trade Diplomacy Tools

- Under the WTO's TRIPS Agreement, a Geographical Indication (GI) is an indication identifying a good as originating in a territory/region/locality where a given quality, reputation, or other characteristic is essentially attributable to its geographic origin. TRIPS Article 22 requires members to provide legal means to prevent misleading use of GIs and acts of unfair competition involving GIs.
- TRIPS Article 23 provides additional protection for wines and spirits, reflecting a higher level of GI protection in those categories.
- In trade diplomacy, GI protection is frequently negotiated in FTAs to secure recognition and enforcement for named products in partner markets, often through annexes/lists of protected names.
- GI chapters in FTAs can function as a non-tariff market-access instrument by shaping labeling rules and restricting the use of certain product names by non-authorised producers.
- GIs can be used as bargaining assets: states may trade concessions on tariffs/services/investment for stronger GI protections that benefit politically salient producer groups (especially in agriculture and specialty foods).
- GI protection supports place-based branding and can increase export value for origin-linked products by signalling authenticity and quality to consumers in foreign markets.
- A GI strategy requires domestic legal and administrative systems for registration and enforcement; international diplomacy then extends that protection outward through bilateral/plurilateral agreements.
- The European Union Intellectual Property Office and EU institutions frame GIs not only as IP protection but also as tools for promoting regional products abroad, reinforcing the link between GI policy and external trade strategy.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Where was the EU–Mercosur free trade agreement formally signed?
   (a) Brussels Belgium Europe
   (b) Montevideo Uruguay Capital
   (c) Buenos Aires Argentina
   (d) Asunción Paraguay Capital

2. Which bloc signed the agreement with the European Union?
   (a) ASEAN Trade Bloc
   (b) Mercosur Trade Bloc
   (c) African Union Bloc
   (d) Pacific Alliance Bloc

3. Which venue hosted the signing ceremony in Paraguay?
   (a) National Congress Building
   (b) Presidential Palace Paraguay
   (c) Asunción City Hall
   (d) Gran Teatro Flores

4. Which year did EU–Mercosur negotiations originally begin?
   (a) 1995
   (b) 2001
   (c) 2006
   (d) 1999

5. Which treaty established Mercosur in 1991?
   (a) Treaty Asunción Agreement
   (b) Treaty Ouro Preto
   (c) Treaty Lisbon Union
   (d) Treaty Maastricht Union

6. Which agreement granted Mercosur legal identity?
   (a) Treaty Asunción Agreement
   (b) Buenos Aires Protocol
   (c) Montevideo Trade Accord
   (d) Treaty Ouro Preto

7. Which country voted against the agreement in the EU Council?
   (a) Germany Federal Republic
   (b) Spain Iberian Kingdom
   (c) France European State
   (d) Portugal Atlantic Nation

8. Which President attended the signing ceremony for the EU?
   (a) Emmanuel Macron France
   (b) Olaf Scholz Germany
   (c) Charles Michel Europe
   (d) Ursula von der Leyen

9. Which of the following is not among the Mercosur members who attended the EU–Mercosur Free Trade Agreement signing ceremony in Asunción on 17 January 2026?
   (a) Argentina (b) France
   (c) Uruguay (d) Paraguay

10. Which of the following agreements applies before full ratification?
    (a) Interim Trade Agreement
    (b) Partnership Framework Agreement
    (c) Political Cooperation Treaty
    (d) Customs Union Protocol

11. Which of the following pillars is included in the EU–Mercosur Partnership Agreement?
    (a) Military Security Cooperation
    (b) Nuclear Energy Regulation
    (c) Political Dialogue Cooperation
    (d) Space Exploration Programme

12. What percentage of EU exports will Mercosur liberalise?
    (a) 85% (b) 87%
    (c) 89% (d) 91%

13. Which of the following products receives strict EU import quotas?
    (a) Coffee (b) Beef
    (c) Steel (d) Textiles

14. What is the full form of the abbreviation EMPA, given that the EU–Mercosur relationship is now framed within two parallel but legally distinct instruments?
    (a) European Market Policy Alliance
    (b) Euro Multilateral Partnership Accord
    (c) EU-Monetary Policy Arrangement
    (d) EU-Mercosur Partnership Agreement

15. Which of the following countries hosts Mercosur headquarters?
(a) Argentina (b) Uruguay
(c) Brazil (d) Paraguay

16 When was Mercosur legally established as a customs union?
(a) 1994 (b) 1992
(c) 2001 (d) 2004

17. Which of the following agreements restricts Mercosur bilateral FTAs?
(a) Mercosur Asunción Clause
(b) Mercosur Lisbon Rule
(c) WTO Membership Obligation
(d) Mercosur Charter Provision

18. Which Indian agreement governs trade with Mercosur?
(a) Comprehensive Economic Partnership
(b) Free Trade Agreement
(c) Preferential Trade Agreement
(d) Customs Cooperation Treaty

19. In which of the following years did the India–Mercosur PTA become operational?
(a) 2009 (b) 2004
(c) 2001 (d) 2003

20. What trade target do India and Brazil aim for by 2030?
(a) 10 billion dollars (b) 15 billion dollars
(c) 18 billion dollars (d) 20 billion dollars

ANSWER KEY

1. (d)	2. (b)	3. (d)	4. (d)	5. (a)	6. (d)	7. (c)
8. (d)	9. (a)	10. (a)	11. (c)	12. (d)	13. (b)	14. (d)
15. (b)	16. (a)	17. (d)	18. (c)	19. (a)	20. (d)	

Economic Survey 2025-26: India's Pathway to Strategic Resilience and Viksit Bharat

News Highlights:

- The Union Finance Minister tabled the **Economic Survey 2025-26** in Parliament on 29th January 2026, presenting a comprehensive assessment of India's economic performance and projecting real GDP growth of **6.8-7.2%** for FY 2026-27.
- India maintained its position as the fastest-growing major economy for the fourth consecutive year, with First Advance Estimates placing FY26 real GDP growth at **7.4%** and GVA growth at 7.3% despite global uncertainties.
- The country recorded its lowest-ever Consumer Price Index inflation since the series began, with average headline inflation at just **1.7%** during April-December 2025, significantly strengthening household purchasing power.

Economic Survey

ECONOMIC SURVEY

The Economic Survey is **an annual document released by the Ministry of Finance, Government of India,** providing a detailed analysis of the **Indian economy's performance over the past year.**

It serves as a **policy guide, offering insights into key economic trends, challenges, and recommendations** for the upcoming financial year.

The survey is **not legally binding** but acts **as a preliminary document before the Union Budget**, helping policymakers, businesses, and analysts assess economic conditions.

The first Economic Survey of India was presented in **1950-51** as part of the Union Budget. After 1964 it was separated from the Budget and presented each year during the Budget Session before the presentation of the budget.

Who Prepares the Economic Survey?

- The **Economic Division of the Department of Economic Affairs (DEA),** Ministry of Finance prepares the **Economic Survey.**
- The document is primarily **authored by the Chief Economic Adviser (CEA)** to the Government of India. Currently, the post of the CEA is held by **V Anantha Nageswaran.**
- It is approved and presented by the **Finance Minister before the Parliament**, usually a day before the Union Budget.
- Each year's survey centers around a thematic concept related to economic trends or reforms. Recent themes include: **2024-25:** Emphasised the need for deregulation to accelerate and sustain economic growth, highlighting the importance of reducing bureaucratic hurdles to foster investment and innovation.

Structure of the Economic Survey

- Traditionally released in two volumes:
  - **Volume 1:** Analytical and policy-driven (thematic chapters).
  - **Volume 2:** Data-oriented, covering sectoral performance.
- **Key focus areas:** Agriculture, industry, services, inflation, trade, fiscal management, social development, and climate change.

State of the Economy

Global and Domestic Context

- The global environment remains fragile with growth holding up better than expected, but risks remain elevated amid intensifying geopolitical tensions, trade fragmentation, and financial vulnerabilities.
- Against this backdrop, India's performance stands out with **the First Advance Estimates placing FY26 real GDP growth at 7.4% and GVA growth at 7.3%**, reaffirming India's status as the **fastest-growing major economy.**
- The potential growth rate for the Indian economy is assessed at around 7%, with **real GDP growth for FY27 projected between 6.8-7.2%.**

Consumption Dynamics

- **Private Final Consumption Expenditure** grew by 7.0% in FY26, reaching 61.5% of GDP, the highest level since 2012, reflecting strong domestic demand momentum.
- This growth is supported by low inflation, stable employment, and increasing real purchasing power among households.
- Strong agricultural performance has bolstered rural consumption, while improvements in urban consumption aided by tax rationalization indicate broad-based demand recovery.

Investment Activity

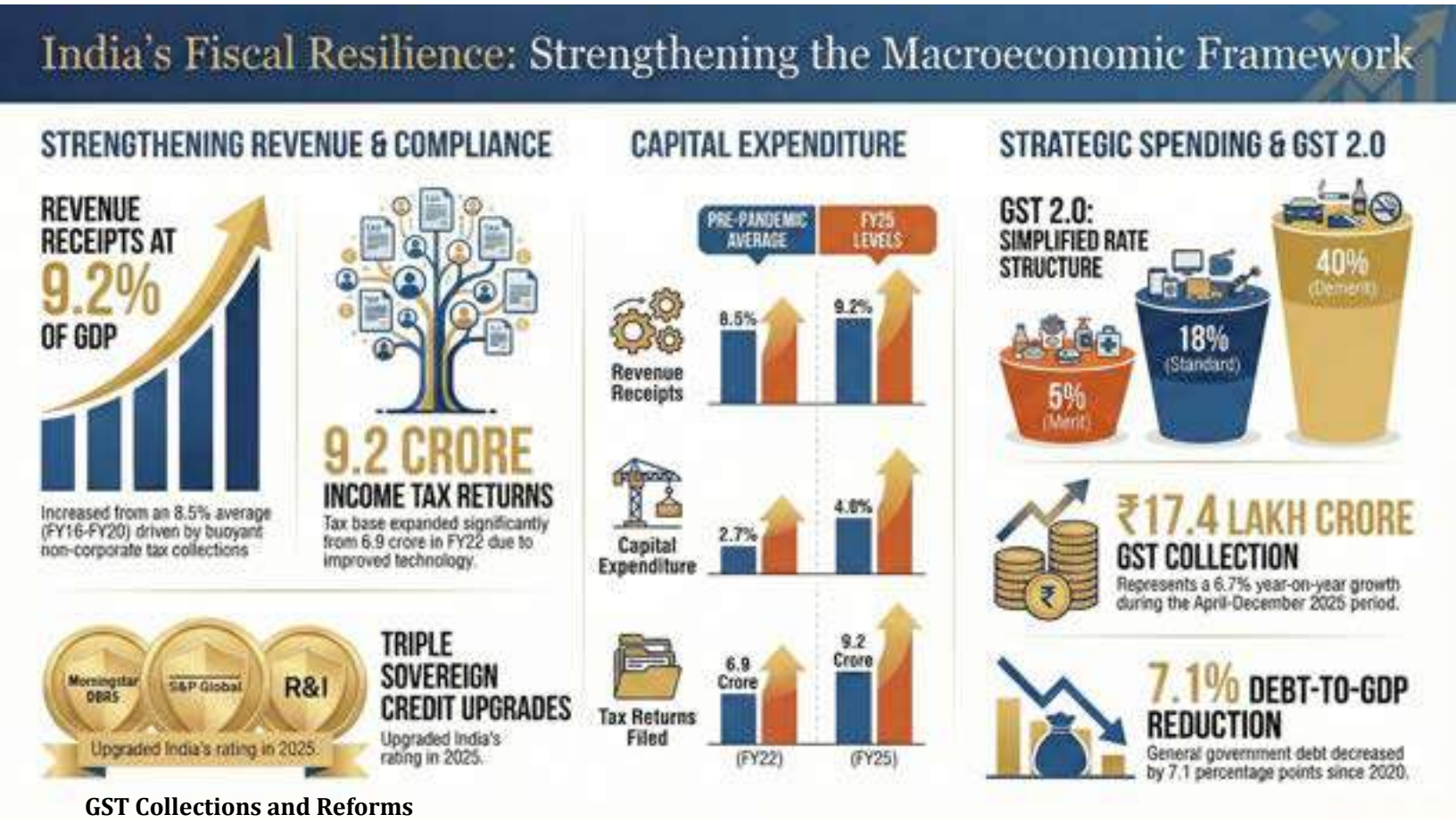
- Investment activity strengthened in FY26 with **Gross Fixed Capital Formation** growing by 7.8% and its share remaining steady at 30% of GDP.
- This momentum was supported by sustained public capital expenditure and a revival in private investment activity, as evident from corporate announcements.
- On the supply side, services remain the main driver of growth, with services GVA increasing by 9.3% in the first half of FY26 and an estimated 9.1% growth for the entire fiscal year.



Fiscal Developments

Revenue Performance

- The government's prudent fiscal management has strengthened credibility and reinforced confidence in India's macroeconomic framework, leading to three sovereign credit rating upgrades in 2025 by Morningstar DBRS, S&P Global Ratings, and Rating and Investment Information Inc.
- The Centre's revenue receipts rose from an average of about 8.5% of GDP during FY16-FY20 to **9.2% of GDP** in FY25, driven by buoyant non-corporate tax collections which increased from approximately 2.4% to 3.3% of GDP.
- The direct tax base expanded steadily with income tax returns filed increasing from 6.9 crore in FY22 to 9.2 crore in FY25, reflecting improved compliance, greater use of technology in tax administration, and a growing number of individuals entering the tax net.



GST Collections and Reforms

- Gross GST collections during April-December 2025 stood at ₹17.4 lakh crore, registering a year-on-year growth of 6.7% aligned with nominal GDP growth conditions.
- High-frequency indicators suggest robust transaction volumes with cumulative e-way bill volumes during April-December 2025 growing by 21% year-on-year.
- The Survey proposes **GST 2.0** reforms featuring a simplified two-rate structure with 18% Standard rate and 5% Merit rate, along with 40% for demerit/sin goods including cess, aimed at boosting consumption, improving compliance, and enhancing manufacturing competitiveness.

Capital Expenditure

- The effective capital expenditure of the Central government rose from an average of 2.7% of GDP in the pre-pandemic period to approximately 4% of GDP in FY25.
- Through Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment (SASCI), the Centre has incentivized States to maintain capital spending at around 2.4% of GDP in FY25. India reduced its general government debt-to-GDP ratio by

- about 7.1 percentage points since 2020, even while maintaining high public investment.

State Finances

- The combined fiscal deficit of State Governments stayed broadly stable at around 2.8% of GDP in the post-pandemic period, similar to pre-pandemic levels.
- However, state deficits have edged up in recent years to 3.2% in FY25, reflecting emerging pressures on State finances that require monitoring.

Monetary Management and Financial Intermediation

Banking Sector Performance



- A significant improvement has been observed in the asset quality of scheduled commercial banks, with the **GNPA ratio** standing at 2.2% in September 2025 (multi-decadal low) and net NPA ratio at 0.5% (record low level).
- As of 31st December 2025, the year-on-year growth in outstanding credit by scheduled commercial banks increased to 14.5% compared to 11.2% in December 2024, supporting broader economic activity.

Financial Inclusion Progress



- Under the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana launched in 2014, **55.02 crore bank accounts** have been opened as of March 2025, with 36.63 crore accounts in rural and semi-urban areas, establishing foundational savings and transaction infrastructure for previously unbanked populations.
- The Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana is financing micro and small enterprises in manufacturing, trading, services, and allied agricultural activities, having disbursed over ₹36.18 lakh crore across 55.45 crore loan accounts by October 2025.
- The Stand-Up India Scheme offers bank loans ranging from ₹10 lakh to ₹1 crore to SC, ST, and women entrepreneurs for establishing greenfield enterprises, while PM SVANidhi provides collateral-free working capital loans to street vendors.

Capital Market Expansion



- During FY26 (till December 2025), 235 lakh demat accounts were added, pushing the total count beyond 21.6 crore.
- A key milestone was the crossing of the 12-crore mark for **unique investors** in September 2025, with nearly a fourth of them being women, indicating widening financial participation.
- The mutual fund industry expanded with 5.9 crore unique investors as of end-December 2025, of which 3.5 crore were from non-tier-I and tier-II cities, underscoring diffusion of financial participation beyond traditional urban centres.
- India's first international financial services centre at GIFT City is creating an enabling ecosystem to attract and channel global capital.

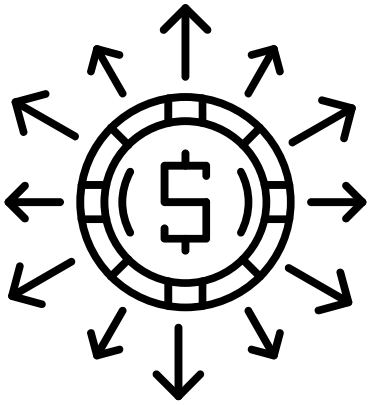
Pension Coverage Expansion

- Atal Pension Yojana (APY) subscribers increased dramatically from 24.6 lakh in FY16 to 641.3 lakh in FY25, with Assets Under Management growing from ₹0.51 thousand crore to ₹44.8 thousand crore.
- National Pension System (NPS) subscribers rose from 97.5 lakh in FY16 to 198.6 lakh in FY25, with AUM expanding from ₹118.3 thousand crore to ₹1,398.7 thousand crore.

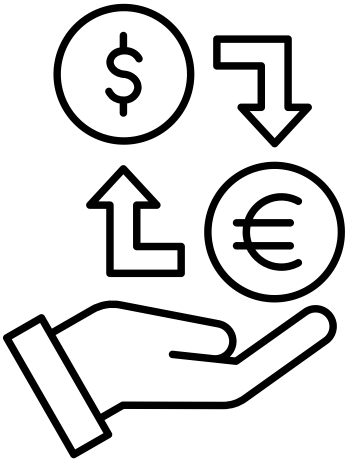
Regulatory Validation

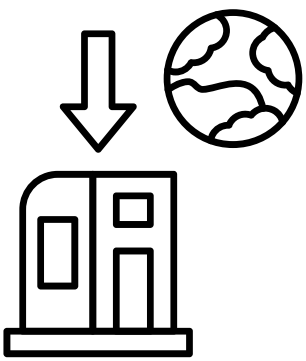
- The systemic rise in regulatory quality received international validation through the Financial Sector Assessment Program conducted jointly by the IMF and World Bank in 2025.
- Both reports noted an increasingly resilient, diversified, and inclusive financial system with total financial sector assets at nearly 187% of GDP in CY 2024 and capital markets expanding from 144% of GDP in CY 2017 to 175% in CY 2024.

External Sector Performance









Trade Diversification and Growth

- Between CY 2005 and CY 2024, India's share of global merchandise exports nearly doubled from 1% to 1.8%, while its share of global commercial services exports more than doubled from 2% to 4.3%.
- According to UNCTAD's Trade and Development Report 2025, India ranked among the leading economies in trade partner diversification, ranking third in the Global South and recording a trade diversity score higher than all Global North economies.
- India's total exports reached a record **USD 825.3 billion** in FY25, registering a 6.1% year-on-year growth, driven primarily by robust growth in services exports.

Services Export Dominance

- Services exports touched an all-time high of USD 387.6 billion in FY25, growing by 13.6%, reinforcing India's position as a global hub for technology and business services.
- India is the world's seventh-largest exporter of services, with its share in global services trade more than doubling from 2% in 2005 to 4.3% in 2024.
- Non-petroleum exports reached a historic high of USD 374.3 billion in FY25, while non-petroleum, non-gems and jewellery exports constituted nearly four-fifths of aggregate merchandise exports.

Remittances and Current Account

- India remained the world's largest recipient of remittances with inflows reaching **USD 135.4 billion** in FY25 (approximately 3.5% of GDP), supporting stability in the external account.
- The share of remittances from advanced economies increased, reflecting a growing contribution from skilled and professional workers abroad.
- India's current account deficit remained moderate, supported by strong net inflows from services exports and remittances that offset the merchandise trade deficit, with CAD at around 1.3% of GDP in Q2 FY26 comparing favourably with several other major economies.

Foreign Exchange Reserves

- India's foreign exchange reserves increased to **USD 701.4 billion** as of 16th January 2026, providing import cover of about 11 months and covering over 94% of external debt.
- This represents more than doubling from USD 341.6 billion in FY15 to current levels, strengthening resilience against external volatility.
- External debt to GDP ratio improved from 23.8% in FY15 to 19.2% by end-September 2025, indicating lower external leverage.

Foreign Direct Investment

- Amid a subdued global investment environment, India continued to attract substantial foreign direct investment with gross FDI inflows reaching USD 64.7 billion during April-November 2025.
- India ranked fourth globally in Greenfield investment announcements in 2024 with over 1,000 projects and emerged as the largest destination for Greenfield digital investments between 2020-24.

Inflation Trends

Record Low Inflation

- India recorded the lowest inflation rate since the beginning of the CPI series, with April-December 2025 average headline inflation coming in at just **1.7%**.
- The moderation in retail inflation can primarily be attributed to the general disinflationary trend in food and fuel prices, which together account for 52.7% of India's Consumer Price Index basket.
- Among major Emerging Markets and Developing Economies, India has recorded one of the sharpest declines in headline inflation in 2025 over 2024, amounting to about 1.8 percentage points.

Agriculture and Food Management

Production Performance

- With a good monsoon season, India's foodgrain production is estimated to have reached **3,577.3 lakh metric tonnes** in Agriculture Year 2024-25, an increase of 254.3 LMT over the previous year.
- This growth has been driven by higher output of rice, wheat, maize, and coarse cereals (Shree Anna).
- Despite rising foodgrain output, horticulture accounting for about 33% of agricultural GVA has emerged as a key driver, with production reaching 362.08 million tonnes in 2024-25, surpassing estimated foodgrain production.

Allied Sectors Growth

- Between FY15 and FY24, the livestock sector witnessed strong growth with GVA rising by nearly 195%.
- The fisheries sector performed well with fish production increasing by more than 140% during 2014-2024, compared to the increase from 2004-14, reflecting diversification of rural incomes.
- While crop GVA growth averaged 4.0% during FY20-FY24, Livestock (6.1%) and Fisheries (7.2%) are driving agricultural diversification.

Marketing and Income Support

- Price discovery has been enhanced through the e-NAM Scheme, which as of 31st December 2025 has onboarded about 1.79 crore farmers, 2.72 crore traders, and 4,698 FPOs, covering 1,522 mandis across 23 States and 4 UTs.
- Under **PM-KISAN**, more than ₹4.09 lakh crore has been released to eligible farmers in 21 instalments since inception.
- Under PM Kisan Maandhan Yojana, 24.92 lakh farmers are enrolled as of 31st December 2025, providing pension support and strengthening farmers' income security.

Services Sector

- **Sectoral Contribution:** Services' share in GDP rose to **53.6%** in H1 FY26, while services' share in GVA stood at the highest ever at 56.4% as per First Advance Estimates of FY26. This reflects the rising weight of modern, tradable, and digitally delivered services in the Indian economy. The services sector remains the main driver of growth with GVA increasing by 9.3% in the first half of FY26.
- **FDI and Employment:** The services sector continues to be the largest recipient of foreign direct investment inflows, accounting for an average of 80.2% of total FDI during FY23-FY25, up from 77.7% in the pre-pandemic period. The sector remains the urban employment backbone, accounting for 30% of total jobs and 61.9% of urban employment. India has consolidated its position as a global technology and innovation hub with expanding Global Capability Centres, and hosts the world's third-largest technology startup ecosystem.

Industry and Manufacturing

- **Industrial Performance:** Industrial activity strengthened in FY26 with Industry GVA growing 7.0% in real terms in H1, despite subdued and persistent global headwinds. Manufacturing growth accelerated with GVA expanding **7.72% in Q1** and **9.13% in Q2** of FY26, reflecting structural recovery. Real manufacturing GVA growth saw sustained momentum, indicating improved competitiveness and capacity utilization.
- **Production Linked Incentive Schemes: PLI Schemes** across 14 sectors have attracted over ₹2.0 lakh crore of actual investment, generating incremental production/sales exceeding ₹18.7 lakh crore and over 12.6 lakh jobs as of September 2025. The India Semiconductor Mission has advanced domestic capabilities with 10 semiconductor manufacturing and packaging projects approved across 6 States, involving about ₹1.60 lakh crore of investment.

Education Sector

- **School Education:** India today operates one of the world's largest school systems, serving 24.69 crore students across 14.71 lakh schools, supported by over 1.01 crore teachers according to UDISE+ 2024-25. **Gross Enrolment Ratios** stand at 90.9 at the primary stage (Grade I to V), 90.3 at the upper primary level (Grade VI to VIII), 78.7 at the secondary stage (Grade IX and X), and 58.4 at the higher secondary stage (Grade XI and XII). India is advancing towards universal access in education, targeting 100% GER in school education by 2030.
- **Higher Education Expansion:** The number of higher education institutions has increased from 51,534 in 2014-15 to 70,018 as of June 2025, significantly improving access. India now has **23 IITs, 21 IIMs, and 20 AIIMS**, alongside the establishment of two international IIT campuses in Zanzibar and Abu Dhabi. Under the National Education Policy, the higher education system has undergone several reforms including the National Credit Framework adopted by 170 universities. The Academic Bank of Credit covers 2,660 institutions with over 4.6 crore IDs issued, including the generation of 2.2 crore APAAR (Automated Permanent Academic Account Registry) IDs with credits. The target is to achieve 50% GER in higher education by 2035, with 153 universities having introduced flexible entry-exit pathways and biannual admissions.

Health Sector

- **Mortality Reduction:** Since 1990, India has reduced its **Maternal Mortality Rate** by 86%, far exceeding the global average of 48%. A 78% decline in the Under-Five Mortality Rate was achieved, surpassing the global reduction of 61%. A 70% decline in the Neonatal Mortality Rate was recorded compared to 54% globally during 1990-2023. The Infant Mortality Rate marked a drop of more than 37% over the past decade, declining from 40 deaths per thousand live births in 2013 to 25 in 2023.

Employment and Skill Development Employment Trends

- **Employment Trends:** A total of **56.2 crore people** (aged 15 years and above) were employed in Q2 FY26, reflecting creation of around 8.7 lakh new jobs in Q2 compared to Q1 of FY26. Labour force participation rate rose from approximately 55% in April to about 56.1% by December, while unemployment stayed low at around 5% across Q1-Q2 FY26. Female labour force participation rate rose from 23.3% in 2017-18 to 41.7% in 2023-24, alongside a sharp decline in female unemployment from 5.6% to 3.2%.
- **Organised Sector Employment:** The Annual Survey of Industries results for FY24 highlight the manufacturing sector's resilience, showing a 6% year-on-year increase in employment over the previous year, translating to an addition of over 10 lakh jobs in FY24 compared to FY23. The Labour Codes have formally recognised gig and platform workers, expanding social security, welfare funds, and benefit portability.
- **Worker Registration and Placement:** As of January 2026, the **e-Shram portal** has successfully registered over 31 crore unorganised workers, with women accounting for over 54% of total registrants, substantially strengthening the reach of gender-focused welfare schemes. The National Career Service is a one-stop solution connecting job seekers, employers, and training providers with over 59 million registered job seekers and 5.3 million job providers across diverse sectors, mobilising approximately 80 million vacancies. Vacancies mobilised in the National Career Service Portal exceeded 2.8 crore in FY25 and have already crossed 2.3 crore by September FY26.

Artificial Intelligence Ecosystem

- **India's AI Fundamentals:** India has strong AI fundamentals with top-tier research output, a large talent pool, and the second most AI-literate workforce globally after the United States. The country possesses vast yet underused domestic data across key sectors that can fuel AI development. Built on India's approximately 1 billion connected users, the AI data framework balances openness, oversight, and domestic value creation through incentive-based compliance.
- **Development Approach:** Smaller, task-specific models deployed across sectors allow innovation to diffuse more evenly, reduce entry barriers for firms, and better fit the diversity of India's economic landscape. India's demand for AI is emerging from real-world problems rather than speculative frontier uses. Across healthcare, agriculture, urban management, education, disaster preparedness, and public administration, there is growing appetite for AI systems that work on local hardware and operate in low-resource settings.



MIND MAP

News Highlights (29 Jan 2026)

- **Real GDP growth projection for FY27: 6.8%–7.2%.**
- **FY26 First Advance Estimates: real GDP 7.4%, GVA 7.3%.**
- **CPI inflation (Apr–Dec 2025): 1.7%; forex reserves: USD 701.4 bn; GNPA (Sep 2025): 2.2%.**

Sectoral Engines

- Agriculture: foodgrains 3,577.3 LMT (2024–25); horticulture 362.08 MT.
- Industry: manufacturing acceleration in FY26 (Q1 and Q2 strength).
- PLI: ₹2.0 lakh cr+ investment; ₹18.7 lakh cr+ incremental production; 12.6 lakh+ jobs (Sep 2025).
- Infrastructure and Delivery
- Capex scale-up: ₹2.63 lakh cr (FY18) to ₹11.21 lakh cr (FY26 BE).
- Highways: NH network 1,46,572 km (Dec 2025); high-speed corridors 5,364 km.
- Rail electrification 99.1% (Oct 2025); airports 74 to 164 (2014–2025); RE capacity share ~49.83%.

Strategic Vision

- Shift from Swadeshi to Strategic Resilience to Strategic Indispensability.
- Disciplined indigenisation with a three-tier vulnerability and feasibility approach.

AI and Future Readiness

- Strong fundamentals: large talent pool; high AI literacy; large domestic data potential.
- Focus on smaller, task-specific models for diffusion across sectors.
- Priority use cases: healthcare, agriculture, cities, education, disaster management, public administration.

Public Capex and Debt

- Effective Central capex: around 4% of GDP (FY25).
- States' capex supported via SASCI; States' capex around 2.4% of GDP (FY25).
- General government debt-to-GDP reduced by ~7.1 percentage points since 2020.
- Money and Banking
- Bank asset quality at record strength: GNPA 2.2%, net NPA 0.5% (Sep 2025).
- Credit growth (Dec 2025): 14.5% YoY.
- Financial system validation: IMF–World Bank FSAP 2025 notes resilience and buffers.

Inclusion and Markets

- Jan Dhan: 55.02 cr accounts (Mar 2025).
- Mudra: ₹36.18 lakh cr across 55.45 cr loans (Oct 2025).
- Capital markets: 21.6 cr+ demat; 12 cr unique investors (Sep 2025); MF investors 5.9 cr.
- External Sector
- Total exports: USD 825.3 bn (FY25); services exports: USD 387.6 bn.
- Remittances: USD 135.4 bn (FY25); CAD around 1.3% of GDP (Q2 FY26).
- Forex reserves: USD 701.4 bn (16 Jan 2026); import cover ~11 months.

What the Economic Survey Is

- Annual analytical review by DEA, Ministry of Finance, under Chief Economic Adviser.
- Serves as the diagnosis for the Union Budget's policy prescription.
- Began in 1950–51; became separate from Budget in 1964.
- Growth and Demand
- PFCE growth FY26: 7.0%; share in GDP: 61.5% (highest since 2012).
- GFCF growth FY26: 7.8%; investment share: 30% of GDP.
- Services-led growth: services GVA 9.3% in H1 FY26; ~9.1% full year estimate.

Fiscal and Taxes

- Centre revenue receipts: 9.2% of GDP (FY25); non-corporate taxes rising.
- ITR filings: 6.9 cr (FY22) to 9.2 cr (FY25).
- GST (Apr–Dec 2025): ₹17.4 lakh cr, 6.7% YoY; e-way bills 21% YoY.
- GST 2.0 Proposal
- Two-rate structure: 18% Standard and 5% Merit.
- 40% for demerit/sin goods (including cess).

Connected Topics

How GDP and GVA are measured in India

- India's official GDP/GVA estimates are compiled and released by the National Statistical Office (NSO) under MoSPI through periodic press notes and national accounts statements. Real (constant price) and nominal (current price) estimates are both published, and the current constant-price series uses base year 2011–12.
- MoSPI/NSO has stated that it is in the process of revising the National Accounts base year from 2011–12 to 2022–23, implying future releases will reflect updated benchmarks, data sources, and methods.
- GVA at basic prices is defined as output (valued at basic prices) minus intermediate consumption (valued at purchasers' prices). GDP (Production/Income Approach) is compiled as: GDP = GVA at Basic Prices + Net Taxes on Products.
- GDP is also compiled using the expenditure approach, where GDP is the sum of PFCE + GFCE + GFCF + Change in Stocks + Valuables + Exports − Imports, and the official tables explicitly note this identity.
- NSO records a "discrepancy" representing the gap between GDP compiled via the production/income approach and GDP compiled via the expenditure approach.
- GDP can also be obtained by the income approach by summing income components that make up value added, as described in national accounts methodology.
- National accounts compilation is a large integration exercise that draws from multiple diverse data sources, because it is designed to account for the economy-wide set of transactions.
- Published GDP/GVA estimates are revised when fresher/revised underlying data become available, and NSO explicitly documents such revisions in its methodological notes.

Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI)

- Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) is the Union Ministry that serves as the nodal agency for the planned and organised development of India's official statistical system, and it also handles key programme implementation responsibilities.
- MoSPI coordinates statistical activities among the Government of India, State Governments, Union Territories, and also engages with international agencies on statistical matters.
- MoSPI's core statistics work is carried out through the National Statistical Office (NSO), which lays down and maintains norms and standards on concepts, definitions, methods of data collection, processing, and dissemination of official statistics. In May 2019, MoSPI restructured its statistics wing by integrating the Central Statistics Office (CSO) and the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) into the NSO to streamline functions and improve administrative synergy.
- The NSO's organisational structure includes a Director General (National Sample Survey) and a Director General (Central Statistics), with divisions such as Household Survey, Enterprise Survey, Field Operations, Coordination and Quality Control, Economic Statistics, National Accounts, Social Statistics, and Price Statistics.
- MoSPI publishes official statistics and macro-indicators through a pre-announced Advance Release Calendar, including scheduled releases for GDP, Index of Industrial Production (IIP), Consumer Price Index (CPI), and major survey outputs such as PLFS, ASI, and ASUSE. On the programme implementation side, MoSPI's Infrastructure and Project Monitoring Division (IPMD) monitors Central Sector infrastructure projects costing ₹150 crore and above using the Online Computerized Monitoring System (OCMS) and publishes periodic monitoring outputs (such as monthly and quarterly reports) based on project data.
- MoSPI administers and monitors the Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS) by prescribing guidelines and reviewing implementation, and it supports statistical governance through the National Statistical Commission, constituted on 12 July 2006 to evolve and enforce statistical priorities, standards, and coordination.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Which ministry prepares the Economic Survey of India?
   (a) Ministry of Commerce and Industry
   (b) Ministry of Finance
   (c) Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation
   (d) NITI Aayog Secretariat

2. The Economic Survey is prepared under the guidance of which of the following key official?
   (a) Cabinet Secretary (b) Chief Economic Adviser
   (c) Finance Secretary (d) RBI Governor

3. What real GDP growth range has been projected for FY 2026-27 in the Survey?
   (a) 6.8–7.2% (b) 5.0–5.5%
   (c) 7.8–8.4% (d) 4.5–5.0%

4. Gross Fixed Capital Formation growth in FY26 was estimated at around to which of the following percentage?
   (a) 3.1% (b) 5.4%
   (c) 7.8% (d) 10.2%

5. Services sector GVA growth for FY26 was estimated close to which of the following percentage?
   (a) 4.5% (b) 6.8%
   (c) 9.1% (d) 11.6%

6. India's first International Financial Services Centre is located at, which of the following cities?
   (a) Mumbai (b) Hyderabad
   (c) Chennai (d) GIFT City

7. The Financial Sector Assessment Program validating India's financial system was conducted jointly by which organisations?
   (a) WTO and UNCTAD (b) IMF and World Bank
   (c) OECD and BIS (d) ADB and AIIB

8. India ranked which position globally in Greenfield investment announcements in 2024?
   (a) Second
   (b) Third
   (c) Fourth
   (d) Fifth

9. Among allied agricultural sectors during FY15-FY24, which of the following sector recorded about 7.2% GVA growth, driving diversification?
   (a) Crop sector (b) Livestock sector
   (c) Forestry sector (d) Fisheries sector

10. The India-UAE CEPA trade agreement was concluded in which of the following year?
    (a) 2022 (b) 2021
    (c) 2023 (d) 2024

11. India became the world's which-largest domestic aviation market?
    (a) First (b) Second
    (c) Third (d) Fourth

12. India's Global Innovation Index rank improved to which of the following position in 2025?
    (a) 28th (b) 38th
    (c) 48th (d) 58th

13. India hosts the world's which-largest technology startup ecosystem?
    (a) First (b) Second
    (c) Third (d) Fifth

14. Global Capability Centres (GCCs) expansion is cited in the Survey as strengthening India's position primarily in which domain?
    (a) Agricultural mechanisation
    (b) Technology and innovation ecosystem
    (c) Defence manufacturing clusters
    (d) Traditional handicrafts exports

15. Under the National Education Policy reforms, how many institutions are covered under the Academic Bank of Credit?
    (a) 1,660 institutions (b) 2,060 institutions
    (c) 2,660 institutions (d) 3,060 institutions

16. India became the fourth country to achieve autonomous satellite docking capability through which mission?
    (a) Gaganyaan Dock-X (b) SpaDeX
    (c) NavIC-Link (d) Antrix-Dock

17. India has reduced its Under-Five Mortality Rate by what percentage since 1990?
(a) 58% (b) 68% (c) 78% (d) 88%

18. The Labour Codes have formally recognised which category of workers for expanded social security coverage?
(a) Contractual migrant labourers
(b) Gig and platform workers
(c) Government trainees
(d) Export processing workers

19 The National Nuclear Energy Mission targets expansion of nuclear power capacity to what level by 2047?
(a) 50 GW (b) 75 GW (c) 150 GW (d) 100 GW

20. Rail electrification achieved what percentage coverage by October 2025, reflecting a shift toward cleaner transport?
(a) 89.1%
(b) 94.1%
(c) 99.1%
(d) 100%

ANSWER KEY

1. (b)	2. (b)	3. (a)	4. (c)	5. (c)	6. (d)	7. (b)	8. (c)
9. (d)	10. (a)	11. (c)	12. (b)	13. (c)	14. (b)	15. (c)	16. (b)
17. (c)	18. (b)	19. (d)	20. (c)				

Union Budget 2026-27: A Yuva Shakti-Driven Blueprint for Viksit Bharat

News Highlights:

- Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presented the **Union Budget 2026-27** in Parliament on 1st February 2026, marking her record ninth consecutive budget presentation and the first budget prepared in the newly inaugurated **Kartavya Bhawan**.
- The budget is anchored in three foundational duties or "Kartavyas" aimed at accelerating economic growth, building people's capacities, and ensuring inclusive development aligned with the vision of **Viksit Bharat**.
- Public capital expenditure has been enhanced to ₹12.2 lakh crore for FY 2026-27, representing approximately 3.1% of GDP, continuing the government's thrust on infrastructure-led growth.
- The fiscal deficit target for FY 2026-27 has been set at **4.3% of GDP**, while the debt-to-GDP ratio is estimated to decline to 55.6%, with the government aiming to reduce it to 50% by 2030-31.
- The **New Income Tax Act, 2025** will come into effect from 1st April 2026, replacing the six-decade-old Income Tax Act, 1961, with simplified rules and forms to ease compliance for ordinary citizens.

The Union Budget of India

- The **Union Budget of India** is the annual financial statement of the Government of India, presented in **Parliament**.
- It details the estimated receipts (revenues) and expenditures of the government for the **upcoming financial year**, as required under **Article 112 of the Indian Constitution.** It serves as a blueprint for the country's economic planning.
- Traditionally presented on the last working day of February, since 2017, it has been advanced to **February 1st** to allow ample time for legislative approval before the new fiscal year commences on April 1st.



- **Presentation and Approval:** On the designated day, the **Finance Minister presents the budget in the Lok Sabha, accompanied by a budget speech** that outlines **key proposals and fiscal policies.**
- Subsequently, the budget undergoes discussions in both houses of Parliament. Post-debate, the Finance Bill and Appropriation Bill are passed, granting the government the authority to implement its fiscal measures.
- **Budget Preparation Process:** The formulation of the Union Budget is a meticulous exercise involving multiple stages:
  - **Estimation of Revenue and Expenditure:** Various ministries and departments submit their estimates, which are scrutinized and consolidated by the Ministry of Finance.
  - **Consultations:** The Finance Ministry engages with stakeholders, including industry leaders, economists, and civil society, to gather inputs and suggestions.
  - **Economic Survey:** Presented a day before the budget, it provides an overview of the economy's performance over the past year and sets the context for the budget.
  - **Cabinet Approval:** The finalized budget is presented to the Union Cabinet for approval before being tabled in Parliament.

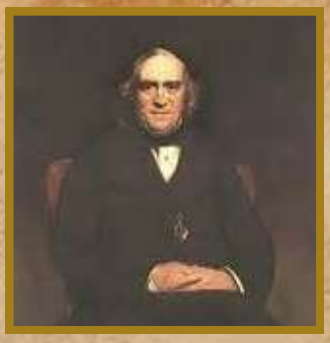
History of Budget

James Wilson, the finance member of the Indian council and founder of the newspaper The Economist, presented India's first Union Budget on April 7, 1860. The Budget was presented following the Revolt of 1857 to reform the country's financial system.



R.K. Shanmukham Chetty

- After Independence, **the first Union Budget of independent India was presented on November 26, 1947, by R.K. Shanmukham Chetty, India's first Finance Minister.** It was an interim budget.
- **The next two budgets of the Republic of India (1950)** were presented by **John Mathai,** the then **Finance Minister,** who also introduced the concept of the **Planning Commission.**



James Wilson



John Mathai

- **In 2000, Finance Minister Yashwant Sinha** switched the budget presentation time from **5:00 PM to 11:00 AM.**
- In **2017**, Finance Minister **Arun Jaitley merged the Railway Budget with the General Budget,** ending a 92-year-old tradition of presenting them separately.

Constitutional Provisions



- Article 112 of the Indian Constitution mandates that the President of India must lay an annual financial statement before both houses of Parliament.
- Article 110 defines a Money Bill, which includes provisions related to taxation, government borrowing, and expenditure.
- Article 265 states that no tax shall be levied or collected except by authority of law.
- Article 266 and Article 267 deal with the Consolidated Fund of India and the Contingency Fund, respectively.
- The Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act, 2003, was enacted to maintain fiscal discipline and transparency in budgeting.

Nodal Body and Preparation Process

- The **Budget Division** under the Department of Economic Affairs in the Ministry of Finance serves as the nodal agency responsible for preparing and presenting the Union Budget in consultation with NITI Aayog and concerned ministries.
- The first Budget of Independent India was presented in 1947, and until 2017, the Government of India maintained two separate budgets comprising the Railway Budget and the General Budget.
- The budget enactment process involves six distinct stages: Presentation, General Discussion, Scrutiny by Departmental Standing Committees, Voting on Demands for Grants, Passing of the Appropriation Bill, and Passing of the Finance Bill.

Economic Divisions Involved:

- The Budget is primarily prepared by the Budget Division of the Department of Economic Affairs (DEA), Ministry of Finance.
- Other agencies like NITI Aayog, Reserve Bank of India (RBI), and Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) also provide input.

Most Memorable Budgets:



Manmohan Singh

1991 Budget (Manmohan Singh): **Liberalization of Indian economy, LPG reforms.**



2000 Budget (Yashwant Sinha): **IT sector incentives, modernized tax system.**



2017 Budget (Arun Jaitley): **Rail Budget merger and 5% tax rate for individuals earning between ₹2.5-5 lakh.**

Key Contributors

Some of India's notable **Finance Ministers** who have presented multiple Union Budgets:

- **Morarji Desai: 10 budgets** (highest ever).
- **P. Chidambaram: 9 budgets.**
- **Pranab Mukherjee: 7 budgets.**
- **Manmohan Singh (1991-92)**: Introduced liberalization and **LPG reforms (Liberalization, Privatization, Globalization).**
- **Arun Jaitley (2014-2019):** Merged **Railway Budget with the Union Budget and introduced GST.**

Budget Presentation Trends:

- **Until 1999,** the Budget was presented at **5:00 PM,** a tradition from the British era.
- **Since 2000**, the Budget has been presented at **11:00 AM.**
- **Since 2017**, the Budget is presented on **February 1st** instead of the last working day of February.

Budget Document Components:

- **Annual Financial Statement** (Main Budget Document).
- **Finance Bill** (Taxation Provisions).
- **Expenditure Budget** (Ministry-Wise Spending).
- **Receipts Budget (**Expected Revenues).
- **Appropriation Bill** (Expenditure Authorizations).

Language & Accessibility:

- The Budget is presented in **both Hindi and English.**
- It is available online via the **Ministry of Finance** website and is **accessible as an app from 2021.**

Comparison with Other Countries:

United States: The President submits a Budget Proposal to Congress, but decisions rest with the legislature.

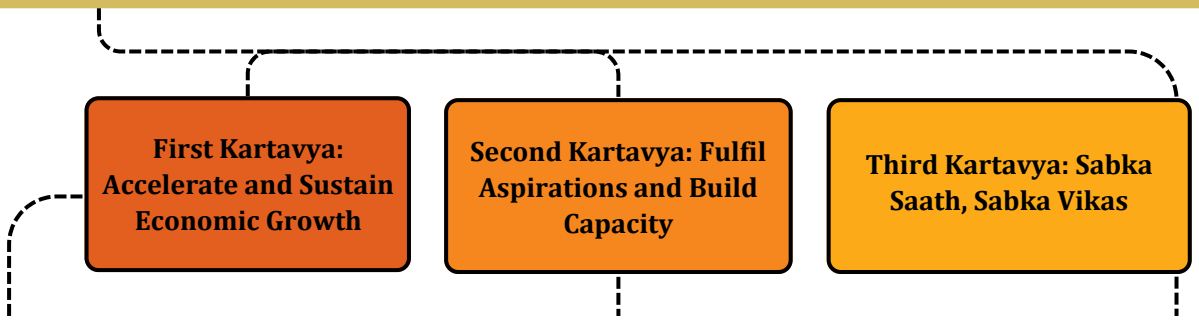
United Kingdom: The Chancellor of the Exchequer presents the Budget before Parliament.

Germany: The Federal Finance Minister presents the Budget before the Bundestag.

Interesting Facts

- **Morarji Desai** holds the record for presenting the most budgets (10 times).
- **Indira Gandhi (1970-71)** is the **only woman to have presented the Union Budget** while she was also the **Prime Minister and Finance Minister.**
- **Nirmala Sitharaman (2019-present)** has presented **8 budgets (7 Budgets and 1 Interim Budget),** making her the longest-serving Finance Minister to present continuous budgets.
- **Longest Budget Speech: Nirmala Sitharaman's 2020 Budget Speech lasted 2 hours 42 minutes.**
- **First Paperless Budget:** The **2021-22 Union Budget** was completely **digital due to COVID-19.**
- **Smallest Budget Speech**: **800 words, by Jawaharlal Nehru in 1958.**

Three Kartavyas: Guiding Principles of Budget 2026-27



- The first duty focuses on enhancing productivity and competitiveness while building resilience against volatile global dynamics through interventions in six key areas.
- These areas include scaling up manufacturing in seven strategic and frontier sectors, rejuvenating legacy industrial sectors, creating champion MSMEs, delivering a powerful push to infrastructure, ensuring long-term energy security, and developing City Economic Regions.
- The second duty aims to fulfil the aspirations of citizens and build their capacity, making them strong partners in India's path to prosperity with renewed emphasis on the services sector.
- Close to 25 crore individuals have emerged from multidimensional poverty through a decade of sustained and reform-oriented government efforts, providing the foundation for this aspiration-driven approach.
- The third duty aligns with the vision of inclusive development, ensuring every family, community, region, and sector has access to resources, amenities, and opportunities for meaningful participation.
- Targeted efforts focus on increasing farmer incomes, empowering Divyangjan, providing mental health and trauma care access to vulnerable populations, and accelerating development in Purvodaya States and the North-East Region.

Key Development Areas in Budget 2026-27

Manufacturing and Strategic Sector Initiatives

Biopharma SHAKTI Mission

- The government announced the **Biopharma SHAKTI** (Strategy for Healthcare Advancement through Knowledge, Technology and Innovation) mission with an outlay of ₹10,000 crore over five years to develop India as a global biopharma manufacturing hub.
- The strategy includes establishing a Biopharma-focused network with three new National Institutes of Pharmaceutical Education and Research (NIPERs) and upgrading seven existing ones.
- A network of over 1,000 accredited India Clinical Trials sites will be created to support the development and approval of complex biological drugs and biosimilars.

1

- The Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation will be strengthened to meet global standards and approval timeframes through a dedicated scientific review cadre and specialists.

India Semiconductor Mission 2.0

- Building on ISM 1.0 launched in 2021 with approximately $10 billion outlay, the **India Semiconductor Mission 2.0** has been announced to advance technological sovereignty.
- The mission focuses on manufacturing semiconductor equipment and materials, designing full-stack Indian intellectual property, and fortifying resilient supply chains.
- Industry-led research and training centres will be established to develop technology and skilled workforce critical for economic and national security.

Electronics and Critical Minerals

- The Electronics Components Manufacturing Scheme outlay has been increased from ₹22,919 crore to ₹40,000 crore to deepen domestic value chains and boost electronics manufacturing.
- Dedicated **Rare Earth Corridors** will be established in Odisha, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu for mining, processing, research, and manufacturing of Rare Earth Permanent Magnets.
- Basic customs duty on import of capital goods required for processing of critical minerals has been exempted to reduce dependence on China across the critical minerals supply chain.

Container and Capital Goods Manufacturing

- A ₹10,000 crore Container Manufacturing Scheme has been announced over a five-year period to create a globally competitive container manufacturing ecosystem amid continued shortage and dependency on China.
- Hi-Tech Tool Rooms by Central Public Sector Enterprises and a Scheme for Enhancement of Construction and Infrastructure Equipment have been proposed to strengthen domestic capital goods manufacturing.
- Three dedicated Chemical Parks will be established under a cluster-based, plug-and-play model to reduce import dependence and enhance domestic production capacity.

Infrastructure Development Initiatives

High-Speed Rail Corridors

- Seven **High-Speed Rail corridors** between cities will be developed as "Growth Connectors" to promote environmentally sustainable passenger systems.
- These corridors include Mumbai-Pune, Pune-Hyderabad, Hyderabad-Bengaluru, Hyderabad-Chennai, Chennai-Bengaluru, Delhi-Varanasi, and Varanasi-Siliguri.
- The initiative builds on India's first high-speed rail corridor (bullet train project) between Mumbai and Ahmedabad, with the Surat-Billimora stretch scheduled for operation by August 2027.

2

Freight and Cargo Movement

- New Dedicated Freight Corridors connecting Dankuni in West Bengal to Surat in Gujarat have been proposed for environmentally sustainable movement of cargo.
- Twenty new National Waterways will be operationalised over the next five years, starting with NW-5 in Odisha to connect mineral-rich areas of Talcher and Angul to the ports of Paradeep and Dhamra.
- A Coastal Cargo Promotion Scheme will incentivise a modal shift from road and rail to waterways and coastal shipping to raise their share from 6% to 12% by 2047.
- Ship-repair ecosystems will be established in Varanasi and Patna to support inland waterway operations.

City Economic Regions

- **City Economic Regions (CERs)** will be developed by mapping cities based on their specific growth drivers to amplify the economic power of urban agglomerations.
- An allocation of ₹5,000 crore per CER over five years has been proposed for implementation through a challenge mode with reform-cum-results based financing mechanism.
- Initial CERs will be established in Bengaluru, Pune, Surat, Varanasi, Visakhapatnam, the tri-cities of Bhubaneswar-Puri-Cuttack, and Coimbatore-Erode-Tiruppur.

Capital Expenditure Allocation

- Public capital expenditure has increased manifold from ₹2 lakh crore in FY 2014-15 to an allocation of ₹11.2 lakh crore in BE 2025-26, now enhanced to ₹12.2 lakh crore for FY 2026-27.
- Road Transport and Highways has been allocated ₹2.94 lakh crore, while Railways received ₹2.78 lakh crore, with total railway capex including IEBR standing at ₹2.93 lakh crore.
- Together, roads and railways account for over 47% of the Centre's total capital expenditure allocation, continuing as primary drivers of infrastructure development.
- An **Infrastructure Risk Guarantee Fund** will be set up to provide prudently calibrated partial credit guarantees to lenders during infrastructure development and construction phases.

MSME and Industrial Revival

SME Growth Fund

- A dedicated ₹10,000 crore **SME Growth Fund** has been proposed to create future champion MSMEs, incentivizing enterprises based on select criteria to compete globally.
- The Self-Reliant India Fund will receive an additional ₹2,000 crore to continue supporting micro enterprises and ensure steady access to risk capital.
- "Corporate Mitras" are envisioned as key enablers to mentor, guide, and integrate small enterprises into larger value chains.

3

Trade Receivables and Liquidity Support

- Four measures have been proposed to maximise the potential of the Trade Receivables Discounting System (TReDS) platform for improving MSME liquidity.
- TReDS will be mandated as the transaction settlement platform for all purchases that central power sector companies make from MSMEs.
- A Credit Guarantee Support Mechanism through CGTMSE will be introduced for invoice discounting on the platform, encouraging cheaper and quicker financing.

Social Sector and Human Development

Education Initiatives

- The Education Ministry allocation has increased by 8% from approximately ₹1.28 lakh crore to ₹1.39 lakh crore, with higher education receiving ₹55,727 crore and school education ₹83,562 crore.
- Five University Townships will be created in the vicinity of major industrial and logistics corridors to bridge academic and industrial requirements.
- One girls' hostel will be established in every district in Higher Education STEM institutions through VGF or capital support to address challenges faced by girl students.
- The Indian Institute of Creative Technologies, Mumbai will set up **AVGC Content Creator Labs** in 15,000 secondary schools and 500 colleges to support the growing Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming and Comics sector.

4

Healthcare and Medical Tourism

- Five Regional Medical Hubs will be established in partnership with the private sector to promote India as a hub for medical tourism services.
- These hubs will serve as integrated healthcare complexes combining medical, educational, and research facilities with AYUSH Centres, Medical Value Tourism Facilitation Centres, and post-care infrastructure.
- Three new All India Institutes of Ayurveda will be set up, and the WHO Global Traditional Medicine Centre in Jamnagar will be upgraded.

Sports Development

- The **Khelo India Mission** will be launched to transform the sports sector over the next decade through integrated talent development and systematic nurturing.
- The mission will facilitate an integrated talent development pathway supported by training centres, systematic development of coaches and support staff, and integration of sports science and technology.
- Competitions and leagues will be promoted to foster sports culture, with expanded sports infrastructure for training and competition.

Agricultural and Rural Development

Bharat-VISTAAR

- **Bharat-VISTAAR** (Virtually Integrated System to Access Agricultural Resources) will be launched as a multilingual AI tool integrating AgriStack portals and ICAR agricultural practices package.
- The platform will enhance farm productivity, enable better decisions for farmers, and reduce risk by providing customised advisory support in local languages. An allocation of ₹150 crore has been made for Bharat-VISTAAR for FY 2026-27.

5

SHE Marts and Women Empowerment

- Building on the success of the Lakhpati Didi Programme, **SHE Marts** (Self-Help Entrepreneur Marts) will be set up as community-owned retail outlets within cluster level federations.
- These marts will be supported through enhanced and innovative financing instruments to provide sustainable livelihood opportunities for rural women entrepreneurs.

High-Value Agriculture

- Support has been announced for high-value crops including coconut, sandalwood, cocoa, and cashew in coastal areas.
- Agar trees in the Northeast and nuts such as almonds, walnuts, and pine nuts in hilly regions will receive targeted support.
- A Coconut Promotion Scheme has been proposed to increase production and enhance productivity, benefiting approximately 30 million people dependent on coconut cultivation.

Regional Development Focus

Purvodaya States

- An integrated East Coast Industrial Corridor with a well-connected node at Durgapur will be developed to accelerate industrialization in the eastern region.
- Five tourism destinations will be created in the five Purvodaya States comprising Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Odisha, and Andhra Pradesh.
- Provision of 4,000 e-buses has been announced to improve public transportation in these states.

6

North-East Buddhist Circuits

- A scheme for Development of Buddhist Circuits will be launched in Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Assam, Manipur, Mizoram, and Tripura.
- The scheme will cover preservation of temples and monasteries, pilgrimage interpretation centres, connectivity improvements, and pilgrim amenities.
- This initiative recognizes the civilizational confluence of Theravada and Mahayana/Vajrayana Buddhist traditions in the region.





Direct Tax Reforms FY 2026-27

New Income Tax Framework

- The **New Income Tax Act, 2025** will come into effect from 1st April 2026, replacing the Income Tax Act, 1961, with simplified forms redesigned for easy compliance.
- No changes have been made to the tax slabs for FY 2026-27, maintaining stability in the personal taxation structure.
- Time available for revising returns has been extended from 31st December to 31st March with payment of a nominal fee.

TCS and TDS Rationalization

- Tax Collected at Source (TCS) on overseas tour packages has been reduced from the current 5% and 20% to a uniform 2% without any amount stipulation.
- TCS for pursuing education and medical purposes under the Liberalized Remittance Scheme has been reduced from 5% to 2%.
- TDS on supply of manpower services has been fixed at 1% for Individuals/HUF and 2% for others to remove ambiguity.

Penalty and Prosecution Rationalization

- Assessment and penalty proceedings will be integrated through a common order to reduce multiplicity of proceedings.
- Pre-payment quantum for dispute resolution has been reduced from 20% to 10%, calculated only on core tax demand.
- Non-disclosure of non-immovable foreign assets with aggregate value less than ₹20 lakh will receive immunity from prosecution with retrospective effect from 1st October 2024.
- Non-production of books of accounts and requirement of TDS payment where payment is made in kind will be decriminalized.

Securities Transaction Tax

- **Securities Transaction Tax (STT)** on futures has been raised to 0.05% from the present 0.02% to curb speculative trading.
- STT on options premium has been increased to 0.15% from the present 0.1%, while exercise of options has been raised to 0.15% from 0.125%.
- The hike triggered a sharp market sell-off with the benchmark Sensex declining more than 2,000 points immediately after the budget speech.

Indirect Tax and Customs Reforms



Customs Duty Rationalization

- Tariff rate on all dutiable goods imported for personal use has been reduced from 20% to 10%.
- Basic customs duty on 17 drugs or medicines has been exempted, and seven more rare diseases have been added for duty exemption on personal imports of medicines and Food for Special Medical Purposes.
- Duty-free import limits for specified inputs in marine, leather, and textile sectors have been increased from 1% to 3% of FOB value to boost export competitiveness.

Sectoral Exemptions

- Basic customs duty exemption on capital goods used for manufacturing Lithium-Ion Cells for batteries has been extended.
- Customs duty exemption on imports of goods required for Nuclear Power Projects has been extended until 2035 following enactment of the SHANTI Act.

- Basic customs duty on components and parts required for manufacture of civilian, training, and other aircraft, as well as MRO requirements for defence sector, has been exempted.

Trade Facilitation

- Cargo clearance approvals from various government agencies will be seamlessly processed through a single and interconnected digital window by end of the financial year.
- The Customs Integrated System (CIS) will be rolled out in two years as a single, integrated, and scalable platform for all customs processes.
- The customs warehousing framework will be transformed into a warehouse operator-centric system with self-declarations, electronic tracking, and risk-based audit.

Fiscal Consolidation and Macroeconomic Framework

- **Deficit Management:** The fiscal deficit for BE 2026-27 is estimated at **4.3% of GDP**, down from 4.4% in RE 2025-26, adhering to the glide path of reducing it below 4.5%. Revenue deficit is projected at 1.5% of GDP, with effective revenue deficit at 0.3% and primary deficit at 0.7%. The debt-to-GDP ratio is estimated to decline to 55.6% in BE 2026-27 from 56.1% in RE 2025-26, with a target of reaching 50±1% by 2030-31.
- **Budget Estimates for FY 2026-27:** Non-debt receipts are estimated at ₹36.5 lakh crore, with the Centre's net tax receipts at ₹28.7 lakh crore. Total expenditure is projected at ₹53.5 lakh crore, representing approximately 10% growth over the previous year. To finance the fiscal deficit, net market borrowings from dated securities are estimated at ₹11.7 lakh crore, with gross market borrowings at ₹17.2 lakh crore. Nominal GDP for FY 2026-27 is estimated at ₹393,00,393 crore, representing 10% growth over Advance Estimates for FY 2025-26.
- **Revenue Composition (Rupee Comes From):** Borrowings and Liabilities constitute 24% of government receipts, followed by Income Tax at 21% and Corporation Tax at 18%. GST and other taxes contribute 15%, while Non-Tax Revenues account for 10% and Union Excise Duties 6%. Customs duties contribute 4%, with Non-Debt Capital Receipts at 2%.
- **Expenditure Distribution (Rupee Goes To):** States' Share of Taxes receives the largest allocation at 22%, followed by Interest Payments at 20% and Central Sector Schemes at 17%. Defence allocation stands at 11%, Centrally Sponsored Schemes at 8%, and Finance Commission and other transfers at 7%. Major Subsidies account for 6%, Other Expenditures 7%, and Civil Pension 2%.

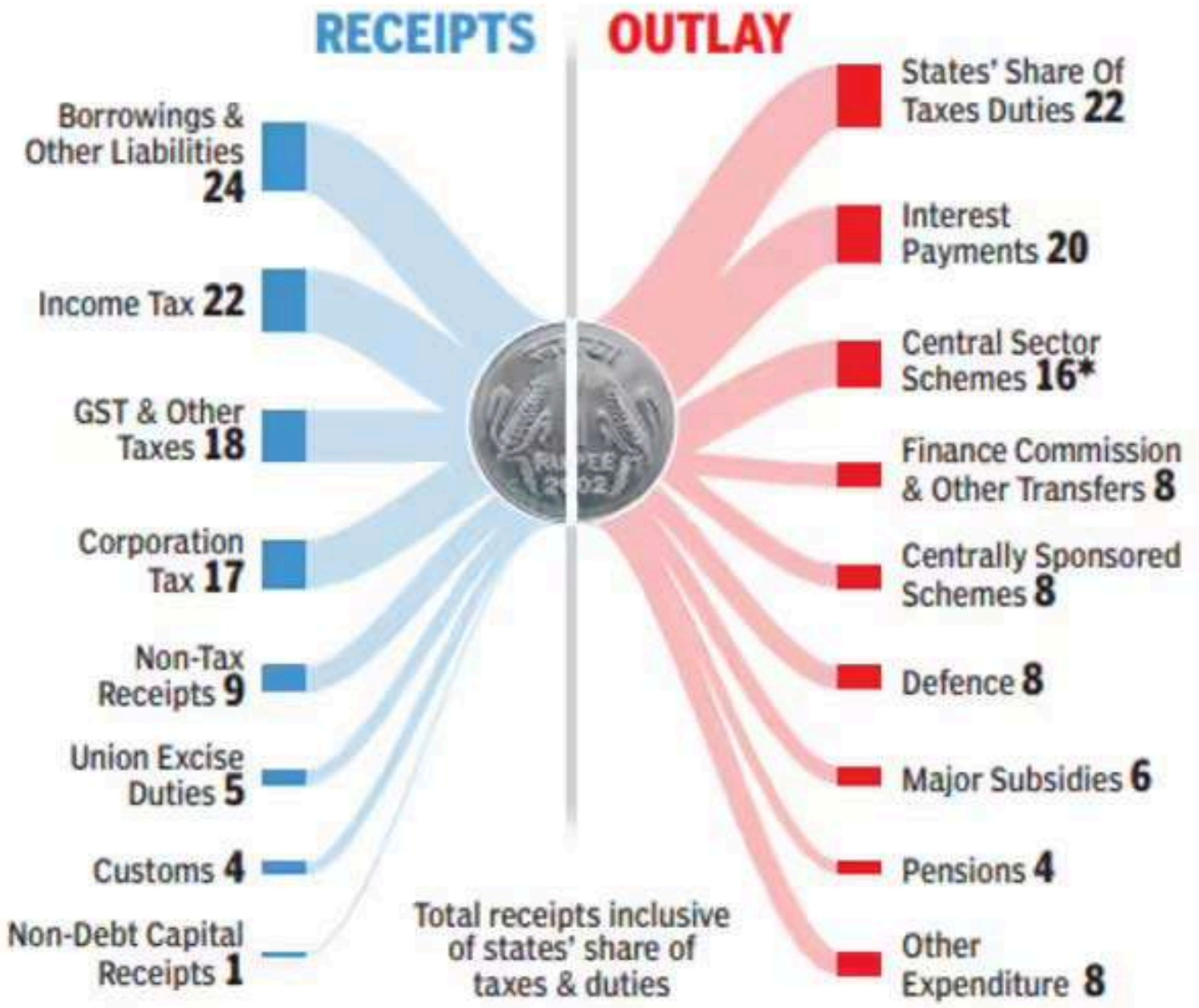
Additional Key Facts

This is the **9th consecutive budget** presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, making it a record in Indian budgetary history, and only the second time a budget has been presented on a Sunday after Yashwant Sinha's budget on 28th February 1999.

- The budget introduces a transition from fiscal deficit to **debt-to-GDP ratio** as the primary fiscal anchor, with the target of reducing it to 50±1% by 2030-31.
- Over **350 reforms** have been rolled out since the Prime Minister's Independence Day 2025 announcement, including GST simplification, notification of Labour Codes, and rationalization of mandatory Quality Control Orders.
- The defence budget has received a **15% hike** to ₹7.85 lakh crore for FY 2026-27, with the defence modernisation budget increasing by nearly 22% to ₹2.19 lakh crore.
- The Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming and Comics (AVGC) sector, part of the **Orange Economy**, is projected to require 2 million professionals by 2030, with current gaming revenue at approximately ₹232 billion in 2024.
- The Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) or **VB-GRAMG Scheme** has received an allocation of ₹95,692.31 crore for FY 2026-27, though it was not mentioned in the budget speech.

WHERE RUPEE COMES FROM, AND WHERE IT GOES

In 2025-26 as % share of total



*Excluding capital outlay on defence and subsidies



MIND MAP

News Highlights

- The Union Finance Minister presented the Budget 2026–27 with a focus on Yuva Shakti and Viksit Bharat, and it was prepared in Kartavya Bhawan.
- Public capital expenditure is set at ₹12.2 lakh crore (about 3.1% of GDP) and the fiscal deficit target is 4.3% of GDP.
- The New Income Tax Act, 2025 will take effect from 1 April 2026, replacing the Income Tax Act, 1961.

Agriculture, Women, Rural

- Bharat-VISTAAR AI advisory; SHE Marts for SHG entrepreneurs.
- High-value crops and Coconut Promotion Scheme support.

Taxes and Customs

- No slab change stated; return revision window extended to 31 March.
- TCS/TDS rationalisation; selected decriminalisation and immunity measures.
- STT increased on futures and options; customs duty rationalisation and digital single window.

Transfers and Devolution

- 16th Finance Commission: 41% vertical devolution retained; local body grants and FY27 grants.

Manufacturing and Strategic Sectors

- Biopharma SHAKTI: ₹10,000 crore; NIPER expansion; clinical trial network.
- Semiconductor Mission 2.0: equipment, materials, Indian IP, talent centres.
- Electronics components outlay raised; Rare Earth Corridors; critical minerals duty relief.
- Containers: ₹10,000 crore scheme; chemical parks; textile integrated programme.

Infrastructure and Logistics

- 7 High-Speed Rail corridors and new freight links.
- 20 new National Waterways; coastal cargo push.
- City Economic Regions with challenge-mode financing; Infrastructure Risk Guarantee Fund.

MSMEs and Cluster Revival

- ₹10,000 crore SME Growth Fund; extra support for Self-Reliant India Fund.
- TReDS strengthening and credit guarantee support.
- Revival of 200 legacy industrial clusters.

Social Sector

- Education allocation rises to ₹1.39 lakh crore; University Townships; girls' hostels in STEM.
- Regional medical hubs; AYUSH expansion; NIMHANS-2 and trauma care strengthening.
- Khelo India Mission for sports ecosystem.

Constitutional and Institutional Framework

- The Union Budget is the Annual Financial Statement under Article 112, laid before both Houses of Parliament.
- Expenditure requiring voting is presented as Demands for Grants under Article 113, and grants need Presidential recommendation.
- Money/Finance Bills can be introduced only in the Lok Sabha, and the Rajya Sabha must return them within 14 days.
- The DEA Budget Division prepares the Budget through stages including presentation, scrutiny, voting, and passage of Appropriation and Finance Bills.

Three Kartavyas

- Growth and competitiveness: manufacturing push, infrastructure, energy security, City Economic Regions.
- Capacity and aspirations: skills and services-led capacity building.
- Inclusive development: farmers, Divyangjan, mental health, Purvodaya and North-East.

Connected Topics

Subsidy reform and DBT efficiency

- A subsidy is a government support mechanism that reduces the cost of a good or service for a targeted group, or supports producers to achieve a public objective.
- Subsidy reform aims to improve targeting, reduce leakages, and limit fiscal burden while protecting the welfare objective behind the subsidy.
- Many traditional subsidies suffer from inclusion errors (benefits going to ineligible persons) and exclusion errors (eligible persons being left out) due to weak identification and outdated beneficiary lists.
- Subsidies delivered through price controls or in-kind distribution can create distortions such as overconsumption, black marketing, and inefficient allocation of resources.
- Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) shifts subsidy delivery from intermediaries to beneficiaries by transferring funds directly into verified bank accounts, reducing layers where diversion can occur.
- DBT efficiency depends on accurate beneficiary identification, reliable banking access, timely fund release, and robust last-mile delivery infrastructure.
- A strong DBT system requires clean data and continuous updating of beneficiary databases, including de-duplication and removal of inactive or ineligible beneficiaries.
- DBT can reduce administrative costs and improve accountability, but it can also face operational risks such as failed transfers, authentication issues, and gaps in financial access for vulnerable groups.
- For essential commodities, governments often use hybrid models where in-kind support continues but is strengthened through technology-enabled tracking and beneficiary validation.
- Effective reform usually combines DBT with grievance redressal, transparent eligibility rules, periodic audits, and outcome monitoring to ensure that the subsidy achieves measurable welfare results.

Funds under the Constitution of India

- The Constitution recognises three main public fund structures: the Consolidated Fund, the Public Account, and the Contingency Fund.
- Under Article 266(1), all revenues received by the Government of India, all loans raised, and all moneys received in repayment of loans form the Consolidated Fund of India.
- Each State also has its own Consolidated Fund under Article 266(1), constructed on similar principles for State finances.
- Under Article 266(3), no money can be withdrawn from the Consolidated Fund of India except under appropriation made by law, which is implemented through the budget and appropriation process.
- The Public Account of India is created under Article 266(2) and consists of money received by the Government in a trustee capacity, such as provident funds, small savings, and other deposits.
- Withdrawals from the Public Account are not treated in the same manner as expenditure from the Consolidated Fund because much of the Public Account money is repayable to the rightful claimants.
- The Contingency Fund of India is established under Article 267(1) to meet unforeseen expenditure pending legislative authorisation.
- Each State may establish a Contingency Fund under Article 267(2) for urgent and unforeseen expenditure within the State's finances.
- Money advanced from the Contingency Fund is typically recouped by subsequent authorisation from the legislature, after which the amount is replenished back into the Contingency Fund.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. The Union Budget is constitutionally referred to as which of the following under the Constitution of India?
   (a) Fiscal Policy Statement
   (b) Annual Financial Statement
   (c) Consolidated Finance Report
   (d) National Revenue Document

2. Which Article of the Constitution mandates the presentation of the Annual Financial Statement before Parliament?
   (a) Article 112 (b) Article 110
   (c) Article 113 (d) Article 117

3. A Money Bill or Finance Bill involving taxation can be introduced only in which House of Parliament?
   (a) Rajya Sabha
   (b) Joint Sitting of Parliament
   (c) Lok Sabha
   (d) Either House

4. The Rajya Sabha must return a Money Bill to the Lok Sabha within how many days?
   (a) 7 days (b) 10 days
   (c) 21 days (d) 14 days

5. Which division acts as the nodal agency for preparation of the Union Budget?
   (a) Revenue Department
   (b) Budget Division, Department of Economic Affairs
   (c) Expenditure Management Commission
   (d) Finance Commission Secretariat

6. Until which year were the Railway Budget and General Budget presented separately in India?
   (a) 2014
   (b) 2015
   (c) 2017
   (d) 2019

7. How many stages are involved in the enactment process of the Union Budget?
   (a) Four stages
   (b) Five stages
   (c) Six stages
   (d) Seven stages

8. The New Income Tax Act, 2025 replaces which earlier legislation?
   (a) Direct Taxes Code, 2010
   (b) Finance Act, 1992
   (c) Taxation Laws Amendment Act, 2019
   (d) Income Tax Act, 1961

9. The Union Budget 2026-27 was presented from which newly inaugurated government building?
   (a) North Block Annexe
   (b) Sardar Patel Bhawan
   (c) Kartavya Bhawan
   (d) Rashtriya Niti Complex

10. The Electronics Components Manufacturing Scheme outlay has been increased to approximately?
    (a) ₹30,000 crore (b) ₹35,000 crore
    (c) ₹40,000 crore (d) ₹50,000 crore

11. Dedicated Rare Earth Corridors proposed in the budget will be established in which of the following States?
    (a) Gujarat and Maharashtra
    (b) Odisha, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu
    (c) Punjab and Haryana
    (d) Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh

12. How many High-Speed Rail "Growth Connector" corridors have been proposed?
    (a) seven corridors (b) Six corridors
    (c) five corridors (d) Eight corridors

13. The new Dedicated Freight Corridor proposal connects which two locations?
    (a) Delhi and Mumbai
    (b) Chennai and Visakhapatnam
    (c) Dankuni and Surat
    (d) Ahmedabad and Kochi

14. Which of the following has been envisioned in the Union Budget FY 2026-27 as key enablers to mentor, guide, and integrate small enterprises into larger value chains?
    (a) Udyam Saathis (b) Corporate Mitras
    (c) MSME Champions (d) Digital Preraks

15. The Khelo India Mission announced in Budget 2026-27 aims to transform sports through which core approach?
(a) Private franchise leagues only
(b) Talent development and sports science integration
(c) Exclusive foreign coaching programmes
(d) Subsidised ticketing for tournaments

16. Tariff rate on all dutiable goods imported for personal use has been reduced from 20% to which of the following percentage?
(a) 5% (b) 8%
(c) 9 % (d) 10 %

17. Which of the following is the largest component under "Rupee Goes To" expenditure distribution is?
(a) Defence allocation
(b) Interest payments
(c) States' share of taxes
(d) Central sector schemes

18. The Sixteenth Finance Commission, whose recommendations were accepted in the budget, is chaired by which of the following?
(a) Rajiv Kumar
(b) Arvind Panagariya
(c) N.K. Singh
(d) Montek Singh Ahluwalia

19 The new fiscal framework introduced in the budget shifts the primary fiscal anchor from fiscal deficit towards which metric?
(a) Revenue deficit ratio
(b) Primary deficit ratio
(c) Debt-to-GDP ratio
(d) Current account balance

20. The Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming and Comics (AVGC) sector is projected to require approximately how many professionals by 2030?
(a) 1 million (b) 6 million
(c) 4 million (d) 2 million

ANSWER KEY

1. (b)	2. (a)	3. (c)	4. (d)	5. (b)	6. (c)	7. (c)	8. (d)
9. (c)	10. (c)	11. (b)	12. (a)	13. (c)	14. (b)	15. (b)	16. (d)
17. (c)	18. (b)	19. (c)	20. (d)				

NAGPUR CENTER







International Affairs

US Intervention in Venezuela and the Revival of the Monroe Doctrine

News Highlights:



- The United States military conducted Operation Absolute Resolve on January 3, 2026, which resulted in the detention of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro, his wife Cilia Flores, and several senior government officials who are now held in New York City facing criminal charges.
- President Donald Trump has revived the **Monroe Doctrine** from 1823 as a central pillar of American foreign policy, rebranding it as the "Trump Corollary" to justify military action and assert dominance over the **Western Hemisphere**.
- The intervention represents a dramatic policy reversal for Trump, who previously criticized foreign wars and promised to end prolonged overseas engagements, but now openly advocates controlling Venezuelan **crude oil reserves** & potentially administering the country for years.
- This operation follows a pattern of escalating American military assertiveness throughout 2025, including airstrikes in Syria, Nigeria, Yemen, and Somalia, attacks on drug-trafficking vessels in the Caribbean, and operations against Iranian nuclear facilities.
- The action has generated significant international criticism regarding sovereignty violations, sparked concerns within Trump's domestic support base about another prolonged foreign entanglement, and raised questions about the future political stability of Venezuela and Latin America.

Historical Context of American Involvement in Latin America

Origins and Evolution of the Monroe Doctrine

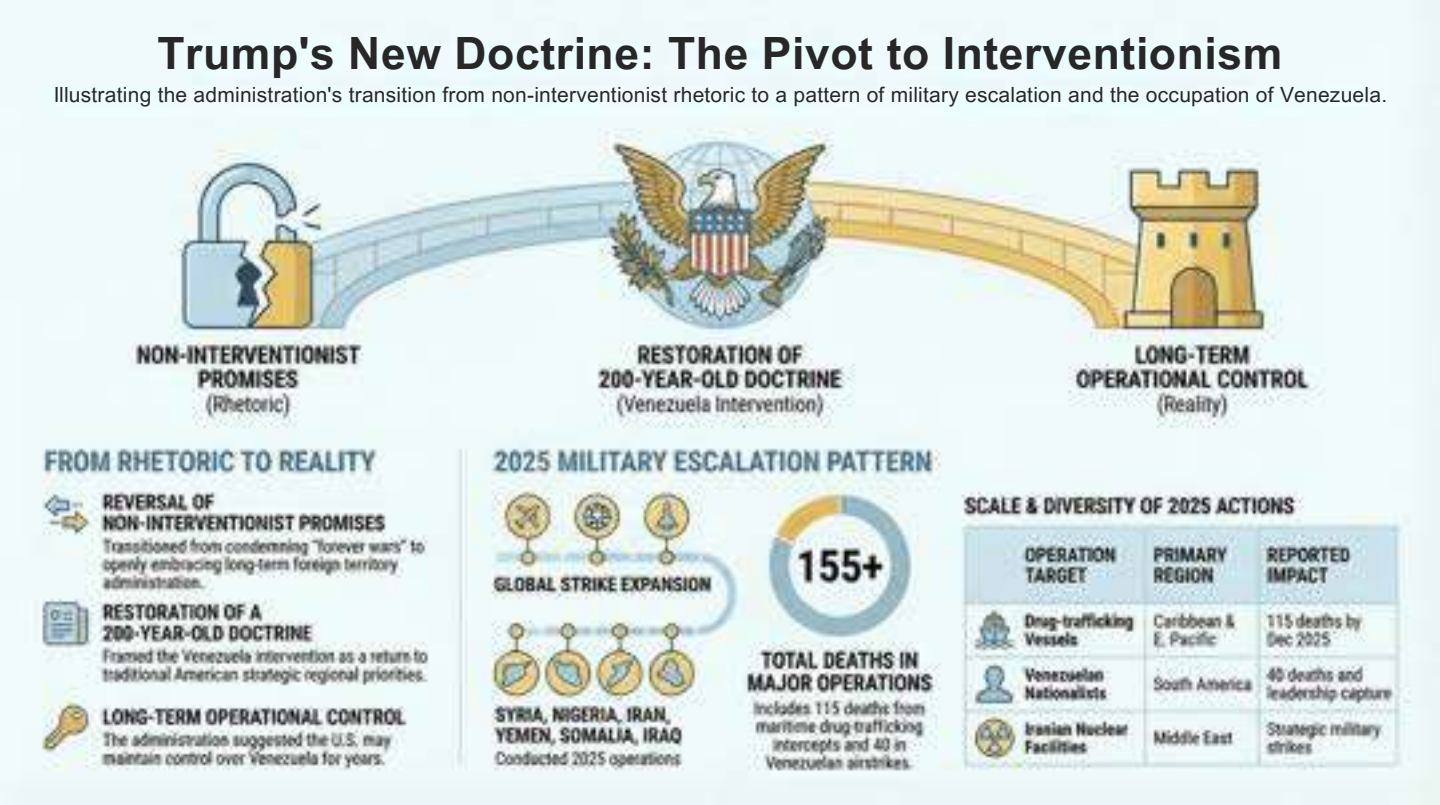
- Proclaimed by President James Monroe in 1823, the policy asserted that no new European colonisation would be permitted in the Americas, external interference would be treated as hostile to the United States, and the U.S. would avoid involvement in European conflicts. Initially a symbolic anti-colonial stance against renewed European influence, it was later expanded by Washington into a doctrine asserting U.S. strategic dominance over Latin America.

The Roosevelt Corollary and Expanded Intervention

- Introduced by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1904, the Roosevelt Corollary expanded the Monroe Doctrine by asserting the U.S. right to exercise “international police power” in Latin America in cases of chronic instability or perceived misconduct, thereby legitimising extensive American military and political interventions across the region during the twentieth century.

Pattern of Historical Interventions

- Between 1898 and 1994, the United States intervened in Latin America at least 41 times, including 17 direct military actions, supporting coups in Guatemala (1954), Brazil (1964), and Chile (1973), invading Cuba (1961), the Dominican Republic (1983), and Grenada (1983), and overthrowing the regime in Panama (1989). During the Cold War, the doctrine was repeatedly used to counter perceived Soviet influence through military and financial backing of authoritarian regimes across South America and support to proxy forces in Nicaragua and El Salvador. In recent decades, U.S. policy had largely moved away from openly invoking this interventionist framework in favor of multilateralism, until its renewed revival.



Reversal from Non-Interventionist Rhetoric

- Donald Trump initially positioned himself as an opponent of prolonged foreign military campaigns, frequently condemning the 2003 Iraq invasion and pledging to conclude what he termed "forever wars."
- Upon taking office in his current term, Trump presented himself as focused on domestic priorities and peace initiatives rather than overseas military adventures.
- The Venezuelan operation represents a complete reversal of this positioning, with Trump now openly embracing unilateral military action and potential long-term occupation or administration of foreign territory.

Pattern of Military Escalation

- Throughout 2025, the Trump administration steadily increased American military operations across multiple regions, including conducting airstrikes in Syria and Nigeria, threatening intervention during civil unrest in Iran, and launching operations against Iranian nuclear facilities.
- Additional military actions targeted drug-trafficking vessels in the Caribbean and Eastern Pacific, resulting in 115 deaths by the end of December 2025, as well as strikes against Houthi forces in Yemen, militant groups in Somalia, and extremist organizations in Iraq.
- These operations culminated in the Venezuela intervention, which involved intercepting oil tankers in the North Atlantic, conducting covert operations inside Venezuelan territory, and launching multiple airstrikes that killed at least 40 Venezuelan nationals before capturing the country's leadership.

Justification Framework

- Trump explicitly framed the Venezuelan action as consistent with a more than 200-year-old foreign policy principle, positioning it as a restoration of traditional American strategic priorities in the hemisphere.
- The administration released a new national security strategy document formally incorporating this revived doctrine as a guiding framework for regional policy.
- Trump has suggested the United States might maintain operational control over Venezuela "for years," though he has not articulated specific plans for how such administration would function.

Venezuela's Strategic Importance

Energy, geopolitics, and intervention logic

Energy Resources & Production Gap

- Venezuela possesses the world's largest proven crude oil reserves, estimated at over 300 billion barrels, representing approximately one-fifth of all proven petroleum reserves globally according to the US Energy Information Administration.
- Despite these massive reserves, the country currently produces only approximately 1 million barrels per day, accounting for merely 0.8 percent of global oil output.
- This stark disparity between potential and actual production results from decades of economic crisis, infrastructure deterioration, international sanctions, and mismanagement of the energy sector.
- Chevron remains the sole major foreign oil corporation with active exposure to Venezuelan crude production, giving American commercial interests a unique position within the country's energy industry.

300+ B barrels



1 M barrels per day

Trump's Resource Control Agenda

- President Trump has repeatedly stated that controlling Venezuelan oil resources constitutes a primary objective of the intervention, moving beyond initial justifications focused on drug trafficking.
- At a January 3 press conference, Trump declared that major American oil companies would enter Venezuela to invest billions of dollars in repairing degraded oil infrastructure and increasing production output.
- The administration envisions American firms taking operational control of Venezuela's energy sector to generate revenue while serving US strategic energy interests.



Infrastructure and Economic Realities

- Venezuela's petroleum infrastructure exists in a severely degraded state following years of sanctions, economic collapse, and insufficient investment in maintenance and modernization.
- The country's oil deposits consist primarily of heavy crude petroleum, which presents particular technical challenges for extraction and refining compared to lighter grades.
- Energy analysts estimate that restoring Venezuelan oil production to previous higher levels would require investments of tens of billions of dollars over multiple years, not the rapid increase Trump's statements suggest.



Official Justifications for Intervention

Narco-terrorism and Security Claims

- The administration initially justified the operation by charging Maduro and senior Venezuelan officials with narco-terrorism, drug trafficking, and weapons violations, portraying the regime as a direct security threat to American interests.

- These charges explicitly linked the Venezuelan government to the fentanyl crisis affecting the United States, providing a legal-political framework for military action under counter-narcotics authority.
- However, this rationale has not withstood scrutiny, as Venezuela does not rank among significant sources of drugs entering the United States and is not a major supplier of fentanyl, the most lethal substance currently being imported.

Countering Extra-Regional Influence

- The administration has identified Venezuela's deepening relationships with China, Russia, and Iran as threats to American dominance in the Western Hemisphere.
- Washington views these partnerships as challenges to its primacy in the region, prompting reassertion of control under a revived Monroe-style framework.
- The intervention aims to demonstrate American willingness to use force to prevent rival global powers from establishing strategic footholds in Latin America.

Implications for India

Limited Economic Impact

- The conflict presents negligible consequences for Indian trade relations, as bilateral commerce with Venezuela had already collapsed under American sanctions imposed in previous years.
- India's exports to Venezuela totaled merely USD 95.3 million in fiscal year 2025, consisting primarily of pharmaceutical products.
- Venezuelan crude oil imports to India declined by 81.3 percent in fiscal year 2025, falling to USD 255.3 million compared to USD 1.4 billion in the previous fiscal year.

Strategic and Energy Considerations

- The current conflict is unlikely to materially affect India's energy security in the immediate term given the already minimal import levels from Venezuela.
- If sanctions on Venezuela are eventually recalibrated or lifted, discounted Venezuelan crude could re-enter global markets, potentially strengthening India's long-term crude supply diversification strategy.
- Access to Venezuelan oil would enhance India's negotiating position with Middle Eastern suppliers and provide alternatives amid Western pressure regarding continued reliance on Russian petroleum imports.

Venezuela: Geographic and Economic Profile

Location and Physical Features

- Venezuela occupies the northern extremity of South America, bordered by the Caribbean Sea and Atlantic Ocean along its coastline, with land boundaries shared with Guyana to the east, Brazil to the south, and Colombia to the southwest and west.
- The country features diverse terrain including the Andes mountain range, Lake Maracaibo (South America's largest lake), the Llanos plains, the Guiana Highlands, and the Orinoco River system which shapes its ecology and economy.
- Major geographic landmarks include Pico Bolívar as the highest elevation point and Angel Falls, the world's tallest waterfall, located in the Guiana Highlands region.
- Principal river systems include the Orinoco and Rio Negro, while Venezuela administers several Caribbean islands including Margarita and Los Roques.

Political Structure and Natural Resources

- The country functions as a federal multiparty republic with a unicameral legislature, with Caracas serving as the national capital.
- Venezuela's resource base includes petroleum, natural gas, iron ore, gold, bauxite, and diamonds, with the economy historically dominated by oil extraction and export.
- As a founding member of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), Venezuela occupies a strategically critical position in global energy geopolitics.

Territorial Disputes

- Venezuela maintains a long-standing territorial dispute with Guyana concerning the resource-rich Essequibo region.
- The country also has ongoing maritime boundary disagreements with Colombia regarding offshore territorial waters.



MIND MAP

News Trigger

- Operation Absolute Resolve conducted on 3 January 2026 by the US military.
- Detention of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro, Cilia Flores, and senior officials.
- Revival of the 1823 Monroe Doctrine as the "Trump Corollary."
- Sharp reversal from earlier anti-war stance to direct military intervention.
- Widespread international criticism over sovereignty and regional instability.

Origins and Evolution of the Monroe Doctrine

- Proclaimed in 1823 by President James Monroe.
- Opposed new European colonies in the Americas.
- Treated external interference as hostile to US interests.
- Gradual expansion into a US sphere-of-influence doctrine.

Roosevelt Corollary and Expanded Intervention

- Introduced in 1904 by President Theodore Roosevelt.
- Asserted US "international police power" in Latin America.
- Justified intervention during instability or governance failure.
- Enabled repeated military and political interventions.

Trump Administration's Strategic Shift

Reversal from Non-Interventionist Rhetoric

- Earlier opposition to "forever wars" and Iraq invasion.
- Initial emphasis on domestic priorities and restraint.
- Venezuela operation marks a complete policy reversal.

Pattern of Military Escalation

- Expanded US airstrikes and operations during 2025.
- Actions in Syria, Nigeria, Yemen, Somalia, and Iraq.
- Attacks on drug-trafficking vessels in Caribbean waters.
- Culmination in Venezuela leadership capture.

Venezuela's Strategic Importance

Energy Resources and Production Gap

- World's largest proven crude oil reserves.
- Current production around 1 million barrels per day.
- Output constrained by sanctions, mismanagement, and decay.
- Chevron remains the only major foreign oil company present.

Official Justifications for Intervention

Narco-terrorism and Security Claims

- Charges of drug trafficking and narco-terrorism against leadership.
- Alleged links to US fentanyl crisis cited.
- Claims disputed due to Venezuela's limited role in fentanyl supply.

Countering Extra-Regional Influence

- Concern over Venezuela's ties with China, Russia, and Iran.
- Objective to block rival powers in the Western Hemisphere.
- Reassertion of US dominance under Monroe-style logic.

Connected Topics

UN Charter and the Prohibition on Use of Force (Article 2(4))

- Article 2(4) of the United Nations Charter requires all Members to refrain in international relations from the threat or use of force. The prohibition covers force "against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State," and also force used "in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations."
- Article 2(4) is treated in UN legal materials as a foundational principle that has been repeatedly reaffirmed in later international instruments and UN practice.
- The Charter's principal express exception is self-defence: Article 51 preserves the "inherent right of individual or collective self-defence if an armed attack occurs," until the Security Council takes necessary measures.
- Article 51 also requires that measures taken in self-defence be reported to the Security Council, and it frames self-defence as operating "until" the Council has acted.
- A second core pathway in the Charter system is Security Council action under Chapter VII, where the Council determines the existence of a threat to peace/breach/act of aggression and decides measures to maintain or restore international peace and security.
- International legal commentary commonly treats Security Council authorization and Article 51 self-defence as the two Charter-based exceptions to the general prohibition.
- In the International Court of Justice's Nicaragua judgment (Merits, 1986), the Court treated the prohibition on the use of force as a rule of customary international law (in addition to Charter obligations) and examined alleged uses of force and intervention.
- The Nicaragua case is widely cited for clarifying that certain forms of support and operations can violate international law rules on non-use of force and non-intervention, and that self-defence claims are legally constrained. UN legal materials emphasize that Article 2(4) includes both "threat" and "use" of force, meaning coercive threats are addressed alongside actual armed action.

Latin American Regional Organisations' Response Capacity

- The Organization of American States (OAS) is described in U.S. Congressional research as concentrating on four broad objectives: democracy promotion, human rights, economic and social development, and regional security cooperation. The Inter-American Democratic Charter (2001) provides a regional framework for collective action to promote and defend representative democracy in the Americas.
- The OAS runs Electoral Observation Missions through its Department of Electoral Cooperation and Observation; it states it has observed elections since 1962 and conducts missions at the request of member states.
- OAS election-observation outputs can influence regional diplomatic responses; for example, Reuters reported the OAS election observation department said it could not recognize the results announced by Venezuela's electoral authority in July 2024 due to lack of documentary support.
- In the Caribbean, CARICOM's disaster-response capacity is institutionalized via Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA), described as a regional inter-governmental agency for disaster management under CARICOM.
- CDEMA describes its main function as making an immediate and coordinated response to disasters affecting CARICOM member-states once assistance is requested.
- In Central America, disaster-risk coordination is supported through CEPREDENAC, described by UNDRR as the specialized institution of the Central American Integration System for disaster prevention, mitigation and response (established in 1988).
- CEPREDENAC states it runs a regional information platform that monitors major natural threats and supports more timely and coordinated decision-making among countries of the SICA region.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Which of the following military operations resulted in the detention of Venezuela's leadership in January 2026?
   (a) Operation Enduring Freedom
   (b) Operation Desert Resolve
   (c) Operation Absolute Resolve
   (d) Operation Western Shield

2. Who revived the Monroe Doctrine as a central pillar of US foreign policy?
   (a) Donald Trump (b) Joe Biden
   (c) Barack Obama (d) George Bush

3. Which of the following refers to the name used by President Donald Trump after reviving the Monroe Doctrine from 1823 as a central pillar of American foreign policy?
   (a) Trump Principle (b) Trump Corollary
   (c) Trump Initiative (d) TrumpFramework

4. Which United States president, in 1904, expanded the Monroe Doctrine by asserting an "international police power" that justified direct American involvement in Latin American affairs?
   (a) James Monroe (b) Woodrow Wilson
   (c) Theodore Roosevelt (d) Franklin Roosevelt

5. Which of the following countries experienced an armed regime change led by the United States in 1989 as part of its interventions in Latin America between 1898 and 1994?
   (a) Panama (b) Brazil
   (c) Cuba (d) Chile

6. Which of the following resources is identified as Venezuela's primary strategic importance?
   (a) Natural gas reserves (b) Crude oil reserves
   (c) Rare earth minerals (d) Hydropower capacity

7. Which of the following regions was specifically mentioned as the location where American military actions targeted drug-trafficking vessels during 2025?
   (a) Arabian Sea and Western Indian Ocean
   (b) Mediterranean Sea and Northern Atlantic
   (c) South China Sea and Western Pacific
   (d) Caribbean and Eastern Pacific

8. Which of the following American companies currently remain active in Venezuelan oil production?
   (a) Exxon Mobil Corporation
   (b) Conoco Phillips Energy
   (c) Halliburton Services Group
   (d) Chevron Oil Company

9. Which justification was initially cited for the Venezuela operation?
   (a) Humanitarian intervention grounds
   (b) Democracy restoration efforts
   (c) Narco terrorism charges
   (d) United Nations mandate

10. Which extra-regional powers' influence did the US seek to counter in Venezuela?
    (a) European Union states
    (b) China Russia Iran
    (c) African Union members
    (d) Southeast Asian powers

11. Which year marked the declaration of the original Monroe Doctrine?
    (a) 1812 (b) 1823 (c) 1835 (d) 1901

12. Which of the following indicates the number of core principles outlined in the Monroe Doctrine when it was declared?
    (a) seven (b) eight (c) nine (d) three

13. Which of the following regions experienced increased US military operations during 2025?
    (a) Syria Nigeria and Yemen
    (b) Brazil Mexico and Peru
    (c) Germany Poland and Italy
    (d) Thailand Vietnam and Laos

14. Which of the following is the sole major foreign oil corporation with active exposure to Venezuelan crude production, giving American commercial interests a unique position in the country's energy sector?
    (a) Rosneft (b) Equinor
    (c) PetroSA (d) Chevron

15. Which of the following drugs was explicitly linked to the security justification used by the administration to frame military action under counter-narcotics authority?
(a) ketamine
(b) fentanyl
(c) morphine
(d) codeine

16. Where is Venezuela geographically located?
(a) Northern South America
(b) Southern Atlantic region
(c) Central American isthmus
(d) Western Pacific coast

17. Which of the following organisations was Venezuela a founding member of?
(a) International Energy Agency
(b) World Trade Organization
(c) Organization of Petroleum
(d) Non Aligned Movement

18. Which of the following disputes involves Venezuela and Guyana?
(a) Maritime Atlantic dispute
(b) Andean mountain conflict
(c) Essequibo region dispute
(d) Caribbean island control

19 What was India's export value to Venezuela in FY 2025?
(a) Ninety five million
(b) Two hundred million
(c) Five hundred million
(d) One billion dollars

20. Which factor could benefit India if American sanctions imposed in previous year ease?
(a) Increased remittance flows
(b) Discounted crude access
(c) Military cooperation growth
(d) Technology transfer gains

ANSWER KEY

1. (c)	2. (a)	3. (b)	4. (c)	5. (a)	6. (b)	7. (d)	8. (d)
9. (c)	10. (b)	11. (b)	12. (d)	13. (a)	14. (d)	15. (b)	
16. (b)	17. (c)	18. (c)	19. (a)	20. (b)			

Greenland Claim: How U.S. Move Could Reshape Arctic Politics

News Highlights:

- President Donald Trump claimed at the World Economic Forum in Switzerland that the United States "gave Greenland back to Denmark" after World War II, though Denmark never ceded **sovereignty** over the territory to America, only granting defense and military rights through wartime and Cold War agreements.
- Trump announced that a "framework" for an agreement with **NATO** regarding Greenland's future has been reached, potentially allowing expanded American military infrastructure and access to rare earth minerals, though specific details remain undisclosed and implementation uncertain.
- The United States already possesses extensive military rights in Greenland under the Defense of Greenland Agreement signed in 1951 and updated in 2004, which permits construction of facilities, stationing of personnel, and control over movements without requiring Danish permission for military expansion.
- Any American military action to acquire Greenland would create an unprecedented crisis for NATO by potentially violating Denmark's **territorial integrity**, contradicting the alliance's collective defense principle under Article 5, and benefiting Russia's strategic interests in fracturing Western unity.
- Denmark and Greenland have firmly stated the territory is not for sale, with Greenland's population of approximately 57,000 people possessing the right under the 2009 Self-Government Act to hold a referendum on independence as a recognized self-determination unit.

Historical Context of American Interest in Greenland

WW II

World War II and Nazi Occupation

- The German Army invaded Denmark on April 9, 1940, and within days the Danish government agreed to German occupation of the mainland.
- On August 29, 1943, German forces disarmed the Danish military, imprisoned King Christian X, and assumed control over Denmark's administrative functions while Greenland remained under nominal Danish authority.
- At that time, Greenland functioned as a colony of Denmark and had long attracted American strategic interest due to its geographic location between North America and Europe.

The 1941 Wartime Agreement

- During World War II, the Danish ambassador to Washington signed a treaty in 1941 that permitted the United States to protect Greenland and establish military bases in exchange for reconfirmation of Danish sovereignty over the island.
- This agreement granted America rights to military installations in Greenland for defensive purposes while Denmark remained under Nazi occupation.
- Denmark was not liberated by Allied forces until May 1945, meaning the agreement was signed while the Danish government-in-exile had limited control over its European territory.

Post-War Purchase Attempt

- In 1946, President Harry Truman offered to purchase Greenland from Denmark for USD 100 million in gold, representing the most recent in a series of American attempts to acquire the territory.
- This offer itself demonstrated that the United States recognized Denmark as the rightful sovereign authority over Greenland, requiring a commercial transaction rather than claiming existing ownership.
- Denmark rejected what was then a substantial financial sum, maintaining its territorial claim over the island.



Cold War Era and Formalization of Defense Rights

The 1951 Defense of Greenland Agreement

- By 1951, the Cold War had begun with the Soviet Union emerging as America's primary security threat, prompting renewed American strategic focus on Greenland as essential to continental defense.
- That year, the World War II-era treaty was formalized through the Defense of Greenland Agreement, establishing the framework for America's Thule Air Base, now designated as the Pituffik Space Base, which remains the sole American military installation on the island.
- The formalized agreement explicitly referenced "the sovereignty of the Kingdom of Denmark" and did not transfer sovereignty to the United States, instead offering wide-ranging military rights and operational permissions.

Greenland's Constitutional Evolution

- In 1953, Greenland's colonial status officially ended when Denmark informed the United Nations that the territory had become an integral part of the Kingdom with constitutional representation in parliament and associated benefits.
- Greenland achieved "home rule" autonomy in 1979, granting significant self-governance over internal affairs while Denmark retained authority over foreign policy and defense matters.
- This autonomy was expanded in 2009 through a Self-Government Act that recognized Greenland as a self-determination unit, meaning its population can hold a referendum on full independence from Denmark.

2004 Agreement Update

- The Defense of Greenland Agreement underwent revision in 2004 to reflect Greenland's changed constitutional status from colony to equal part of the Kingdom of Denmark.
- In this updated agreement, the United States expressly acknowledged the transformation of the territory's status, precluding any American legal challenge to the legitimacy of the constitutional change implemented in 1953.
- Currently, Greenland manages almost all internal affairs independently while Denmark retains formal responsibility for foreign policy, defense, and security matters in coordination with the Greenland government.

Trump's Recent Statements and Framework Agreement

False Claims About Historical Sovereignty

- At the World Economic Forum in Switzerland, President Trump claimed that America "gave Greenland back to Denmark" after World War II and questioned why the United States made what he characterized as a stupid decision.
- This statement distorts historical reality, as Denmark never transferred sovereignty over Greenland to the United States, only granting defense and military access rights through wartime agreements.
- Trump's rhetoric suggested ungratefulness on Denmark's part despite the historical record showing continuous Danish sovereignty throughout the period.

Announced Framework with NATO

- Following a meeting with NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte, Trump announced that a "framework" for an agreement on Greenland had been determined, though specific details remain undisclosed.
- Media reports suggest the potential arrangement could permit the United States to construct additional military bases in Greenland and potentially obtain sovereignty over those specific areas.
- The framework might allow American access to rare earth minerals without requiring permission from Denmark, representing an expansion beyond existing military-focused rights.

Uncertainty About Added Value

- It remains unclear what the announced framework offers beyond America's existing extensive military rights under the 1951 and 2004 agreements.
- The framework contains no indication of full territorial sovereignty transfer to the United States, suggesting Trump's ownership rhetoric may not materialize in actual policy.
- More details will emerge once the agreement is formally negotiated and disclosed to public scrutiny.

Context & Limits

Historical Reality

- Denmark never transferred sovereignty over Greenland
- U.S. received defence and military access only
- Continuous Danish sovereignty throughout WWII and after

Existing Agreements

- 1951 & 2004 U.S.–Denmark agreements already grant extensive U.S. military rights
- Current U.S. presence already substantial

Limits of the "Framework"

- No evidence of full sovereignty transfer
- No confirmed expansion beyond existing military access
- Ownership rhetoric not reflected in known policy

Status

- Framework not published
- Details subject to negotiation and public disclosure

Implications for NATO Alliance Structure

Fundamental Contradiction with Article 5

- Any American military action to forcibly acquire Greenland would strike at NATO's foundational principle of collective defense enshrined in Article 5 of the alliance treaty.
- NATO's credibility rests on the assumption of external aggression against member states, not violations of territorial integrity by one alliance member against another.
- A United States incursion into Danish-administered territory would create an unprecedented crisis that NATO's organizational structure and legal framework were never designed to address.

Founded: 1949
Formed by: 12 founding countries, led by the **United States**

Denmark's Alliance Contributions

- Denmark was among the first NATO members to invoke Article 5 collective defense provisions following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, standing firmly with the United States.
- Danish military forces fought alongside American troops in Afghanistan, suffering significant casualties in support of the alliance's mission over two decades.
- An American action against Greenland would nullify this shared sacrifice and hollow out NATO's moral foundation

built on mutual defense commitments.

Strategic Benefits to Russia

- A Greenland crisis would directly benefit Russian President Vladimir Putin's long-standing objective of fracturing NATO unity and diverting Western attention from Ukraine.
- Ironically, any action justified as countering Russian influence in the Arctic would weaken the very alliance structure designed to contain Moscow's strategic ambitions.
- Russia would gain significant propaganda advantages by highlighting American violations of international law and alliance obligations, undermining Western credibility globally.

Arctic Geopolitics and Security Considerations

Misplaced Strategic Focus

- United States defense assessments indicate the actual pressure point for Arctic security lies near Alaska rather than Greenland, according to Pentagon briefings and the 2024 Arctic Strategy document.
- These official evaluations highlight infrastructure degradation and increased China-Russia cooperation in waters adjacent to Alaska as the primary concern requiring attention and resources.
- A Greenland operation would address the wrong Arctic problem in the incorrect geographic location while diverting resources from genuine security needs.



Militarization Concerns

- Arctic nations have expressed concern about increasing militarization of the region and the potential for strategic instability resulting from great power competition.
- The transformation of the Arctic from a cooperative space governed by international frameworks into a strategic theater of military competition represents a fundamental shift in regional dynamics.
- Indigenous populations and smaller Arctic stakeholders face marginalization as major powers assert dominance and pursue geopolitical advantages without adequate consultation.

Climate Change and New Routes

- Accelerating ice melt in the Arctic is creating year-round navigable shipping passages that previously existed only seasonally or not at all.
- These emerging routes substantially reduce shipping distances between Asia and Europe, creating new economic opportunities and strategic vulnerabilities requiring governance frameworks.
- Competition for control over these routes and adjacent resources is intensifying among the United States, Russia, China, and European powers.

Additional Key Facts

- Greenland covers approximately 2.166 million square kilometers, making it the world's largest island, with roughly 80 percent of its landmass covered by ice sheet.
- The island's population of approximately 57,000 people is primarily Inuit, with most settlements located along the ice-free coastal areas in the southwest and southeast regions.
- President Harry Truman's 1946 offer of USD 100 million in gold for Greenland would be equivalent to approximately USD 1.5 billion in current inflation-adjusted terms.
- The Pituffik Space Base (formerly Thule Air Base) in northwestern Greenland serves as a crucial early warning station for ballistic missile detection and space surveillance operations.
- Greenland's rare earth mineral deposits include elements critical for manufacturing batteries, smartphones, wind turbines, and military equipment, currently dominated by Chinese production.
- The Northwest Passage shipping route through Arctic waters could reduce travel distance between East Asia and Europe by approximately 40 percent compared to traditional routes through the Suez or Panama Canals.



MIND MAP

News Trigger

- President **Donald Trump** claimed the US "gave Greenland back to Denmark" after WWII.
- Trump announced a **framework with NATO** on Greenland's future.
- Denmark and Greenland reiterated that **Greenland is not for sale**.
- Debate revived over **Arctic security**, **NATO unity**, and **US intentions**.

Post-War Developments
1946 Purchase Attempt

- President **Harry Truman** offered **USD 100 million in gold**.
- Denmark rejected the offer
- Demonstrated US recognition of **Danish ownership**.

1951 Defense of Greenland Agreement

- Established US military presence during Cold War.
- Created **Thule Air Base** (now **Pituffik Space Base**).
- Explicitly affirmed **Danish sovereignty**.

Greenland's Constitutional Evolution

- **1953**: Greenland ceased to be a colony; became part of Denmark.
- **1979**: Home Rule introduced.
- **2009**: Expanded self-government and independence pathway.

World War II Background
German Occupation of Denmark

- Germany invaded Denmark on **9 April 1940**.
- Danish government lost control by **1943**.
- Greenland remained under nominal Danish authority.

US Strategic Interest

- Greenland's location critical between **North America and Europe**.
- Viewed as essential for Atlantic and Arctic security.

1941 Wartime Agreement

- Signed by Danish ambassador in Washington.
- Allowed US to **defend Greenland** and build bases.
- Explicitly **reaffirmed Danish sovereignty**.
- Signed while Denmark was under Nazi occupation.

NATO Framework Announcement

- Trump announced a **framework agreement** after meeting NATO Secretary General.
- Possible expansion of **US military infrastructure**.
- Potential **access to rare earth minerals** discussed.
- No clarity on added powers beyond existing agreements.

Core Issue

- Whether US claims or actions can alter **Greenland's sovereignty**.
- Impact of US moves on **NATO's Article 5** credibility.
- Strategic competition in the **Arctic region**.

Sovereignty

- Greenland has **always remained under Danish sovereignty**.
- US only received **defense and military access rights**, not ownership.

Self-Government

- **2009 Self-Government Act** recognises Greenland as a **self-determination unit**.
- Population can hold a **referendum on independence**.

Connected Topics

Legal Status of Military Bases on Foreign Sovereign Territory

- A foreign military base on another State's territory is lawful primarily when it rests on the host State's valid consent, typically expressed through a treaty (basing agreement), lease, or a broader defence arrangement (often interpreted using general treaty law principles). Under the United Nations framework, using force or maintaining forces on another State's territory without consent can raise issues under the prohibition on the threat or use of force in international relations.
- Most basing arrangements do not transfer sovereignty over the base area; the host State remains sovereign, while the sending State receives defined functional rights (access, use, control over specified facilities) set out in the agreement.
- The legal position of a foreign force is commonly governed by a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), which allocates legal privileges, immunities, and jurisdiction between the sending and receiving States.
- Criminal jurisdiction is often arranged so that each side has exclusive jurisdiction over offences punishable only under its own law, while "concurrent" cases follow agreed priority rules (a well-known template is the NATO SOFA model).
- Agreements also typically regulate entry/exit, movement, carrying of arms, uniforms, and discipline, alongside customs/tax issues for equipment and supplies, because a base needs predictable operating rules across borders.
- Civil and administrative matters (contracts, tort claims, labour issues, and procurement) are frequently addressed through claims mechanisms and agreed choice-of-law/venue rules, since host-state courts may or may not have full competence over visiting forces.
- Some arrangements create exceptional "control without sovereignty" situations (for example, Cuba is described as retaining "ultimate sovereignty" while the United States exercises "complete jurisdiction and control" in the Guantánamo lease framework).

Arctic Council: Mandate, Limitations, and Strategic Marginalisation

- The Arctic Council was established in 1996 by the Ottawa Declaration as a high-level forum to promote cooperation, coordination, and interaction among Arctic States, with involvement of Arctic Indigenous communities and other Arctic inhabitants. Its mandate focuses on sustainable development and environmental protection in the Arctic. The Ottawa Declaration explicitly states that the Council should not deal with matters related to military security, which is a core built-in limitation.
- Decision-making follows the principle of consensus among the eight Arctic States, meaning any State can effectively block collective decisions.
- The Council's work is mainly carried out through six Working Groups that produce assessments and project outputs across themes like environment, sustainable development, and emergency prevention/response.
- The Council includes Permanent Participants—Indigenous peoples' organizations granted a distinct status to ensure "full consultation and full involvement" in Council work (though decision power remains with States).
- Institutionally, the Arctic Council Secretariat (Standing Secretariat) in Tromsø supports chairing and administration; it became operational in 2013.
- Although the Council is primarily a soft-law forum, the Arctic States have negotiated three legally binding agreements under its auspices (search and rescue; marine oil pollution preparedness/response; scientific cooperation).
- Since March 2022, Arctic Council work was heavily disrupted; the Council later moved toward limited resumption of project-level/working-group activity, reflecting how geopolitical conflict can constrain the forum.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Which of the following bodies was cited by Trump in connection with a proposed framework affecting military presence and strategic access in Greenland?
   (a) OECD (b) OPEC
   (c) ASEA (d) NATO

2. Which of the following provisions of the NATO treaty would be directly contradicted if the United States undertook military action to acquire Greenland?
   (a) Article 4 (b) Article 5
   (c) Article 6 (d) Article 7

3. Which of the following countries, along with Greenland, has affirmed that any change in Greenland's political status must occur only through a referendum under the 2009 Self-Government Act?
   (a) Sweden (b) Finland
   (c) Germany (d) Denmark

4. Which of the following individuals was imprisoned by German forces after they disarmed the Danish military and took control of Denmark's administration on August 29, 1943?
   (a) King Haakon VII (b) King Leopold III
   (c) King George VI (d) King Christian X

5. Which of the following regions define Greenland's strategic location that historically attracted American attention while it remained a Danish colony?
   (a) North America and Europe
   (b) East Asia and Latin America
   (c) Africa and North America
   (d) Latin America and Asia

6. Which of the following best identifies the regime controlling Denmark when the United States obtained defensive military rights in Greenland during World War II?
   (a) Allied (b) Soviet
   (c) Italian (d) Nazi

7. Which of the following leaders made an offer in 1946 to purchase Greenland from Denmark for USD 100 million in gold?
   (a) Franklin Wilson (b) Dwight Reagan
   (c) Harry Truman (d) John Kennedy

8. Which of the following governance arrangements preceded Greenland's recognition as a self-determination unit under the 2009 Self-Government Act?
   (a) direct rule (b) military rule
   (c) shared rule (d) home rule

9. Which Arctic security concern is identified by US defense assessments as the real pressure point?
   (a) Greenland's coast (b) Areas near Alaska
   (c) Northern Canada (d) Icelandic waters

10. Which of the following accurately describes the legal scope of the 1951 and 2004 Greenland agreements?
    (a) Extensive US military rights without sovereignty transfer
    (b) Complete US territorial authority including political control
    (c) Shared NATO governance through permanent administration
    (d) Full Greenlandic independence from Denmark and allies

11. When did Greenland achieve home rule autonomy?
    (a) 1953 (b) 1969 (c) 2004 (d) 1979

12. Which of the following facts highlights Denmark's alliance commitment to the United States?
    (a) Rejection of the 1946 purchase offer
    (b) Invocation of Article 5 after 9/11
    (c) Opposition to Arctic militarization
    (d) Greenland's mineral policy

13. Which military installation remains the sole American base in Greenland today?
    (a) Thule Naval Station (b) Arctic Command Base
    (c) North Pole Radar Site (d) Pituffik Space Base

14. Which of the following would most directly contradict NATO's Article 5 principle?
    (a) Expanding US bases with consent
    (b) Joint Arctic military exercises
    (c) Resource extraction agreements
    (d) Forcible acquisition of Greenland

15. Which factor is accelerating competition over Arctic shipping routes?
    (a) Decline in oil prices demand
    (b) Expansion of NATO alliance
    (c) Climate change and ice melt
    (d) International legal arbitration

16. Which of the following best explains why Greenland's rare earth minerals are geopolitically significant?
    (a) They are dominated by Chinese production
    (b) They are controlled and dominated by NATO
    (c) They are dominated by Japanese production
    (d) They are controlled and dominated by WTO

17. Which of the following best summarizes why a Greenland-focused strategy may be misplaced?
    (a) Greenland lacks strategic challenges
    (b) Denmark opposes militarization and trade
    (c) Arctic shipping routes bypass Greenland
    (d) Security challenges are greater near Alaska

ANSWER KEY

1. (d)	2. (b)	3. (d)	4. (d)	5. (a)	6. (d)	7. (c)	8. (d)
9. (b)	10. (a)	11. (d)	12. (b)	13. (d)	14. (d)	15. (c)	16. (a)
17. (d)							

Board of Peace for Gaza – Trump Invites India to Join the Proposed Board

News Highlights:

- President Donald Trump extended an invitation to India to participate in the proposed **Board of Peace for Gaza**, a newly established governance and conflict-management mechanism designed to oversee transitional administration, stabilization, and reconstruction efforts in the Gaza Strip.
- The initiative emerged following the unanimous adoption of **United Nations Security Council Resolution 2803** in December 2025, which authorized a supervisory board for Gaza's transition until December 31, 2027, with Russia and China abstaining from the vote while Global South nations supported the measure.
- India attended discussions at the World Economic Forum in Davos but did not participate in the official charter announcement ceremony, with the government continuing deliberations on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's potential membership in this American-led body.
- The Board represents a departure from traditional **multilateral institutions**, operating as an invitation-only mechanism chaired by Trump himself with an executive board including personal associates and family members, raising concerns about undermining United Nations authority and established international governance frameworks.
- The proposed membership structure offers a two-tier system where countries can join for three-year renewable terms without financial contribution, while payment of USD 1 billion grants permanent membership status with funds designated for Gaza reconstruction activities.

Board of Peace for Gaza

Structure and Operational Framework

Leadership and Composition

- The Board of Peace is proposed to be chaired by United States President **Donald J. Trump**, who has appointed himself to this position with authority over strategic decision-making processes.
- The Founding Executive Board comprises high-level figures possessing expertise in diplomacy, development, and economics, including former United Kingdom Prime Minister **Tony Blair** and United States Secretary of State **Marco Rubio**.
- A Gaza Executive Board functions as a supporting operational body responsible for coordinating on-the-ground activities and implementation of reconstruction programs.
- Bulgarian diplomat **Nickolay Mladenov** serves as the High Representative for Gaza, functioning as the primary on-the-ground liaison between international stakeholders and local administrators.



Palestinian Administrative Component



- The National Committee for the Administration of Gaza consists of 15 politically independent Palestinian technocrats responsible for day-to-day civil administration functions.
- Ali Shaath, a former Palestinian Authority deputy minister, chairs this committee which operates as the primary governance body for routine administrative matters.
- The structure emphasizes technical expertise over political representation, creating an apolitical transitional administration until the Palestinian Authority completes institutional reforms.

Membership and Financial Mechanisms

- Invitations for Board membership have been extended to numerous countries including Greece, Pakistan, and India, operating on a selective rather than universal participation basis.
- The unique funding arrangement permits countries to join for three-year renewable memberships without financial contributions to the reconstruction fund.
- Nations choosing to pay USD 1 billion receive permanent membership status in the Board, with these funds allocated directly to Gaza's reconstruction and development projects.

Mandate and Objectives

Primary Responsibilities

- The Board supervises Gaza's transitional governance arrangements, ensuring stability during the period between the ceasefire and establishment of permanent political structures.
- Oversight of stabilization efforts includes coordination of security arrangements, humanitarian assistance delivery, and infrastructure reconstruction planning.
- Management of funding for redevelopment activities continues until the Palestinian Authority demonstrates completion of necessary institutional reforms to resume governance responsibilities.

Temporal Authorization

- United Nations Security Council Resolution 2803 provides authorization for the Board's operations through December 31, 2027, establishing a defined timeframe for transitional supervision.
- The initial mandate focuses specifically on Gaza-related activities, though proposals exist to expand the mechanism's scope beyond this limited geographic and temporal framework.

Broader Conflict Resolution Vision

- President Trump has articulated intentions to transform this Gaza-specific mechanism into a global conflict-resolution template applicable to other international disputes.
- The initiative is framed as a solution to United Nations Security Council paralysis, particularly regarding veto power exercised by permanent members blocking decisive action.
- Proponents suggest the Board could address various international crises where traditional multilateral mechanisms have proven ineffective or unable to reach consensus.

Gaza Peace Plan Implementation: Trump Administration Strategy

Phase One	Achieved a cessation of hostilities between Israel and Hamas, with all living Israeli hostages returned home as part of the agreement.
Phase Two	Focuses on long-term stability, reconstruction, and political pathways toward resolving the Israel-Palestine conflict through negotiations on a **two-state solution.**

Humanitarian Situation and Response

- Israel's military campaign and ground operations resulted in more than 70,000 Palestinian deaths including approximately 20,000 children, following Hamas-led attacks in October 2023.

- The United Nations has officially declared famine conditions in Gaza resulting from conflict escalation, widespread displacement, and severe restrictions on humanitarian and commercial food supplies.
- The Board's mandate includes enhanced humanitarian assistance delivery to address immediate needs while reconstruction efforts proceed.

India's Position and Considerations

Stated Principles and Policies

- India maintains consistent support for a two-state solution involving peaceful coexistence of Israel and Palestine as sovereign nations.
- The government welcomed Phase One of Trump's peace plan, particularly the release of hostages and provisions for enhanced humanitarian assistance to Gaza.
- India has been a principled supporter of the Palestinian cause throughout its diplomatic history, providing consistent humanitarian assistance including through the UN Relief and Works Agency.

Military Involvement Position

- The United States is seeking military personnel contributions for a temporary International Stabilization Force to maintain security in Gaza during the transitional period.
- India has clearly ruled out participation in the ISF, explicitly noting that this force does not constitute a United Nations peacekeeping mission operating under Security Council mandate.
- This distinction reflects India's traditional preference for contributing to UN-authorized peacekeeping operations rather than coalition-based military deployments.

Strategic Considerations

- Regional powers including the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Israel, and Turkey have joined the Board, potentially creating diplomatic pressure on India to participate.
- Current tensions in US-India relations and fragility of trade negotiations present additional factors in evaluating whether to accept Trump's invitation.
- Pakistan's decision to join the Board raises concerns for India, particularly regarding potential expansion of the Board's mandate to address other disputes including Kashmir.

Current Diplomatic Status

- India has received the formal invitation to join the Board of Peace but has not communicated a final decision regarding participation as of late January 2026.
- The government continues internal deliberations and consultations with partners on the most appropriate response to the American invitation.
- India skipped the official charter announcement ceremony held in Davos despite participating in related discussions at the World Economic Forum.

Israel-Palestine Conflict: Timeline

1917 — Early Twentieth Century Developments

- The Balfour Declaration issued by Britain in 1917 expressed support for establishing a Jewish homeland in Palestine, heightening tensions between the Jewish minority population and Arab majority.
- The Balfour Declaration issued by Britain in 1917 expressed support for establishing a Jewish homeland in Palestine, heightening tensions between the Jewish minority population and Arab majority.
- Following World War I, Britain administered Palestine under a League of Nations mandate, managing competing claims between Jewish immigrants and Arab residents.

1947

Creation of Israel and Initial Conflicts

- In 1947, the United Nations proposed dividing Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states, a plan accepted by Jewish leaders but rejected by Arab nations.
- Jews declared Israel's independence in 1948, prompting immediate military conflict with neighboring Arab states and displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians.
- The 1948 war established Israel's borders while creating the refugee crisis that continues to affect Palestinian populations decades later.

1967 - 1979

Territorial Expansion and Occupation

- During the 1967 Middle East War, Israel gained military control over the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem, placing approximately one million Palestinians under occupation.
- The Yom Kippur War of 1973 eventually led to the Camp David Accords in 1978, where Egypt became the first Arab country to formally recognize Israel.
- Israel returned the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt in 1979 but retained control over the West Bank and other territories captured in 1967.



Palestinian Loss of Land from 1946 to 2009



DID YOU KNOW?

Under the UN plan (**Resolution 181**), **Jerusalem** was not meant to belong to either side. Instead, it was proposed as an **international city** (corpus separatum) to be governed by the United Nations because of its religious significance to Jews, Christians, and Muslims. This international status was never actually implemented, making Jerusalem one of the earliest and most enduring flashpoints after the creation of Israel and the proposed state of Palestine.

Gaza Strip: Geographic and Demographic Profile

Physical Characteristics

- The Gaza Strip comprises a densely populated coastal territory in West Asia measuring approximately 41 kilometers in length and 10 kilometers in width.
- The territory is located along the Mediterranean Sea coast, sharing borders with Israel to the north and east and Egypt to the southwest.
- Gaza's small geographic area contains one of the world's highest population densities, creating significant challenges for resource management and infrastructure development.

Strategic Importance in Conflict

- Gaza remains strategically important in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict due to its location, population concentration, and political significance.
- The territory faces ongoing humanitarian, political, and security challenges exacerbated by periodic military conflicts and sustained blockades.
- Control over Gaza and determination of its political status constitute central elements in any comprehensive resolution of the broader Israeli-Palestinian dispute.



Additional Key Facts

- India served as a non-permanent member of the Security Council for the eighth time during 2021-2022, advocating for reforms to make the body more representative of contemporary global realities.
- India has participated in 43 United Nations peacekeeping missions since independence, contributing more than 160,000 military personnel and significant numbers of police personnel to international peace operations.
- The United Nations Security Council consists of 15 members including five permanent members (United States, Russian Federation, France, China, and United Kingdom) with veto power, plus ten non-permanent members elected for two-year terms by the General Assembly.
- Security Council decisions on substantive matters require affirmative votes from nine members including concurrent votes of all five permanent members, meaning a single "No" vote from a permanent member blocks resolution passage.
- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, formulated in 1947-1948 with active Indian participation, established fundamental human rights principles that continue to guide international humanitarian law and governance.
- India's population exceeding 1.4 billion people, territorial size, economic potential, civilizational legacy, and contributions to UN activities form the basis for its demand for permanent Security Council membership with veto power.



MIND MAP

News Trigger

- President **Donald Trump** invited **India** to join the **Board of Peace for Gaza**.
- Initiative followed **UNSC Resolution 2803 (Dec 2025)** authorising a transitional supervisory board.
- India attended **WEF Davos** discussions but skipped the charter announcement.
- Board design departs from traditional UN mechanisms and is **invitation-only**.

nited Nations Security Council Role

Resolution 2803

- Adopted **December 2025**.
- **Russia and China abstained**; no veto used.
- **Global South** states supported the resolution.

UN Relationship

- Board not under UN command.
- Peace plan derives **legitimacy from UNSC authorisation**.
- Creates a **hybrid governance model**.

Core Idea of the Board

- Transitional **governance and conflict-management** body for Gaza.
- Oversight of **stabilisation, administration, and reconstruction**.
- Operates alongside, but **outside direct UN control**.
- Mandate valid until **31 December 2027**.

Structure and Leadership

Top Leadership

- Chair: **US President Donald Trump**.
- Holds authority over **strategic decision-making**.

Founding Executive Board

- Includes figures such as **Tony Blair** and **Marco Rubio**.
- Focus on diplomacy, development, and economics.

Operational Layer

- **Gaza Executive Board** handles implementation.
- **Nickolay Mladenov** serves as High Representative for Gaza.

Gaza Peace Plan Context

Phase One

- Ceasefire between **Israel and Hamas**
- Release of all living Israeli hostages.

Phase Two

- Establishment of the **Board of Peace**.
- Focus on reconstruction and long-term stability.
- Linked to negotiations on a **two-state solution**.

Palestinian Administrative Component

- **National Committee for the Administration of Gaza**.
- Composed of **15 independent Palestinian technocrats**.
- Chaired by **Ali Shaath**, former PA deputy minister.
- Handles routine civil governance during transition.
- Emphasises **technical competence over politics**.

India's Military Stance

- US requested troops for an **International Stabilisation Force (ISF)**.
- India **declined military participation**.
- ISF not a **UN peacekeeping mission**, guiding India's refusal.

Connected Topics

International Trusteeship Models in Post-Conflict Territories

- The UN Trusteeship Council suspended its operations on 1 November 1994, after the independence of Palau, the last UN trust territory, meaning the Charter-based trusteeship machinery is not operational in practice today. Post–Cold War "international trusteeship-like" arrangements have mostly taken the form of UN Security Council–mandated international territorial administrations, rather than formal UN trust territories under the Trusteeship Council.
- In Timor-Leste, the Security Council created United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) through Resolution 1272 (1999), establishing a UN transitional administration for the territory.
- Resolution 1272 (1999) mandated UNTAET to provide an interim civil administration and to support the territory in moving toward self-government, including institution-building and governance functions.
- In Kosovo, the Security Council adopted Resolution 1244 (1999), authorizing the Secretary-General to establish an international civil presence—United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK)—to provide an interim administration pending a political settlement.
- Resolution 1244 (1999) describes UNMIK's interim governance role, including civil administrative functions, helping develop provisional institutions of self-government, maintaining law and order, and supporting conditions for the return of refugees and displaced persons.
- A standard comparison point between trusteeship-era practice and UNTAET/UNMIK-type models is the legal basis: trusteeship was anchored in the UN Charter's Trusteeship System, whereas UNTAET/UNMIK were created via Security Council resolutions, typically under a Chapter VII peace-and-security framing.
- Another comparison point is governance intensity: studies of UNTAET/UNMIK describe them as rare cases where the UN assumed unusually direct administrative authority, raising operational questions about applicable law, local ownership, and accountability during the transition.

Legitimacy Crisis of Ad-hoc Global Governance Mechanisms

- The UN Secretary-General's report Our Common Agenda emphasizes that "effective multilateralism" depends on an effective United Nations that can live up to Charter purposes and principles—i.e., legitimacy is linked to institutional multilateralism, not only flexible coalitions.
- In a UN press conference (January 2026), António Guterres explicitly framed legitimacy for a multipolar world as requiring strong multilateral institutions where legitimacy is "rooted in shared" foundations (UN framing of legitimacy through institutions). Peer-reviewed research on "informal governance" in world politics describes informal cooperation as a central feature of contemporary global governance, implying it can operate alongside formal institutions but also reshapes the institutional landscape and accountability expectations.
- A recurring legitimacy concern identified in scholarship on "G-groups" (such as the G20) is membership and representation—who gets to decide, and whether decision-makers have a rightful claim to speak for affected states and publics. Studies of club or network governance highlight the effectiveness–legitimacy trade-off: smaller groups can be faster, but may face greater legitimacy scrutiny if outcomes significantly affect non-members.
- Work on accountability in global governance notes expanding responsibilities of international actors increases calls for responsiveness and accountability, including stakeholder participation and transparency—areas that ad-hoc bodies can struggle to institutionalize.
- A recent International Affairs article argues that ad-hoc coalitions can circumvent institutionalized forms of action, bypass established procedures, and contribute to deinstitutionalization by shifting decision-making away from established multilateral centres. The same line of analysis flags a practical risk: ad-hoc coalitions can compete with established multilateral institutions for limited resources, potentially weakening the capacity of standing institutions over time.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Which of the following best describes the purpose of the Board of Peace for Gaza?
   (a) Transitional governance reconstruction mechanism
   (b) Permanent United Nations peacekeeping force
   (c) Bilateral regional security coordination mechanism
   (d) Replacement Palestinian Authority governance

2. Who extended the invitation to India to join the Board of Peace for Gaza?
   (a) President Biden (b) Pesident Macron
   (c) President Trump (d) President Lula

3. Which of the following United Nations Security Council resolutions authorized the Gaza supervisory board?
   (a) Resolution 2827 (b) Resolution 2799
   (c) Resolution 2701 (d) Resolution 2803

4. Which of the following countries abstained from voting on the UNSC latest Resolution?
   (a) Russia and China (b) France and Britain
   (c) India and Brazil (d) Israel and America

5. Which of the following best describes the Board's membership model?
   (a) Universal multilateral participation system
   (b) United Nations assessed membership
   (c) Invitation only participation mechanism
   (d) Regional Arab alliance structure

6. Who chairs the Board of Peace for Gaza?
   (a) António Guterres (b) Donald J Trump
   (c) Tony Melo Blair (d) Marco De Rubio

7. Which of the following individuals is a member of the Founding Executive Board?
   (a) B Netanyahu (b) Olaf Scholz
   (c) Tony Blair (d) R Erdogan

8. Who serves as the High Representative for Gaza?
   (a) Salam Fayyad
   (b) Hanan Ashrawi
   (c) Nickolay Mladenov
   (d) Nasser AlKidwa

9. Which of the following bodies manages routine civil administration in Gaza?
   (a) Palestinian Authority Governing Cabinet
   (b) National Gaza Administration Committee
   (c) Hamas Central Political Leadership Council
   (d) United Nations Humanitarian Relief Agency

10. Who chairs the National Committee for Gaza Administration?
    (a) Omar Abbas (b) S Haniyeh
    (c) M Dahlan (d) Ali Shaath

11. Which of the following countries skipped the official charter announcement ceremony despite attending Davos discussions?
    (a) India (b) Greece
    (c) Pakistan (d) Turkey

12. What grants permanent membership in the Board of Peace?
    (a) Annual assessed contributions
    (b) Humanitarian assistance pledge
    (c) Renewable term membership
    (d) One billion dollar payment

13. Until when is the Board authorized under UNSC Resolution 2803?
    (a) December 31, 2026 (b) September 31, 2027
    (c) December 31, 2027 (d) January 21, 2027

14. Which of the following phases of Trump's Gaza Peace Proposal includes the Board of Peace?
    (a) Initial ceasefire phase (b) Final status phase
    (c) Phase two transition (d) Post conflict referendum

15. Which of the following outcomes was achieved during Phase One of the peace plan?
    (a) Two state agreement
    (b) International trusteeship
    (c) Gaza elections held
    (d) Hostages safely released

16. Which of the following factors complicates India's decision regarding Board membership?
    (a) United Nations opposition
    (b) Pakistan participation factor

(c) European trade sanctions
(d) Israeli diplomatic pressure

17. Which of the following wars resulted in Israel gaining control over Gaza?
(a) 1960 war
(b) 1962 war
(c) 1965 war
(d) 1967 war

17.

ANSWER KEY

1. (a)	2. (c)	3. (d)	4. (a)	5. (c)	6. (b)	7. (c)	8. (c)
9. (b)	10. (d)	11. (a)	12. (d)	13. (c)	14. (c)	15. (d)	16. (b)
17. (d)							

PRAYAGRAJ CENTRE





KOLKATA CENTRE

INDORE CENTRE

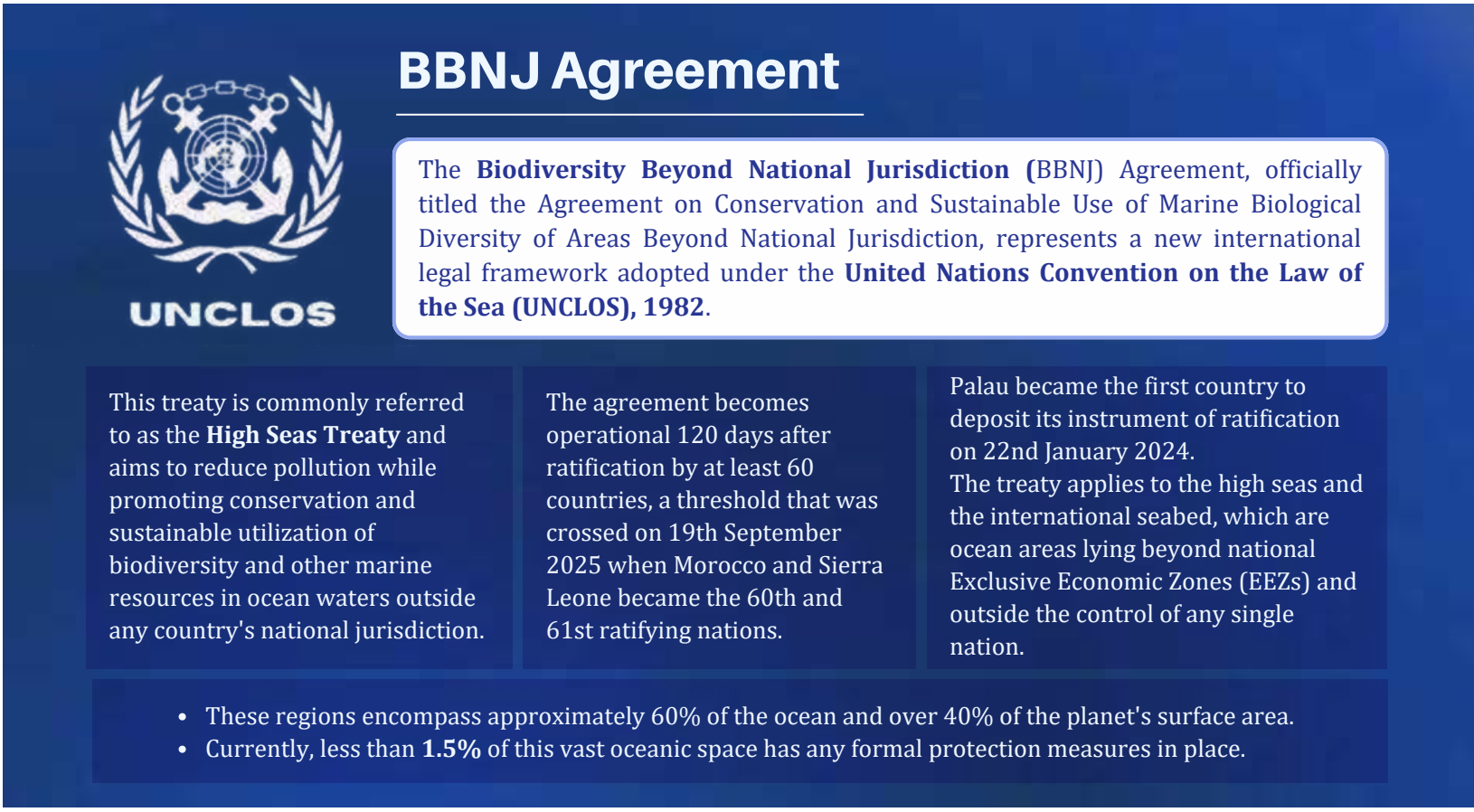


Environment & Biodiversity

BBNJ Agreement Enters Into Force

News Highlights:

- The **Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Agreement**, the world's first legally binding treaty for safeguarding marine life in international waters and the seabed beyond national borders, became effective on **17th January 2026**.
- This landmark agreement covers ocean zones that constitute over two-thirds of the ocean's surface and represent more than 90% of Earth's living space by volume.
- More than **81 nations** have ratified the treaty so far, including major economies like China, Japan, France, Germany, and Brazil, while the United States, India, and the United Kingdom have signed but not yet completed domestic ratification.
- The treaty establishes the first international framework for inclusive ocean governance, incorporating provisions for **Indigenous Peoples**, local communities, and gender balance.



Four Foundational Pillars of the Agreement

Marine Genetic Resources and Benefit Sharing

- The treaty addresses **Marine Genetic Resources (MGRs)**, including provisions for fair and equitable distribution of benefits derived from these resources.
- Marine genetic resources can enable the production of biochemicals used in cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, and food supplements.

- An **Access and Benefit-Sharing Committee** has been established to oversee the implementation of these provisions.

Area-Based Management Mechanisms

- The agreement provides for **Area-Based Management Tools (ABMTs)**, including the establishment of **Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)** where activities would be regulated to conserve marine ecosystems.
- For the first time, a global mechanism exists to designate protected areas in international waters when scientific evidence supports such protection.
- This framework supports the global commitment to protect 30% of land and sea by 2030 under the **Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework**.

Environmental Impact Assessments

- **Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs)** are made mandatory for any activity that could potentially pollute or damage the marine ecosystem in international waters.
- If a party determines that an activity under its control may cause significant harm to the marine environment, conducting an EIA becomes obligatory.
- Parties are required to communicate EIA reports to the **Clearing-House Mechanism** established by the agreement, ensuring public availability of such reports.

Capacity Building and Technology Transfer

- The treaty mandates parties to develop and implement mechanisms for capacity building, including financing research programs and dedicated initiatives.
- This pillar aims to assist developing nations in fully utilizing ocean benefits while also contributing to conservation efforts.
- Technology transfer initiatives may include sharing data, information dissemination on marine scientific research, and strengthening institutional capacity and national regulatory frameworks.

Institutional Framework

- The agreement creates several key institutional structures including a **Conference of the Parties (COP)**, subsidiary bodies, a **Clearing-House Mechanism**, and a secretariat.
- Additional committees established include a **Capacity-Building and Transfer of Marine Technology Committee**, a **Finance Committee on Financial Resources**, and an **Implementation and Compliance Committee**.
- The **UN Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (DOALOS)** hosts the BBNJ Secretariat.
- A **Preparatory Commission** was established to prepare for implementation, with sessions held in April 2025 and August 2025, and a third session scheduled for March-April 2026.

Ratification and Implementation Status

- **Countries That Have Ratified** As of the treaty's entry into force, 81 parties have ratified the agreement, including the **European Union** and 16 of its Member States. Major economies that have completed ratification include **China**, Japan, France, Germany, and Brazil. China holds particular significance given its impact on ocean-related industries such as shipbuilding, aquaculture, fisheries, and offshore oil and gas, exporting approximately **$155 billion** of ocean-related goods in 2023. A total of **145 countries** signed the treaty before the signature window closed on 20th September 2025.
- **Countries Yet to Ratify:** The **United States**, despite being one of the top five ocean-related goods exporters with $61 billion in exports, signed the treaty in September 2023 but Senate action on ratification remains pending. President Biden transmitted the treaty to the Senate for advice and consent on **18th December 2024**. **India**, a top developing-economy exporter with $19 billion in ocean-related goods, adopted the treaty in 2024 but domestic legislation on ratification is still pending. The **United Kingdom** introduced legislation on the matter in 2025, but parliamentary ratification is incomplete. **Russia** has neither adopted nor ratified the treaty, citing concerns about preserving existing governance frameworks and ensuring freedom of navigation in international waters.

Historical Background and Negotiations

The United Nations began preparatory meetings in **2004** to lay the groundwork for an implementing agreement addressing governance and regulatory gaps. On 24th December 2017, the UN General Assembly adopted **Resolution 72/249** to convene an intergovernmental conference for formal negotiations. Five intergovernmental conference sessions were held between **2018 and 2023** at UN Headquarters in New York. The fourth session, originally scheduled for 2020, was postponed to March 2022 due to the **COVID-19 pandemic**. The treaty text was finalized on **4th March 2023** and formally adopted by UN Member States on **19th June 2023**. In November 2025, the High Seas Treaty won the prestigious **Earthshot Prize** in the "Revive our Oceans" category.

Significance of the Agreement

The BBNJ Agreement addresses a long-standing governance gap by introducing legally binding rules for more than two-thirds of the ocean's surface, strengthening global ocean conservation under UNCLOS, often described as the **constitution of the oceans**. The treaty supports **Sustainable Development Goal 14 (Life Below Water)** and contributes to tackling the **triple planetary crisis** of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. This represents the **third implementing agreement** under UNCLOS, following the 1994 Part XI Implementation Agreement on international seabed mining and the 1995 UN Fish Stocks Agreement on straddling and highly migratory fish stocks. The agreement enables stronger international efforts to protect oceans, mitigate climate change, and safeguard the lives and livelihoods of billions of people worldwide. The **EU Global Ocean Programme** has pledged **€40 million** to support the treaty's implementation, particularly in developing countries.

Defining the High Seas

Geographic and Legal Definition

- According to the 1958 Geneva Convention on the High Seas, ocean parts not included in territorial waters or internal waters of any country are designated as high seas.
- These areas exist beyond a country's **Exclusive Economic Zone**, which extends up to **200 nautical miles** from the coastline where nations have jurisdiction over living and non-living resources.
- No single country bears responsibility for managing and protecting resources in these waters.

Ecological and Economic Importance

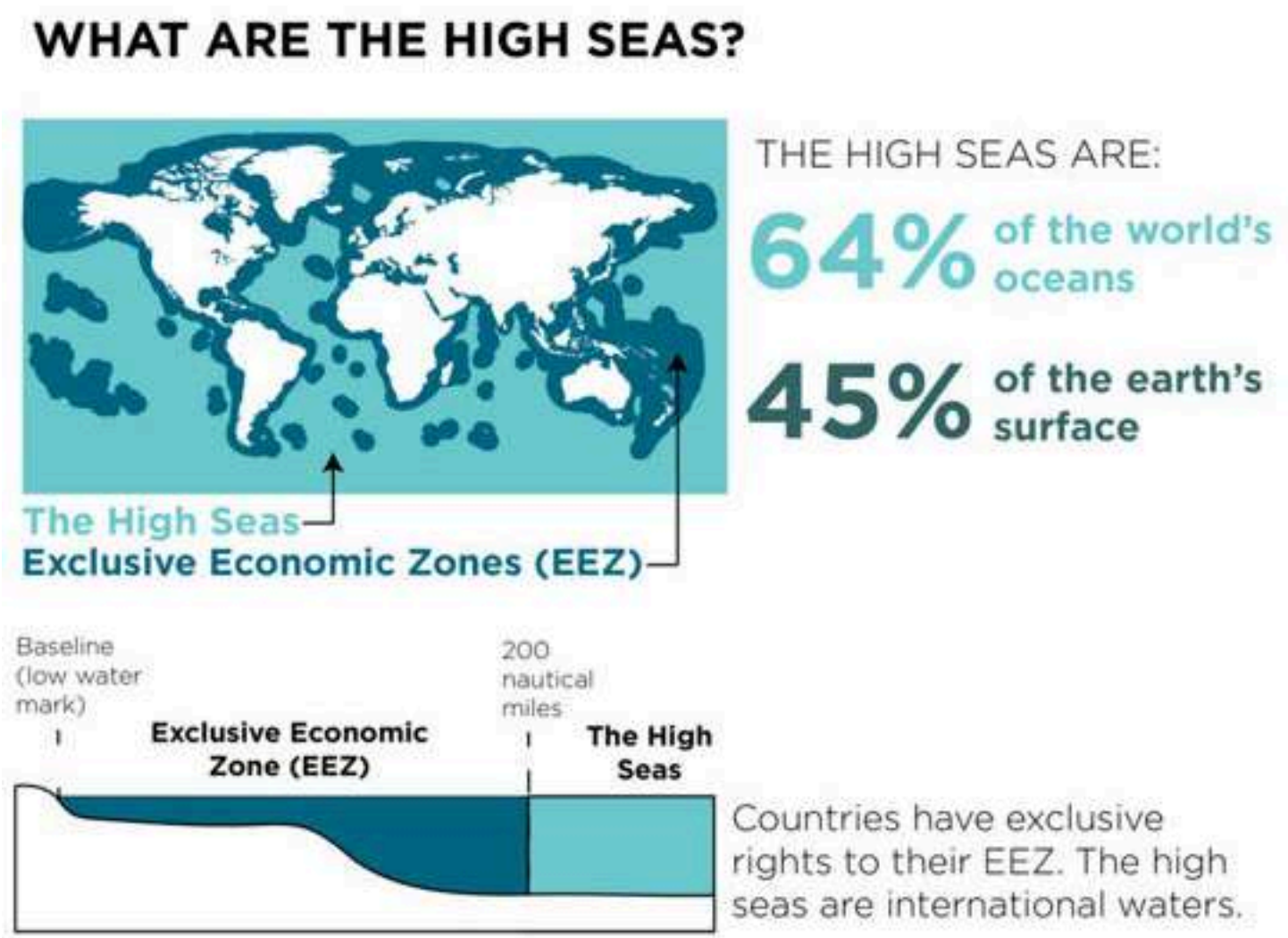
- The high seas cover over **64%** of the world's oceans and **50%** of Earth's surface, making them vital for marine life.
- These waters are home to approximately **270,000 known species**, with many yet to be discovered.
- High seas regulate climate, absorb carbon, store solar radiation, and distribute heat, which is crucial for planetary stability and climate change mitigation.
- They are essential for human survival, providing resources including seafood, raw materials, and genetic and medicinal resources.

Existing Threats

- These waters absorb atmospheric heat and are affected by phenomena like **El Niño** and **ocean acidification**, which endanger marine flora and fauna.
- Several thousand marine species face extinction risk by **2100** if current warming and acidification trends continue.
- Human-induced pressures include seabed mining, noise pollution, chemical and oil spills, disposal of untreated waste including antibiotics, overfishing, introduction of invasive species, and coastal pollution.
- Despite these threats, only about **1%** of the high seas currently have protection measures.

United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)

- UNCLOS is an international treaty adopted and signed in **1982**, replacing the four Geneva Conventions of April 1958 related to territorial sea, contiguous zone, continental shelf, high seas, fishing, and conservation of living resources.
- It is considered the **constitution for the oceans**, establishing comprehensive rules for maritime and seabed exploitation and marine protection since coming into force in **1994**.



Maritime Zones Under UNCLOS

- **Internal Waters**: Waters on the landward side of the baseline from which territorial sea is measured.
- **Territorial Sea**: Extends up to **12 nautical miles** from the baseline; coastal state has sovereignty.
- **Contiguous Zone**: Extends up to **24 nautical miles**; state can exercise control necessary to prevent infringement of customs, fiscal, immigration, or sanitary laws.
- **Exclusive Economic Zone**: Extends up to **200 nautical miles**; state has sovereign rights for exploring, exploiting, conserving, and managing natural resources.
- **High Seas**: Areas beyond EEZ; open to all states with freedom of navigation, fishing, and scientific research.



MIND MAP

News Trigger

- **BBNJ Agreement** entered into force on **17 Jan 2026**.
- First legally binding treaty for biodiversity in **international waters** and **international seabed**.
- Covers **> two-thirds** of ocean surface and **>90%** of Earth's living space by volume.
- First **COP** to be held within **one year** of entry into force.

What is the BBNJ Agreement

- Official title: Agreement on **Conservation and Sustainable Use** of Marine Biological Diversity of **Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction**.
- Common name: **High Seas Treaty**.
- Adopted as an implementing agreement under **UNCLOS (1982)**.
- Focus on conservation, sustainable use, and reducing harm in areas outside national control.

Legal Trigger for Entry Into Force

- Becomes operational **120 days** after **60 ratifications**.
- Threshold crossed on **19 Sep 2025** (60th and 61st ratifications).
- First ratification deposited by **Palau** on **22 Jan 2024**.

Geographical Scope

- Applies to **high seas** and **international seabed** beyond national **EEZs**.
- Covers roughly **60% of the ocean** and **>40% of Earth's surface area**.
- Formal protection exists for **<1.5%** of this space prior to treaty mechanisms.

Pillar 1: MGRs and Benefit Sharing

- Sets rules for fair and equitable sharing of benefits from **MGRs**.
- MGRs linked to biochemicals for **pharma**, **cosmetics**, and supplements.
- Creates an **Access and Benefit-Sharing Committee**.

7) Pillar 2: ABMTs and MPAs

- Enables **Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)** in international waters.
- First global mechanism to designate protected zones on scientific basis.
- Supports **30x30 target** under the Kunming–Montreal framework.

8) Pillar 3: EIAs

- EIAs mandatory for activities likely to cause significant marine harm.
- Obligatory when activity under a party's control risks serious damage.
- EIA reports must be shared through the **Clearing-House Mechanism**.
- Ensures transparency and public availability of impact information.

The Four Pillars

- **Marine Genetic Resources (MGRs)** and benefit-sharing.
- **Area-Based Management Tools (ABMTs)** including MPAs.
- Mandatory **Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs)**.
- **Capacity building** and **technology transfer** for developing states.

Ratified

- **81 parties** have ratified, including **EU** and several member states.
- Major ratifiers include **China**, **Japan**, **France**, **Germany**, **Brazil**.

Connected Topics

Global Commons Governance and the "Tragedy of the Commons"

- "Global commons" commonly refers to resource domains beyond the jurisdiction of any single State, especially the high seas, the atmosphere, outer space, and Antarctica.
- Many global-commons problems are common-pool resource problems: resources are costly to exclude users from, and one user's extraction can reduce what remains for others (e.g., fish stocks on the high seas).
- The "tragedy of the commons" idea was popularised by Garrett Hardin in a 1968 Science essay: individual incentives to maximise private gain can drive overuse and depletion of shared resources unless access/use is governed. A core governance response is creating rules + monitoring + sanctions so that the cost of overuse is internalised; Hardin argued that effective solutions often involve "mutual coercion, mutually agreed upon."
- Elinor Ostrom showed that commons outcomes are not inevitably tragic: communities can create durable institutions for collective action (e.g., clear boundaries, monitoring, graduated sanctions, dispute-resolution).
- In ocean governance, the baseline legal framework is the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which recognises freedoms of the high seas but also ties them to conditions and duties (including conservation-related duties).
- UNCLOS-based governance relies on a patchwork of sectoral bodies (e.g., fisheries management, shipping rules) plus treaty-based duties to cooperate—an approach that can leave gaps for biodiversity protection in areas beyond national jurisdiction.
- A distinct governance principle in parts of ocean law is the "common heritage of mankind" concept (especially linked to the deep seabed regime under UNCLOS Part XI), which frames some areas/resources as not subject to national appropriation and subject to shared-benefit governance.
- The BBNJ Agreement (often called the "High Seas Treaty") adds an implementing framework under UNCLOS for biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction, covering: marine genetic resources (benefit-sharing), area-based management tools/MPAs, environmental impact assessments, and capacity-building/technology transfer.

India's Ocean Governance Strategy under SAGAR and Indo-Pacific Vision

- India articulated SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) in the Indian Ocean context in March 2015, framing regional maritime cooperation around security and shared prosperity.
- India's Indo-Pacific approach was formally articulated at the Shangri-La Dialogue (1 June 2018), emphasising a free, open, inclusive Indo-Pacific and support for rule-based regional order.
- In India's Indo-Pacific messaging, international law—especially UNCLOS—is repeatedly highlighted as a foundation for maritime order (sovereignty, territorial integrity, and lawful use of seas).
- India launched the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI) at the East Asia Summit (4 November 2019) as a cooperation platform on multiple maritime pillars (often described in official/track-1.5 write-ups as spanning security, ecology, economy, capacity-building, and rules).
- The BBNJ Agreement's subject matter is the high seas/areas beyond national jurisdiction, aligning with India's stated emphasis on UNCLOS-based governance and rules-based maritime order in the wider Indo-Pacific.
- BBNJ's area-based management tools (including MPAs) provide a multilateral route to designate conservation measures in areas beyond national jurisdiction—consistent with the "sustainable development + environmental protection" components India associates with cooperative ocean governance (including in IPOI-oriented framing).
- BBNJ requires environmental impact assessments (EIAs) for relevant activities in areas beyond national jurisdiction, which aligns with a governance style that emphasises procedural safeguards (assessment, transparency, consultation) rather than purely unilateral action.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Which of the following best describes the legal nature of the BBNJ Agreement?
   (a) A legally binding treaty under UNCLOS
   (b) A voluntary environmental declaration
   (c) A regional marine conservation protocol
   (d) A non-binding UN General Assembly resolution

2. In which of the following year did the BBNJ Agreement enter into force?
   (a) 2023 (b) 2026 (c) 2025 (d) 2024

3. Which of the following bodies will meet within one year of the treaty's entry into force to monitor implementation?
   (a) International Seabed Council
   (b) Conference of the Parties
   (c) UN General Assembly
   (d) UN Maritime Council

4. Which of the following ocean areas are primarily governed by the BBNJ Agreement?
   (a) Territorial seas of coastal states
   (b) Internal waters of coastal states
   (c) High seas and international seabed
   (d) Continental shelves within EEZs

5. Which of the following thresholds triggered the operationalization of the BBNJ Agreement?
   (a) Adoption by UN General Assembly
   (b) Ratification by at least sixty states
   (c) Signature by all UNCLOS parties
   (d) Approval by the International Court of Justice

6. Which of the following pillars of the BBNJ Agreement mandates mandatory Environmental Impact Assessments?
   (a) Marine Genetic Resources
   (b) Area-Based Management Tools
   (c) Environmental Impact Assessments
   (d) Capacity Building and Technology Transfer

7. Which of the following countries was the first to deposit its instrument of ratification?
   (a) Palau (b) Morocco
   (c) Turkey (d) Brazil

8. Which of the following mechanisms ensures public access to Environmental Impact Assessment reports?
   (a) Secretariat Registry Report
   (b) Clearing-House Mechanism
   (c) COP Documentation Unit
   (d) UN Ocean Database Report

9. Which of the following countries has neither adopted nor ratified the BBNJ Agreement?
   (a) China (b) Japan (c) India (d) Russia

10. Which of the following international bodies hosts the BBNJ Secretariat?
    (a) UN Maritime and Environmental Programme organization
    (b) International Maritime Organization and Law of the Sea agency
    (c) United Nations Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea
    (d) United Nations Educational and Maritime Scientific Organization

11. Which of the following frameworks commits states to protect thirty percent of land and sea by 2030?
    (a) Kunming Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework
    (b) Paris Global Climate Change Mitigation Agreement
    (c) Sendai Global Disaster Risk Reduction Framework
    (d) Ramsar Climate Convention on Wetlands Protection

12. Which of the following committees oversees benefit sharing related to Marine Genetic Resources?
    (a) Financial Resources Allocation Oversight Committee
    (b) Implementation and Compliance Review Committee
    (c) Access and Benefit Sharing Oversight Committee
    (d) Capacity Building Technology Transfer Committee

13. Which of the following treatises is commonly referred to as the High Seas Treaty?
    (a) International Convention for Marine Life Pollution
    (b) United Nations Convention for Fish Stocks Agreement
    (c) Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction Agreement

(d) London Convention on Ocean Waste Dumping

14. Which of the following prizes was awarded to the High Seas Treaty in 2025?
(a) Nobel Peace Prize International Committee
(b) Blue Planet Environmental Conservation Award
(c) Goldman International Environmental Achievement Prize
(d) Earthshot Prize Revive Our Oceans

15. Which of the following countries transmitted the BBNJ Agreement to its legislature in December 2024?
(a) United Kingdom parliamentary constitutional monarchy
(b) United States federal presidential republic
(c) India federal parliamentary democratic republic
(d) Japan constitutional monarchy parliamentary system

16. Which of the following agreements is recognized as the third implementing agreement under UNCLOS?
(a) Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction Agreement
(b) United Nations Fish Stocks High Seas Agreement
(c) Part Eleven Biodiversity Implementation Agreement
(d) Geneva Convention on High Seas Agreement

17. Which of the following organisations established a dedicated BBNJ Working Group in June 2025?
(a) Food and Agriculture Organization United Nations
(b) United Nations Environment Programme Authority
(c) UNESCO Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission
(d) World Meteorological Organization Secretariat

18. Which of the following maritime zones extends up to two hundred nautical miles from the baseline?
(a) Territorial Sea maritime sovereignty zone
(b) Contiguous Zone limited enforcement zone
(c) Exclusive Economic Zone resource jurisdiction
(d) High Seas international commons zone

19. Which of the following countries adopted the BBNJ Agreement in 2024 but awaits domestic ratification?
(a) United Kingdom parliamentary constitutional monarchy
(b) India federal parliamentary democratic republic
(c) France federal presidential republic
(d) Russia federal semi presidential republic

20. Which of the following reasons best explains the need for a new treaty governing the high seas?
(a) Existing treaties restricted international navigation
(b) Coastal states controlled entire global oceans
(c) Governance gaps left biodiversity largely unprotected
(d) UNCLOS prohibited marine conservation measures

ANSWER KEY

1. (a)	2. (b)	3. (b)	4. (c)	5. (b)	6. (c)	7. (a)	8. (b)
9. (d)	10. (c)	11. (a)	12. (c)	13. (c)	14. (d)	15. (b)	16. (a)
17. (c)	18. (c)	19. (b)	20. (c)				

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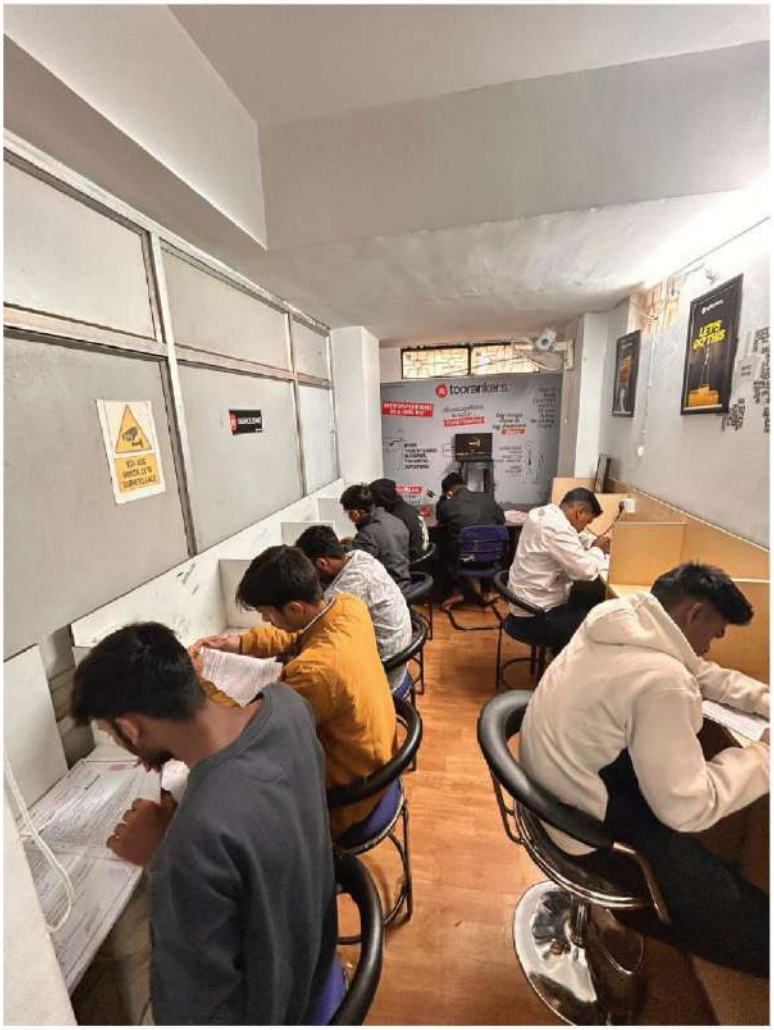


Science & Technology

DHRUV64 Microprocessor

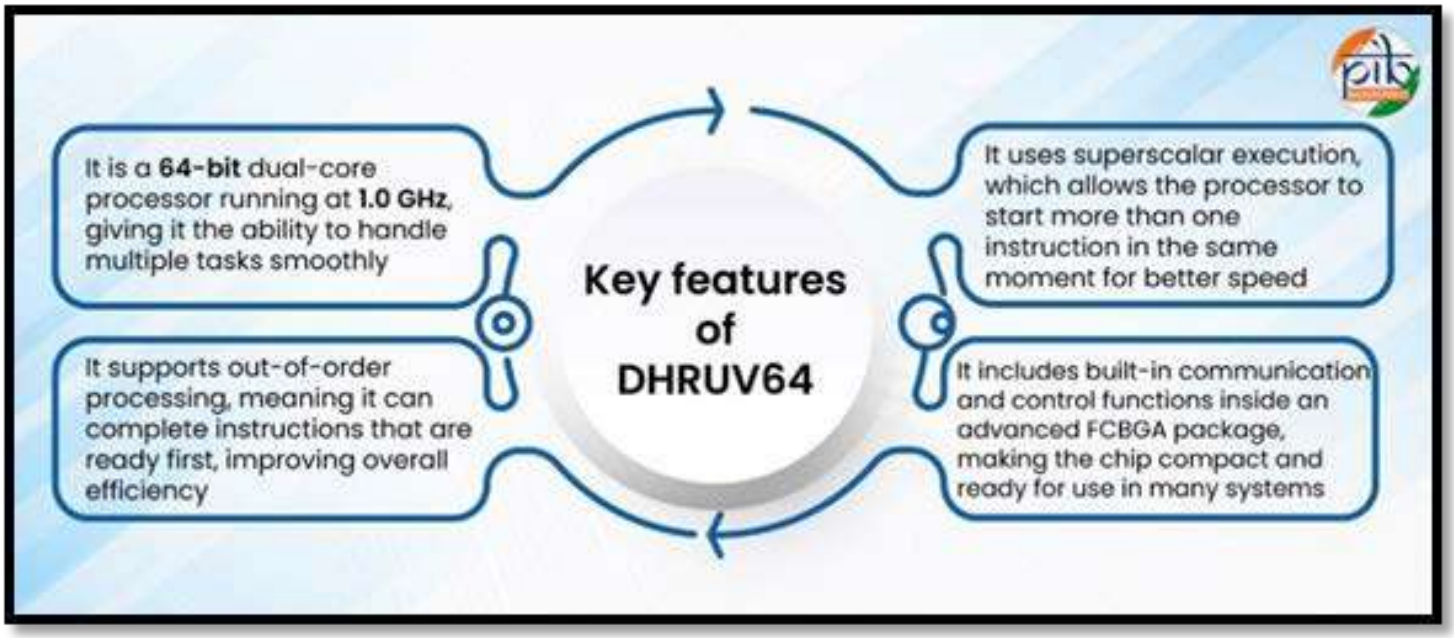
News Highlights:

- The **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)** announced the launch of **DHRUV64** on 15th December 2025, India's first fully indigenous 64-bit dual-core microprocessor developed by C-DAC under the Microprocessor Development Programme.
- The processor operates at **1 GHz clock speed** with a 64-bit, dual-core architecture based on the open-source **RISC-V** instruction set, making it capable of running operating systems while remaining efficient for embedded deployments.
- DHRUV64 is the third chip fabricated under the **Digital India RISC-V (DIR-V)** programme, following THEJAS32 (fabricated in Malaysia) and THEJAS64 (manufactured at SCL Mohali).
- India consumes approximately **20% of all microprocessors** manufactured globally, yet continues to depend heavily on imported designs and supply chains, making indigenous processor development strategically critical.
- The processor targets applications in **5G infrastructure**, **automotive systems**, **industrial automation**, **IoT**, and **strategic government systems**, providing a trusted platform for startups, academia, and industry to build products without relying on foreign processors.

DHRUV64

Definition and Development

- DHRUV64, also designated as **VEGA AS2161**, is a fully indigenous microprocessor developed by the **Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC)** under MeitY's Microprocessor Development Programme (MDP).
- A **microprocessor** is a single semiconductor chip that combines the essential functions of a computer—arithmetic and logic, control, storage, input, and output—serving as its central processing unit (CPU).
- Microprocessors are the "brains" of modern electronic devices such as mobiles, computers, automobiles, medical equipment, defence systems, and satellites.
- The processor represents a deliberate intermediate step rather than a technological leap, designed as part of a transition from low-frequency microcontrollers to application-class processors operating in the gigahertz range.



Technical Specifications

Parameter	Specification
Architecture	64-bit RISC-V instruction set
Core Configuration	Dual-core (VEGA AS2161 cores)
Clock Speed	1.0 GHz
Pipeline	13 to 16 stage out-of-order engine
Memory	128 KB SRAM, DDR4 memory interface
Memory Bandwidth	75.4 GB/s memory interconnect
Process Node	28nm (estimated)
Packaging	FCBGA (Flip Chip Ball Grid Array)
Operating System Support	Linux-capable
Developer	Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC)
Programme	Digital India RISC-V (DIR-V)



Key Architectural Features

- **Superscalar Execution**: The processor can start more than one instruction simultaneously for improved speed and throughput.
- **Out-of-Order Processing**: DHRUV64 can complete instructions that are ready first, improving overall efficiency rather than waiting for instructions to complete sequentially.
- **Memory Management Unit (MMU)**: Enables the processor to run Linux and other operating systems requiring virtual memory support.
- **Floating-Point Support**: Enables mathematical calculations required for scientific and engineering applications.
- **Configurable L1 and L2 Caches**: Multiple levels of cache memory for faster data access.
- **Low-Latency Vectored Interrupt Controller**: Supports mixed real-time and Linux environments.
- **AXI-Compliant Interfaces**: Standard interfaces for broader system integration.
- **JTAG Debug Support**: Industry-standard debugging interface with Eclipse and GDB support.
- **Built-in Communication and Control Functions**: Integrated within the compact FCBGA package for use in multiple systems.

Performance Context and Comparison

Positioning in the Market



- DHRUV64's 1 GHz dual-core profile is roughly comparable to smartphone processors from **2011**, specifically the Samsung Exynos 4210 (Galaxy S II) or Apple A5 (iPhone 4S).
- The specified performance is low compared to top-tier consumer standards, as today's smartphone and laptop processors combine many more CPU cores with higher peak clock speeds and include specialized blocks like **GPUs** for machine-learning workloads.
- However, a significant portion of contemporary computing does not demand topline CPUs, including base station subsystems in telecommunications, industrial controllers, routers, and automotive modules that prize reliability and better hardware-software integration.
- The processor is "perfectly sized" for smart energy meters, industrial automation, secure routers, and guidance systems, sectors where reliability and security vastly outweigh the need for bleeding-edge speed.



Strategic Rather Than Consumer Focus

- DHRUV64 is not designed to win smartphone benchmarks but to ensure that if supply chains fracture or geopolitics weaponises dependence, critical digital infrastructure does not become collateral damage.
- Whoever controls microprocessor design, toolchain, and update pathways also controls security assumptions and resilience during export controls or supply shocks.
- The processor provides India with a secure, domestically controlled alternative for sensitive applications where data integrity and system security are critical.

India's Indigenous Processor Ecosystem

Key Indigenous Processors Developed

Processor	Developer	Year	Purpose
SHAKTI	IIT Madras	2018	Strategic, space, and defence applications

Processor	Developer	Year	Purpose
AJIT	IIT Bombay	2018	Industrial and robotics applications
VIKRAM	ISRO-SCL	2025	Space applications (navigation, guidance, mission operations); engineered to withstand extreme space conditions
VIKRAM3201	C-DAC	-	Qualified for launch vehicles, fabricated domestically
THEJAS32	C-DAC	2022	First DIR-V chip; fabricated at Silterra facility in Malaysia
THEJAS64	IIT Bombay	2025	Industrial automation; manufactured at SCL Mohali on 180nm process
DHRUV64	C-DAC	2025	General-purpose; 5G, automotive, industrial, IoT applications

Evolution of India's Chip Design Capability

- India started a concerted push to build locally designed chips based on the RISC-V architecture in **2020**, when the country's best efforts were 180nm, 32-bit processors running at 75-100 MHz.
- The progression from THEJAS32 to DHRUV64 demonstrates significant advancement, from 32-bit microcontrollers to a 64-bit, 1 GHz application processor capable of running Linux.
- THEJAS32 was eventually incorporated into the **ARIES v3.0** Arduino UNO-inspired development board, demonstrating practical application.
- Industry watchers say DHRUV64 signals a maturing of India's chip design talent into production-grade silicon.

Digital India RISC-V Programme

Programme Overview

The Digital India RISC-V (DIR-V) Programme was launched by the Government of India to advance the vision of Aatmanirbhar Bharat in semiconductors.

The programme aims to establish India as a global hub for Electronics System Design and Manufacturing (ESDM).

DIR-V develops a complete portfolio of RISC-V-based microprocessors to power applications across industry, strategic sectors, and consumer technologies.

The initiative targets reducing India's dependence on foreign processor technologies for strategic and commercial sectors including industry, defence, space, and consumer electronics.

Chips Under DIR-V Programme			
Chip	**Status**	**Fabrication Location**	**Process Node**
THEJAS32	**Fabricated**	**Silterra, Malaysia**	180nm
THEJAS64	**Fabricated**	**SCL Mohali, India**	180nm
DHRUV64	**Launched**	**Not disclosed**	28nm (estimated)
DHANUSH64	**Under Development**	**-**	28nm
DHANUSH64+	**Under Development**	**-**	14nm or 16nm

Future Roadmap

- **DHANUSH**: A 1.2 GHz quad-core processor currently in the engineering/design stage with a 28nm process node.
- **DHANUSH+**: A 2 GHz quad-core processor planned with 14nm or 16nm process node.
- The design, implementation, and fabrication of DHANUSH64 and DHANUSH64+ **System-on-Chip (SoC)** variants are currently under development.

RISC-V Architecture

What is RISC-V?

- **RISC-V** (pronounced "risk five") is an open-source **Instruction Set Architecture (ISA)** based on **Reduced Instruction Set Computing (RISC)** principles.
- An **ISA** is essentially a "recipe book" for processors, a set of basic instructions that define commands like "add two numbers," "move data from memory," "compare two values," and "jump to another step in a program."
- RISC-V originated from the **Berkeley RISC project** led by Turing Award winner **David Patterson** at the University of California, Berkeley in 1980.
- The fifth generation (RISC-V) was developed in 2010 when Berkeley researchers wanted an instruction set for teaching that wasn't plagued by IP law issues, authorization difficulties, and costly licensing fees.

Key Characteristics of RISC-V	
Feature	**Description**
Open Source	Core rules are publicly available; anyone can design a chip without paying licence fees
Modular	Designers can start with a small standard core and add extensions as needed
Customizable	Enables specialized instructions for cryptography, AI, or other specific applications
Simple	Only 236 pages of specifications compared to 2,000+ pages for ARM-32 and x86-32

Feature	Description
Scalable	Supports implementations from embedded systems to high-performance computing
No Vendor Lock-in	Organizations have full control over processor designs

Why Governments Prefer RISC-V

- **No Licensing Fees:** Eliminates recurring costs associated with proprietary architectures.
- **Export Control Immunity:** Reduces sensitivity to geopolitical pressures and sanctions.
- **Security Control:** Full visibility into processor design without relying on foreign-controlled intellectual property.
- **Long-term Deployment:** Open architecture supports sustainable development without vendor dependency.
- **National Sovereignty:** Enables countries to develop truly indigenous processor capabilities.

RISC-V vs ARM vs x86 Comparison

Aspect	RISC-V	ARM	x86
Type	Open-source ISA	Proprietary ISA	Proprietary ISA
Architecture	RISC (Reduced)	RISC (Reduced)	CISC (Complex)
Licensing	Free, no royalties	Licensed from ARM Holdings	Licensed from Intel/AMD
Owner	Global community	ARM Holdings	Intel, AMD
Customization	Highly customizable	Limited customization	Limited customization
Specification Size	236 pages, ~77,000 words	2,000+ pages	2,000+ pages, 2 million+ words
Base Instructions	47	Fixed set	Complex set
Market Dominance	Emerging	Mobile, embedded systems	PCs, laptops, servers

Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC)

- C-DAC is the premier **Research & Development organization** of MeitY for carrying out R&D in IT, Electronics, and associated areas.
- India's first supercomputer **PARAM 8000** was indigenously built by C-DAC in **1991**.
- C-DAC's headquarters are in Pune, with the microprocessor development team based in **Thiruvananthapuram (Trivandrum), Kerala**.
- C-DAC Director General **E Magesh** has been steering national programmes across supercomputing and microprocessors.
- The **VEGA processor family** developed by C-DAC includes the THEJAS and DHRUV series of RISC-V processors.

India's Semiconductor Ecosystem Development

India Semiconductor Mission (ISM)

- The government provides fiscal support up to 50% of project cost for eligible semiconductor fabrication projects.

- ISM was established as the nodal agency under MeitY to vet and screen investments and implement semiconductor schemes in India.
- As of late 2025, ISM has approved **10 projects across six states** with total investment commitments of **₹1.6 lakh crore** (approximately US$18-19 billion).

Tata Electronics Semiconductor Fab – Dholera

- India's first commercial semiconductor fabrication plant, established in partnership with Taiwan's **Powerchip Semiconductor Manufacturing Corporation (PSMC).**
- Total investment of **₹91,000 crore** (approximately US$11 billion).
- Manufacturing capacity of **50,000 wafers per month**.
- Expected to generate over **20,000 direct and indirect skilled jobs**.
- Manufacturing nodes: 28nm, 40nm, 55nm, 90nm, and 110nm.
- Target markets: Automotive, computing, communications, and artificial intelligence.
- First commercial chip production expected by late 2026.
- The facility is located in the **Dholera Special Investment Region (SIR),** which spans approximately 900 square kilometers, larger than Singapore and is designated as India's "Semicon City."

Additional Key Facts

- IT Minister **Ashwini Vaishnaw** announced that the first "Made in India" semiconductor chip from the Tata Dholera facility is expected in **September or October 2025**.
- The first generation of RISC-I processor designed at UC Berkeley in 1980 contained only 32 instructions and half as many transistors as contemporary CISC chips, yet outperformed any other chip of that era.
- The RISC-V architecture market was estimated at US$445.7 million in 2021 and is projected to grow at a CAGR of 33.1% to reach US$2.7 billion by 2027.
- RISC-V International, the non-profit organization overseeing RISC-V development, has introduced standard base profiles like RVA22 and RVA23 for Linux-class CPUs to avoid fragmentation.
- India's semiconductor budget allocation increased by 83% to ₹7,000 crore in 2025, signaling strong government commitment.
- A Semiconductor Innovation Museum, first of its kind showcasing India's indigenous AI chip and related technologies, was inaugurated in Hyderabad on 12th October 2025 by the Technology Chip Innovation Corporation (T-Chip).
- ISRO's VIKRAM3201 microprocessor, qualified for launch vehicles, has already been fabricated at SCL Mohali, proving India possesses domestic manufacturing capability where sovereignty matters more than cutting-edge specifications.



MIND MAP

- Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology announced **DHRUV64** on **15 Dec 2025**
- India's first fully indigenous **64-bit dual-core microprocessor**.
- Developed by Centre for Development of Advanced Computing under the **Microprocessor Development Programme (MDP)**.
- Built on the open-source RISC-V International ISA ecosystem for Linux-capable, embedded-class deployments.
- Positioned as strategically critical because India consumes ~**20%** of global microprocessors but remains import-dependent.

Technical Profile

- Architecture: **64-bit RISC-V**.
- Core configuration: **dual-core** (VEGA AS2161 cores).
- Clock speed: **1.0 GHz**.
- Pipeline: **13–16 stage out-of-order** engine.
- Memory: **128 KB SRAM** + **DDR4 interface**.
- Interconnect bandwidth: **75.4 GB/s**.
- Packaging: **FCBGA**.
- OS support: **Linux-capable** (via MMU support).
- Process node: **28nm (estimated)**.

What DHRUV64 Is

- Also designated as **VEGA AS2161** (VEGA core family).
- Fully indigenous processor design intended as a transition from low-frequency microcontrollers to **GHz-class** application processors.
- Intended to provide a **trusted domestic platform** for government, industry, startups, and academia.

India's Indigenous Processor Landscape

- IIT Madras developed **SHAKTI** for strategic/space/defence use.
- IIT Bombay developed **AJIT** for industrial/robotics applications.
- Indian Space Research Organisation ecosystem includes **VIKRAM/VIKRAM3201** class processors for space/launch vehicles.
- DHRUV64 adds a general-purpose, application-class option in this portfolio.

Roadmap Beyond DHRUV64

- DHANUSH64 under development: ~**1.2 GHz quad-core** (28nm).
- DHANUSH64+ planned: ~**2.0 GHz quad-core** (14/16nm target).
- SoC variants planned to deepen product readiness for large-scale deployment.

Why RISC-V Matters for India

- Open ISA with no royalty licensing fees and reduced vendor lock-in.
- Modular and customizable for domain extensions like crypto or safety
- Greater design visibility supports security assurance and long deployments.
- Lower sensitivity to export-control and licensing chokepoints.

Connected Topics

India Semiconductor Mission (ISM)

- India Semiconductor Mission is positioned as the nodal agency for the "efficient and seamless implementation" of India's semiconductor and display schemes.
- ISM's stated aim is to build a strong semiconductor and display ecosystem and enable India's emergence as a global hub for electronics manufacturing and design.
- The Union Cabinet approved a comprehensive programme for semiconductor and display ecosystem development with a total outlay of ₹76,000 crore, alongside the setting up of ISM to drive the sector.
- The Cabinet note (Dec 2021) lists the programme's coverage across Silicon Semiconductor Fabs, Display Fabs, Compound Semiconductors / Silicon Photonics / Sensors (including MEMS) Fabs, Packaging (ATMP/OSAT), and Semiconductor Design.
- Under the Semiconductor Fabs scheme, fiscal support is stated as 50% of the project cost on a pari-passu basis for approved applicants.
- A later official outline of the Semicon India programme reiterates four schemes: Semiconductor Fabs, Display Fabs, Compound/Sensors/Discrete + ATMP/OSAT, and the Design Linked Incentive (DLI) scheme.
- Under the DLI scheme, the press note specifies Product Design Linked Incentive up to 50% of eligible expenditure (cap ₹15 crore/application) and Deployment Linked Incentive of 6% to 4% of net sales turnover over 5 years (cap ₹30 crore/application).
- A PIB update (Dec 2022) records that ISM has been receiving and appraising applications under the Semicon India programme schemes and engaging stakeholders to attract investments.
- ISM's public portal notes that ISM 1.0 expanded India's semiconductor capabilities, and indicates that ISM 2.0 is planned to focus on equipment & materials, design IP, supply chains, and R&D centres.

Role of SCL Mohali in India's Semiconductor Fabrication History

- Semi-Conductor Laboratory (SCL) is India's long-standing government semiconductor facility located at Mohali, and has been treated as a strategic national asset in official statements.
- Multiple accounts of India's early fab history place SCL's origins in the late-1970s/early-1980s semiconductor push and note that it began production in the mid-1980s, making it central to India's first major attempt at indigenous chip fabrication.
- A major inflection point frequently referenced in India's semiconductor narrative is the 1989 fire at the Mohali facility, which destroyed key production infrastructure and significantly disrupted India's early momentum in chip manufacturing.
- In today's ecosystem framing, the Government has approved modernization of SCL Mohali as a brownfield fab, explicitly listing it alongside the four Semicon India programme schemes.
- In November 2025, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology announced an investment of ₹4,500 crore to upgrade and expand SCL Mohali, and stated it would not be privatized.
- The same announcement positions SCL as a continuing fabrication platform for students, researchers, and start-ups, turning chip designs into "real silicon," including chips produced under the Chips-to-Startup context.
- Indian Space Research Organisation has publicly stated that the VIKRAM3201 (32-bit) microprocessor used for space applications was fabricated at SCL's 180 nm CMOS semiconductor fab.
- ISRO further notes that a "Make-in-India" version of the VIKRAM1601 was inducted after the 180 nm semiconductor fab was established at SCL (referenced in its statement).

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Which organisation developed DHRUV64, India's first fully indigenous 64-bit dual-core microprocessor launched under the Microprocessor Development Programme?
   (a) I-SRO (b) D-RDO (c) C-DAC (d) B-HEL

2. Which of the following ministries announced the launch of DHRUV64 on 15th December 2025, India's first fully indigenous 64-bit dual-core microprocessor?
   (a) Ministry of Electronics Manufacturing and Renewable Energy
   (b) Ministry of Information Technology Services and Digital Economy
   (c) Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology India
   (d) Ministry of Electronics Infrastructure and Innovation Systems

3. Which of the following organisations developed the DHRUV64 microprocessor?
   (a) Indian Space Research Organisation
   (b) Centre for Electronics Information Technology
   (c) Ministry of Electronics Information Technology
   (d) Centre for Development of Advanced Computing

4. Which of the following instruction set architecture forms the foundation of DHRUV64?
   (a) ARM proprietary reduced architecture
   (b) x86 complex instruction architecture
   (c) Open source RISC V architecture
   (d) Hybrid ARM RISC architecture

5. Which of the following clock speeds best describes the operating frequency of DHRUV64?
   (a) One gigahertz processing frequency
   (b) Two gigahertz performance frequency
   (c) Three gigahertz computing frequency
   (d) Four gigahertz execution frequency

6. Which of the following best describes DHRUV64's core configuration?
   (a) Single core embedded microcontroller
   (b) Quad core consumer processing unit
   (c) Dual core VEGA architecture
   (d) Octa core mobile processing chip

7. Which of the following operating systems capability is enabled by DHRUV64's Memory Management Unit?
   (a) Bare metal firmware
   (b) Linux operating system
   (c) Android consumer platform
   (d) Real time microcontroller

8. Which of the following programmes does DHRUV64 belong to?
   (a) India Semiconductor Mission programme
   (b) Digital India RISC V programme
   (c) National Supercomputing programme
   (d) Production Linked Incentive programme

9. Which of the following earlier DIR-V chips was fabricated in Malaysia?
   (a) DHRUV64 (b) THEJAS64
   (c) DHANUSH64 (d) THEJAS32

10. Which of the following process nodes is estimated for DHRUV64 fabrication?
    (a) 80 nanometre (b) 40 nanometre
    (c) 28 nanometre (d) 14 nanometre

11. Which of the following processors is designed specifically for space applications?
    (a) VIKRAM processor (b) TEJAS64 processor
    (c) DHRUV64 processor (d) AJIT 44K processor

12. Which of the following future processors targets a 14 or 16 nanometre node?
    (a) DHRUV64 + (b) DHANUSH32 +
    (c) THEJAS64 + (d) DHANUSH64+

13. Who led the original Berkeley RISC project underlying RISC-V?
    (a) John Hennessy (b) David Patterson
    (c) Gordon Moore (d) Linus Torvalds

14. Which of the following features of RISC-V eliminates vendor lock in?
    (a) Complex proprietary extensions
    (b) Open source instruction specification
    (c) Closed source licensing ecosystem
    (d) Fixed hardware implementations

15. Where is C-DAC's microprocessor development team primarily based?
    (a) Mumbai Maharashtra
    (b) Bhubaneswar Odisha
    (c) Thiruvananthapuram Kerala
    (d) Hyderabad Telangana

16. Which of the following organisations oversees investments under the India Semiconductor Mission?
    (a) Reserve Bank of India
    (b) NITI Aayog planning commission
    (c) Ministry of Finance department
    (d) India Semiconductor Mission

17. Where is India's first commercial semiconductor fabrication plant located?
    (a) Dholera
    (b) Noida
    (c) Vizag
    (d) Sanand

18. Which of the following companies from Taiwan partnered with India to establish its first commercial semiconductor fabrication plant?
    (a) Advanced Micro Devices Manufacturing Corporation
    (b) Powerchip Semiconductor Manufacturing Corporation
    (c) United Semiconductor Manufacturing Corporation
    (d) Globalfoundries Semiconductor Manufacturing Corporation

19. Which of the following descriptions best fits DHRUV64's strategic positioning?
    (a) High end consumer smartphone processor
    (b) Gaming oriented graphics heavy chip
    (c) Benchmark focused flagship computing unit
    (d) Secure reliable processor for critical systems

ANSWER KEY

1. (c)	2. (c)	3. (d)	4. (c)	5. (a)	6. (c)	7. (b)	8. (b)
9. (d)	10. (c)	11. (a)	12. (d)	13. (b)	14. (b)	15. (c)	16. (d)
17. (a)	18. (b)	19. (d)					

ISRO's Heaviest Launch: BlueBird Block-2

News Highlights:

- The Indian Space Research Organisation accomplished its heaviest-ever payload deployment by launching the **BlueBird Block-2** satellite, weighing approximately 6,100 kg, into **Low Earth Orbit** using the LVM3-M6 rocket from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota.
- This commercial communication satellite, developed by American company **AST SpaceMobile**, became the largest communication satellite ever deployed in Low Earth Orbit, surpassing ISRO's previous record of 5,700 kg set during the OneWeb missions.
- The mission represents the sixth operational flight of the **LVM3** launch vehicle and marks ISRO's third commercial mission using this heavy-lift rocket, demonstrating India's capability to execute heavy launches at competitive costs against global alternatives.
- The satellite was injected into an orbital altitude of approximately 520 km within 15 minutes of lift-off and will provide **direct-to-mobile connectivity** enabling 4G and 5G services directly to standard smartphones without requiring specialized ground stations.
- This launch came just weeks after the LVM3-M5/CMS-03 mission in November 2025, marking the shortest interval between two LVM3 launches and the second instance of two LVM3 missions being conducted in a single calendar year.

BlueBird Block-2 Satellite

Basic Specifications

- **The BlueBird Block-2 is a next-generation commercial communication satellite designed and manufactured by the American company AST SpaceMobile.**
- **At approximately 6,100 kg, this satellite represents the heaviest payload ever launched by ISRO, exceeding the previous record of 5,700 kg achieved during the cumulative OneWeb satellite deployments.**
- **The satellite was precisely injected into a Low Earth Orbit at an altitude of approximately 520 km above the Earth's surface.**
- **This deployment marks the largest commercial communication satellite ever placed in Low Earth Orbit globally.**



Communication Technology and Functionality

- Unlike conventional communication satellites that transmit signals to specialized ground stations for further dissemination to end users, the BlueBird Block-2 operates on a **direct-to-mobile** communication architecture.
- The satellite constellation will communicate directly with standard mobile smartphones without requiring any specialized receiving equipment or ground-based relay infrastructure.
- This technology enables comprehensive communication services including 4G and 5G voice calls, video calls, text messaging, media streaming, and mobile data services.
- The satellite forms part of a larger Low Earth Orbit constellation designed to provide seamless cellular broadband connectivity across the globe, ensuring coverage in remote and underserved areas.

Commercial Significance of the Mission

- This mission represents ISRO's third commercial venture using the LVM3 launch vehicle, following two successful OneWeb satellite launches conducted in 2022 and 2023.
- India emerged as a preferred launch destination after Russia declined to conduct these missions following the commencement of the Ukraine conflict, and the European Space Agency's Ariane-5 rocket was decommissioned.
- Despite the availability of global alternatives such as SpaceX's Falcon-9 and the European Space Agency's Ariane 6, ISRO's LVM3 offers a compelling value proposition through significantly lower launch costs while maintaining reliable heavy-lift capabilities.
- The successful completion of this mission demonstrates India's growing competitiveness in the international commercial satellite launch market.

Earth Orbits: Classification and Characteristics

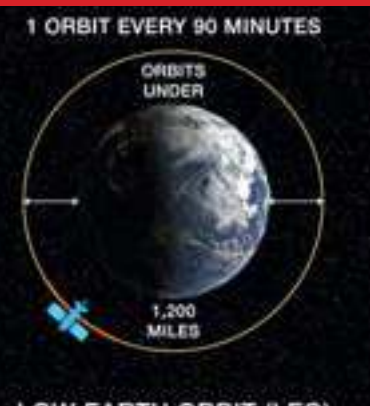
Low Earth Orbit

Orbital Parameters

- Low Earth Orbit encompasses the region extending from approximately 160 km to 2,000 km above the Earth's surface.
- Satellites operating in this orbital zone complete one full revolution around Earth in approximately 88 to 127 minutes.
- The signal round-trip latency for LEO satellites ranges between 2 to 27 milliseconds, making this orbit ideal for real-time communication applications and interactive services.

Applications and Satellite Types

- This orbital zone hosts a diverse array of satellites including communication satellites, Earth observation platforms, scientific research instruments, and navigation system components.
- The relatively close proximity to Earth enables higher resolution imaging, lower power requirements for communication, and reduced signal delay compared to higher orbits.
- While the majority of LEO satellites maintain circular orbital paths, certain specialized missions utilize elliptical orbits to achieve specific coverage objectives.



Key Facts

- **Objects in LEO travel at roughly 7.8 km/s (≈28,000 km/h) to stay in orbit.**
- **Typical signal latency ranges from 2–27 milliseconds, far lower than higher orbits.**

Medium Earth Orbit (MEO)

- Medium Earth Orbit occupies the region between 2,000 km and 35,786 km above the Earth's surface.
- Satellites in this orbital zone have orbital periods ranging from approximately 127 minutes to 24 hours, depending on their specific altitude.
- The round-trip signal latency for MEO satellites ranges between approximately 27 to 477 milliseconds.
- This orbit is commonly used for navigation satellite constellations and certain communication systems requiring broader coverage than LEO but lower latency than GEO.

Geostationary Earth Orbit (GEO)

- Geostationary Earth Orbit is positioned at a precise altitude of 35,786 km above the Earth's equator.
- Satellites in this orbit maintain a fixed position relative to the Earth's surface as their orbital period exactly matches Earth's rotational period of 24 hours.
- The round-trip signal latency for GEO satellites is approximately 477 milliseconds.
- This orbit is predominantly used for television broadcasting, weather monitoring, and wide-area communication services due to the ability of a single satellite to provide continuous coverage over a large geographical area.

Launch Vehicle Mark-3: Technical Profile

Historical Background and Nomenclature

1. The LVM3 was originally designated as the Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle Mark III (GSLV Mk III) when it was initially developed.
2. The rocket successfully completed its maiden flight in December 2014, marking a significant milestone in India's space launch capabilities.
3. Following the successful deployment of multiple satellites into different orbits during the 2022 OneWeb mission, the vehicle was officially renamed from GSLV Mk III to Launch Vehicle Mark-3 (LVM3) to reflect its versatile orbital delivery capabilities.
4. The LVM3 has made ISRO entirely self-sufficient in launching its satellites across various orbital requirements.

Physical Specifications

- The LVM3 is ISRO's largest and most powerful heavy-lift rocket currently in operational service. The vehicle has a total lift-off mass of 640 tonnes, representing the combined weight of the rocket structure, propellants, and payload.
- The rocket stands 43.5 metres tall from base to payload fairing. The vehicle is configured as a three-stage launch system comprising two solid strap-on motors, a liquid core stage, and a cryogenic upper stage.
- The solid strap-on boosters (S200) are among the largest solid rocket motors in the world, each carrying about 203 tonnes of solid propellant and providing the majority of lift-off thrust.
- The cryogenic upper stage (C25) uses liquid hydrogen and liquid oxygen and is powered by the CE-20 engine, developed indigenously to support high-energy orbital insertions.

Payload Delivery Capabilities

- The LVM3 can deliver payloads weighing up to 4,000 to 4,200 kg to Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit (GTO) at approximately 36,000 km altitude.
- For Low Earth Orbit missions, the vehicle has a payload capacity of approximately 8,000 kg.
- The rocket is capable of delivering payloads to multiple orbital destinations including Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit, Medium Earth Orbit, Low Earth Orbit, and trajectories to the Moon and Sun.

LVM3: The Three Stages of Orbital Power

Initial Ascent & Core Power

S200 Solid Rocket Boosters

Two massive HTPB-burning boosters provide the primary thrust during the initial lift-off phase.

L110 Liquid Core Stage

The central stage utilizes twin indigenous Vikas engines burning UDMH and nitrogen tetroxide.

Controlled Ascent Trajectory

The Vikas engines allow for throttled thrust to optimize the vehicle's flight path.



The Final Orbital Push

C25 Cryogenic Upper Stage

India's largest cryogenic stage, powered by the CE20 engine using liquid hydrogen and oxygen.

50% Total Required Velocity

This final stage provides half the velocity needed for Geosynchronous Transfer Orbits.

C25 Upper Stage Specifications

Engine Model	Engine **CE20**
Propellant Capacity	Fuel **28,000 kg**
Thrust Output	Thrust **20 Tonnes**

Mission History and Achievements

Lunar Missions

- The LVM3 successfully launched the Chandrayaan-2 mission, India's second lunar exploration mission comprising an orbiter, lander, and rover.
- The vehicle also deployed the Chandrayaan-3 mission, which achieved India's historic first successful soft landing on the lunar south pole region.

Commercial OneWeb Missions

- In 2022 and 2023, the LVM3 conducted two commercial missions for OneWeb, a global broadband satellite internet service provider.
- These two missions collectively deployed 72 OneWeb satellites (36 satellites per mission) into Low Earth Orbit.
- The cumulative payload mass of the OneWeb satellites reached approximately 5,700 kg, which held the record for ISRO's heaviest payload until the BlueBird Block-2 mission.

CMS-03 Communication Satellite

- The LVM3-M5 mission successfully launched the CMS-03 communication satellite on November 2, 2025.
- This satellite weighed 4,410 kg, setting the record for the heaviest satellite placed in geosynchronous transfer orbit by ISRO at that time.
- The interval between the CMS-03 mission and the BlueBird Block-2 mission represents the shortest gap between two LVM3 launches in the programme's history.



MIND MAP

News Trigger

- Indian Space Research Organisation launched **BlueBird Block-2** (~**6,100 kg**) using **LVM3-M6**.
- Lift-off from Satish Dhawan Space Centre into **LEO (~520 km)**.
- Heaviest payload ever deployed by ISRO; surpassed **5,700 kg** OneWeb record.
- Sixth operational flight of **LVM3**; **third commercial** mission with the heavy-lift rocket.

Payload Overview: BlueBird Block-2

- Developed by AST SpaceMobile.
- Mass: **~6,100 kg**; largest **communication satellite in LEO**.
- Injection achieved within **~15 minutes** of lift-off.
- Part of a LEO constellation for **global cellular broadband**.

Stage-1: S200 Solid Boosters

- Two largest ISRO solid motors; **HTPB** propellant.
- Provide primary lift-off thrust.

Stage-2: L110 Liquid Core

- Two **Vikas** engines; **UDMH + N_2O_4**.
- Throttle control for trajectory optimisation.

Stage-3: C25 Cryogenic

- **CE20** engine; **LH_2 + LOX**.
- ~**50%** of velocity for GTO insertion.
- Propellant: **~28,000 kg**; thrust: **~20 tonnes**.

Communication Technology

- **Direct-to-mobile** architecture (no specialised ground stations).
- Works with **standard smartphones**.
- Enables **4G/5G voice, data, video, messaging, streaming**.
- Targets coverage in **remote and underserved regions**.

Launch Vehicle: LVM3 (Overview)

- Formerly **GSLV Mk III**; renamed **LVM3** after multi-orbit capability
- Maiden flight: **Dec 2014.**
- India's **largest operational** heavy-lift rocket.
- Lift-off mass: **~640 tonnes**; height: **~43.5 m**.

Payload Capability

- **LEO**: up to **~8,000 kg**.
- **GTO**: **~4,000–4,200 kg**.
- Supports **LEO, MEO, GTO**, and **interplanetary** trajectories.

Low Earth Orbit (LEO)

- Altitude: **160–2,000 km**; period **88–127 min**.
- Latency: **~2–27 ms**; ideal for real-time comms.
- Hosts comms, EO, science, navigation payloads.

Medium Earth Orbit (MEO)

- Altitude: **2,000–35,786 km**; latency **~27–477 ms**.
- Used mainly for **navigation constellations**.

Geostationary Orbit (GEO)

- Altitude: **35,786 km**; fixed over equator.
- Latency: **~477 ms**; TV, weather, wide-area comms.

Mission Track Record

- **Chandrayaan-2** and **Chandrayaan-3** lunar missions.
- **OneWeb** (72 satellites; ~5,700 kg cumulative).
- **CMS-03** (Nov 2025): **4,410 kg** to GTO; prior heaviest GTO payload.
- BlueBird Block-2 sets **new mass benchmark** for ISRO.

Connected Topics

NewSpace India Limited (NSIL) and ISRO's Commercial Launch Model

- NewSpace India Limited (NSIL) is positioned as the commercial arm for marketing and delivering space products/services from India's Department of Space ecosystem, including launch-related services.
- NSIL offers launch services (dedicated and rideshare) using Indian launch vehicles, and publicly states it has launched international and Indian customer satellites on-board PSLV, LVM3 and SSLV.
- A core element of the commercial model is "productionisation" of ISRO launch vehicles through industry—NSIL describes PSLV productionisation via Indian industry on its official platform.
- NSIL signed an end-to-end manufacturing contract with a HAL-led consortium (HAL + L&T) for five PSLV vehicles, reflecting the shift from agency-built to industry-built launch vehicle production under NSIL's commercialization mandate.
- Official Government information stated that the first fully industry-manufactured PSLV was planned for launch in the second half of 2025 (as per parliamentary/PIB material).
- NSIL has indicated plans to expand its commercial business through Public–Private Partnership (PPP) approaches, including considering production/realisation of ISRO's heavy-lift LVM3 under PPP due to perceived commercial potential.
- In February 2025, official Government communication reiterated NSIL's role in commercial launches and stated NSIL would launch India's first fully industry-made PSLV (timeline given as Q2 2025 in that release).
- The commercial launch ecosystem also includes technology commercialization: in September 2025, an agreement was signed among NSIL, ISRO and IN-SPACe with HAL for technology transfer of SSLV.
- The same SSLV technology-transfer announcement is hosted on ISRO's official site and explicitly lists NSIL and IN-SPACe as parties, reflecting a model of agency-developed systems being commercially transferred/industrialised for operational use.

International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Role in Satellite Spectrum Allocation

- The ITU, through the ITU Radiocommunication Sector (ITU-R), manages the international framework for use of the radio-frequency spectrum and associated satellite-orbit resources via the Radio Regulations (an international treaty instrument).
- ITU-R runs international procedures for coordination, notification, and recording of frequency assignments for space systems and earth stations submitted by Member State administrations.
- Satellite networks are filed by national administrations (not private firms directly) to obtain international recognition of spectrum/orbit use, reflecting the state-based character of the ITU system.
- A key ITU instrument is the Master International Frequency Register (MIFR), which records frequency assignments and supports international recognition/coordination of satellite spectrum use.
- The ITU system seeks to prevent harmful interference between radio stations/satellite systems of different countries by requiring coordination where applicable under the Radio Regulations.
- Coordination is a bilateral/multilateral negotiation process between administrations; ITU materials distinguish mandatory and voluntary coordination from a regulatory standpoint.
- For satellite networks, the Radio Regulations prescribe structured stages (commonly presented as information exchange → coordination → notification/recording), tied to specific RR Articles and Bureau processing.
- The World Radiocommunication Conference (WRC) process under ITU updates the Radio Regulations and makes/adjusts global allocations to accommodate emerging services while protecting existing users.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Which of the following achievements did ISRO accomplish with the BlueBird Block-2 launch?
   (a) Heaviest payload ever deployed by ISRO
   (b) First reusable launch vehicle flight
   (c) First human spaceflight mission
   (d) First interplanetary commercial launch

2. Who developed and manufactured the BlueBird Block-2 satellite?
   (a) Indian Space Research Organisation
   (b) AST SpaceMobile of United States
   (c) European Space Agency consortium
   (d) SpaceX commercial satellite division

3. Which of the following launch vehicles was used to deploy the BlueBird Block-2 satellite?
   (a) Geosynchronous PSLV-3
   (b) Geosynchronous LV-3
   (c) Launch Vehicle Mark-3
   (d) Launch Vehicle PSLV-3

4. Where was the BlueBird Block-2 satellite launched from?
   (a) Thumba Equatorial Rocket Launching Station
   (b) SDSC Sriharikota Second Launch Pad Station
   (c) Abdul Kalam Island Odisha coast Launch Pad
   (d) Satish Dhawan Space Centre Sriharikota

5. Which of the following orbit was selected for the deployment of BlueBird Block-2?
   (a) Medium Earth Orbit
   (b) Polar Earth Orbit
   (c) Low Earth Orbit
   (d) Polar Elliptical Orbit

6. What is the approximate orbital altitude of the BlueBird Block-2 satellite?
   (a) approximately 320 km (b) approximately 520 km
   (c) approximately 220 km (d) approximately 620 km

7. Which of the following key services does the BlueBird Block-2 constellation aim to provide?
   (a) Satellite television broadcasting
   (b) Deep space scientific exploration
   (c) Direct to mobile 4G and 5G connectivity
   (d) Exclusive military encrypted communication

8. Which of the following earlier missions held ISRO's previous heaviest payload record?
   (a) Chandrayaan-3 lunar satellite mission
   (b) OneWeb commercial satellite missions
   (c) CMS-03 communication satellite
   (d) Gaganyaan crew module test mission

9. Which of the following factors made India a preferred launch destination for OneWeb missions?
   (a) Exclusive military launch facilities
   (b) Higher payload capacity than SpaceX
   (c) Mandatory international launch regulations
   (d) Russia withdrawal and Ariane-5 retirement

10. Which of the following latency ranges is characteristic of Low Earth Orbit satellites?
    (a) Five hundred milliseconds average delay
    (b) One thousand milliseconds signal delay
    (c) Two to twenty seven milliseconds latency
    (d) More than one second latency

11. Which of the following launches marked the shortest interval between two LVM3 missions?
    (a) Chandrayaan-2 and Chandrayaan-3
    (b) CMS-03 and BlueBird Block-2 missions
    (c) OneWeb Mission-13 and Mission-21
    (d) Gaganyaan test flights sequence-22

12. Which of the following stages of LVM3 uses cryogenic propulsion?
    (a) First stage S200 boosters
    (b) Second stage L110 core
    (c) Third stage C25 upper stage
    (d) Payload fairing separation system

13. Which of the following engines powers the cryogenic upper stage of LVM3?
    (a) VS33 (b) K322 (c) S200 (d) CE20

14. Which of the following orbit is positioned exactly at 35,786 km altitude?
    (a) Medium Earth Orbit
    (b) Polar Low Earth Orbit
    (c) Geostationary Earth Orbit
    (d) Highly Elliptical Orbit

15. Which of the following ISRO missions achieved a successful soft landing near the lunar south pole, marking a major milestone in India's lunar exploration programme?
(a) Chandrayaan-1 (b) Chandrayaan-3
(c) Chandrayaan-2 (d) Mangalyaan-1

16. Which of the following launch vehicles is designated for India's Gaganyaan mission?
(a) Polar Launch Vehicle-4
(b) Launch Vehicle Nike-2
(c) Launch Vehicle Mark-3
(d) Launch Vehicle Pollo-1

17. Which of the following vehicles is considered ISRO's workhorse launch system?
(a) Launch Vehicle Sputnik -3
(b) Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle
(c) Geosynchronous Launch Vehicle
(d) Small Satellite Launch Vehicle

18. Which of the following planned Indian space stations will orbit at 400–450 km altitude?
(a) International Space Station
(b) Tiangong Space Station
(c) Bharatiya Antariksh Station
(d) Skylab experimental station

19. Which of the following organisations leads the International Space Station partnership?
(a) Indian Space Research Organisation
(b) European Space Research Organisation
(c) Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency
(d) National Aeronautics Space Agency

20. Which of the following characteristics best defines Medium Earth Orbit satellites?
(a) Orbital altitude located below LEO
(b) Orbital altitude fixed exactly within GEO
(c) Orbital altitude between LEO and GEO
(d) Orbital altitude designed beyond GEO

ANSWER KEY

1. (a)	2. (b)	3. (c)	4. (d)	5. (c)	6. (b)	7. (c)	8. (b)
9. (d)	10. (c)	11. (b)	12. (c)	13. (d)	14. (c)	15. (b)	16. (c)
17. (b)	18. (c)	19. (d)	20. (c)				

Amazonian Stingless Bees- World's First Insects with Legal Rights

News Highlights:

- The provincial municipality of **Satipo** in Peru has formally adopted the Declaration of Rights for Native Stingless Bees through a municipal ordinance, making Amazonian stingless bees the first insects in the world to receive legal recognition and protection.
- The declaration grants these native pollinators fundamental rights including the right to exist and flourish, maintain healthy populations, live in pollution-free habitats, and receive legal representation when threatened or harmed.
- These bees, belonging to the tribe **Meliponini**, are among the oldest bee species on Earth and are responsible for pollinating over 80% of Amazonian flora, including globally important crops such as coffee, cocoa, avocados, and blueberries.
- The legal framework establishes a significant global precedent for insect conservation by integrating **Rights of Nature** principles into local governance, blending modern scientific approaches with ancestral Indigenous wisdom.
- This landmark legislation aims to preserve Peru's biocultural heritage while strengthening nature-rights governance models that recognize ecosystems and species as rights-bearing entities rather than mere resources for human exploitation.

Amazonian Stingless Bees

Taxonomic Classification and Physical Characteristics

- Amazonian stingless bees belong to the tribe Meliponini within the family Apidae, which also includes honeybees, bumblebees, and orchid bees.
- These bees range in size from 2 mm to 15 mm in body length depending on the species, and are typically black in colour with possible yellow, brown, or red markings.
- Contrary to their common name, stingless bees are not completely devoid of stingers but possess vestigial stingers that are too small and reduced to be functional for defensive purposes.
- When threatened, these bees defend their colonies through alternative mechanisms including biting with strong mandibles and secreting irritating plant resins.
- As corbiculate bees, workers possess specialized structures called pollen baskets (corbiculae) on their hind legs for transporting pollen, resins, and mud.



Amazonian Stingless Bee

Global Distribution and Habitat

- Stingless bees are found in tropical and subtropical regions across three major biogeographical zones: the Neotropical region (Americas), the Afrotropical region (sub-Saharan Africa), and the Indo-Malayan/Australasian region (Southeast Asia and Australia).
- The Neotropics possess the highest species diversity, hosting approximately 400 to 450 species ranging from Cuba and Mexico in the north to Argentina in the south.
- The Amazon Rainforest harbours the greatest concentration of stingless bee diversity, with the Brazilian Amazon alone recording 188 native meliponine species.
- These bees occupy diverse ecosystems including tropical rainforests, cloud forests, and even arid lands, thriving at altitudes from sea level up to 4,000 metres in the Andes mountains.
- Approximately 90 species of stingless bees are distributed across Asia and Australia, spanning from India and Nepal to Taiwan, China, and the Solomon Islands.

Interesting Facts



The term "Meliponini" derives from Greek words meaning "honey" and "labour," reflecting their role as honey producers.

Social Organization and Behaviour

- Stingless bees are highly eusocial insects, representing the most socially advanced native bees in tropical and subtropical regions.
- They live in perennial colonies that persist year-round, with colony sizes ranging from a few hundred to several thousand workers, smaller than typical honeybee colonies.
- Colony structure revolves around a single queen bee responsible for egg production, male drones that mate with the queen and subsequently leave to forage alone, and female worker bees that perform all colony maintenance tasks.
- Worker bees are responsible for food collection, care of eggs and larvae, nest construction, and colony defence against predators and intruders.
- Some species, including Tetragonisca angustula, have evolved specialized soldier bees with larger bodies and distinct colouration dedicated to colony defence.
- These bees commonly nest in hollow tree trunks, utilizing tree cavities as natural nest sites, though they also adapt to various artificial structures.

Nest Architecture and Honey Storage



Building Material

- Constructed from beeswax mixed with plant resins
- Material is called cerumen
- Stronger and more flexible than pure wax
- Naturally sticky, helping seal the nest
- Resin content gives antimicrobial protection
- Acts as both structure and defense

Honey Storage

- Honey stored in small oval-shaped pots
- Pots made entirely of cerumen
- Arranged around the brood area, not above it
- Honey and pollen stored in separate pots
- Storage system is non-hexagonal, unlike honeybees
- Designed for short-term storage, not large reserves

Brood Structure

- Brood arranged in horizontal layered combs
- Layers resemble stacked discs or floors
- Central brood area forms the heart of the nest
- Surrounded by protective cerumen walls
- Architecture supports temperature and humidity control

Different Strategy from Honeybees

Unlike honeybees, stingless bees do not rely on large, long-term honey reserves. Their storage system is designed for frequent use and rapid replenishment, reflecting their tropical and subtropical environments where food sources are more consistently available.

Ecological and Economic Significance



Responsible for
80%
Amazonian flora,
90+
crops

Ecological Role

Stingless bees are not just pollinators; they are keystone species that hold tropical ecosystems together. Their work sustains both wild forests and human food systems, especially in regions where other pollinators struggle.

- Responsible for pollinating over 80% of Amazonian flora
- Visit flowers of 90+ crop species across tropical regions
- Confirmed as essential pollinators for at least 9 major crops
- Especially effective in low-light conditions, making them vital for shade-grown and understory plants
- Support long-term rainforest biodiversity and ecosystem stability



effective pollination recorded for
30+
crops (Brazil)

Agriculture and Livelihoods

Stingless bees quietly power agriculture far beyond the rainforest. Their pollination directly affects food security, farmer incomes, and sustainable agroforestry systems, particularly in the Global South.

- Pollinate globally important crops such as coffee, cocoa, avocados, mangoes, citrus, blueberries, and watermelons
- In Brazil alone, effective pollination recorded for 30+ agricultural crops
- Well suited to agroforestry systems, where shade and dense vegetation limit other pollinators
- Enable higher fruit quality and yield without intensive chemical inputs





Cultural, Medicinal, and Economic Value

Beyond ecology and agriculture, stingless bees are deeply woven into Indigenous knowledge systems. Their honey and hive products are valued not as commodities, but as medicine and cultural heritage.

- Meliponiculture practiced since pre-Columbian times, especially by the Maya
- Beekeeping integrated into social, economic, and religious life
- Honey known as “miracle liquid” for its medicinal use
- Scientifically confirmed anti-inflammatory, antibacterial, and antiviral properties
- Distinct honey traits: higher moisture, acidic pH, sweet-sour taste
- Other valuable products include propolis, geopropolis, and cerumen

Declaration of Rights

Legal Framework and Structure

- The Declaration of Rights for Native Stingless Bees represents a landmark **Rights of Nature**-based legal framework that recognizes insects as rights-bearing entities.
- The Satipo Provincial Municipality integrated this declaration into local law through a formal municipal ordinance, creating binding legal obligations.

- This legislation establishes the first global legal recognition of insect rights, setting a precedent for other jurisdictions to follow.
- The framework emerges from collaborative efforts between scientific organizations, legal professionals, and Indigenous community leaders.
- The **Earth Law Center**, an organization advancing Rights of Nature legal movements worldwide, provided legal expertise for drafting the declaration.
- Amazon Research Internacional, founded by Rosa Vásquez Espinoza, spearheaded the campaign through years of fieldwork documenting bee populations with Indigenous communities.

Rights Recognized Under the Declaration

- **Right to Exist and Flourish**: Recognition that stingless bees possess inherent worth and entitlement to continue their existence as species.
- **Right to Maintain Healthy Populations**: Protection ensuring bee colonies can sustain viable population numbers for species survival.
- **Right to Pollution-Free Habitat**: Guarantee of environments free from contamination including pesticides, industrial pollutants, and other harmful substances.
- **Right to Ecologically Stable Climatic Conditions**: Acknowledgment that bees require stable climate patterns to maintain their ecological functions.
- **Right to Regenerate Natural Cycles**: Recognition of bees' entitlement to complete their natural reproductive, foraging, and colony development cycles.
- **Right to Legal Representation**: Provision enabling human guardians, such as Indigenous leaders, scientists, or legal advocates, to represent bee interests in legal proceedings and sue polluters on their behalf.

Rights of Nature

GARN
GLOBAL ALLIANCE FOR THE RIGHTS OF NATURE

About the Movement

- Rights of Nature is a legal framework that recognizes ecosystems and species as rights-bearing entities, not property.
- It challenges traditional environmental law that treats nature as a resource for human use.
- The approach aligns law with ecological science and the reality of interconnected ecosystems.
- Rooted in Indigenous worldviews that understand nature as a living community.

Conceptual Foundation

- Rights of Nature is a legal framework that recognizes ecosystems and species as rights-bearing entities, not property.
- It challenges traditional environmental law that treats nature as a resource for human use.
- The approach aligns law with ecological science and the reality of interconnected ecosystems.
- Rooted in Indigenous worldviews that understand nature as a living community.



Global Legal Developments

- As of early 2025, over 540 Rights of Nature laws exist at local, regional, and national levels across more than 40 countries worldwide.
- Ecuador became the first nation to enshrine Rights of Nature in its constitution in 2008, recognizing that "Nature, or Pacha Mama, has the right to integral respect for its existence."
- **Bolivia** passed the Framework Law on Mother Earth in 2012, according legal personhood to nature and mandating harmony between humans and the natural environment.
- New Zealand granted legal personhood to the Te Urewera rainforest (2014), the Whanganui River (2017), and Taranaki Maunga mountain (2024).
- Spain's national legislature passed a law in 2022 recognizing legal rights of the Mar Menor lagoon, which was upheld as constitutional in 2024.
- Colombia's courts have recognized the legal rights of the Amazon rainforest, the Atrato River, and various páramo (highland) ecosystems.
- In July 2025, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights issued a historic advisory opinion affirming that ecosystems can hold intrinsic rights independently of human interests.

Rights of Nature in India

Animal Welfare Board of India vs. A. Nagaraja (2014)

- In this landmark judgment, the Supreme Court of India interpreted the word "life" under Article 21 of the Constitution expansively to include protection of animal life.
- The Court recognized that animals possess a right to live with intrinsic worth, dignity, and freedom from unnecessary pain and suffering.
- This ruling established the constitutional foundation for animal welfare jurisprudence in India, acknowledging that non-human beings deserve legal protection.

Mohd. Salim vs. State of Uttarakhand (2017)

- The Uttarakhand High Court granted legal personhood to the rivers Ganga and Yamuna, declaring them living entities with legal rights and duties.
- The Court followed similar reasoning to New Zealand's Whanganui River case, recognizing rivers as more than mere water bodies.
- The judgment was inspired by ecocentric principles holding that humans are part of nature rather than separate from or superior to it.
- The Court subsequently extended similar recognition to glaciers associated with these rivers, including Gangotri and Yamunotri.
- However, the Supreme Court of India later stayed this decision, putting the legal personhood status on hold pending further deliberation.

Amazon Rainforest

Physical Extent and Location

- The Amazon Rainforest is the world's largest tropical rainforest, occupying the drainage basin of the Amazon River and its tributaries across northern South America.
- The forest covers an area of approximately 6,000,000 square kilometres, comprising about 40% of Brazil's total land area.
- The Amazon basin is bounded by the Guiana Highlands to the north, the Andes Mountains to the west, the Brazilian Central Plateau to the south, and the Atlantic Ocean to the east.
- Nine countries share portions of the Amazon: Brazil (which contains approximately 60%), Peru, Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia, Guyana, Suriname, and French Guiana.

Climate Characteristics of Tropical Rainforests

- Tropical rainforests are defined as closed-canopy forests growing within 28 degrees north or south of the equator.
- These ecosystems receive abundant precipitation, typically more than 200 centimetres of rainfall annually, distributed either seasonally or throughout the year.
- Temperatures remain uniformly high throughout the year, ranging between 20°C and 35°C with minimal seasonal variation.
- High humidity levels persist year-round, creating ideal conditions for diverse plant and animal life.
- Similar tropical rainforest ecosystems occur in Asia, Australia, Africa, Central America, Mexico, and numerous Pacific Islands.



Ecological Importance

- The Amazon Rainforest is recognized as the planet's most biodiverse terrestrial ecosystem, hosting an estimated 10% of all species on Earth.
- The forest functions as a critical carbon sink, absorbing billions of tonnes of carbon dioxide annually and helping regulate global climate patterns.
- The Amazon River system contains approximately 20% of the world's fresh surface water.
- Indigenous peoples have inhabited and managed Amazonian ecosystems for thousands of years, developing sophisticated ecological knowledge systems.
- The forest provides essential ecosystem services including climate regulation, water cycling, and maintenance of regional precipitation patterns.

Additional Key Facts

- Over 600 species of stingless bees have been described globally, with approximately 80% occurring in the Western Hemisphere from Mexico to Argentina.

- The evolutionary origin of stingless bees is Neotropical, with species dispersing to other continents through ancient land bridges including the Bering Strait (Beringia route) and Greenland (Thulean route).
- Bees collectively are responsible for pollinating approximately 73% of cultivated plant species worldwide, resulting in up to 50% higher production of seeds and fruits.
- Kukama Indigenous leader Mari Luz Canaquiri received the 2025 Goldman Environmental Prize for her decades-long defence of the Marañón River and leadership of the movement for nature's rights in Peru.
- The International Court of Justice issued a landmark advisory opinion in July 2025 stating that governments can be held accountable under international law for greenhouse gas emissions that harm ecosystems.
- Panama became a pioneer in 2023 by adopting Law 371 recognizing the legal rights of sea turtles, representing another precedent for granting legal protection to specific animal species.
- At least three species of stingless bees in the genus Trigona, called vulture bees, have evolved to obtain nutrition from decomposing animal carcasses, making them the only bees known to scavenge carrion.



MIND MAP

News Trigger

- The provincial municipality of Satipo adopted a municipal ordinance approving the **Declaration of Rights for Native Stingless Bees**.
- Amazonian stingless bees became the **first insects** globally to receive **legal recognition and protection**.
- The declaration grants rights like **existence**, **healthy populations**, **pollution-free habitat**, and **legal representation**.
- The move sets a precedent by applying **Rights of Nature** principles to insect conservation

Who These Bees Are

- Stingless bees belong to the tribe **Meliponini** (family **Apidae**
- Among the **oldest bee lineages**, crucial to tropical ecosystems.
- They pollinate **80%+** of Amazon flora and support crops like coffee, cocoa, avocados, and blueberries.

Distribution and Habitat

- Found across tropical/subtropical zones: **Neotropical**, **Afrotropical**, and **Indo-Malayan/Australasian** regions.
- Neotropics host **~400–450 species**, with the Amazon as a major diversity centre.
- The Brazilian Amazon alone records **188** native meliponine species.
- Altitude range spans **sea level to ~4,000 m** (Andes).

Physical Traits and Defence

- Size range: **2 mm to 15 mm**, typically dark with possible coloured markings.
- Stingers are **vestigial** (non-functional for defence).
- Defence relies on **biting mandibles** and **irritating plant resins**.
- Workers have **pollen baskets (corbiculae)** for pollen/resin/mud transport.

Nest Architecture and Honey

- Nests built using **cerumen** (beeswax + plant resins).
- Honey/pollen stored in **oval pots**, not hexagonal combs.
- Brood arranged in **horizontal layers** with protective cerumen walls.
- Only **~20–30** American species produce harvestable honey in notable quantities.

Meliponiculture

- Traditional stingless beekeeping known as **meliponiculture**.
- Practised since pre-Columbian times, especially by **Maya** communities.
- Uses gourds, woven hives, and wooden boxes as nest structures.
- Honey extraction uses careful pot-piercing and suction tools to avoid brood damage.
- Culturally important in Peru for **Asháninka** and **Kukama-Kukamiria** peoples.

Amazon Rainforest Context

- World's largest tropical rainforest: **~6 million sq km**.
- Spread across nine countries; Brazil holds ~60%, Peru is a major stakeholder.
- Functions as a major carbon sink and biodiversity hotspot (estimated ~10% of Earth's species).
- Supports large water systems; Amazon basin contains ~20% of world's fresh surface water.

Connected Topics

FAO's International Pollinator Initiative (IPI)

- The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations hosts the "Global Action on Pollination Services" platform and positions itself as a lead coordinator for pollination-related global action.
- The International Pollinator Initiative (IPI) was established under the Convention on Biological Diversity as a cross-cutting initiative on agricultural biodiversity to promote coordinated global action for conservation and sustainable use of pollinators.
- The CBD COP decision establishing the IPI sets out coordinated-action aims such as monitoring pollinator decline, addressing drivers, building capacity, and sharing best practices.
- The CBD's updated IPI platform describes pollination as a vital ecosystem service underpinning biodiversity, agriculture, livelihoods, and food systems, while listing key pressures such as habitat loss and pesticide misuse.
- FAO states that it plays a leading role in facilitating and coordinating IPI 2.0 and the Action Plan 2018–2030.
- The IPI Plan of Action 2018–2030 is framed to support actions that safeguard pollinators and pollination functions/services across diverse landscapes (including croplands, forests, grasslands, wetlands, coastal areas, and urban environments) and at multiple governance levels.
- FAO describes its IPI support as helping countries integrate pollination services into agricultural planning, agroecological transition, and biodiversity strategies through technical guidance, tools, knowledge products, and field-based approaches.
- The FAO pollination platform highlights the strong dependence of many flowering plants and food systems on animal pollination, linking wild ecosystems with agricultural production systems.
- FAO's engagement includes policy and knowledge-exchange work around pollinator protection, including in relation to pesticide risks, in collaboration with CBD-linked initiatives.

Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Target 14 & 15)

- The Aichi Biodiversity Targets form part of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020, adopted under the Convention on Biological Diversity, and are organized under strategic goals (Target 14 and 15 fall under Strategic Goal D). Target 14 (core focus) is about ecosystems that provide essential services (including water-related services) and their contributions to human well-being.
- Target 14 (wording) states that by 2020, ecosystems that provide essential services and contribute to health, livelihoods and well-being are restored and safeguarded, considering the needs of women, indigenous and local communities, and the poor and vulnerable.
- The quick guide clarifies that Target 14 emphasizes ecosystem services that are "essential" for well-being, with examples including food, fibre, medicines, fresh water, crop pollination, filtration of pollutants, and protection from natural disasters.
- Target 15 (core focus) links ecosystem condition to climate outcomes by addressing ecosystem resilience and biodiversity's contribution to carbon stocks.
- Target 15 (wording) states that by 2020, ecosystem resilience and biodiversity's contribution to carbon stocks are enhanced through conservation and restoration, including restoration of at least 15% of degraded ecosystems.
- Target 15 explicitly frames restoration as contributing to climate change mitigation and adaptation and to combating desertification. The Target 15 quick guide highlights ecosystem restoration as a pathway to improve resilience and increase carbon sequestration, reinforcing the target's climate–biodiversity linkage. Targets 14 and 15 together reflect a benefits-based approach: protecting biodiversity by safeguarding the ecosystem services and resilience that underpin livelihoods and broader development outcomes.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Which of the following authorities introduced the first enforceable rule worldwide granting statutory safeguards to insect life?
   (a) Lima Metropolitan Authority
   (b) Satipo Provincial Municipality
   (c) Cusco Regional Administration
   (d) Madre de Dios Environmental Council

2. Which of the following guarantees allows non-human organisms to be defended in courts through appointed human advocates?
   (a) Freedom from economic use
   (b) Unrestricted territorial movement
   (c) Right to legal representation
   (d) Right to permanent guardianship

3. Which of the following biological grouping includes tropical bees known for advanced cooperation and resin-based nest structures?
   (a) Meliponini (b) Apini
   (c) Bombini (d) Euglossini

4. Which of the following geographical zones supports the greatest variety of these Stingless Bees?
   (a) Sub-Saharan Africa
   (b) Southeast Asia
   (c) Northern Australia
   (d) Central and South America

5. Which of the following composite substances made from biological secretions and plant-derived material is used for nest construction?
   (a) Refined wax (b) Cerumen
   (c) Hardened sap (d) Clay composite

6. Which of the following descriptions most accurately reflects the societal structure of these insects?
   (a) Permanent colonies with role specialization
   (b) Solitary nesting with seasonal interaction
   (c) Temporary cooperative clusters
   (d) Parasitic dependence on other species

7. Which of the following agricultural products directly benefits from pollination carried out by these insects?
   (a) Barley (b) Coffee (c) Rice (d) Wheat

8. Which of the following traditional livelihood practices involves managing colonies of non-stinging bees?
   (a) Meliponiculture (b) Apiculture
   (c) Sericulture (d) Vermiculture

9. Which of the following ancient civilizations embedded this beekeeping practice into ritual and economic life?
   (a) Olmec (b) Maya (c) Inca (d) Aztec

10. Which of the following organisations contributed specialist expertise to shape a legal framework recognizing non-human entities as rights holders?
    (a) World Wildlife Fund
    (b) Earth Law Center
    (c) Greenpeace International
    (d) United Nations Environment Programme

11. Who established the research institution that led long-term documentation efforts alongside Indigenous communities?
    (a) Jane Goodall (b) Vandana Shiva
    (c) Rosa Vásquez Espinoza (d) Mari Luz Canaquiri

12. Which of the following countries became the first to constitutionally recognize ecological entities as deserving inherent respect?
    (a) Bolivia (b) Ecuador
    (c) Colombia (d) Peru

13. Which of the following international judicial bodies formally affirmed that ecosystems can possess independent legal standing?
    (a) International Criminal Court
    (b) United Nations General Assembly
    (c) Inter-American Court of Human Rights
    (d) Permanent Court of Arbitration

14. Which of the following Indian judicial decisions expanded constitutional protection beyond humans to include animals?
    (a) Animal Welfare Board of India vs. A. Nagaraja
    (b) Animal Welfare Board of India vs. Union of India
    (c) Animal Welfare Board of India vs. State of Tamil Nadu
    (d) Animal Welfare Board of India vs. Subhash Kumar

15. Which of the following rivers was judicially recognized as a living entity by a state-level court in India?
(a) Cauvery (b) Godavari
(c) Ganga (d) Narmada

16. What proportion of regional plant life relies on these insects for reproductive success?
(a) More than four-fifths
(b) Around one-half
(c) Less than two-fifths
(d) Nearly one-quarter

17. Which of the following storage methods distinguishes these insects from conventional honey-producing bees?
(a) Vertical wax frames (b) Hexagonal wax chambers
(c) Oval resin containers (d) Underground clay pits

18. Which entitlement specifically safeguards living organisms from chemical contamination?
(a) Regeneration entitlement
(b) Existence entitlement
(c) Advocacy entitlement
(d) Habitat purity entitlement

19. Which principle underlies the shift from viewing nature as property to recognizing it as a rights-bearing entity?
(a) Rights of Nature doctrine
(b) Sustainable development framework
(c) Market-based conservation model
(d) State trusteeship approach

ANSWER KEY

1. (b)	2. (c)	3. (a)	4. (d)	5. (b)	6. (a)	7. (b)	8. (a)
9. (b)	10. (b)	11. (c)	12. (b)	13. (c)	14. (a)	15. (c)	16. (a)
17. (c)	18. (d)	19. (a)					

Akash-NG Missile

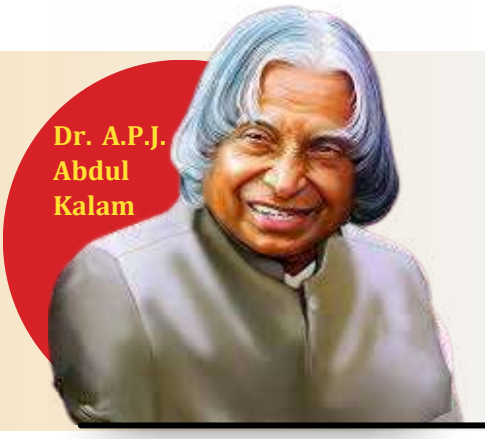
News Highlights:

- The **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)** successfully completed User Evaluation Trials (UET) of the **Akash-NG** (Next Generation) missile system, clearing the pathway for its induction into the **Indian Air Force (IAF)**.
- During the trials conducted at the Integrated Test Range off the coast of Odisha, the missiles successfully intercepted aerial targets across various ranges and altitudes, including near-boundary low-altitude and long-range high-altitude scenarios.
- The Akash-NG is a next-generation surface-to-air missile designed to intercept high-speed, highly manoeuvrable aerial threats with low **radar cross-section (RCS)**, including aircraft, drones, and cruise missiles, with an extended range of up to 70 km.
- This indigenous missile system features **96% domestic components** and is being produced by Bharat Dynamics Limited (BDL) and Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL), reinforcing India's self-reliance in defence manufacturing under the Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative.
- The successful completion of UET marks a significant milestone as it satisfies the Provisional Staff Qualitative Requirements (PSQR), enabling the issuance of Acceptance of Necessity (AoN) for the system's induction.

Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme

Programme Genesis and Leadership

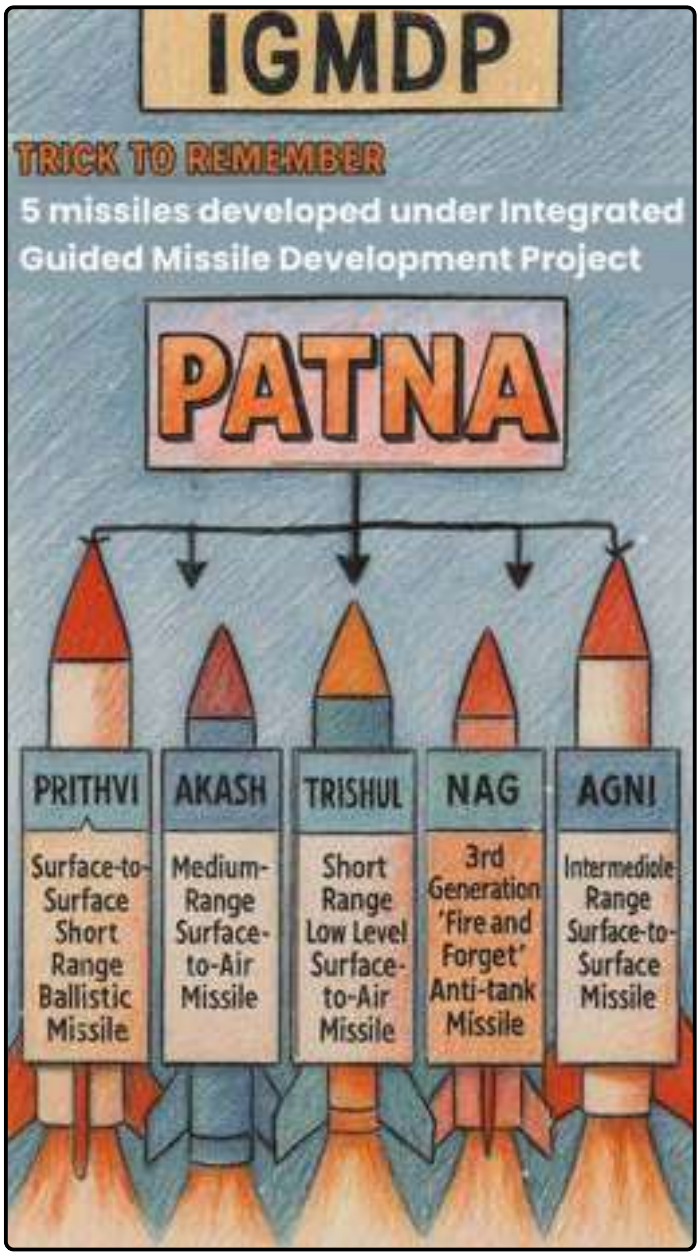
- The **Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme** was launched in 1983 under the leadership of Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam with the objective of achieving self-sufficiency in missile technology for Indian defence forces.
- The programme operated until 2012, successfully developing the foundational missile systems that form the backbone of India's strategic deterrence capability.
- The initiative emerged from the recognition that India needed indigenous missile technology to reduce dependence on foreign suppliers and achieve strategic autonomy.



Missiles Developed Under IGMDP (P-A-T-N-A)

- **Prithvi Missile System**
  - Prithvi is a short-range surface-to-surface ballistic missile representing India's first indigenously developed ballistic missile.
  - The Prithvi series comprises three variants: Prithvi-I with 150 km range (now withdrawn from service), Prithvi-II with 250-350 km range (liquid-fuelled, nuclear-capable), and Prithvi-III with range up to 750 km with lighter payload configurations.
  - Dhanush serves as the naval variant of the Prithvi missile system, enabling ship-based ballistic missile launch capability.
- **Agni Missile Series**
  - Agni represents India's family of ballistic missiles with varying ranges designated as Agni-I, Agni-II, Agni-III, Agni-IV, and Agni-V.
  - Due to its strategic importance for nuclear deterrence, the Agni missile programme was subsequently separated from IGMDP and expanded independently.
  - The Agni series provides India with credible minimum deterrence capability across different ranges.
- **Trishul Missile**
  - **Trishul** was developed as a short-range, low-level surface-to-air missile for point air defence applications.
  - The system had a limited operational range of 12 km, designed primarily for close-range aerial threat interception.

- **Nag Missile**
  - **Nag** is a third-generation anti-tank guided missile developed for destroying enemy armoured vehicles.
  - The missile employs "fire-and-forget" technology with imaging infrared seeker for autonomous target tracking after launch.
- **Akash Missile**
  - Akash emerged as a key medium-range surface-to-air missile with an intercept range of approximately 30 km.
  - Named after the Sanskrit word for "sky," Akash symbolises India's air defence deterrence capability.



Original Akash Missile System

System Characteristics

- The Akash missile is India's first indigenously produced medium-range surface-to-air missile capable of engaging multiple targets from multiple directions simultaneously.
- The system features a unique capability of being launched from mobile platforms including battle tanks and wheeled trucks, providing tactical flexibility in deployment.
- The missile can engage targets flying at low, medium, and high altitudes at speeds 2.5 times the speed of sound.
- The system achieves a kill probability of nearly 90%, making it highly effective against aerial threats.

Operational Range and Altitude

- The initial version of the Akash missile has an operational range of 27 to 30 kilometres.
- The system can intercept targets at flight altitudes of around 18 kilometres.
- It is primarily designed to provide air defence cover to vulnerable areas and critical military and civilian installations.

Supporting Systems

- The missile is supported by the indigenously developed **Rajendra** radar system for target acquisition and tracking.
- The weapon system can operate in group mode for coordinated multi-target engagement or in autonomous mode for independent operations.
- Built-in **Electronic Counter-Counter Measures (ECCM)** provide onboard mechanisms to counter electronic systems designed to deceive detection systems.

Induction and Export Status

- Akash was inducted into the Indian Air Force in 2014, followed by induction into the Indian Army in 2015.
- Both the IAF and the Army currently operate multiple squadrons and groups of Akash missiles respectively.
- In December 2020, the Cabinet approved the Akash missile for exports following interest from several friendly foreign countries including Armenia, the Philippines, Vietnam, Egypt, and Brazil.
- The export version of Akash incorporates modifications from those currently in service with the Indian Armed Forces.
- The Akash missile is reportedly more cost-effective and accurate than comparable systems like the US Patriot missiles due to its solid-fuel technology and advanced indigenous radars.

Development Timeline

- The development of Akash-NG commenced during the mid-2010s, coinciding with the induction of the original Akash system into the armed forces.
- The maiden test of the Akash-NG missile was conducted on January 25, 2021, from the Integrated Test Range off the coast of Odisha.
- On January 12, 2024, a successful flight test was conducted against a high-speed unmanned aerial target at very low altitude, paving the way for user trials.
- User Evaluation Trials were successfully completed on December 23, 2025, with the missiles meeting Provisional Staff Qualitative Requirements.

Development and Production Partners

- The system was indigenously developed by the Defence Research and Development Laboratory (DRDL), Hyderabad, in collaboration with other DRDO laboratories.
- Production responsibilities are shared between Bharat Dynamics Limited (BDL) for missile manufacturing and Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) for electronic systems and radars.
- The missile system contains 96% indigenous components, demonstrating substantial progress toward self-reliance in critical defence technologies.

Enhanced Performance Specifications

- Akash-NG can achieve flight speeds of Mach 2.5 (2.5 times the speed of sound).
- The missile has an extended strike range of approximately 60-70 kilometres, more than double the original Akash's range.
- Operational altitude capability exceeds 20 kilometres, enabling engagement of high-altitude threats.
- The system achieves a kill probability of nearly 90%, maintaining the high effectiveness of its predecessor.



Weight and Design Improvements

- The Akash-NG missile weighs approximately 350 kg, reduced by half from the original Akash's weight of 700 kg.
- The sleeker and lighter profile improves manoeuvrability and enables faster response times.
- The system features a much smaller ground system footprint compared to other similar air defence systems.

Canisterised Launch System

- Akash-NG missiles are stored and operated from specially designed sealed containers called canisters.
- The controlled internal environment of the canister simplifies transportation and storage logistics.
- Canisterisation significantly enhances the missile's shelf life by protecting components from environmental degradation.
- The system maintains high operational readiness as missiles can be launched directly from storage containers without extensive pre-launch preparation.



Propulsion System

- The Akash-NG employs a **dual-pulse solid rocket motor**, replacing the ramjet propulsion used in the original Akash missile.
- Solid rocket motor technology offers advantages in terms of storage stability, reduced maintenance requirements, and faster response times.
- The dual-pulse configuration provides improved thrust management for optimal performance across different engagement scenarios.

Indigenous Radio Frequency Seeker

- The missile features an indigenously developed **Radio Frequency (RF) seeker** for terminal guidance.
- The RF seeker enables precision strikes against low radar cross-section targets that are difficult to detect using conventional radar systems.

- This technology allows the missile to autonomously track and home in on targets during the final approach phase.

Electronic Counter-Counter Measures

- Built-in **ECCM** capabilities protect the missile and its guidance systems from enemy electronic warfare attempts.
- The system can counter electronic jamming and deception techniques designed to disrupt radar and communication systems.
- This feature ensures reliable performance even in electronically contested battlespace environments.

Radar and Command Systems

- The system incorporates a fully indigenous **Multi-Function Radar (MFR)** for surveillance, tracking, and fire control functions.
- An integrated Command, Control, and Communication (C3) system coordinates missile engagements and provides situational awareness.
- The **Missile Launch Vehicle (MLV)** provides mobile launch capability, enabling rapid repositioning for tactical advantage.

Operational Capabilities and Threat Engagement

Target Engagement Scenarios

- Akash-NG can engage targets across diverse operational scenarios including near-boundary low-altitude threats and long-range high-altitude targets.
- The system is specifically designed to intercept high-speed, highly manoeuvring aerial threats that present challenging engagement profiles.
- Low radar cross-section targets, including stealth aircraft features and small drones, can be effectively engaged using the advanced RF seeker.

Multi-Target Engagement

- The weapon system can simultaneously engage multiple targets, providing comprehensive air defence coverage.
- Operations can be conducted in group mode with coordinated engagement across multiple launchers or in autonomous mode for independent target prosecution.
- The system supports both day and night operational scenarios with consistent performance.

Platform Flexibility

- Missiles can be launched from mobile platforms, enabling the system to accompany advancing military formations.
- The mobility feature allows rapid repositioning to counter evolving threat axes and maintain optimal defensive postures.
- Quick deployment capability reduces vulnerability to counter-battery targeting by enemy forces.

Additional Key Facts

- India's Capital Dome programme aims to deploy a multi-layered air defence network including VL-SRSAM and QRSAM to defend the National Capital Region against missiles and drones.
- The first Integrated Air Defence Weapon System (IADWS) test was conducted by DRDO on August 23, 2025, simultaneously engaging and destroying two high-speed fixed-wing UAVs and a multicopter drone using QRSAM, Advanced VSHORAD, and a high-power laser-based Directed Energy Weapon.

- The Indian Army's Air Defence units effectively intercepted and destroyed multiple aerial threats including drones, missiles, and aircraft during **Operation Sindoor**, demonstrating the operational effectiveness of indigenous air defence systems.
- During the four-day conflict with Pakistan, Indian Army Air Defence units destroyed the majority of enemy drones using L-70 and Zu-23 air defence guns, while the Spyder, S-400, Akash, and MRSAM systems provided layered protection.
- MRSAM is progressively replacing aging Soviet-era **Kvadrat** and **OSA-AKM** missile systems, reducing India's historical dependence on imported air defence weaponry.
- The **Akashteer** command and control system has been developed to integrate various air defence assets into a unified network, enabling coordinated threat response across multiple platforms.



MIND MAP

News Trigger
- Defence Research and Development Organisation completed **User Evaluation Trials (UET)** of **Akash-NG**.
- Trials conducted at **Integrated Test Range, Odisha**.
- Successful interception across **low-altitude near-boundary** and **long-range high-altitude** scenarios.
- Clears pathway for **induction into the Indian Air Force** after meeting **PSQR**.

Original Akash Missile (Baseline)
- **Medium-range SAM**, range **27–30 km**.
- Intercepts targets up to **~18 km altitude**.
- Uses **Rajendra radar** with ECCM.
- Inducted: **IAF (2014)**, **Army (2015)**.
- Approved for **export (2020)**.

Akash-NG: Development Timeline
- Programme initiated **mid-2010s**.
- Maiden test: **25 January 2021**.
- Successful low-altitude UAV interception: **12 January 2024**.
- **UET completed: 23 December 2025**.

What is Akash-NG
- **Next-generation surface-to-air missile (SAM)** system.
- Designed to counter **high-speed, highly manoeuvrable, low-RCS threats**.
- Targets include **aircraft, UAVs, cruise missiles**.
- **Extended range: ~60–70 km**.

Indigenous Manufacturing
- **96% indigenous content**.
- Missile production by Bharat Dynamics Limited.
- Electronics and radar systems by Bharat Electronics Limited.
- Aligns with **Atmanirbhar Bharat** in defence.

IGMDP Background (P-A-T-N-A)
- Launched **1983**, led by **Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam**.
- Missiles developed: **Prithvi, Agni, Trishul, Nag, Akash**.
- Foundation for India's **strategic autonomy** in missile technology.

DRDO: Institutional Context
- Established in **1958** under Ministry of Defence.
- Network of **50+ laboratories** across aeronautics, missiles, electronics, armaments.
- Major systems: **Agni, Prithvi, Akash, Tejas, Pinaka**
- Operates India's highest R&D centre at **Changla, Ladakh (17,600 ft)**.

Akash Prime (Parallel Upgrade)
- Same range as original Akash (**~30 km**).
- Adds **active RF seeker** for higher accuracy.
- Complements Akash-NG within medium-range layer.

India's Layered Air Defence Ecosystem
- **VSHORADS**: Close-range, IIR seeker, man-portable.
- **QRSAM (Anant Shastra)**: 25–30 km, search-on-move.
- **MRSAM**: ~70 km, DRDO-IAI joint system.
- **Akash / Akash-NG**: Indigenous medium-range backbone.
- **Project Kusha**: Long-range (150–400 km) under development.
- Integrated via **Akashteer C2 system**.

Connected Topics

Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)

- DRDO was formed in 1958 through the amalgamation of the Technical Development Establishments (TDEs) of the Indian Army, the Directorate of Technical Development & Production (DTDP), and the Defence Science Organisation (DSO).
- DRDO functions under the Ministry of Defence, Government of India, as the R&D wing for defence technologies and systems.
- DRDO's stated mission includes achieving self-reliance in critical defence technologies and systems and equipping the Armed Forces with state-of-the-art systems as per Service requirements.
- DRDO is organised through technology clusters (domain-based organisational grouping) as per its organisational structure published on its official portal.
- DRDO is commonly described (in Government science portals) as having a network of around 50 laboratories/establishments working across aeronautics, missiles, electronics, land/naval systems, life sciences, materials, etc.
- DRDO develops and supports indigenous air-defence programs; PIB has reported DRDO's Integrated Air Defence Weapon System (IADWS) as a multi-layered air-defence platform integrating QRSAM, VSHORADS and a Directed Energy Weapon (DEW).
- DRDO conducts R&D and flight-testing for missile systems and advanced defence technologies, with outcomes routinely communicated through official MoD/PIB releases (e.g., tests/demonstrations of air-defence and strategic systems).
- DRDO's headquarters is DRDO Bhawan, New Delhi, as recorded in standard references and government listings about the organisation.

Layered Air Defence Architecture of India

- India's layered air-defence approach is built around multiple engagement tiers (very short/short/medium/long range) plus strategic systems for high-end threats, coordinated through integrated command-and-control and sensor networks. VSHORADS (Very Short Range Air Defence) refers to man-portable/point-defence systems for low-altitude threats; MoD describes DRDO's VSHORADS as a MANPADS developed by DRDO's Research Centre Imarat with other labs/industry partners.
- QRSAM (Quick Reaction SAM) is designed as a fast-response air-defence layer; DRDO+Indian Army completed multiple evaluation flight-tests of QRSAM from ITR Chandipur.
- DRDO's Integrated Air Defence Weapon System (IADWS) is explicitly described as a multi-layered system combining QRSAM + VSHORADS + a laser-based DEW, showing how layers are integrated into a single concept demonstration.
- Akash Weapon System (AWS) is an indigenous Short Range Surface-to-Air Missile (SRSAM) system used as an area/point air-defence layer; PIB notes procurement of additional AWS regiments with upgrades for northern borders. DRDO's official product page describes Akash as a major indigenous surface-to-air missile system delivered to the Indian Air Force and Indian Army and deployed for national security tasks.
- MRSAM (Medium Range SAM) is a medium-tier air-defence layer; PIB records handover of the first deliverable firing unit of MRSAM to the Indian Air Force and separately reports Army-version MRSAM operational flight-trials.
- LRSAM (Long Range SAM) (naval tier) is identified by PIB as the ship-launched version of the Barak-08 family, distinct from the land-launched MR-SAM variant.
- Strategic air-defence layer includes imported long-range systems such as S-400, with PIB noting that induction of S-400 significantly enhances national air-defence capability for large-area coverage.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Which of the following trial outcomes enabled the next-generation air defence missile to move closer to formal service entry?
   (a) Completion of developmental testing
   (b) Approval of export clearance
   (c) Successful User Evaluation Trials
   (d) Induction into operational squadrons

2. Which organisation functions as India's primary defence technology research arm under the Ministry of Defence?
   (a) Bharat Electronics and Development Limited
   (b) Defence Research and Development Organisation
   (c) Bharat Dynamics and Defence Research Limited
   (d) Integrated Defence Research Organisation

3. Which of the following missile systems recently completed user-level trials that cleared the way for induction into the Indian Air Force?
   (a) Prithvi-II (b) Trishul-M
   (c) Agni-III (d) Akash-NG

4. Which of the following locations hosts DRDO's highest terrestrial research centre situated at extreme altitude?
   (a) Nubrang (b) Lehroad
   (c) Changla (d) Zanskar

5. Which of the following propulsion improvements contributes to faster response and easier storage?
   (a) Ramjet-based propulsion
   (b) SingleLiquid-fuel propulsion
   (c) Dual-stage solid propulsion
   (d) Hybrid electric system

6. Which of the following capability allows the missile to remain effective despite enemy electronic interference?
   (a) Built-in Infrared guidance system
   (b) Built-in Optical tracking system
   (c) Built-in Satellite navigation measures
   (d) Built-in electronic resistance measures

7. Which of the following phases of testing involves active participation of the final operational personnel before deployment?
   (a) User-assisted trials
   (b) Developmental trials
   (c) Design validation
   (d) Pre-production checks

8. Which of the following legacy missile programmes laid the foundation for India's indigenous missile capability?
   (a) Advanced Missile Research Development Programme
   (b) Defensive Weapons Technology Expansion Programme
   (c) Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme
   (d) Long Range Precision Strike Capability Programme

9. Who provided leadership during the launch of India's comprehensive missile development initiative in the 1980s?
   (a) Vikram S Sarabhai (b) A.P.J. Abdul Kalam
   (c) Homi J Bhabha (d) Satish Dhawan

10. Which of the following missile variants provides improved precision without increasing engagement distance?
    (a) Akash-NG (b) QRSAM
    (c) Akash Prime (d) VSHORADS

11. Which of the following air defence systems is jointly developed with an overseas partner?
    (a) Long-Range Surface-to-Air Missile
    (b) Medium-Range Surface-to-Air Missile
    (c) Short-Range Surface-to-Air Missile
    (d) Medium-Range Air-to-Air Missile

12. Which of the following missile systems is designed specifically to protect fast-moving armoured formations?
    (a) Akash-NG Surface-to-Air Missile
    (b) MRSAM Surface-to-Air Missile
    (c) Quick Reaction Surface-to-Air Missile
    (d) Quick Reaction Air-to-Air Missile

13. Which of the following systems is intended to counter threats at very close ranges with a portable configuration?

(a) MRSAM MQ (b) VSHORADS
(c) Akash Prime (d) QRSAM SD

14. Which of the following development programmes aims to bridge the capability gap between existing medium and very long-range systems?
(a) Capital Dome (b) Project Kusha
(c) Akashteer II (d) Project IGMDP

15. Which of the following features improves storage life and launch readiness of the missile?
(a) Mobile launcher
(b) Lightweight airframe
(c) Networked command system
(d) Sealed container storage

16. Which of the following operational advantages results from reduced missile weight?
(a) Improved manoeuvrability
(b) Longer storage duration
(c) Higher explosive yield
(d) Expanded radar coverage

17. Which of the following components enables accurate engagement of low-observable aerial threats?
(a) Infrared camera control unit
(b) Optical tracker frequency unit
(c) Radio-frequency guidance unit
(d) Satellite uplink guidance unit

18. Which of the following systems integrates multiple air defence assets into a unified operational network?
(a) Akashteer
(b) Capital Dome
(c) IADWS
(d) Project Kusha

19. Which of the following systems is designed to safely neutralise explosive threats for armed forces without direct human involvement?
(a) Tactical Automated Defence System
(b) Mobile Autonomous Robot System
(c) Integrated Battlefield Response System
(d) Advanced Remote Surveillance System

20. Which of the following older air defence missile systems are being replaced by MRSAM to reduce reliance on imported weapon platforms?
(a) Patriot and Arrow-AKM
(b) OSA-AKM and Torram
(c) Kvadrat and OSA-AKM
(d) Aster-PS and Kvadrat

ANSWER KEY

1. (c)	2. (b)	3. (d)	4. (c)	5. (c)	6. (d)	7. (a)	8. (c)
9. (b)	10. (c)	11. (b)	12. (c)	13. (b)	14. (b)	15. (d)	16. (a)
17. (c)	18. (a)	19. (b)	20. (c)				

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Sports

India Tops Global Doping Violations in 2024

News Highlights:

- India has been identified as the world's leading doping offender for the third successive year, recording a record **260 positive cases** from 7,113 samples in 2024, according to the **World Anti-Doping Agency's (WADA)** annual report published on 16th December 2025.
- The country registered a **3.6% positivity rate**, more than double that of any other nation, with no other country exceeding 1.75% among major testing nations.
- **Athletics** contributed the maximum violations with 76 cases, followed by **weightlifting** with 43 and **wrestling** with 29, reflecting a persistent pattern in endurance and strength-based disciplines.
- The findings assume critical significance as India prepares to host the **2030 Commonwealth Games** in Ahmedabad and pursues its ambitious bid for the **2036 Olympic Games**.
- The **International Olympic Committee (IOC)** during meetings in Lausanne flagged doping as one of three fundamental concerns alongside governance issues and poor medal performances that could prevent India from hosting the Olympics.

WADA Report 2024

India's Testing and Violation Statistics

- India's **National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA)** collected 7,113 samples in 2024, comprising 6,576 urine samples and 537 blood samples.
- Of these samples, 260 returned **Adverse Analytical Findings (AAF)**, resulting in a positivity rate of 3.6%, the highest among all major testing nations.
- The **National Dope Testing Laboratory (NDTL)** in New Delhi recorded a positivity rate of 3.65%, the highest among all WADA-accredited laboratories globally.
- In 2023, India's positivity rate stood at 3.8% with 213 adverse findings from 5,606 tests, indicating only a marginal improvement despite increased testing volume.
- In the last decade, India's positive dope test share has fluctuated, reaching a high of **5.6% in 2019**.
- Nearly one in every five Indian athletes tested during competitions returned a positive result for prohibited substances.
- This marks the second successive year that India has surpassed the 200 mark in the WADA Testing Figures Report, with no other testing authority reaching the triple-figure mark.

Comparative Analysis with Other Nations

Country	Number of Tests	Positive Cases	Positivity Rate
India	7,113	260	3.6%
China	24,214	43	0.2%
Russia	10,514	76	0.7%

France	-	91	0.8%
United States	6,592	76	1.1%
Germany	-	54	-
Italy	-	85	-
Norway	-	-	1.75%

Sport-Wise Distribution of Violations in India

- The data presents sport-wise anti-doping positive cases in India for disciplines with the highest absolute positives, along with samples tested and positivity rates where available.
- Athletics recorded the highest number of positive cases at 76, with 1,852 samples tested and a positivity rate of 4.08%.
- Weightlifting recorded 43 positive cases, with 663 samples tested and a positivity rate of 6.48%.
- Wrestling recorded 29 positive cases, with 414 samples tested and a positivity rate of 7.0%.
- Boxing recorded 17 positive cases, with 412 samples tested and a positivity rate of 4.12%.
- Powerlifting recorded 17 positive cases, with 54 samples tested and a positivity rate of 31.48%.
- Kabaddi recorded 10 positive cases, with 181 samples tested and a positivity rate of 5.52%.
- Bodybuilding recorded 8 positive cases, but the number of samples tested and the positivity rate were not provided.
- Judo recorded 6 positive cases, but the number of samples tested and the positivity rate were not provided.
- Para-wrestling recorded 5 positive cases, but the number of samples tested and the positivity rate were not provided.
- Wushu recorded 5 positive cases, with 111 samples tested and a positivity rate of 4.50%.

High-Profile Doping Cases in Indian Sports

- In July 2025, **Reetika Hooda**, the under-23 wrestling champion and Paris Olympics quarter-finalist, tested positive for banned substances and received provisional suspension for one year by NADA.
- **Shivpal Singh**, an Asian Championships and South Asian Games medalist in javelin, tested positive for metandienone in a 2021 drug test and was banned for four years by NADA in 2022, later reduced to one year after appeal citing contaminated supplements, but tested positive again in May 2025 during an out-of-competition test, potentially facing an eight-year ban.
- **Simran's Guide Saifi**, gold-winner at World Para Athletics Championships, was suspended for dope failure, putting medals in doubt.
- **Dutee Chand**, India's 100m national record holder, received a four-year ban after testing positive for anabolic agents/SARMs (andarine, enobosarm, and ligandrol) in an out-of-competition test conducted on 5th December 2022, with the ban commencing from 3rd January 2023.
- **Sanjita Chanu**, two-time Commonwealth Games gold medalist in weightlifting, received a four-year ban after testing positive for Drostanolone Metabolite, a banned anabolic steroid, during the 2022 National Games in Gujarat.
- **Dipa Karmakar**, Rio Olympics gymnast who finished fourth, served a 21-month ban for testing positive for Higenamine in an out-of-competition test, with the ban running from October 2021 to July 2023.
- **Aishwarya Babu**, triple jump national record holder, received a four-year ban after testing positive for Ostarine (a selective androgen receptor modulator) at the National Inter-State Championships in June 2022, resulting in the forfeiture of her national record of 14.14m.
- **MR Poovamma**, three-time Asian Games gold medalist, was banned for testing positive for

- methylhexaneamine from February 2021 to 2023.
- **Amit Panghal**, World Championships silver medalist and Asian Games champion boxer, tested positive for a banned substance in 2012 during youth competition and received a suspension that was later reduced to one year on appeal.

Doping and Anti-Doping Framework

- Doping refers to consuming artificial and often illegal substances to gain competitive advantages in sporting competitions.
- Common doping substances include **anabolic steroids**, **human growth hormones**, **stimulants**, and **diuretics**.
- Doping products are often illegally produced, trafficked, and distributed, and as they rarely receive approval for public use, their consumption poses serious health risks to both professional and amateur athletes.
- Adverse Analytical Findings refers to a laboratory report identifying the presence of a **prohibited substance**, its metabolites or markers, including elevated quantities of endogenous substances.
- It also includes evidence of the use of a **prohibited method**, in line with WADA standards.
- The detection of such substances in samples is labelled by WADA as an adverse analytical finding, which is distinct from **Anti-Doping Rule Violations (ADRV)**.

WADA Prohibited List – Categories of Banned Substances

Category	Description	Examples
S0	Non-Approved Substances	Substances not approved for therapeutic use anywhere
S1	Anabolic Agents	Anabolic androgenic steroids (testosterone, nandrolone, stanozolol), SARMs (ostarine, ligandrol)
S2	Peptide Hormones, Growth Factors	Erythropoietin (EPO), Human Growth Hormone (HGH), Insulin-like Growth Factor (IGF-1)
S3	Beta-2 Agonists	Clenbuterol (except certain inhaled forms with TUE)
S4	Hormone and Metabolic Modulators	Aromatase inhibitors, SERMs, insulin
S5	Diuretics and Masking Agents	Furosemide, hydrochlorothiazide, probenecid

Key Changes in 2024 Prohibited List

- **Tramadol** was added to the list of prohibited substances in-competition under S7 Narcotics, effective 1st January 2024. Data indicated significant use of tramadol in sports, and WADA-funded research confirmed its potential to enhance physical performance.
- **2,4-Dinitrophenol (DNP)**, an extremely dangerous compound often marketed for weight loss, was added to S0 **Semaglutide** (GLP-1 analog) was added to the Monitoring Program to examine prevalence of use in sport.

World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA)

- WADA was established in **1999** by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to combat doping in sports globally.
- The agency operates on a unique principle of **equal partnership and funding** between the global Sport Movement and Governments worldwide.
- WADA is headquartered in **Montreal, Canada**, and functions as the global independent authority promoting and coordinating the fight against doping.
- WADA's primary role is to develop, harmonize, and coordinate anti-doping rules and policies across all sports and countries.
- The agency's key activities include scientific and social science research, education, intelligence and investigations, development of anti-doping capacity, and monitoring of compliance with the World Anti-Doping Program.

World Anti-Doping Code

- The **World Anti-Doping Code** is the fundamental charter designed to harmonize anti-doping rules across all sports and nations for consistent athlete standards.
- The Code was first adopted at the 2nd World Conference on Doping in Sport in **March 2003** in Copenhagen, Denmark.
- The Code is supplemented by **eight International Standards** covering prohibited substances, testing and investigations, laboratories, Therapeutic Use Exemptions, protection of privacy, code compliance, education, and results management.
- The most recent version of the Code took effect on **1st January 2021** following comprehensive review at the Fifth World Conference on Doping in Sport in Katowice, Poland.
- In 2013, amendments doubled the sanction for a first offence where intentional doping is established, while allowing more lenient sanctions for inadvertent violations.

UNESCO International Convention Against Doping in Sport

- The **UNESCO International Convention against Doping in Sport** was adopted during the 33rd session of UNESCO's General Conference on **19th October 2005** in Paris.
- The Convention entered into force on **1st February 2007**, becoming the most successful convention in UNESCO's history in terms of ratification rhythm.
- Currently, the Convention has **192 States Parties**, making it UNESCO's second most ratified treaty.
- The Convention allows governments to formally recognize WADA and the Code, since governments cannot be signatories to the World Anti-Doping Code directly.
- **India is a signatory** to this Convention, providing the international framework for its anti-doping obligations.



MIND MAP

News Trigger

- India topped global doping violations for the **third straight year**, as per World Anti-Doping Agency annual report published **16 Dec 2025**.
- India recorded **260 positive cases** out of **7,113 samples** in 2024.
- India's **3.6% positivity rate** was the highest among major testing nations.
- The issue gained urgency due to India's hosting plans for **2030 Commonwealth Games (Ahmedabad)** and its **2036 Olympics bid**.

Headline Numbers

- Samples tested: **7,113** (Urine **6,576** + Blood **537**).
- Positive cases (AAF): **260**.
- Positivity rate: **3.6%** (highest among major testing nations).
- India crossed **200+ positives** for the **second successive year**.

Highest violation counts

- Athletics: **76** positives (from **1,852** samples).
- Weightlifting: **43** positives (from **663** samples).
- Wrestling: **29** positives (from **414** samples).
- Boxing: **17** positives; Powerlifting: **17** positives; Kabaddi: **10** positives.

Lab and Testing System Outcomes

- National Dope Testing Laboratory recorded a **3.65% positivity rate**, stated as the highest among WADA-accredited labs.
- 2023 comparison: **213 positives** out of **5,606 tests** (positivity **3.8%**).
- Long-term high point: positivity reached **5.6% in 2019**.
- Competition testing concern: nearly **1 in 5** tested during competitions returned positive.

Recent cases (2024–25)

- Reetika Hooda: provisional suspension after positive test (July 2025).
- Shivpal Singh: repeat positive in May 2025 after earlier sanction-related proceedings.
- Simran's guide Saifi: suspended after dope failure, medals under doubt.

Notable historical cases

- Dutee Chand: four-year ban linked to anabolic agents/SARMs (ban from Jan 2023).
- Sanjita Chanu: four-year ban for anabolic steroid metabolite (2022 National Games).
- Dipa Karmakar: 21-month ban for higenamine (Oct 2021–Jul 2023).
- Aishwarya Babu: four-year ban for ostarine and forfeiture of national record.
- M.R. Poovamma: ban for methylhexaneamine (2021–2023).
- Amit Panghal: youth-level positive test (2012), reduced suspension after appeal.

Connected Topics

National Sports Governance Act / Bill, 2025

- The National Sports Governance Act, 2025 (Act No. 25 of 2025) received Presidential assent on 18 August 2025. The Act's stated purposes include development and promotion of sports, welfare measures for sportspersons, ethical governance, and a unified dispute-resolution framework aligned with the Olympic/Paralympic Charters and international best practices.
- The Act provides that it comes into force on dates notified by the Central Government, and different provisions can commence on different dates; a notification brought specified provisions into force from 31 December 2025. It establishes specified national sports governing bodies (including National Olympic Committee, National Paralympic Committee, and National Sports Federations/Regional Sports Federations for designated sports) and requires international recognition/affiliation where applicable.
- It creates a National Sports Board (by Central Government notification) with a Chairperson and Members appointed through a prescribed process, to exercise powers/functions under the Act.
- The Board can grant recognition to sports organisations as National Sports Bodies, and existing Central Government–recognised bodies are deemed to have recognition under the Act (with the Act applying to them). The Board has powers to inquire and to suspend/cancel recognition/registration in specified situations, and the Act also provides for ad hoc administrative bodies in certain circumstances.
- Governance requirements include an Executive Committee with specified composition, including athlete representation (members from an Athletes Committee) and a minimum of four women members in the Executive Committee. The Act mandates a Code of Ethics for National Sports Bodies and provides for a Safe Sports Policy (framed by the Board) including protection and safety of women and minorathletes, plus internal grievance redressal mechanisms.
- It establishes a National Sports Election Panel (retired election officials) to oversee free and fair elections, and a National Sports Tribunal (Chairperson who is/has been a Supreme Court Judge/Chief Justice of a High Court) with an appeal to the Supreme Court.

National Anti-Doping Act, 2022

- The National Anti-Doping Act, 2022 (No. 15 of 2022) received Presidential assent on 12 August 2022.
- Its stated objective is to constitute a National Anti-Doping framework for regulating anti-doping in sport and to give effect to the UNESCO International Convention against Doping in Sport; India ratified the Convention on 7 November 2007 (as recorded in the Act's preamble).
- The Act prohibits doping: no athlete, athlete support personnel, or other persons shall indulge in doping in sport, and participants are bound by anti-doping rules as a condition of participation.
- It defines Anti-Doping Rule Violations to include, among others: presence/use of prohibited substances/methods, refusal to submit samples, whereabouts failures, tampering, possession, trafficking, administration, and complicity.
- It provides for a National Board for Anti-Doping in Sports (Chairperson + Members appointed by the Central Government), with conflict-of-interest restrictions on appointments (as specified).
- The Act provides for Therapeutic Use Exemptions (TUE) and links results-management steps to verifying whether a TUE was granted.
- It creates an adjudicatory mechanism through a National Anti-Doping Disciplinary Panel constituted by the Board for determining consequences of violations.
- It also creates a National Anti-Doping Appeal Panel, with composition including a retired High Court Judge as Chairperson, a Vice-Chairperson (legal expert), medical practitioners, and eminent athletes/sports administrators.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Which of the following best explains why India's doping record drew global attention in 2024?
   (a) India tested fewer athletes than others
   (b) India recorded marginal doping records
   (c) India showed declining positivity trends
   (d) India topped global doping violation rankings

2. Which of the following sports accounted for the highest number of doping violations in India?
   (a) Weightlifting (b) Wrestling
   (c) Athletics (d) Boxing

3. Which of the following institutions flagged doping as a critical concern affecting India's Olympic hosting prospects?
   (a) World Anti Doping Agency leadership
   (b) International Olympic Committee officials
   (c) Commonwealth Games Federation council
   (d) Athletics Integrity Unit regulators council

4. Which of the following laboratories recorded the highest positivity rate among all WADA-accredited labs globally?
   (a) Cologne laboratory accredited testing center
   (b) Paris laboratory international testing facility
   (c) Moscow laboratory former accredited institution
   (d) New Delhi National Dope Testing Laboratory

5. Which of the following disciplines showed the highest positivity rate among sports with more than fifty samples?
   (a) Athletics (b) Powerlifting
   (c) Weightlifting (d) Wrestling

6. Which of the following substances tested positive in Shivpal Singh's repeat doping violation?
   (a) Metandienone (b) Tramadolene
   (c) Clenbuterol (d) Ostarineol

7. Which of the following terms refers to a laboratory report identifying prohibited substances in samples?
   (a) Anti doping rule violation classification
   (b) Adverse analytical finding laboratory report
   (c) Whereabouts failure compliance assessment
   (d) Prohibited association disciplinary determination

8. Which of the following categories includes anabolic steroids and selective androgen receptor modulators?
   (a) S zero non approved category
   (b) S two peptide hormone agents
   (c) S one anabolic agents category
   (d) S five diuretics masking agents

9. Which of the following substances was added to the prohibited list in competition from January 2024?
   (a) Clenbuterol (b) Tramadol
   (c) Semaglutide (d) Dinitrophenol

10. Which of the following organisations established the World Anti-Doping Agency?
    (a) International Olympic Committee
    (b) United National Scientific Organization
    (c) World Health Organization executive council
    (d) International Association of Athletics Federations

11. Where is the headquarters of the World Anti-Doping Agency located?
    (a) Montreal Canada (b) Lausanne Switzerland
    (c) Riyad, Saudi Arab (d) Geneva Switzerland

12. In which of the following year was the World Anti-Doping Code first adopted?
    (a) 2001 (b) 2004 (c) 2002 (d) 2003

13. Which of the following conventions allows governments to formally recognize WADA and the Code?
    (a) United Nations Convention on Sea Laws
    (b) UNESCO International Convention Against Doping
    (c) Vienna International Convention Against Doping
    (d) Geneva Convention Humanitarian Protection

14. Which of the following Indian bodies is responsible for planning and coordinating anti-doping activities?
    (a) National Anti Doping Agency India
    (b) Sports Authority India Operational Wing
    (c) Indian Olympic and Anti Doping Council
    (d) Athletics Integrity Unit Enforcement Arm

15. Which of the following portals digitises India's anti-doping testing process?
    (a) Know Your Medicine mobile application

(b) Athlete Passport Management Unit system
(c) NADA India Data Management System
(d) Food Safety Authority monitoring platform

16. Who is the current President of the International Olympic Committee?
(a) Kirsty Coventry (b) Thomas Bach
(c) Sebastian Coe (d) Juan Antonio

17. Which of the following cities has India proposed as its candidate for the 2036 Olympics?
(a) New Delhi (b) Ahmedabad
(c) Mumbai (d) Bengaluru

18. Who became the first Indian woman to win an Olympic shooting medal?
(a) Apurvi Chandela (b) Heena Sidhu
(c) Abhinav Bindra (d) Manu Bhaker

19. Which of the following organisations governs the Olympic Movement in India?
(a) Sports Authority of India
(b) Ministry of Youth Affairs
(c) Indian Olympic Association
(d) National Sports Council

ANSWER KEY

1. (d)	2. (c)	3. (b)	4. (d)	5. (b)	6. (a)	7. (b)	8. (c)
9. (b)	10. (a)	11. (a)	12. (d)	13. (b)	14. (a)	15. (c)	16. (a)
17. (b)	18. (d)	19. (c)					

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Static Scoop

Foundation Day of Lokpal of India

News Highlights:

- The **Lokpal of India** celebrated its Foundation Day on 16th January, marking the anniversary of the institution's establishment in 2014 when Section 3 of the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013 came into effect.
- Justice A.M. Khanwilkar, the Chairperson, along with Judicial Members Justice Lingappa Narayana Swami, Justice Sanjay Yadav, Justice Ritu Raj Awasthi, and Non-Judicial Members Sushil Chandra, Pankaj Kumar, and Ajay Tirkey participated in the commemorative event held at the Lokpal office in New Delhi.

Global Origins of the Ombudsman Institution

- The concept of an independent grievance redressal mechanism originated in Sweden in 1809 when the Parliamentary Ombudsman office was established following the adoption of the Instrument of Government after the deposition of King Gustaf IV Adolf.
- The Swedish word 'Ombudsman' translates to 'representative' or 'agent of the people' and refers to a public officer entrusted with investigating complaints against government administration.
- The institution was created to provide the Swedish Parliament (Riksdag) with a means of supervising compliance with laws by judges, civil servants, and military officers, ensuring protection of citizens' rights through an agency independent of the executive.
- Finland adopted the Ombudsman model in 1919, followed by Denmark in 1955, Norway in 1962, and Iceland in 1987, leading to the global spread of this institutional framework.
- The International Ombudsman Institute, established in 1978, currently lists over 170 independent ombudsman institutions across more than 90 countries worldwide.

LOKPAL OF INDIA
भारत के लोकपाल

Lokpal in India

- **1960s:** The concept of an ombudsman was first proposed in the early 1960s by then Law Minister **Ashok Kumar Sen.** In 1963, **Dr. L.M. Singhvi coined the terms "Lokpal" and "Lokayukta"** during a parliamentary debate.
- **1966:** The First Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC), led by Morarji Desai, recommended the establishment of these institutions to address grievances related to public administration.
- **1968-2011:** Multiple attempts were made to pass the Lokpal Bill in Parliament, with bills introduced in 1968, 1971, 1977, 1985, 1989, 1996, 1998, 2001, and twice in 2011. However, none were enacted during this period.
- **2011:** A significant anti-corruption movement, led by activist Anna Hazare, intensified public demand for a robust anti-corruption framework, culminating in the passage of the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Bill.
- The Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013 was enacted to establish the Lokpal at the central level and mandate the creation of Lokayuktas in states.



Appointment Process

Members of the Lokpal are appointed by the President based on recommendations from a **Selection Committee** comprising: The Prime Minister | The Speaker of the Lok Sabha | The Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha | The Chief Justice of India or a Supreme Court judge nominated by the Chief Justice and An eminent jurist nominated by the President based on the recommendations of the first four members

Structure of Lokpal

- **Composition:** The Lokpal is a multi-member body comprising a Chairperson and up to eight Members.
- **Chairperson:** The Chairperson can be a current or former Chief Justice of India, a former Supreme Court judge, or an eminent individual with at least 25 years of expertise in anti-corruption, public administration, vigilance, finance, law, or management.
- **Members:** The body can consist of 8 members, 50% must be judicial members (current or former judges of the Supreme Court or Chief Justices of High Courts). Additionally, 50% of the members should represent Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), Other Backward Classes (OBC), minorities, or women.

Jurisdiction and Powers

- **Scope:** The Lokpal has jurisdiction over the Prime Minister (with specific safeguards), Union Ministers, Members of Parliament, Group A, B, C, and D officers, and officials of the Central Government.
- **Investigation Authority:** The Lokpal can direct the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to conduct inquiries and has the authority to supervise such investigations.
- **Prosecution Powers:** Upon concluding an investigation, the Lokpal can initiate prosecution through its Prosecution Wing or direct relevant agencies to take appropriate action against the accused.

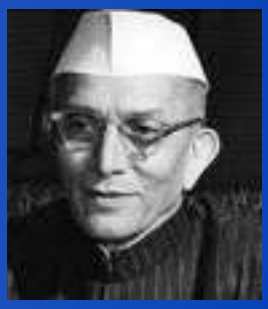
Challenges and Implementation

- **Delayed Appointments:** Despite the Act's passage in 2013, the appointment of the first Lokpal was delayed until 2019, when Pinaki Chandra Ghose was appointed to the coveted post. Current Lokpal of India is retired SC Justice Ajay Manikrao Khanwilkar.

Lokayuktas in India

The **Lokayukta** is a statutory **anti-corruption ombudsman** established at the state level in India, designed to investigate and address complaints of corruption and maladministration against public servants, including politicians, bureaucrats, and other government officials. The institution aims to promote transparency and accountability within state administrations.

Historical Background



- **1966:** The concept of the Lokayukta was first recommended by the **Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC) led by Morarji Desai**. The ARC's interim report emphasized the need for an independent authority at the state level to address grievances against public administration.
- **1968:** Based on the ARC's recommendations, the Government of India introduced a **bill proposing the establishment of the Lokpal at the central level and Lokayuktas in the states.** Although the bill did not pass at that time, it laid the foundation for states to enact their own legislation.
- **1971: Maharashtra became the first state to establish the Lokayukta** institution by enacting **The Maharashtra Lokayukta and Upa-Lokayuktas Act,** which came into effect on **October 25, 1972.**
- **Subsequent Developments:** Following Maharashtra's lead, several other states enacted their own Lokayukta Acts, including Odisha (1971), Rajasthan (1973), Bihar (1974), Uttar Pradesh (1975), and Karnataka (1984). Each state's legislation varies, leading to differences in the powers and functions of the Lokayukta across states.

The **Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013** is a significant legislative measure aimed at combating corruption in India. While the Act primarily focuses on establishing the Lokpal at the central level, it also mandates that each state shall establish a Lokayukta **within one year** of the Act's commencement.

Appointment and Composition

- **Appointment Authority:** The Lokayukta is appointed by the Governor of the respective state. The selection process typically involves consultation with key state officials to ensure the appointee's impartiality and integrity.
- **Eligibility Criteria:** Qualifications for the Lokayukta vary by state. For instance, in Karnataka, the appointee must have served as a Judge of the Supreme Court, a Chief Justice of a High Court, or as a High Court Judge for a minimum of ten years.
- **Tenure and Removal:** The tenure of the Lokayukta is defined by State legislation, which commonly is five years. Once appointed, the Lokayukta cannot be dismissed or transferred by the government. Removal from office typically requires a formal impeachment process by the state legislature, ensuring the institution's independence.

Powers and Functions

- **Jurisdiction:** The Lokayukta's jurisdiction encompasses a wide range of public servants, including: State Chief Ministers and Ministers | Members of the State Legislature | State Government employees and Employees of local authorities, public enterprises, and other instrumentalities within the state
- **Investigative Authority:** The Lokayukta has the power to investigate allegations of corruption, abuse of power, maladministration, and favoritism. Upon receiving a complaint, the Lokayukta can: Initiate a preliminary inquiry | Conduct detailed investigations | Recommend actions such as prosecution or departmental proceedings against the accused.



MIND MAP

News Trigger

- **Lokpal Foundation Day** observed on **16 January 2026**.
- Marks enforcement of **Section 3** of the **Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013** in **2014**.
- Event held at **Lokpal office, New Delhi** with Chairperson and Members present.
- Noted **rise in corruption complaints** over the last two years.
- **New IT infrastructure and Data Centre** inaugurated for paperless processing.

Global Origins of Ombudsman
Sweden (1809)

- Parliamentary Ombudsman created after adoption of the **Instrument of Government**.
- Designed to oversee legality of administration independent of executive control.

Concept Meaning

- "Ombudsman" means **representative/agent of the people**.
- Mandated to investigate complaints against public administration.

Early Lokpal Idea in India
Parliamentary Origin

- Term **"Lokpal"** coined by **Dr. L.M. Singhvi** in **1963**.
- Derived from **Lok (people)** and **Pala (protector)**.

Initial Advocacy

- **Law Minister Ashoke Kumar Sen** proposed a constitutional ombudsman concept.
- Focus on grievance redressal and accountability.

4) Administrative Reforms Commission (1966)

- **First ARC**, chaired by **Morarji Desai**, examined citizen grievance redressal.
- Recommended **Lokpal (Centre)** and **Lokayukta (States)**.
- Intended to remove injustice perception and enhance administrative credibility.

Organisational Structure
Composition

- Chairperson + up to **8 Members**.
- Minimum **50% Judicial Members**.
- **50% representation** from SC/ST/OBC/minorities/women

Current Composition: 3 Judicial and **3 Non-Judicial Members** under the Chairperson.

Eligibility and Appointment
Chairperson: Former **CJI**, **SC Judge**, or eminent person with **25+ years expertise**.

Legislative Journey
Early Attempts

- First Lokpal Bill introduced in **1968** by **Shanti Bhushan**.
- Passed Lok Sabha in **1969**, lapsed in Rajya Sabha.

Repeated Failures

- Bills introduced in **1971, 1977, 1985, 1989, 1996, 1998, 2001, 2005, 2008**.
- Multiple committee referrals over **45 years**.

State-Level Lokayuktas

- **Maharashtra** first state with Lokayukta (Act of **1971**, effective **1972**).
- Followed by **Rajasthan (1973)** and **Bihar (1974)**.
- Several states still lack **functional Lokayukt**

Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013
Enactment

- Passed on **17 December 2013**.
- Presidential assent on **1 January 2014**.
- **Section 3** enforced on **16 January 2014**.

2016 Amendment

- Allowed leader of single largest opposition party in Selection Committee.

Connected Topics

United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC), 2003

- UNCAC is the only legally binding universal anti-corruption instrument adopted under the United Nations system.
- Adoption and entry into force: It was adopted on 31 October 2003 and entered into force on 14 December 2005.
- Negotiation background: It was drafted/negotiated in Vienna (2002–2003) and then adopted by the UN General Assembly.
- Structure: UNCAC is organised into eight chapters covering prevention, criminalisation, cooperation, asset recovery, technical assistance, and implementation mechanisms.
- Preventive architecture (Chapter II): It requires States Parties to adopt preventive anti-corruption policies and institutions, and includes measures for public sector integrity and systems to prevent corruption.
- Criminalisation focus (Chapter III): It sets standards for criminalising key corruption-related conduct and strengthening law enforcement responses (with some provisions framed as mandatory and some as encouraged).
- International cooperation (Chapter IV): It provides a framework for cross-border cooperation (including assistance between States) to investigate and prosecute corruption-related offences.
- Asset recovery (Chapter V): Return of assets is a "fundamental principle" under Article 51, and States Parties are to provide wide cooperation and assistance for asset recovery.
- Implementation oversight: UNCAC is supported by a Conference of States Parties (CoSP) and an Implementation Review Mechanism (IRM), which operates as a peer review process to support effective implementation. Capacity building (Chapter VI): It emphasises technical assistance, training, and information exchange to strengthen national anti-corruption capacity.

Whistle Blowers Protection Act, 2014

- Legislative timeline: The Act received Presidential assent on 9 May 2014 and was published in the Gazette of India on 12 May 2014.
- Commencement mechanism: The Act provides that it comes into force on a date notified by the Central Government in the Official Gazette (i.e., commencement is notification-based).
- Core purpose: It establishes a mechanism to receive complaints/disclosures about corruption or wilful misuse of power/wilful misuse of discretion by a public servant, to inquire into such disclosure, and to provide safeguards against victimisation.
- Who can disclose and where (Public Interest Disclosure): Any person (including a non-governmental organisation) may make a public interest disclosure before the Competent Authority, and the Act states this notwithstanding the Official Secrets Act, 1923.
- Competent Authority is category-specific: The Act defines "competent authority" with different authorities depending on whether the disclosure concerns (for example) certain constitutional/public offices, Central/State public servants, or specified public bodies.
- Safeguards against victimisation (Section 11): The Central Government must ensure that a person/public servant making a disclosure is not victimised; the complainant can seek redress; directions can be issued (including restoration to status quo ante), and non-compliance can attract a monetary penalty (up to ₹30,000). Witness/whistleblower protection directions (Section 12): If protection is needed, the Competent Authority may issue directions to Government authorities (including police) to protect the complainant, witnesses, or others assisting the inquiry.
- Penalty for revealing identity (Section 16): Negligently or mala fide revealing the complainant's identity can be punished with imprisonment up to 3 years and fine up to ₹50,000.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Which of the following dates is observed as the Lokpal Foundation Day in India?
   (a) 1 January 2014 (b) 16 January 2014
   (c) 19 March 2019 (d) 10 March 2024

2. Who first coined the term 'Lokpal' during a parliamentary discussion in India?
   (a) Dr. L. M. Singhvi (b) Morarji Desai
   (c) Shanti Bhushan (d) Ashoke Kumar Sen

3. Which of the following countries first established the Ombudsman institution in 1809?
   (a) Denmark (b) Finland
   (c) Sweden (d) Norway

4. Which of the following Indian states was the first to establish a Lokayukta institution?
   (a) Rajasthan (b) Maharashtra
   (c) Haryana (d) Gujarat

5. Which of the following international organisations currently maintains a global network listing over 170 independent grievance-redress and public accountability institutions worldwide?
   (a) United Nations Development Programme
   (b) Transparency International Institute
   (c) International Ombudsman Institute
   (d) International Monetary Fund

6. Who introduced the first Lokpal Bill in the Lok Sabha in 1968?
   (a) Shanti Bhushan (b) Indira Gandhi
   (c) Morarji Desai (d) L. M. Singhvi

7. Which of the following movements in 2011 demanded the enactment of a strong Jan Lokpal Bill?
   (a) Right to Information Campaign
   (b) Chipko Forest Protection Drive
   (c) India Against Corruption Movement
   (d) Total Revolution Political Call

8. In which of the following years did India ratify the United Nations Convention Against Corruption?
   (a) 2008 (b) 2011
   (c) 2014 (d) 2013

9. Who was appointed as the first Chairperson of the Lokpal of India?
   (a) Justice A. M. Khanwilkar
   (b) Justice Ritu Raj Awasthi
   (c) Justice Sanjay Yadav
   (d) Justice Pinaki Chandra Ghose

10. Which of the following amendments allowed the leader of the single largest opposition party to be part of the Selection Committee?
    (a) Lokpal Amendment, 2014
    (b) Lokpal Amendment, 2016
    (c) Lokpal Amendment, 2019
    (d) Lokpal Amendment, 2021

11. Which of the following authority appoints the Chairperson and Members of the Lokpal?
    (a) President of India (b) Prime Minister of India
    (c) Chief Justice of India (d) Parliament of India

12. Which of the following categories of matters relating to the Prime Minister is excluded from Lokpal's jurisdiction?
    (a) Public finance and fiscal planning
    (b) Electoral reforms and voting systems
    (c) National security and foreign relations
    (d) Administrative delays in governance

13. What is the maximum number of Members (excluding the Chairperson) in the Lokpal?
    (a) Eight (b) Ten (c) Seven (d) Six

14. What is the maximum age limit for holding office as a Lokpal Member?
    (a) 65 years (b) 70 years (c) 72 years (d) 75 years

15. Which of the following bodies assists the Selection Committee by recommending suitable candidates for Lokpal appointments?
    (a) Vigilance Commission (b) Service Commission
    (c) Standing Committee (d) Search Committee

16. What is the prescribed time limit for completion of preliminary inquiry by the Lokpal?
    (a) 30 days (b) 60 days
    (c) 90 days (d) 40 days

17. Which of the following categories of personnel is completely excluded from Lokpal's jurisdiction?
    (a) Members of Parliament
    (b) Public sector employees
    (c) Personnel under military laws
    (d) Autonomous body officials

18. Who appoints the Lokayukta at the state level?
    (a) President of India
    (b) Governor of the State
    (c) Chief Minister
    (d) State Legislature

19. What is the limitation period for filing a complaint before the Lokpal?
    (a) Five years
    (b) Ten years
    (c) Seven years
    (d) No limitation

20. Which of the following year saw the formal constitution of the Lokpal's Inquiry Wing?
    (a) 2016
    (b) 2019
    (c) 2022
    (d) 2024

ANSWER KEY

1. (b)	2. (a)	3. (c)	4. (b)	5. (c)	6. (a)	7. (c)	8. (b)
9. (d)	10. (b)	11. (a)	12. (c)	13. (a)	14. (b)	15. (d)	16. (b)
17. (c)	18. (b)	19. (c)	20. (d)				

Current protests and 1979 Islamic Revolution of Iran

News Highlights:

- Nationwide protests erupted across **Iran** beginning on 28th December 2025, initially triggered by shopkeepers in **Tehran's Grand Bazaar** demonstrating against severe economic hardships, before spreading to at least 31 provinces across the country.
- The **Iranian rial** plummeted to a historic low of 1.5 million against the US dollar in early January 2026, while inflation surged beyond 48% in late 2025, with monthly food inflation touching approximately 7%.
- US President Donald Trump issued a warning on 3rd January 2026 that America was "locked and loaded" to intervene if Iranian security forces continued using lethal force against peaceful demonstrators, sharply escalating international tensions.



Economic Triggers

- The protests were primarily sparked by a severe economic crisis that had been developing over several years, characterized by chronic budget deficits, government monetary and fiscal policy failures, and the continuation of international sanctions.
- • Inflation had surged to 48.6% in October 2025 and 42.2% in December 2025, severely straining household budgets and eroding purchasing power of ordinary Iranians.
- The Iranian rial reached its lowest value of 1.45 million to the US dollar on 29th December 2025, and by 6th January 2026, it broke this record again, reaching 1.5 million to the dollar, causing sharp increases in prices of essential goods including food.
- The average price of cooking oil doubled within days of the protests beginning, according to state-run media reports, exemplifying the rapid deterioration in living standards.
- Recurring electricity and gas disruptions throughout 2024-2025, combined with energy deficits, had already fueled public frustration and anger against the government before the protests erupted.

Impact of the Twelve-Day War (June 2025)

- The **Twelve-Day War** between Iran and Israel (13-24 June 2025) significantly weakened Iran's regional standing and military capabilities, contributing to the economic freefall that followed.
- Israel launched Operation Rising Lion on 13th June 2025, deploying over 200 fighter jets to strike more than 100 nuclear and military facilities across Iran, killing senior military commanders and nuclear scientists.Iran retaliated with Operation True Promise III, firing nearly 900 ballistic missiles and over 1,000 armed drones at Israeli cities and military installations.

- The United States entered the conflict on 22nd June 2025 through Operation Midnight Hammer, using B-2 bombers and submarine-launched missiles to strike Iran's Natanz, Fordow, and Isfahan nuclear facilities.
- The conflict resulted in at least 5,665 casualties in Iran (1,190 killed and 4,475 injured), significant infrastructure damage, and the rial losing more than 40% of its value in the war's aftermath.

Historical Context: Protests in the Islamic Republic

1979-1990s

Early Post-Revolution Period

Women's protests began less than two weeks after the 1979 Islamic Revolution, with thousands marching in Tehran to oppose Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's decree mandating the hijab (Islamic headscarf). The **Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)** was formed and deployed to crack down on protests and political dissent, particularly targeting the Mojahedin-e-Khalq (MEK) and their supporters. Sporadic unrest was recorded in several cities during the 1990s, including in Mashhad (1992), Qazvin (1994), and the Tehran suburb of Eslamshahr (1995), mostly tied to economic grievances and sudden price increases.

1999-2003

Student and Reformist Protests

In July 1999, Tehran witnessed massive student-led protests triggered by the closure of a reformist newspaper by hardliners, during the presidency of Mohammad Khatami. Police and paramilitary **Basij** forces raided student dormitories at night, attacking students in their sleep, beating them, and reportedly setting rooms on fire. The protests spread to university campuses in Tabriz, Mashhad, Isfahan and other cities, resulting in multiple student deaths, dozens injured, and hundreds jailed before being quelled by security forces.

2009-2010

Green Movement

Following the disputed June 2009 presidential election, when Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was re-elected in a claimed landslide, Iran witnessed its largest protests since the revolution. Millions of Iranians took to the streets in Tehran and major cities, with protesters donning green attire (the campaign colour of reformist candidate **Mir Hossein Mousavi**) and asking "Where is my vote?" The death of 26-year-old philosophy student Neda Agha-Soltan, filmed bleeding on a Tehran pavement after being shot, turned her into an international symbol of the movement. The movement's figureheads were later put under house arrest, with Mousavi remaining confined to this day, while authorities labelled the Green Movement as "sedition" rather than legitimate dissent.

2017-2019

Economic Protests

In late December 2017, demonstrations began in the northeastern ultraconservative city of Mashhad over economic hardship, spreading within days to more than 100 cities across the country. These protests occurred against the backdrop of currency depreciation following US President Donald Trump's threats to withdraw from the 2015 nuclear deal and impose sanctions.

2017-2019

Economic Protests

In November 2019, nationwide protests erupted after the government increased petroleum prices by up to 200% overnight, triggering widespread unrest among working class and youth. The government imposed a near-total internet blackout for almost a week during the 2019 protests, with Amnesty International reporting at least 304 protesters killed, while Reuters cited an Interior Ministry official estimating approximately 1,500 deaths.

2022-2023

Mahsa Amini Uprising

Millions across Iran expressed their anger after 22-year-old **Mahsa Amini** (also known as Jina Amini) died in police custody on 16th September 2022 after being arrested for alleged non-compliance with mandatory hijab rules. "Woman, Life, Freedom" became the main slogan of the protests, which addressed women's rights, limited personal and social freedoms, internet censorship, and deteriorating economic conditions. Hundreds of protesters were killed, more than 20,000 people arrested, and multiple individuals executed in connection with the unrest, with at least one publicly hanged from a crane in Mashhad. Many women began openly defying the "morality police" and draconian hijab laws in the aftermath, taking off their headscarves and wearing attire of their choice.

United States-Iran Relations and Tensions

The JCPOA Nuclear Deal (2015)

- The **Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)** was concluded in July 2015 between Iran and the P5+1 (China, France, Russia, the UK, the US, and Germany) to place significant restrictions on Iran's nuclear programme in exchange for sanctions relief.
- The agreement was endorsed by the UN Security Council through Resolution 2231 on 20th July 2015, incorporating the "snapback" mechanism that allowed reimposition of UN sanctions in the event of "significant non-performance" by Iran.
- Under the JCPOA, Iran agreed to limit uranium enrichment to 3.67% purity, reduce its stockpile of enriched uranium, and allow International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) monitoring of its compliance.
- The JCPOA's restrictions were scheduled to progressively expire over time, culminating in the "Termination Day" of 18th October 2025, when the Security Council would end its consideration of the Iranian nuclear file.

US Withdrawal and Maximum Pressure Campaign

- On 8th May 2018, during his first term, President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew the United States from the JCPOA, citing its "sunset provisions" as "totally unacceptable" and reimposed comprehensive national sanctions against Iran.
- In response, Iran began incrementally reducing its compliance with the JCPOA, including enriching uranium to 60% purity, approaching the approximately 90% level considered weapons-grade and well above the 3.67% limit imposed by the agreement.
- On 3rd January 2020, the US assassinated Iranian Major General **Qasem Soleimani**, commander of the IRGC's Quds Force, in a drone strike at Baghdad International Airport, sharply escalating bilateral hostility.
- Indirect talks between the US and Iran to restore the deal under President Joe Biden collapsed in 2022 without agreement, with Iran's nuclear advances continuing throughout subsequent years.

Snapback Sanctions (2025)

- On 28th August 2025, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom (E3) formally triggered the **snapback mechanism**, citing Iran's "significant non-performance" of its JCPOA commitments, including the accumulation of a highly

- enriched uranium stockpile lacking any credible civilian justification.
- When the UN Security Council did not adopt a resolution to continue terminating measures within 30 days of the E3 letter, previously lifted UN sanctions were reimposed on 27th September 2025.
- The reimposed sanctions encompassed prohibitions against Iranian uranium enrichment, restrictions on arms transfers, finance, and shipping, as well as asset freezes and travel bans on designated individuals and entities.
- By early 2025, the IAEA reported that Iran had acquired enough enriched uranium that, if enriched further to 90% (weapons grade), would theoretically be sufficient for multiple nuclear explosive devices.

Geographical Profile of the Islamic Republic of Iran

Iran is a large country located in West Asia (Middle East), centred on the Iranian Plateau, with a total area of approximately 1,648,195 square kilometres, making it the 17th largest country in the world.

The country shares land borders with Turkey and Iraq to the west; Armenia, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, and the Caspian Sea to the north; and Afghanistan and Pakistan to the east.

Iran has maritime borders with the Persian Gulf and Gulf of Oman to the south, providing strategic access to international shipping lanes including the **Strait of Hormuz**.



Topography and Climate

- The country is dominated by the Zagros Mountains in the west and the Alborz Mountains in the north, including Mount Damavand (5,610 metres), Iran's highest peak and the highest volcano in Asia.
- The Dasht-e Kavir (Great Salt Desert) and Dasht-e Lut (Emptiness Desert) occupy central and eastern regions, with Dasht-e Lut recording some of the highest surface temperatures on Earth.
- Climate ranges from subtropical along the Caspian coast to arid and semi-arid conditions inland, with significant seasonal temperature variations across different regions.

Key Statistical and Factual Insights

- The Human Rights Activists News Agency (HRANA) confirmed at least **6,126 deaths** including 5,777 protesters, 214 government-affiliated forces, 86 children, and 49 non-demonstrating civilians, with over 41,800 arrests during the crackdown.
- Protests spread to at least **280 locations** across **27 of Iran's 31 provinces**, making it one of the most geographically widespread uprisings in the Islamic Republic's history.
- The Iranian rial depreciated by more than 50% over the course of 2025, from approximately 600,000 rials per dollar in early 2025 to 1.5 million rials per dollar by January 2026.
- Iran is one of the most sanctioned countries in the world, with the economic blockade significantly constraining government revenue, foreign trade, and access to international financial systems.
- Supreme Leader **Ali Khamenei**, aged 85, has led Iran for 36 years since 1989, with questions of succession creating additional uncertainty during the current crisis.
- Iran's proposed 2026 budget reflected the government's priorities, with security spending increased by nearly 150% while offering wage increases amounting to only about two-fifths of the inflation rate.



MIND MAP

News Trigger

- Nationwide protests began on **28 December 2025**, starting from **Tehran's Grand Bazaar**.
- Demonstrations spread to **31 provinces** across Iran.
- **Iranian rial** collapsed to **1.5 million/USD**; inflation crossed **48%**.
- **US President Donald Trump** warned of possible intervention on **3 January 2026**.
- Security crackdown from **8 January 2026** involved mass arrests and internet blackout.

Government Response

- President **Masoud Pezeshkian** acknowledged economic grievances.
- Announced **subsidy removal** on essential imports.
- Introduced **direct cash transfers** of ~$7 per month.
- Security forces launched **nationwide crackdown**.

Immediate Causes of the Protests

Economic Collapse

- Chronic **budget deficits** and policy mismanagement.
- Long-standing **international sanctions** intensified pressure.
- Inflation reached **48.6% (Oct 2025)** and **42.2% (Dec 2025)**.

Currency Freefall

- Rial hit **1.45 million/USD** on **29 Dec 2025**.
- Further fell to **1.5 million/USD** by **6 Jan 2026**.
- Prices of essentials, including food, surged sharply.

Role of the Twelve-Day War (June 2025)

Israel–Iran Conflict

- Conflict ran from **13–24 June 2025**.
- Israel launched **Operation Rising Lion** targeting nuclear and military sites.
- Over **200 fighter jets** struck **100+ facilities**.

Iranian Retaliation

- **Operation True Promise III** involved ~900 missiles and 1,000 drones.

US Intervention

- US launched **Operation Midnight Hammer** on **22 June 2025**.
- Struck **Natanz, Fordow, and Isfahan** nuclear facilities.

1979 Islamic Revolution: Background

- Overthrew **Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi**.
- Established **Islamic Republic** under **Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini**.
- Created a **theocratic system** combining clerical authority and republican institutions.
- Introduced strict religious and social controls.

Early Post-Revolution Protests (1979–1990s)

- Women protested **mandatory hijab** within weeks of revolution.
- **IRGC** formed to suppress dissent.
- Crackdown on **MEK** and opposition groups.
- Economic riots in **Mashhad (1992)**, **Qazvin (1994)**, **Eslamshahr (1995)**.

US–Iran Relations: JCPOA Phase

JCPOA (2015)

- Agreement between Iran and **P5+1**.
- Endorsed by **UNSC Resolution 2231**.
- Uranium enrichment capped at **3.67%**.
- Monitoring by **IAEA**.

US Withdrawal

- US exited deal on **8 May 2018**.
- Sanctions reimposed under **maximum pressure**.
- Iran raised enrichment to **60%**.

Connected Topics

Role and Structure of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)

- The IRGC is constitutionally recognised in Iran: Article 150 states it "shall remain in existence" to continue its role of guarding the Revolution and its achievements, with its scope/relations with other forces to be determined by law.
- The IRGC is separate from and parallel to Iran's regular armed forces (the Artesh), and has its own command structure while operating within the broader security apparatus.
- Key military "services" broadly parallel a conventional force structure: Ground Forces, Navy, and Aerospace Force, alongside additional organisations such as the Basij and an Intelligence apparatus (commonly described in analytic profiles of the armed forces).
- The IRGC is widely described as the primary body controlling Iran's missile (and drone) arsenals, with the Aerospace Force central in that role.
- The Quds Force is described as an expeditionary/unconventional arm that supports and manages partnerships with regional aligned groups ("Axis of Resistance" framing in security analysis).
- The Basij is a large volunteer paramilitary organisation under the IRGC umbrella, frequently cited in open sources as a domestic mobilisation/enforcement arm used in internal security contexts.
- The IRGC has a prominent internal security role, and has been repeatedly linked in reporting to crackdowns on protests, including the 2025–26 unrest.
- Multiple governments have designated the IRGC (or parts of it) under terrorism/sanctions frameworks; notably, the EU designation (reported January 2026) is described as carrying legal consequences such as asset freezes and criminalisation of material support under EU law.

Iranian Currency Crisis and Hyperinflation Trends (2018–2026)

- The rial's collapse was driven largely by U.S. sanctions reimposed in 2018 that constrained Iran's oil-export earnings and access to foreign currency.
- The open-market exchange rate shifted from about 55,000 rials per US$ (2018) to around 1,250,000 rials per US$ (8 Dec 2025).
- By 27 Jan 2026, the rial fell to around 1,500,000 rials per US$ on widely tracked market rates.
- By 28 Jan 2026, the exchange rate touched around 1.6 million rials per US$ in the context of nationwide unrest.
- Legislative steps toward redenomination advanced in 2025: Parliament approved removing four zeros from the rial, with a multi-year preparation and transition period.
- Official inflation pressures remained extremely high: Iran's Statistical Centre recorded 48.6% inflation (October 2025, year-on-year).
- The International Monetary Fund projects Iran's average consumer-price inflation at ~41.6% in 2026 (WEO update).
- A standard economics definition (Cagan) treats "hyperinflation" as beginning when monthly inflation exceeds 50% (and ending after it stays below that threshold for a sustained period).
- Iran's published inflation figures in this period are typically reported as very high annual inflation, which is severe and destabilizing but is not, by itself, evidence that the strict 50% per month hyperinflation threshold is being met.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Which of the following events triggered the initial protests in Iran on 28 December 2025?
   (a) Student demonstrations in universities
   (b) Shopkeepers protesting in Tehran's Grand Bazaar
   (c) Women protesting mandatory hijab rules
   (d) Farmers protesting water shortages

2. Which of the following best describes the scale of the 2025–2026 protests in Iran?
   (a) Limited to Tehran city only
   (b) Spread to at least 31 provinces
   (c) Confined to border regions
   (d) Restricted to rural districts

3. Who issued the "locked and loaded" warning regarding possible US intervention in January 2026?
   (a) Joe Biden (b) Antony Blinken
   (c) Lloyd Austin (d) Donald Trump

4. Which of the following operations involved US B-2 bombers striking Iranian nuclear facilities in June 2025?
   (a) Operation Rising Lion
   (b) Operation True Promise III
   (c) Operation Desert Shield
   (d) Operation Midnight Hammer

5. Which of the following military operations was launched by Israel against Iran in June 2025?
   (a) Operation Iron Dome
   (b) Operation Rising Lion
   (c) Operation True Promise II
   (d) Operation Guardian Shield

6. What was the approximate value of the Iranian rial against the US dollar in early January 2026?
   (a) 1.5 million rials per dollar
   (b) 2.4 million rials per dollar
   (c) 1.6 million rials per dollar
   (d) 2.5 million rials per dollar

7. Which of the following slogans became central during the Mahsa Amini protests of 2022–2023?
   (a) Justice for Iran (b) Bread, Work, Freedom
   (c) Woman, Life, Freedom (d) Reform and Stability

8. Which of the following facilities was targeted by US strikes during Operation Midnight Hammer?
   (a) Bushehr Nuclear Plant
   (b) Arak Heavy Water Reactor
   (c) Tehran Research Reactor
   (d) Natanz nuclear facility

9. Which of the following agreements limited Iran's uranium enrichment to 3.67% purity?
   (a) Treaty of Non-Proliferation
   (b) Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action
   (c) Nuclear Suppliers Group Accord
   (d) Tehran Declaration

10. What happened on the JCPOA "Termination Day" of 18 October 2025?
    (a) Iran formally withdrew from the long-standing international nuclear agreement
    (b) United States expanded its unilateral economic sanctions regime on Iran
    (c) UN Security Council ended consideration of Iran's nuclear file
    (d) IAEA inspections of Iranian nuclear facilities were completely suspended

11. Which of the following countries withdrew unilaterally from the JCPOA in May 2018?
    (a) United States (b) United Kingdom
    (c) France (d) Germany

12. Which of the following European countries triggered the snapback mechanism in August 2025?
    (a) Italy, Spain, Portugal and Poland,
    (b) France, Germany, United Kingdom
    (c) Sweden, Norway, United Kingdom
    (d) Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic

13. Which of the following deserts in Iran is known for recording some of the highest surface temperatures on Earth?
    (a) Dasht-e Kavir (b) Alborz Plateau
    (c) Dasht-e Lut (d) Zagros Basin

14. Which of the following mountains is the highest peak in Iran?
    (a) Mount Damavand (b) Mount Sabalan

(c) Mount Elbrus (d) Mount Ararat

15. Which of the following forces was created after the 1979 revolution to suppress dissent?
(a) Basij Revolutionary Student Corps
(b) Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps
(c) National Special Police Force Corps
(d) Supreme Special Security Council

16. Which of the following cities saw the beginning of the December 2017 economic protests?
(a) Tehran (b) Mashhad
(c) Isfahan (d) Shiraz

17. Which of the following individuals became an international symbol after being killed during the 2009 Green Movement?
(a) Leila Amini
(b) Zahra Kazemi
(c) Neda Agha-Soltan
(d) Jina Mahsa Amini

18. Which of the following slogans questioned the legitimacy of the 2009 Iranian presidential election?
(a) Where is my vote?
(b) Who counted our votes?
(c) Why ignore our voices?
(d) Where is our justice?

19. Which of the following water bodies lies to the north of Iran?
(a) Persian Gulf
(b) Gulf of Oman
(c) Caspian Sea
(d) Red Sea

20. Which of the following sectors saw nearly a 150% increase in Iran's proposed 2026 budget?
(a) Education
(b) Security
(c) Healthcare
(d) Infrastructure

ANSWER KEY

1. (b)	2. (b)	3. (d)	4. (d)	5. (b)	6. (a)	7. (c)	8. (d)
9. (b)	10. (c)	11. (a)	12. (b)	13. (c)	14. (a)	15. (b)	16. (b)
17. (c)	18. (a)	19. (c)	20. (b)				

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JAIPUR CENTER

JLN Nagar Centre



Vaishali Nagar Centre





NATIONAL

Santhali Incorporated in New Edition of the Constitution of India

- President Droupadi Murmu launched a new edition of the Constitution of India incorporating the Santhali language. Santhali was included in the Eighth Schedule through the 92nd Constitutional Amendment Act, 2003, along with Bodo, Dogri, and Maithili.
- Santhali belongs to the Austroasiatic language family and is spoken primarily by the Santhal tribal community.
- According to the 2011 Census, Santhali has approximately 7.6 million speakers across eastern and central India.
- The Ol Chiki script, created by Raghunath Murmu in 1925, is the official script for Santhali in several States, particularly Jharkhand.

India's First Indian Standard for Agarbattis Unveiled by BIS

- Union Minister Pralhad Joshi released India's first dedicated Indian Standard for agarbattis titled IS 19412:2025 – Incense Sticks (Agarbatti) Specification.
- The standard was developed by the Bureau of Indian Standards and was launched on National Consumer Day 2025 at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi.
- The standard prohibits the use of specified harmful insecticidal chemicals and synthetic fragrance substances to improve consumer safety and indoor air quality.
- IS 19412:2025 classifies agarbattis into machine-made, hand-made, and traditional masala categories based on manufacturing methods.
- The notification marks the first formal standardisation of agarbattis, a culturally significant and widely used consumer product.

India Launches First-Ever Weapon Database to Curb Terrorism

- Union Home Minister Amit Shah launched India's first weapon database titled the "Lost, Looted and Recovered Firearm" database.
- The database was launched during the Anti-Terror Conference–2025 organised by the National Investigation Agency.
- The database creates a centralised digital repository of government-owned weapons that have been lost, looted, stolen, or recovered from police and Central Armed Police Forces.
- It integrates data from all States, Union Territories, border regions, and Naxal-affected areas to aid real-time investigation and coordination. The initiative is aimed at strengthening India's response to organised crime, terrorism, and extremism.

India Clears New Airlines to Boost Aviation Competition

- The Ministry of Civil Aviation granted No Objection Certificates to Al Hind Air and FlyExpress to promote competition in India's aviation sector.
- Civil Aviation Minister Ram Mohan Naidu stated that encouraging new carriers remains a key policy priority.
- Shankh Air had already received its NOC earlier, bringing the total number of newly cleared airlines to three.
- Al Hind Air plans to operate regional services in southern India using ATR turboprop aircraft, while FlyExpress is a Hyderabad-based startup with logistics and cargo experience.
- The approvals followed widespread flight disruptions in December 2025 due to cancellations by IndiGo, highlighting concerns over market concentration.

Rashtra Prerna Sthal Inaugurated in Lucknow

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the Rashtra Prerna Sthal memorial complex in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh.
- The memorial features 65-feet-high bronze statues of Syama Prasad Mookerjee, Deendayal Upadhyaya, and Atal Bihari Vajpayee.
- The complex was developed by the Lucknow Development Authority at a cost of ₹230 crore across 65 acres.
- The inauguration coincided with Good Governance Day marking Vajpayee's 101st birth anniversary.
- The three leaders symbolise the founding, ideological evolution, and governance legacy of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh and the BJP.

POCSO Case Cannot Be Quashed Merely Because Child Victim Turns Hostile

- The Delhi High Court upheld the conviction and 20-year sentence of a stepfather under Section 6 of the POCSO Act despite the child victim turning hostile during trial.
- The Court held that offences under the POCSO Act cannot be dismissed solely on hostile testimony when scientific and corroborative evidence is available.
- The Court recognised that child victims in incest or intra-family abuse cases often retract statements due to fear, dependence on the accused for shelter and finances, and pressure to preserve the family unit.
- The judgment relied on statutory presumptions under Sections 29 and 30 of the POCSO Act, which shift the burden of proof to the accused in cases involving child sexual offences.
- The Court emphasised legislative safeguards such as Section 19(5) of the POCSO Act, which mandates protective care and shelter for child victims to prevent coercion and intimidation.

Bombay High Court Bars Use of Civilian Awards as Name Prefixes

- The Bombay High Court ruled that civilian awards such as Bharat Ratna and Padma Awards are not titles and cannot be used as prefixes or suffixes to names.
- The ruling was delivered by Justice Somasekhar Sundaresan while directing removal of the "Padma Shri" prefix from a party's name in court records.
- The Court relied on the Constitution Bench judgment in Balaji Raghavan v. Union of India, which held that national awards do not violate Article 18 of the Constitution.
- The judgment reiterated that under Article 141 of the Constitution, Supreme Court rulings are binding on all courts.
- The Court clarified that award statutes themselves prohibit the use of civilian honours as titles.

Jayshree Ullal Tops Hurun India Rich List 2025

- Jayshree Ullal, President and CEO of Arista Networks, topped the Hurun India Rich List 2025 among Indian-origin professional managers.
- Her estimated net worth of ₹50,170 crore surpassed several prominent Indian-origin technology executives.
- Arista Networks has seen strong growth due to rising demand for AI-driven data centres and cloud infrastructure.
- Under her leadership, the company recorded revenues of $7 billion in 2024 and exceptional stock performance.
- Ullal's ranking reflects a broader shift in wealth creation toward AI and digital infrastructure sectors.

Indian National Congress Marks 140th Foundation Day

- The Indian National Congress celebrated its 140th Foundation Day on 28 December 2025.
- The party was founded in 1885 by Allan Octavian Hume as India's first modern nationalist political organisation.
- Mahatma Gandhi transformed the Congress into a mass movement after returning to India in 1915.
- The Karachi Resolution of 1931 laid the foundation for fundamental rights and economic principles later incorporated into the Constitution. The Congress played a central role in India's freedom struggle and early nation-building.

Australia Flags Fake Rabies Vaccine; Indian Manufacturer Refutes Claim

- Australia's Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation warned that counterfeit batches of the rabies vaccine Abhayrab® may have circulated in India since 2023.
- Australian authorities advised travellers vaccinated in India with Abhayrab® to seek replacement doses.
- Indian Immunologicals Limited rejected the claim, stating the issue involved only one isolated batch identified in January 2025.
- The company clarified that the affected batch is no longer in circulation and requested revision of the advisory.
- Abhayrab® remains one of India's most widely used anti-rabies vaccines with a large export footprint.

Govt's Green Panel Clears Dulhasti Stage-II Hydel Power Project

- The Expert Appraisal Committee on hydel projects granted environmental clearance to the 260 MW Dulhasti Stage-II hydropower project during its 45th meeting held in December 2025.

- The project will be developed as a run-of-the-river hydropower scheme on the Chenab River in Kishtwar district of Jammu and Kashmir, with an estimated cost of more than ₹3,200 crore.
- Dulhasti Stage-II is planned as an extension of the existing 390 MW Dulhasti Stage-I Hydroelectric Project, which has been operational since 2007 under NHPC.
- The clearance was granted in the context of India's suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty with Pakistan in April 2025 following the Pahalgam terror attack.
- With the treaty now in abeyance, the Union Government is accelerating hydropower development in the Indus basin through projects such as Ratle, Bursar, Pakal Dul, Sawalkote, Kwar, and Kiru.

Supreme Court Stays Delhi HC Bail Order for Unnao Rape Convict

- The Supreme Court of India stayed the Delhi High Court's order that had suspended the life sentence and granted bail to former MLA Kuldeep Singh Sengar in the Unnao rape case.
- The stay was granted after the Central Bureau of Investigation challenged the High Court order, raising serious legal and interpretational issues.
- A key issue before the Supreme Court is whether an elected legislator qualifies as a "public servant" for the purpose of attracting aggravated punishment provisions under the POCSO Act.
- The apex court observed that the High Court's reasoning could create legal inconsistencies by treating elected representatives more leniently than other categories of public servants.
- The Supreme Court also noted that Sengar will continue to remain in custody as he is already serving a sentence in a separate case relating to the custodial death of the survivor's father.

8th Pay Commission Effective from January 1, 2026:

- The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved the Terms of Reference for the 8th Central Pay Commission in January 2025 to review and revise the pay, pension, and service conditions of central government employees.
- The commission is expected to formally take effect from January 1, 2026, as the 7th Pay Commission completes its 10-year cycle on December 31, 2025, but this effective date does not imply immediate salary revision.
- The 8th Pay Commission has a mandated timeline of around 18 months from formal constitution to submit its recommendations, after which the government must examine, approve, and notify the revised pay structure.
- Approximately 48–50 lakh serving central government employees and 65–68 lakh pensioners, including defence personnel, are expected to benefit, impacting the financial lives of over one crore individuals.
- The commission will revise the existing 18-level pay matrix ranging from Level-1 (entry-level staff) to Level-18 (Cabinet Secretary), with historical trends suggesting relatively higher percentage increases at lower levels and larger absolute increases at higher levels.
- Drawing from previous commissions, particularly the 7th Pay Commission with a fitment factor of 2.57, the 8th Pay Commission is expected to balance inflation compensation with fiscal prudence, potentially moderating increases due to current economic constraints.

Assam Constitutes India's First State-Level 8th Pay Commission

- Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma announced on January 2, 2026 that Assam will become the first state in India to constitute an 8th State Pay Commission following the Centre's decision to form the 8th Central Pay Commission.
- The Assam 8th Pay Commission will be chaired by former Additional Chief Secretary Subhas Chandra Das, bringing extensive administrative and financial experience to the pay revision exercise.
- The commission will undertake a comprehensive review of salaries, allowances, and service conditions of Assam government employees, with the last state pay commission having been constituted in 2015.
- The timing of the announcement closely aligns with the Centre's 8th Pay Commission, whose recommendations are scheduled to take effect from January 1, 2026, allowing the state to synchronise its pay structure with central revisions.

Goa Creates Third District 'Kushavati'

- The Government of Goa officially notified the creation of its third district, named Kushavati, on December 31, 2025, marking a major administrative reorganisation.

- The new district has been named after the Kushavati River, reflecting the region's geographical heritage and historical significance.
- Kushavati district will comprise four talukas—Dharbandora, Quepem, Sanguem, and Canacona—carved out of South Goa district, restructuring Goa into three districts.
- Quepem town has been designated as the district headquarters, with the state government announcing special transport and road connectivity measures to improve access from distant talukas.
- The district will be designated as an Aspirational District, making it eligible for enhanced central funding and focused development initiatives, particularly significant given its 27% tribal population.

MoSPI Unveils New Logo and Mascot to Promote Data-Driven Governance

- The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation unveiled a new institutional logo and mascot named "सांख्यिकी (Sankhyiki)" to modernise its public identity and strengthen awareness of the role of official statistics in governance.
- The redesigned logo is built around the theme "Data for Development," underscoring the importance of reliable and timely statistical data in evidence-based policymaking and national development.
- Symbolically, the logo integrates the Ashoka Chakra representing transparency and good governance, the rupee symbol reflecting economic planning, and numerical and upward-moving graphic elements signifying growth and modern data systems.
- The colour palette of saffron, white, green, and deep blue draws from national values such as progress, sustainability, stability, and knowledge, reinforcing public trust in official statistics.
- The mascot "सांख्यिकी" has been conceptualised as a citizen-friendly figure to simplify complex statistical concepts and will be used in surveys, awareness campaigns, educational initiatives, and digital outreach platforms.

Surat Emerges as India's First Large Slum-Free City

- The **Gujarat** government announced that Surat is set to become India's first major city with a population exceeding 7 million to be virtually slum-free, with slum population reduced from 38% in 2006 to about 5% at present.
- While Chandigarh was India's first slum-free city, Surat's achievement is far more significant due to its massive population size and complex urban challenges as a major textile and diamond manufacturing hub.
- The transformation has been driven largely by effective implementation of the **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana** (Urban), particularly its In-Situ Slum Redevelopment component, which provides central assistance for rehabilitating slum dwellers.
- The Surat Municipal Corporation also leveraged multiple housing schemes such as VAMBAY, JnNURM, Mukhya Mantri GRUH Yojana, and PMAY-Urban to construct tens of thousands of EWS and LIG housing units.
- A three-pronged strategy of slum upgradation, slum redevelopment, and slum rehabilitation, backed by provisions of the Gujarat Town Planning and Urban Development Act, 1976, has helped prevent the re-emergence of slums while ensuring affordable housing.

NATGRID–NPR Integration

- The Ministry of Home Affairs informed Parliament in December 2025 that the National Intelligence Grid (NATGRID) has been integrated with the National Population Register (NPR), enabling authorised law-enforcement and intelligence agencies to access family-level demographic data of nearly 119 crore residents in real time.
- NATGRID was conceptualised in 2009 in the aftermath of the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks to dismantle information silos among security agencies and provide a secure platform for intelligence-led counter-terrorism and criminal investigations.
- The platform became fully operational in 2024 after receiving Cabinet Committee on Security approval with a total sanctioned outlay of about ₹3,400 crore, with its initial phases connecting multiple user agencies and service providers.

- The NPR, prepared under the Citizenship Act, 1955 and the Citizenship Rules, 2003, contains detailed family-wise demographic data first collected during the 2011 Census and later updated through door-to-door enumeration in 2015.
- NATGRID's analytical backbone includes the advanced "Gandiva" tool, which supports facial recognition, entity resolution across datasets, and multi-source intelligence analysis, significantly enhancing investigative capability.
- An Organised Crime Network Database is also being developed on the NATGRID platform to facilitate secure intelligence sharing between the National Investigation Agency and State Anti-Terror Squads.

Telangana Ends Two-Child Ceiling for Local Body Elections

- The Telangana Legislative Assembly passed the Telangana Panchayat Raj (Amendment) Bill, 2026 on January 4, 2026, formally abolishing the long-standing two-child norm that disqualified individuals with more than two children from contesting local body elections.
- The Bill was introduced by Panchayat Raj Minister **Danasari Anasuya Seethakka**, implementing a Cabinet decision taken earlier in October 2024 and completing the legal process to remove a restriction that had been in force for over three decades.
- The two-child norm was originally introduced in 1994 as a population-control policy during a period of high fertility, rapid population growth, and concerns related to food security, unemployment, and poverty, with elected representatives expected to act as demographic role models.
- Under the earlier rule, individuals with more than two children were barred from contesting elections for posts such as sarpanch, ward member, Mandal Parishad Territorial Constituency member, and Zilla Parishad Territorial Constituency member, which significantly constrained democratic participation at the grassroots level.
- The decision reflects a major demographic shift, as Telangana's Total Fertility Rate has already declined to around 1.7, well below the replacement level of 2.1, raising concerns about long-term population sustainability.

Indian Army Declares 2026 as 'Year of Networking & Data Centricity'

- The Indian Army declared 2026 as the "Year of Networking & Data Centricity" as part of its continuing digital transformation and modernisation roadmap.
- The announcement was made by Upendra Dwivedi in his New Year message, underscoring the Army's focus on enhanced connectivity and data-driven decision-making.
- The initiative builds upon the Army's earlier designation of 2024–25 as the "Year of Technology Absorption," which focused on inducting new technologies into operational units.
- Data-centric warfare emphasizes integrated information sharing across all arms and services rather than isolated platform-centric operations.
- The approach aims to enable real-time data flow from drones, satellites, sensors, and surveillance systems to commanders at all levels, improving coordination, targeting accuracy, and operational tempo.
- By eliminating traditional information silos, the Army seeks to improve artillery effectiveness, reduce fratricide risks, and enhance jointness across combat and support arms.

Integrated Security Hub Launched in Andaman and Nicobar Islands

- Union Home Minister Amit Shah inaugurated an Integrated Command and Control Centre worth ₹229 crore in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands during his visit to Sri Vijaya Puram on January 3, 2026.
- The high-tech centre integrates surveillance systems, communication networks, and coordination platforms of multiple security agencies to enable real-time monitoring and rapid response across the island territory.
- The facility significantly enhances maritime surveillance, emergency response coordination, disaster management operations, and overall internal security in the strategically critical island chain.
- During the visit, the Home Minister also inaugurated nine development projects and laid foundation stones for two additional projects with a combined outlay of ₹373 crore.
- Infrastructure development under schemes such as the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana aims to improve road connectivity, boost economic activity, and enhance accessibility in remote island regions.

- The Minister highlighted the ₹72,000 crore Great Nicobar Project, which includes an international container trans-shipment terminal and a greenfield international airport, as a transformative initiative to position the islands as a global trade, security, and tourism hub.

Supreme Court Expands Definition of 'Terrorist Act' under UAPA

- The Supreme Court of India denied bail to Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam in the 2020 Delhi riots conspiracy case while granting bail to five other co-accused.
- The judgment was delivered on January 5, 2026, by a bench comprising Justice Aravind Kumar and Justice N.V. Anjaria, following reservation of the verdict in December 2025.
- The Court significantly expanded the interpretation of "terrorist act" under Section 15 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act by holding that terrorism is not limited to physical violence alone.
- The Court emphasized Parliament's use of the phrase "by any other means of whatever nature," indicating that acts causing economic disruption, essential service breakdowns, or systemic instability may also qualify as terrorist acts.
- It held that the stringent bail bar under Section 43D(5) of UAPA applied in the case, as there were reasonable grounds to believe that the accusations were prima facie true.
- While acknowledging the precedent in Union of India v. K.A. Najeeb, the Court clarified that bail due to trial delays is not automatic and must be assessed on a case-by-case constitutional balance.
- The judgment underscored that Article 21 requires continuous justification of prolonged pre-trial detention, while also recognizing Parliament's intent to impose strict safeguards against terrorism-related offences.

Somnath Swabhiman Parv

- India is observing the Somnath Swabhiman Parv in 2026 to commemorate 1,000 years since the first attack on the Somnath Temple by Mahmud of Ghazni in January 1026.
- The year-long observance reflects India's civilizational resilience, with the central theme of the celebrations being "Unbroken Faith," symbolising cultural continuity despite repeated historical assaults.
- The main four-day commemorative events will be held from January 8 to January 11, 2026, during which cultural, spiritual, and historical programmes will highlight India's enduring spiritual heritage.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will participate in special programmes at Somnath Temple on January 11, 2026, marking the formal beginning of the nationwide observance.
- Somnath Temple, located at Prabhas Patan on Gujarat's western coast, is revered as the first of the twelve Jyotirlingas of Lord Shiva, with references in ancient texts such as the Shiva Purana, Skanda Purana, Shreemad Bhagavat, and the Rig Veda.
- Following Independence, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel played a decisive role in rebuilding the temple in 1947, with the restored shrine inaugurated on May 11, 1951, by Rajendra Prasad, making 2026 also the 75th anniversary of its modern restoration.

Siddaramaiah Becomes Karnataka's Longest-Serving Chief Minister

- Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah created history by becoming the longest-serving Chief Minister of the state, surpassing the four-decade-old record held by former Chief Minister Devaraj Urs.
- Siddaramaiah equalled Devaraj Urs's record of 2,792 days in office on January 6, 2026, and officially surpassed it on January 7, 2026, taking his cumulative tenure across two non-consecutive terms beyond the historic mark.
- During his first term from May 13, 2013, to May 15, 2018, he served for 1,829 days, completing a full five-year term, while his second term beginning May 20, 2023, added another 963 days to his tenure.
- He remains only the second Chief Minister in Karnataka's history to complete a full five-year term, with his 2013–2018 tenure being the first uninterrupted term in the state after nearly four decades.
- Siddaramaiah's political strategy has been centred on the 'Ahinda' coalition—representing minorities, backward classes, and Dalits—through which he pursued social justice-oriented governance and welfare expansion.

Indian Army Creates Modern Warfare Force 'Bhairav' with Over One Lakh Drone Operatives

- The Indian Army has undertaken one of its most significant transformations by creating a force of over one lakh trained drone operatives across its formations.

- As part of this restructuring, the Army has raised new technology-driven 'Bhairav' Special Forces battalions, with every soldier trained to deploy and integrate drones in real combat environments.
- Around 15 Bhairav battalions have already been raised and deployed along both the northern border with China and the western border with Pakistan, with plans to expand the force to approximately 25 battalions.
- These battalions are designed to bridge the operational gap between elite Para Special Forces units and conventional infantry formations, offering commanders flexible, technology-enabled strike options.
- The Bhairav units enhance the Army's ability to conduct deep reconnaissance, precision strikes, and network-centric operations in modern, high-technology battlefields.

Uttarakhand Police Ranks First in ICJS 2.0 National Rankings

- Uttarakhand Police secured the first position in the India Criminal Justice System (ICJS) 2.0 National Rankings, emerging as the best-performing state police force in the country in terms of criminal justice delivery and institutional efficiency.
- The ranking recognises Uttarakhand's excellence in integrating policing, prosecution, courts, and prisons through technology-enabled coordination and data-driven governance.
- ICJS 2.0 is a nationwide digital platform aimed at seamless integration of police, prosecution, judiciary, and correctional institutions to improve transparency, efficiency, and case outcomes.
- Uttarakhand Police's performance was driven by effective use of online FIR registration, real-time crime tracking systems, digital evidence management, and structured data sharing with courts and prosecution agencies.
- The state demonstrated strong outcomes in timely investigation, charge-sheet filing, case monitoring, and inter-agency coordination, which collectively contributed to faster justice delivery and improved conviction rates.

DRDO Celebrates 68th Foundation Day 2026

- The Defence Research and Development Organisation marked its 68th Foundation Day on January 1, 2026, commemorating its establishment in 1958 and nearly seven decades of contributions to India's defence self-reliance.
- DRDO operates under the Ministry of Defence and leads research and development across aeronautics, armaments, electronics, missiles, combat vehicles, naval systems, and strategic technologies.
- The celebrations highlighted DRDO's growing focus on Aatmanirbhar Bharat through indigenous development of critical defence platforms and technologies.
- Significant emphasis was placed on advances in cybersecurity, including indigenous encryption systems, secure communication networks, and cyber threat detection platforms for protecting critical infrastructure.
- DRDO also showcased leadership in artificial intelligence through autonomous systems, AI-powered surveillance, predictive threat analytics, intelligent drones, and decision-support systems.

Oxford University Press Apologised Over a Book on Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj

- Oxford University Press issued a public apology and withdrew a book published over two decades ago following allegations of derogatory references to Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj.
- The controversy erupted after certain passages were widely perceived as disrespectful to the 17th-century Maratha ruler and founder of the Maratha Empire.
- Strong public backlash emerged from historians, political leaders, activists, and citizens, particularly in Maharashtra, demanding accountability from the publisher.
- OUP India acknowledged that some content was inappropriate and hurt public sentiments, and announced the immediate withdrawal of the book from print and digital circulation.
- Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj (1630–1680) is revered as a symbol of valor, administrative innovation, and resistance against Mughal and Adilshahi rule.
- The episode highlights ongoing debates over historical representation, academic responsibility, and public memory in India.

PIB Approves Kamala Hydroelectric Project in Arunachal Pradesh

- The Public Investment Board approved an expenditure of ₹26,069.50 crore for the proposed 1,720 MW Kamala Hydroelectric Project in Arunachal Pradesh, marking a major boost to India's clean energy and hydropower capacity.

- The approved project cost includes Interest During Construction and financing charges amounting to ₹4,815.64 crore, and the project is scheduled for completion within eight years from the commencement date.
- The Kamala Hydroelectric Project will generate approximately 6,869.92 million units of green energy annually, significantly contributing to India's renewable energy targets and its Net Zero commitment by 2070.
- The project is a storage-based hydropower scheme with a flood moderation component and is proposed on the Kamala River, a major tributary of the Subansiri River. It will be located across Kamle, Kra Daadi, and Kurung Kumey districts of Arunachal Pradesh in the Lower Subansiri region, an area with high hydropower potential.
- The project will be implemented under the Build-Own-Operate-Transfer (BOOT) model through a joint venture, with NHPC holding 74 percent equity and the Government of Arunachal Pradesh holding the remaining 26 percent.
- Under the project framework, the Arunachal Pradesh government will receive 12 percent free power from total generation, ensuring long-term revenue and energy benefits. The project will also contribute ₹40 crore annually to the Local Area Development Fund, which will be used for infrastructure development and community welfare in project-affected regions.

ED Raids Linked to I-PAC in West Bengal Coal Scam Case

- The Enforcement Directorate conducted coordinated raids on January 8, 2026, at approximately ten locations across West Bengal and Delhi linked to the Indian Political Action Committee (I-PAC).
- Raided locations included I-PAC's Salt Lake office in Kolkata, the residence of co-founder Pratik Jain, and premises of a trader in Burrabazar's Posta area.
- The case relates to a large-scale coal pilferage racket in Eastern Coalfields Limited leasehold areas, particularly in Kunustoria and Kajora near Asansol.
- According to ED findings, around 25.51 lakh metric tonnes of coal valued at over ₹1,114 crore were illegally excavated between December 2017 and October 2020.
- The alleged mastermind of the syndicate is Anup Majee, also known as "Lala," against whom multiple FIRs and a CBI case were registered.
- The ED alleges that ₹20 crore from the scam proceeds was routed from Kolkata to Goa through hawala channels to fund election-related activities during the 2021–22 Goa Assembly elections.
- The money-laundering probe stems from a November 2020 FIR filed by the Central Bureau of Investigation, which has chargesheeted at least 41 individuals.

World Hindi Day 2026 (Vishwa Hindi Diwas)

- World Hindi Day is observed annually on January 10 to promote the global use and recognition of the Hindi language.
- The day commemorates the first World Hindi Conference held in Nagpur on January 10, 1975, which was inaugurated by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.
- World Hindi Day was officially observed for the first time on January 10, 2006, following a decision taken by the government led by Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh.
- The day is distinct from National Hindi Day, which is celebrated on September 14 to mark the adoption of Hindi in the Devanagari script as an official language of India in 1949.
- Hindi is spoken by nearly 600 million people worldwide and holds official or recognised status in countries such as Fiji, Mauritius, and Trinidad and Tobago.

Indian Army Major Swathi Shantha Kumar Wins UN Secretary-General's Award 2025

- Indian Army Major Swathi Shantha Kumar received the UN Secretary-General's Award 2025 in the Gender Category for her outstanding contribution to gender-inclusive peacekeeping.
- The award was announced by António Guterres and recognises initiatives promoting gender parity and gender-responsive peacekeeping across UN missions.
- Major Swathi led the project "Equal Partners, Lasting Peace" under the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), focusing on inclusive operational practices.
- As head of the Indian Engagement Team under UNMISS, she ensured effective integration of women peacekeepers into field operations, strengthening community engagement and mission effectiveness.

- Her work improved the mission's capacity to address gender-specific security concerns and build trust with local populations.
- The achievement highlights India's global leadership in UN peacekeeping, with over 275,000 Indian personnel deployed since 1950, including a growing number of women peacekeepers.

Swami Vivekananda's 164th Birth Anniversary Observed as National Youth Day

- January 12 is observed as National Youth Day in India to commemorate the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda, whose ideals continue to inspire India's youth.
- National Youth Day has been officially observed since 1984 to promote his message of strength, character, self-confidence, and service to humanity.
- Swami Vivekananda attained global recognition through his historic address at the Parliament of the World's Religions in Chicago on September 11, 1893.
- He propagated the philosophy of Vedanta and emphasised the unity of religions, self-realisation, and service to mankind as the highest form of worship.
- He advocated a holistic education system that develops both intellect and moral character while enabling individuals to become self-reliant. In 1897, he founded the Ramakrishna Mission, which continues to work in education, healthcare, disaster relief, and social service across India and abroad.

Supreme Court Split Verdict on Corruption Law Interpretation

- The Supreme Court of India delivered a split verdict on a case involving interpretation of provisions under the Prevention of Corruption Act, with judges differing on key legal questions.
- The central disagreement related to the definition of "criminal misconduct" by public servants and the evidentiary threshold required to establish corruption.
- One view emphasised the need to prove actual corrupt intent, while the other supported reliance on circumstantial evidence such as possession of disproportionate assets.
- The split verdict highlights the constitutional tension between protecting the presumption of innocence of public officials and ensuring effective mechanisms to combat corruption.
- The absence of a clear ruling creates uncertainty for pending corruption cases in trial courts and High Courts.
- Given the importance of the legal issues involved, the matter will be referred to a larger Constitution Bench for authoritative resolution.

Supreme Court Rules Unreserved Seats Open to All Candidates on Merit

- The Supreme Court of India delivered a landmark judgment clarifying that unreserved or general category seats in educational institutions and public employment must remain open to all candidates, irrespective of caste or community, purely on the basis of merit.
- The Court held that candidates belonging to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes, and Economically Weaker Sections are fully entitled to compete for unreserved seats if they qualify on merit without availing reservation benefits.
- The judgment emphasized that when a reserved-category candidate secures an unreserved seat on merit, the corresponding reserved seat should not be consumed and must remain available for other eligible candidates from that category.
- The ruling reinforces the principle that reservation is an enabling mechanism for representation and not a ceiling on merit-based advancement.
- The Court reiterated that reservation flows from Articles 15(4), 15(5), and 16(4) of the Constitution as a form of affirmative action, while unreserved seats operate within the framework of equality under Article 14.

Jharkhand Implements PESA After 25 Years

- Jharkhand has implemented the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996, after a delay of nearly 25 years since the state's formation in 2000.
- The PESA Act extends the provisions of Part IX of the Constitution relating to Panchayati Raj Institutions to Fifth Schedule areas inhabited predominantly by tribal communities.
- Under PESA, Gram Sabhas are empowered with authority over natural resource management, ownership of minor forest produce, control over minor water bodies, and regulation of intoxicants.

- The Act mandates Gram Sabha consultation prior to land acquisition and grants powers to prevent land alienation and restore unlawfully alienated tribal land.
- In Jharkhand, PESA applies to scheduled areas spread across multiple districts rich in forest cover and mineral resources, making community control over land and resources particularly significant.
- While tribal rights groups have welcomed the implementation as a step towards self-governance and constitutional empowerment, concerns have been raised regarding potential dilution of PESA provisions in state rules.

Tiger Global Case: Supreme Court Clarifies Limits of Treaty Benefits

- The Supreme Court of India denied capital gains tax exemption to Tiger Global on its exit from Flipkart, delivering a landmark ruling on the relationship between tax treaties and domestic tax liabilities.
- Tiger Global had invested in Flipkart through Mauritius-based entities and claimed exemption under the India–Mauritius Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement following Walmart's acquisition of Flipkart in 2018.
- Indian tax authorities argued that the Mauritius entities lacked genuine economic substance and were created primarily for tax avoidance purposes.
- The Supreme Court held that tax treaties do not automatically override legitimate tax dues, especially when transactions involve treaty shopping or lack commercial substance.
- The judgment reaffirmed the applicability of General Anti-Avoidance Rules, which allow authorities to deny treaty benefits when the primary objective of a transaction structure is tax avoidance rather than genuine business activity. The ruling draws a clear distinction between protection from double taxation and evasion of lawful tax obligations.

233-Year-Old Valmiki Ramayana Gifted to Ram Katha Museum, Ayodhya

- A rare 233-year-old manuscript of the Valmiki Ramayana, dating back to 1792, has been donated to the Ram Katha Museum in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh.
- The manuscript is written in Sanskrit and features traditional calligraphy and artistic elements typical of late eighteenth-century manuscript traditions.
- The donation was made by a private family or collector who had preserved the manuscript across generations, contributing significantly to the museum's cultural repository.
- The manuscript provides valuable insight into the historical transmission, preservation, and reverence of the Ramayana prior to the advent of printing technology.
- The Ram Katha Museum, located in Ayodhya, houses manuscripts, sculptures, paintings, and artefacts depicting narratives from the Ramayana.

Exercise DOSTI-17 Begins in the Indian Ocean Region

- The 17th edition of Exercise DOSTI, a trilateral maritime exercise involving India, Maldives, and Sri Lanka, has commenced to enhance regional maritime security and cooperation.
- Exercise DOSTI is conducted biennially and derives its name from the word "Dosti," meaning friendship, symbolising close ties among the participating nations.
- The Indian Navy has deployed warships, maritime patrol aircraft, and specialised personnel, while the Maldives National Defence Force and Sri Lankan Navy have contributed naval assets.
- The exercise includes harbour and sea phases aimed at improving interoperability, search and rescue coordination, and maritime domain awareness.
- Exercise DOSTI aligns with India's "Neighborhood First" policy and the SAGAR vision of Security and Growth for All in the Region.
- The exercise was first conducted in 1991 between India and Maldives, with Sri Lanka joining in 2012, making it a trilateral initiative.

Punjab Launches First Dog Sanctuary in Ludhiana

- Punjab has inaugurated its first-ever Dog Sanctuary at the Haibowal Dairy Complex in Ludhiana to address the growing stray dog menace through humane management practices.
- The facility has a capacity to house approximately 500 dogs and is designed to provide shelter, medical treatment, vaccination, and sterilisation services.

- Ludhiana recorded 13,728 dog bite cases in 2025, the highest figure in the past five years, highlighting the severity of the public safety challenge.
- The sanctuary will function in compliance with Supreme Court guidelines and the Animal Birth Control Rules, emphasising sterilisation, vaccination, and release of dogs back into their original localities.
- Aggressive or rabid dogs will be housed separately in accordance with public safety and animal welfare norms.
- The initiative has been launched as a pilot project, and its performance will guide the establishment of similar facilities across Punjab.

Mangaluru Tops India in Numbeo Safety Index 2026

- The Numbeo Safety Index 2026 ranked Qingdao in China as the world's safest city with a safety score of 89.2.
- Mangaluru in Karnataka emerged as India's safest city, ranking 46th globally with a safety score of 74.4.
- The Numbeo Safety Index measures perceived safety and crime levels using crowdsourced survey data processed into scores ranging from 0 to 100.
- Cities are classified into safety categories ranging from very low to very high based on their scores.
- Other Indian cities ranked among the top five included Ahmedabad, Jaipur, Coimbatore, and Thiruvananthapuram.
- India ranked 70th among countries with an overall safety score of 55.8, placing it in the moderate safety category.
- The United Arab Emirates topped the country-level rankings, while countries facing governance and security challenges ranked at the bottom.

Parakram Diwas 2026: Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Jayanti

- Parakram Diwas 2026 is observed on January 23, 2026, to commemorate the 129th birth anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, one of the most prominent leaders of India's freedom struggle.
- The term "Parakram" means valour, and the day celebrates Netaji's courage, leadership, patriotism, and revolutionary role in India's fight for independence.
- Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose was born on January 23, 1897, in Cuttack, Odisha, and was a brilliant scholar who qualified for the Indian Civil Service examination in England before resigning to join the freedom movement.
- He founded the Indian National Army, led the Azad Hind government, and gave iconic slogans such as "Give me blood, and I shall give you freedom" and "Delhi Chalo."
- The Government of India formally declared January 23 as Parakram Diwas on January 19, 2021, during the celebrations marking Netaji's 125th birth anniversary.
- The observance aims to inspire citizens, particularly the youth, by highlighting Netaji's fearless approach, organisational skills, and unwavering commitment to national sovereignty.

Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament and Development

- The Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament and Development was instituted in 1986 in memory of former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.
- The award carries a monetary prize of ten million rupees along with a citation and is awarded annually without distinction of nationality, race, or religion.
- Mozambican rights activist and humanitarian Graca Machel has been selected as the recipient of the Indira Gandhi Prize for 2025.
- The 2024 Indira Gandhi Prize was awarded to Michelle Bachelet, former President of Chile and former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.
- Michelle Bachelet served two terms as President of Chile and played a key role in advancing education reforms, tax reforms, and institutional frameworks for human rights.
- Her contributions include establishing the National Institute for Human Rights, the Museum of Memory and Human Rights, and the Ministry of Women and Gender Equality in Chile.

Padma Awards 2026: Celebrating Service Beyond the Spotlight

- The Padma Awards are among India's highest civilian honours, instituted in 1954 and announced annually on Republic Day to recognise distinguished service in diverse fields such as art, literature, education, public affairs, social work, science, and sports.

- The awards are conferred in three categories, namely Padma Vibhushan for exceptional and distinguished service, Padma Bhushan for distinguished service of high order, and Padma Shri for distinguished service in any field.
- In 2026, five Padma Vibhushan awards were approved, including posthumous recognition of Dharmendra Singh Deol for Art and V.S. Achuthanandhan for Public Affairs, along with N. Rajam for Art, K.T. Thomas for Public Affairs, and P. Narayanan for Literature and Education.
- The Padma Bhushan category included thirteen awardees from varied fields, with notable recipients such as Mammootty for Indian cinema, Alka Yagnik for music, Uday Kotak for trade and industry, Vijay Amritraj for sports, and several political leaders for contributions to public life.
- A total of 113 Padma Shri awards were announced, reflecting broad geographic and sectoral diversity, with recipients including Rohit Sharma and Harmanpreet Kaur for sports, R. Madhavan for art, and Savita Punia for hockey.
- Padma Awards do not confer any title and cannot be used as prefixes or suffixes to names, and while government servants are generally not eligible, doctors and scientists are exempted, with posthumous awards granted only in highly deserving cases.

Governor's Address Walkouts and Constitutional Limits

- Article 176(1) of the Constitution mandates that the Governor shall address the Legislative Assembly or both Houses of the State Legislature at the commencement of the first session each year.
- The Governor's address is constitutionally intended to reflect the policies and programmes of the elected State government and does not constitute a personal or discretionary statement of the Governor.
- In the Shamsher Singh versus State of Punjab (1974) judgment, the Supreme Court held that public criticism of government policy by a Governor amounts to an unconstitutional act.
- The Nabam Rebia judgment (2016) further clarified that functions under Articles 175 and 176 are executive in nature and must be exercised strictly on the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers.
- Constituent Assembly debates, including statements by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, described the Governor as a constitutional head without independent executive authority.
- Recent walkouts during Governor's addresses in opposition-ruled states have raised concerns that such actions undermine legislative authority and constitutional conventions, potentially inviting judicial scrutiny.

Revised UPSC Cadre Allocation Policy 2026

- On January 23, 2026, the Department of Personnel and Training notified a revised cadre allocation policy for the All India Services, replacing the zonal system introduced in 2017.
- The new policy introduces four alphabetical groups of state cadres to enhance transparency, objectivity, and national integration in cadre allocation.
- Cadre allocation determines the state or joint cadre in which IAS, IPS, and IFoS officers serve, balancing merit ranking with regional representation.
- Insider candidates are now eligible strictly based on merit rank and vacancy availability, with willingness to serve in the home state made mandatory.
- Outsider allocation follows a two-stage roster system, prioritising Persons with Benchmark Disabilities before general allocation.

Republic Day Parade 2026 Highlights 150 Years of 'Vande Mataram'

- The 77th Republic Day Parade held at Kartavya Path on January 26, 2026, commemorated 150 years of the national song 'Vande Mataram' through rare historical artwork, thematic tableaux, and cultural performances.
- A series of historic paintings created in 1923 by artist Tejendra Kumar Mitra, depicting verses of 'Vande Mataram' and originally published in the Bande Mataram Album, were displayed prominently as visual installations along Kartavya Path.
- Official invitation cards and parade tickets featured a special sesquicentenary logo marking 150 years of 'Vande Mataram', incorporating a silhouette of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee.
- 'Vande Mataram', written in 1875 by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and first published in Bangadarshan, later appeared in his novel Anandamath and was first sung publicly by Rabindranath Tagore at the 1896 Indian National Congress session.

- The song was adopted as India's National Song by the Constituent Assembly in 1950, reflecting its deep association with the freedom struggle and national identity.
- A total of 30 tableaux participated in the parade, including 17 from States and Union Territories and 13 from Ministries, Departments, and Armed Forces, organised under the themes "स्वतंत्रता का मंत्र – वंदे मातरम" and "समृद्धि का मंत्र – आत्मनिर्भर भारत".
- For the first time, the Indian Army presented a Battle Array Formation, while the Tri-Services Tableau showcased "Operation Sindoor: Victory through Jointness", highlighting integrated military capability.
- The flypast featured 29 aircraft, including Rafale, Su-30, C-295, MiG-29, Apache, Light Combat Helicopter, Advanced Light Helicopter, and Mi-17, demonstrating India's expanding air power.
- The President of the European Commission and the President of the European Council attended the celebrations as Chief Guests, underlining India–European Union strategic engagement.

Gujarat Declared Tiger-Present State After 33 Years

- The National Tiger Conservation Authority officially declared Gujarat a tiger-present state on 26 December 2025 after confirmed photographic evidence of a resident tiger.
- Tigers had become locally extinct in Gujarat in 1989, following which the State was removed from the national tiger census in 1992.
- The confirmed tiger has established territory in the Ratanmahal Wildlife Sanctuary located along the Gujarat–Madhya Pradesh border.
- Repeated camera-trap captures over nearly ten months confirmed permanent settlement rather than transient movement.
- Gujarat has become the only State in India where Asiatic lions, leopards, and tigers coexist in their natural habitats.
- Gujarat will now be included in the All-India Tiger Estimation 2026 exercise.

40th Asian Waterbird Census to Be Held at Godavari Estuary

- The 40th Asian Waterbird Census will be conducted on 10–11 January 2025 at the Godavari Estuary in Andhra Pradesh.
- The Godavari Estuary spans East Godavari and Konaseema districts and is one of India's most significant wetland ecosystems.
- The Asian Waterbird Census is coordinated by Wetlands International and has been conducted annually since 1987.
- The census monitors the population status of migratory and resident waterbirds across Asian wetlands.
- The exercise is conducted in collaboration with the Andhra Pradesh Forest Department, conservation groups, and volunteers.

Supreme Court to Hear Suo Motu Case on Definition of Aravalli Hills

- The Supreme Court of India registered a suo motu case to examine concerns over the definition of the Aravalli Hills and Ranges.
- The matter will be heard by a special vacation bench led by Chief Justice Surya Kant on 29 December 2025.
- The action follows criticism of the Court's November 20, 2025 judgment adopting a uniform elevation-based definition for the Aravallis.
- Environmental concerns were raised that the revised definition could permit expanded mining activity.
- The Court has already directed that no new mining leases be granted until a comprehensive sustainable mining plan is finalised.

Govt Declares Parvati-Arga Bird Sanctuary as Eco-Sensitive Zone

- The Government of India declared the Parvati-Arga Bird Sanctuary in Uttar Pradesh as an Eco-Sensitive Zone to strengthen conservation and regulate surrounding activities.
- The sanctuary is located in Gonda district and covers approximately 1,084 hectares of wetland habitat.
- It supports a wide variety of resident and migratory bird species, including winter migrants from Central Asia and Tibet.
- The ESZ notification aims to restrict unregulated development, industrial activity, and construction around the protected area. The declaration also seeks to promote responsible ecotourism while maintaining ecological balance.

India Records 166 Tiger Deaths in 2025

- India recorded 166 tiger deaths in 2025, according to data from the National Tiger Conservation Authority, marking a sharp rise from 126 deaths in 2024.
- Madhya Pradesh reported the highest number of deaths, followed by Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Uttarakhand.
- Of the total fatalities, 31 were cubs, reflecting both natural mortality and increasing pressure from habitat fragmentation.
- Nearly 60% of tiger deaths occurred outside protected areas, highlighting rising human–wildlife conflict.
- The figures come despite India hosting 3,682 tigers as per the 2022 census, underlining new conservation challenges after decades of success under Project Tiger.

CJI Surya Kant Inaugurates India's First Fully Paperless District Court in Kalpetta, Kerala

- Surya Kant, the Chief Justice of India, inaugurated the country's first fully paperless district court at Kalpetta in Kerala's Wayanad district, marking a landmark moment in India's judicial digital transformation.
- Kalpetta, the district headquarters of Wayanad, now serves as a national model for judicial digitalisation, demonstrating how technology can enhance efficiency, transparency, and accessibility in justice delivery.
- The district court is equipped with comprehensive digital infrastructure, including e-filing systems, electronic case management software, digital cause lists, video conferencing facilities, and secure cloud-based storage of judicial records.
- The paperless court enables online case filing, electronic service of summons and notices, virtual hearings, digital signatures on orders and judgments, and real-time case tracking for litigants.
- This initiative forms part of the e-Courts Mission Mode Project, implemented by the Supreme Court's e-Committee to modernise the Indian judiciary using information and communication technology.

All-India Tiger Estimation 2026 Begins in Thanthai Periyar Sanctuary

- The All-India Tiger Estimation 2026 commenced at Thanthai Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary in Tamil Nadu, marking the start of a nationwide, scientifically coordinated census of India's tiger population.
- Located in Erode district, Thanthai Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary covers approximately 104.59 square kilometres and functions as an important wildlife corridor within the Western Ghats landscape. The tiger estimation is conducted by the National Tiger Conservation Authority in collaboration with State Forest Departments.
- The survey follows a four-phase methodology comprising habitat assessment through beat-level surveys, deployment of camera traps, photographic capture–recapture analysis, and digital data collection using the M-STrIPES mobile application.
- Camera traps identify individual tigers through unique stripe patterns, while the M-STrIPES system enables real-time GPS-tagged data upload and centralised monitoring to enhance scientific accuracy.
- The census covers all tiger-bearing states and assesses not only tiger numbers but also prey availability, co-predator presence, habitat quality, and human–wildlife conflict zones. Conducted under the Project Tiger framework launched in 1973, the estimation helps evaluate conservation effectiveness and guide future protection strategies.

Kumbhalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary Declared Eco-Sensitive Zone

- The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has declared an Eco-Sensitive Zone around the Kumbhalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary in Rajasthan.
- The sanctuary is located across the Rajsamand, Pali, and Udaipur districts and serves as a critical buffer for biodiversity conservation.
- The Eco-Sensitive Zone aims to regulate development activities and minimise ecological degradation and human-wildlife conflict.
- Activities such as commercial mining, stone quarrying, and establishment of polluting industries are prohibited within the ESZ.
- The sanctuary supports diverse wildlife including wolves, leopards, sloth bears, hyenas, and jungle cats.
- The area surrounds the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Kumbhalgarh Fort, known for its 36-kilometre-long wall built by Rana Kumbha.

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INTERNATIONAL

United States Conducts Airstrikes Against ISWAP in Nigeria

- The United States Africa Command conducted airstrikes against Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) targets in northeastern Nigeria.
- The strikes were carried out in Borno State near the Lake Chad region and targeted leadership, training camps, and logistical infrastructure.
- ISWAP emerged in 2016 as a splinter faction of Boko Haram after internal leadership disputes.
- Borno State has remained the epicentre of insurgency since 2009 and has witnessed large-scale civilian casualties and displacement.
- The Lake Chad Basin has become a major theatre of terrorism due to regional instability, ecological stress, and porous borders.
- The United States maintains a limited military presence in Nigeria focused on intelligence sharing, training, and counter-terrorism support.

Israel Recognises Somaliland as an Independent State

- Israel formally recognised Somaliland as an independent and sovereign state on 26 December 2025, marking a major diplomatic development.
- With this decision, Israel became the first United Nations member state to grant formal recognition to Somaliland since it declared independence from Somalia in 1991.
- The recognition was formalised through a joint declaration outlining cooperation in areas such as agriculture, technology, healthcare, and economic development.
- The federal government of Somalia condemned the move as a violation of its sovereignty and territorial integrity.
- Several regional and international actors warned that the recognition could have destabilising implications for peace and stability in the Horn of Africa.

Iran Launches Three Satellites Using Russian Soyuz Rocket

- Iran successfully launched three domestically developed satellites—Paya, Zafar-2, and Kowsar-1.5—into low-Earth orbit on 28 December 2025.
- The satellites were launched aboard a Russian Soyuz rocket from the Vostochny Cosmodrome in eastern Russia as part of a multi-payload mission.
- The satellites are designed primarily for civilian Earth-observation purposes, including agriculture monitoring, environmental assessment, and resource mapping.
- The mission demonstrates Iran's growing indigenous space capabilities in satellite design and development.
- The launch also reflects deepening strategic cooperation between Iran and Russia, particularly in the space sector amid Western sanctions.

China Launches 'Justice Mission 2025' Military Drills Around Taiwan

- China's People's Liberation Army launched large-scale joint military exercises codenamed "Justice Mission 2025" encircling Taiwan on 29 December 2025.
- The drills involve coordinated participation of the army, navy, air force, and rocket force across seven designated maritime zones around Taiwan.
- The exercises include live-fire drills, simulated strikes on land and sea targets, and rehearsals of blockades around Taiwan's major ports.
- Taiwan responded by placing its armed forces on high alert and initiating rapid response exercises to counter any potential escalation.
- China described the drills as a stern warning against Taiwanese independence and against foreign military interference in the Taiwan Strait.

INSV Kaundinya Begins Maiden Overseas Voyage to Oman

- The Indian Naval Sailing Vessel INSV Kaundinya commenced its maiden overseas voyage from Porbandar in Gujarat to Muscat in Oman on 29 December 2025, marking a historic milestone in India's maritime heritage revival.

- The vessel was formally flagged off by Vice Admiral Krishna Swaminathan, Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the Western Naval Command, in the presence of Issa Saleh Al Shibani, the Ambassador of Oman to India.
- The voyage covers approximately 1,400 kilometres across the Arabian Sea and is expected to take between 8 to 15 days depending on prevailing wind and sea conditions.
- The ship is built using ancient stitched-ship construction techniques inspired by a 5th-century CE merchant vessel depicted in the Ajanta Cave murals, highlighting India's indigenous shipbuilding knowledge.
- The project was undertaken through a tripartite partnership between the Ministry of Culture, the Indian Navy, and a private shipbuilder, with traditional artisans constructing the vessel under expert supervision.
- Named after the legendary ancient mariner Kaundinya, the voyage symbolises India's historical maritime links with the Indian Ocean world and reinforces long-standing cultural ties between India and Oman.

Israel Announces Israel Prize for Donald Trump in 2026

- Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced that former US President Donald Trump will receive the Israel Prize in 2026.
- Trump will be honoured under the category of "special contribution to the Jewish people," making him the first American citizen to receive Israel's highest civilian award.
- The decision was communicated by Education Minister Yoav Kisch during a meeting between Netanyahu and Trump at Mar-a-Lago in Florida.
- The award recognises Trump's role in combating antisemitism, recognising Jerusalem as Israel's capital, supporting Israel's security, and efforts related to hostage issues.
- The Israel Prize, established in 1953, is traditionally awarded on Israel's Independence Day and is overseen by the Education Ministry, with recipients usually being Israeli citizens.

Khaleda Zia, Bangladesh's First Woman Prime Minister, Passes Away

- Khaleda Zia, Bangladesh's first female Prime Minister and long-time leader of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, passed away after prolonged illness.
- She served as Prime Minister twice, from 1991 to 1996 and from 2001 to 2006, and led the BNP for over four decades.
- Khaleda Zia played a crucial role in the restoration of democracy following the fall of military ruler H.M. Ershad in 1990.
- Her political rivalry with Sheikh Hasina defined Bangladeshi politics for over three decades in what became known as the "Battling Begums" era.
- Bangladesh declared state mourning in her honour, recognising her role in shaping the country's modern political history.

Google Allows Users to Change Primary Gmail Address

- Google began rolling out a long-awaited feature allowing users to change their primary @gmail.com email address without creating a new Google account.
- The update enables users to retain all existing data, including emails, Google Drive files, photos, and subscriptions, while the old address becomes a permanent alias.
- Users can receive emails on both the old and new addresses and sign into Google services using either, ensuring continuity and security.
- To prevent misuse, Google has imposed strict limits, allowing a maximum of three address changes per account with a mandatory 12-month gap between changes.
- The feature is being rolled out gradually on a region-wise basis, with early documentation appearing in Hindi, indicating initial testing in India.

Bulgaria Adopts Euro, Joins Eurozone as 21st Member

- Bulgaria officially adopted the euro at midnight on January 1, 2026, becoming the 21st member of the eurozone and replacing its national currency, the lev.
- The conversion rate was fixed at 1 euro = 1.95583 Bulgarian lev under the EU's Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM-II), a rate that had effectively been in place for decades due to currency pegging.

- A one-month dual-currency period in January 2026 allows transactions in both currencies, after which only euros will be accepted for payments.
- Despite strong public opposition—nearly half the population opposed the move—the government argued euro adoption would strengthen economic stability, deepen EU integration, and counter external geopolitical influence.
- Bulgaria's euro coins feature national cultural symbols such as the Madara Rider, reinforcing national identity within the common currency framework.

India and Pakistan Exchange Prisoners' Lists Under Consular Pact

- India and Pakistan exchanged lists of civilian prisoners and fishermen on January 1, 2026, under the 2008 Agreement on Consular Access, continuing a humanitarian confidence-building measure conducted twice annually.
- India shared details of 391 civilian prisoners and 33 fishermen in its custody who are Pakistani nationals or believed to be Pakistani.
- Pakistan provided details of 58 civilian prisoners and 199 fishermen in its custody who are Indian nationals or believed to be Indian, reflecting the frequent detention of fishermen due to maritime boundary crossings in the Arabian Sea.
- India reiterated its demand for early release and repatriation of prisoners who have completed their sentences, particularly urging Pakistan to release 167 such individuals.
- New Delhi also sought immediate consular access for 35 detainees believed to be Indian nationals who have not yet been granted access.

India and Pakistan Complete Annual Exchange of Nuclear Facility Information

- India and Pakistan completed their 35th consecutive annual exchange of lists of nuclear installations on January 1, 2026, under the 1988 Agreement on Prohibition of Attack against Nuclear Installations and Facilities.
- The agreement, which entered into force in 1991, obliges both countries to share information on nuclear power plants, research reactors, fuel fabrication units, enrichment facilities, and radioactive material storage sites every year.
- The exchange has continued uninterrupted since 1992, even amid severely strained relations following the May 2025 military confrontation.
- This mechanism remains one of the longest-running nuclear confidence-building measures between the two neighbours.
- India simultaneously reiterated humanitarian demands regarding prisoners and missing defence personnel, underscoring limited functional engagement despite diplomatic freeze.

Turkmenistan Legalises Cryptocurrency Mining and Exchanges

- Turkmenistan formally legalised cryptocurrency mining and exchanges after President Serdar Berdimuhamedov signed the "Law on Virtual Assets" in November 2025, which came into force on January 1, 2026.
- The law brings virtual assets under civil law for the first time and establishes a licensing regime overseen by the Central Bank of Turkmenistan.
- Virtual assets are legally defined as property or investment instruments, not legal tender, and therefore cannot be used to purchase goods or services.
- The legislation mandates strict KYC and AML compliance for exchanges and custodians, aligning with international financial standards.
- Covert mining practices, including cryptojacking, have been explicitly banned to prevent misuse of computing resources.

Iran Protests and Trump's "Locked and Loaded" Warning

- US President Donald Trump warned on January 2, 2026 that the United States was "locked and loaded" if Iran violently suppressed peaceful protesters amid nationwide demonstrations.
- Protests erupted after Iran's currency collapsed to historic lows, triggering shopkeeper strikes and mass demonstrations across major cities.

- Inflation exceeded 40%, with food and medical costs soaring, sharply eroding living standards and fuelling public anger.
- Iran's economic crisis has been exacerbated by prolonged Western sanctions, renewed UN restrictions, and military escalation in 2025.
- Tehran rejected external interference, framing the protests as foreign-instigated destabilisation.

US Strikes Venezuela

- The United States launched Operation Absolute Resolve in the early hours of January 3, 2026, conducting large-scale airstrikes across northern Venezuela, particularly around Caracas, using more than 150 aircraft deployed from multiple bases across the Western Hemisphere.
- US President Donald Trump approved the operation late on January 2, 2026, and later announced that Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro and First Lady Cilia Flores had been captured and flown out of the country.
- The Trump administration justified the intervention primarily on narcoterrorism charges, citing indictments alleging state-sponsored drug trafficking and long-standing US bounties placed on Maduro.
- At a press conference in Florida, President Trump stated that the United States would temporarily "run the country" until a "safe and proper transition" could be achieved, raising serious questions under international law and US constitutional norms.
- The operation plunged Venezuela into political and economic uncertainty, with global concern over sovereignty, precedent-setting regime change, and future control of the country's oil resources.

What Is the Monroe Doctrine and Why Did Trump Invoke It?

- US President Donald Trump invoked the Monroe Doctrine on January 3, 2026, following a US military operation that resulted in the capture of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro.
- Speaking at a press conference at Mar-a-Lago, Trump justified the intervention by asserting that American dominance in the Western Hemisphere would "never be questioned again."
- Trump coined the term "Donroe Doctrine," a blend of "Donald" and "Monroe," claiming that the original doctrine had been superseded and reinterpreted to suit contemporary geopolitical realities.
- The term "Donroe Doctrine" first appeared in a New York Post headline in January 2025 and gained prominence after being discussed on Fox News just a day before the Venezuela operation.
- Trump argued that Venezuela under Maduro had been hosting foreign adversaries and acquiring offensive capabilities that threatened US strategic interests in the region.
- The original Monroe Doctrine was articulated by James Monroe on December 2, 1823, warning European powers against interference or recolonization in the Western Hemisphere.

U.S. Withdraws from 66 International Organizations Under Trump Order

- Donald Trump signed an executive order on January 7, 2026, withdrawing the United States from 66 international organizations, marking a major escalation in America's retreat from multilateral engagement.
- Most of the targeted bodies are affiliated with the United Nations and focus on climate action, labour standards, social development, and global governance.
- The administration justified the withdrawals on grounds of inefficiency, redundancy, and misalignment with U.S. national interests and sovereignty.
- The U.S. formally exited the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the foundational treaty underpinning the Paris Agreement.
- The withdrawal also included the International Solar Alliance, an India–France led initiative promoting global solar energy deployment.
- The decision continues a pattern of disengagement, following earlier withdrawals from bodies such as the WHO, UNESCO, and the UN Human Rights Council.

Jensen Huang Conferred 2026 IEEE Medal of Honor

- Jensen Huang, co-founder and Chief Executive Officer of NVIDIA, was awarded the 2026 IEEE Medal of Honor, the highest recognition conferred by the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers.

- The award was announced on January 6, 2026, recognising Huang's pioneering contributions to graphics processing units and accelerated computing, which have fundamentally transformed artificial intelligence, scientific research, and high-performance computing.
- Established in 1917, the IEEE Medal of Honor is the organisation's most prestigious award and has previously been conferred on technological pioneers such as Alexander Graham Bell, Thomas Edison, and Tim Berners-Lee.
- The 2026 Medal of Honor includes a cash prize of USD 2 million, reflecting the extraordinary impact of Huang's contributions to global technological advancement.
- Under Huang's leadership since NVIDIA's founding in 1993, GPUs evolved from graphics-rendering tools into platforms for parallel processing, forming the backbone of modern AI training, machine learning, autonomous systems, and scientific simulations.

Akasa Air Enters IATA, Becomes India's Fifth Member of Global Airline Body

- Akasa Air announced its membership in the International Air Transport Association, becoming the fifth Indian airline to join the global trade association that represents over 360 airlines accounting for more than 80 percent of global air traffic.
- The International Air Transport Association functions as the principal global body for airlines, setting international standards for aviation safety, security, operational efficiency, and environmental sustainability.
- With this milestone, Akasa Air joined the ranks of Indian IATA members including Air India, Air India Express, IndiGo, and SpiceJet.
- Akasa Air's IATA membership followed the successful completion of the IATA Operational Safety Audit (IOSA) in December 2025, which is a mandatory and globally recognised safety benchmark for airline operations.
- IOSA is regarded as one of the most rigorous safety audit programmes in civil aviation and ensures strict compliance with internationally standardised operational and safety protocols.
- Akasa Air was founded in 2020 by aviation professional Vinay Dube, with the late investor Rakesh Jhunjhunwala investing USD 35 million for nearly a 40 percent stake in the airline.

Oscars 2026: Five Indian Films Eligible for Best Picture

- The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences released its eligibility list for the 98th Academy Awards, featuring five Indian films among the 201 films eligible for Best Picture consideration.
- The Indian films include Kantara: A Legend – Chapter 1, Tanvi The Great, Mahavatar Narsimha, Tourist Family, and Sister Midnight, representing multiple languages and production formats.
- Kantara: A Legend – Chapter 1 is a Kannada-language prequel directed by and starring Rishabh Shetty, following the success of the 2022 film Kantara.
- Tanvi The Great marks the directorial venture of Anupam Kher and represents mainstream Hindi cinema in the Oscar race.
- Mahavatar Narsimha is a multilingual animated mythological film presented by Hombale Films, depicting Lord Vishnu's fourth avatar.
- Tourist Family is a Tamil-language debut directed by Abishan Jeevinth, while Sister Midnight is a UK-India co-production starring Radhika Apte.

India–Germany Sign Multiple Agreements During Chancellor Friedrich Merz's Visit

- German Chancellor Friedrich Merz paid his first official visit to India since assuming office and held high-level bilateral talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Gandhinagar, Gujarat.
- India and Germany issued a Joint Declaration of Intent on a Global Skills Partnership aimed at facilitating structured mobility of skilled workers, with a specific focus on healthcare professionals and skill-based migration.
- Germany announced a visa-free transit facility for Indian citizens passing through German airports, marking a major people-to-people facilitation measure.
- Both countries signed agreements to strengthen security cooperation, reflecting shared concerns over global security challenges and regional stability.
- An India–Germany Centre of Excellence was announced to institutionalise collaboration in green technologies, clean energy innovation, and climate solutions, aligning India's energy transition goals with Germany's leadership in sustainable technologies.

- Bilateral trade between India and Germany reached USD 51.23 billion, highlighting the deepening economic partnership, while both sides reiterated efforts to conclude a long-pending Free Trade Agreement.

ICJ Hearings Begin in Rohingya Genocide Case Against Myanmar

- The International Court of Justice began substantive hearings in the genocide case filed against Myanmar over its treatment of the Rohingya Muslim minority.
- The case was instituted by The Gambia in November 2019 on behalf of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, alleging violations of the 1948 Genocide Convention.
- The allegations relate to Myanmar's military operations in Rakhine State during 2016–2017, which led to mass killings, sexual violence, and destruction of Rohingya villages.
- More than 740,000 Rohingya fled to Bangladesh following the August 2017 crackdown, creating one of the world's largest refugee crises.
- The case alleges acts of genocide including murder, rape, torture, and deliberate destruction of communities with intent to destroy the Rohingya group in whole or in part.
- Several countries, including Canada, the Netherlands, and the Maldives, have intervened or filed declarations supporting the case. Parallel proceedings are underway at the International Criminal Court, while Argentina has initiated cases under universal jurisdiction. Nearly one million Rohingya refugees continue to live in camps in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, with limited prospects for repatriation.

India Unveils Logo and Website for BRICS Presidency 2026

- India officially unveiled the logo and dedicated website for its BRICS Presidency 2026, marking the beginning of its leadership role in the grouping of emerging economies.
- As part of the rotational arrangement, India will assume the BRICS presidency in 2026 and will be responsible for steering the agenda and hosting the annual BRICS Summit.
- The presidency provides India with a significant diplomatic platform to influence cooperation among BRICS members on economic, political, developmental, and cultural issues.
- The official logo reflects India's cultural identity and its vision of unity, inclusiveness, and collective growth among BRICS nations.
- India's presidency follows the historic expansion of BRICS in 2024, when countries including Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates were invited to join.
- With the expanded membership, BRICS now represents a much larger share of global population, economic output, and geopolitical influence.

Golden Globe Awards 2026: Major Winners and Highlights

- The 83rd Golden Globe Awards were held in January 2026 at the Beverly Hilton in California, honouring outstanding achievements in film and television from 2025.
- "Hamnet" won Best Motion Picture – Drama, with Jessie Buckley receiving Best Actress in a Drama for her performance.
- "One Battle After Another" dominated the Musical or Comedy category, winning Best Motion Picture, Best Director for Paul Thomas Anderson, Best Supporting Actress for Teyana Taylor, and Best Screenplay.
- Wagner Moura won Best Actor in a Motion Picture – Drama for "The Secret Agent," while Timothée Chalamet won Best Actor – Musical or Comedy for "Marty Supreme."
- The animated film "K-Pop Demon Hunters" won Best Animated Motion Picture and Best Original Song.
- The television series "Adolescence" dominated TV categories, winning Best Limited Series and multiple acting awards.

India Improves Ranking in Henley Passport Index 2026

- India improved its position to 80th rank in the Henley Passport Index 2026, moving up from 85th rank in the previous year.
- The Indian passport now provides visa-free or visa-on-arrival access to 55 destinations out of 227 globally assessed destinations.
- Singapore retained the top position, followed by Japan and South Korea, while European countries continued to dominate the higher ranks.

- Within South Asia, India ranked ahead of Pakistan, which stood at 98th position with access to 31 destinations.
- Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan occupied the lowest positions on the index, reflecting the impact of conflict and diplomatic isolation on global mobility.

China Rejects India's Claim Over Shaksgam Valley

- China rejected India's claim over the Shaksgam Valley in Jammu and Kashmir, asserting that the territory belongs to Beijing and forms part of China's Xinjiang region.
- India maintains that the Shaksgam Valley, covering approximately 5,180 square kilometers, is an integral part of Indian territory that was illegally ceded by Pakistan to China under the 1963 Sino-Pakistan Boundary Agreement.
- The Government of India has never recognized the 1963 agreement, consistently holding that Pakistan had no legal authority to transfer Indian territory to China.
- Strategically, the Shaksgam Valley connects China's Xinjiang region with Pakistan-occupied Kashmir and provides access to the Karakoram Highway, making it significant for the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.
- The issue arises amid continued India-China border tensions following the 2020 Galwan Valley clash and ongoing military and diplomatic engagements along the Line of Actual Control in eastern Ladakh.

Pentagon Pizza Index Trends Amid US–Iran Tensions

- The Pentagon Pizza Index surged into public discussion amid escalating US–Iran tensions, following reports of a sharp spike in pizza orders near the Pentagon on January 5, 2026.
- The Pentagon Pizza Index, also known as the Pizza Meter, is an open-source intelligence theory suggesting that late-night pizza orders near US government buildings increase before major geopolitical or military events.
- The logic behind the index is that Pentagon, CIA, or White House staff working overnight on emerging crises tend to order food, making pizza deliveries a visible indicator of unusual activity.
- Historical precedents include August 1990, when the CIA ordered 21 pizzas in a single night before Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, and December 1998, when pizza orders surged during the impeachment of President Bill Clinton and Operation Desert Fox.
- On June 22, 2025, heightened pizza activity was observed near a Papa John's outlet shortly before President Trump announced US strikes on Iranian nuclear facilities.
- Between January 2 and January 3, 2026, similar spikes preceded US military action in Venezuela and the capture of President Nicolás Maduro.
- On January 14, 2026, the index reportedly shifted from "nothing ever happens" to "something might happen," amid speculation of a possible US strike on Iran.

World Economic Forum Global Risks Report 2026

- The World Economic Forum released the Global Risks Report 2026, the 21st edition of its annual assessment, based on inputs from over 1,300 experts across business, government, academia, and civil society.
- The report identifies geoeconomic confrontation as the most significant short-term global risk in 2026, reflecting the growing use of economic tools such as sanctions, tariffs, supply-chain controls, and capital restrictions.
- Geoeconomic confrontation was selected by 18 percent of respondents as the most likely trigger of a global crisis, climbing eight positions compared to the previous year.
- The report highlights rising pessimism, with 50 percent of respondents expecting turbulent or stormy global conditions over the next two years and 57 percent anticipating similar instability over the next decade.
- Misinformation and disinformation rank as the second most severe short-term risk, while cyber insecurity ranks sixth, underscoring escalating technological vulnerabilities.
- Adverse outcomes of artificial intelligence recorded the largest upward shift, moving from rank 30 in the two-year outlook to rank five in the ten-year outlook.
- Environmental risks declined in short-term prioritization, with extreme weather events falling from second to fourth position and biodiversity loss dropping to rank 26, reflecting a shift in immediate global concerns.

Nobel Peace Prize Medal Transfer Clarification

- Venezuelan opposition leader María Corina Machado presented her 2025 Nobel Peace Prize medal to US President Donald Trump during a private meeting at the White House.

- A photograph showed Trump holding a gold-framed plaque containing the medal, accompanied by a dedication expressing gratitude from the Venezuelan people.
- The Norwegian Nobel Institute clarified that while the physical medal may change hands, the title of Nobel Peace Prize laureate cannot be transferred, revoked, or shared.
- María Corina Machado was awarded the 2025 Nobel Peace Prize for her efforts to promote democratic rights and oppose authoritarian rule in Venezuela.
- President Trump has repeatedly expressed his desire to receive the Nobel Peace Prize, citing claims of ending multiple wars during his tenure.
- The medal presentation followed a US military operation on January 3, 2026, that captured Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro, who faces drug trafficking charges in the United States.

US Claims Over Greenland and NATO Implications

- President Donald Trump's renewed calls since January 2026 for US control over Greenland have triggered a major diplomatic crisis with European NATO allies.
- Trump stated that anything less than complete US control of Greenland would be unacceptable, and suggested that the acquisition could occur "one way or the other."
- Greenland is an autonomous territory of Denmark, a founding NATO member, and any US annexation would directly violate Article 5 of the NATO Treaty, undermining the alliance's collective defence credibility.
- The United States already operates the Pituffik Space Base in Greenland under a 1951 defence agreement with Denmark, providing extensive military access without compromising Danish sovereignty.
- Trump announced potential 10% tariffs on eight NATO allies, including Denmark, Germany, and the United Kingdom, until a deal is reached on Greenland.
- Greenland possesses vast mineral reserves, including 25 of the 34 critical raw materials identified by the European Commission. Greenland's Premier has categorically stated that the territory is not for sale and will not become part of the United States.

India Ranks Sixth in Asia Manufacturing Index 2026

- India secured the sixth position in the Asia Manufacturing Index 2026, reflecting steady improvement in manufacturing capacity while highlighting the need for faster reforms and investments.
- The index evaluates countries on manufacturing output, productivity, technological advancement, infrastructure quality, ease of doing business, and global competitiveness.
- China, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore occupied the top five positions due to their advanced manufacturing ecosystems and efficient supply chains.
- Manufacturing contributes approximately 17 per cent to India's GDP, which remains below the government's target of 25 per cent under the Make in India initiative.
- Production-Linked Incentive schemes across 14 sectors have played a key role in attracting investments and strengthening domestic manufacturing.
- Global supply chain diversification away from China presents India with an opportunity to emerge as a preferred manufacturing destination through logistics reform, infrastructure investment, and technology adoption.

India Ranks 16th in Responsible Nations Index 2026

- India secured the 16th position in the Responsible Nations Index 2026, which evaluates countries on sustainability, social equity, governance quality, and global responsibility.
- India's ranking reflects progress in renewable energy expansion, including large-scale solar and wind power deployment.
- Commitments such as achieving net-zero emissions by 2070 and reducing carbon intensity of GDP by 45 per cent by 2030 have strengthened India's climate credentials.
- Social welfare initiatives such as Jan Dhan Yojana, Ayushman Bharat, and large-scale poverty alleviation programmes contributed positively to the ranking.
- The index places India among emerging economies making notable progress toward responsible and inclusive development.

Abu Dhabi Named World's Safest City for Tenth Consecutive Year

- Abu Dhabi has been ranked the world's safest city for the tenth consecutive year in the Numbeo Global Safety Index 2026.
- The ranking assessed over 400 cities across more than 150 countries based on crime perception, public safety, and quality of life indicators.
- Abu Dhabi scored highest in safety while walking alone during both day and night, reflecting strong public confidence.
- The city's safety model relies heavily on technology-driven policing, including artificial intelligence, predictive analytics, and real-time surveillance systems.
- Authorities attribute the success to a systematic approach combining technology, proactive policing, community engagement, and urban design.

UAE Becomes India's Second-Largest LNG Supplier

- The United Arab Emirates has become India's second-largest supplier of liquefied natural gas following the signing of a new long-term supply agreement.
- The agreement involves Indian energy companies sourcing LNG from UAE-based suppliers, including the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company.
- Under the contract, India will import multi-million tonnes of LNG annually over a period of 10 to 15 years.
- The agreement strengthens India's energy security by diversifying natural gas imports and reducing dependence on a single supplier.
- India currently meets nearly half of its natural gas requirements through LNG imports.
- The deal reflects the deepening India–UAE strategic partnership under the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement.

NASA Astronaut Sunita Williams Retires from Space Service

- NASA astronaut Sunita Williams has announced her retirement after a distinguished career in human spaceflight.
- Before joining NASA, she served as a U.S. Navy officer and test pilot with over 3,000 flight hours in more than 30 aircraft.
- She was selected as an astronaut in 1998 and completed extensive training in spacecraft systems, robotics, and spacewalking.
- Williams flew two long-duration missions to the International Space Station, accumulating a total of 322 days in space.
- She set records for the most spacewalks and longest cumulative spacewalk duration by a female astronaut.
- As the first woman of Indian origin to go to space, she became a global role model and advocate for STEM education.

India and Namibia Agree to Deepen Cooperation in Defence and Critical Minerals

- India and Namibia held the fifth round of Foreign Office Consultations in New Delhi to review and strengthen bilateral relations across strategic sectors.
- The consultations were co-chaired by senior officials from the Indian Ministry of External Affairs and Namibia's Ministry of International Relations and Trade.
- Both countries agreed to deepen cooperation in defence and critical minerals, reflecting shared strategic and economic interests.
- India and Namibia also agreed to expand collaboration in Digital Public Infrastructure, with India sharing its experience in digital governance platforms and service delivery.
- Cooperation in health, pharmaceuticals, agriculture, and capacity building was reaffirmed as part of India's development partnership approach.
- Namibia reiterated its view of India as a dependable partner, recalling India's support during Namibia's liberation struggle. Both sides agreed to hold the next round of consultations in Windhoek at a mutually convenient date.

Israel Joins Trump's "Board of Peace" to Oversee Gaza Ceasefire Plan

- Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu accepted US President Donald Trump's invitation to join the "Board of Peace" established under phase two of the Gaza ceasefire framework.
- Netanyahu's participation has generated controversy due to the International Criminal Court issuing a warrant against him in 2024 on charges related to Gaza.
- The Board of Peace will be led by President Trump and will oversee governance, reconstruction, investment mobilisation, and regional relations in Gaza.
- The executive board includes senior political and financial figures from the United States, international institutions, and the private sector.
- The proposed Gaza administration model envisions a unified Palestinian-run territory administered by a technocratic body known as the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza.
- The plan is based on the principle of "one authority, one law, and one weapon," requiring the disarmament of armed groups outside the recognised administration.
- The first 100-day plan prioritises restoration of essential services such as water, electricity, healthcare, and food supply systems.

Davos 2026: Key Takeaways from the World Economic Forum

- The World Economic Forum Annual Meeting 2026 was held in Davos, Switzerland, under the theme "A Spirit of Dialogue," bringing together nearly 3,000 leaders from over 130 countries.
- Discussions highlighted growing strain in US-Europe relations, with warnings of a potential long-term breakdown of trust in the global order.
- A major diplomatic development was the de-escalation of tensions over Greenland, with the United States backing away from the use of force and agreeing to a cooperative security framework with NATO.
- Leaders announced progress toward major trade agreements, including the India-EU Free Trade Agreement, described as a historic deal with global economic significance.
- Artificial Intelligence emerged as a central theme, with concerns raised about large-scale job disruptions and the need to balance innovation with social protection.
- The Global Risks Report 2026 emphasized that geoeconomic fragmentation and societal polarization have overtaken climate risks as the most immediate global threats.

Oscar Success of Sinners and Film Ownership Models

- The film Sinners received a record-breaking 16 nominations at the 98th Academy Awards, the highest number ever received by a single film.
- Warner Bros. agreed to return ownership rights of the film to director Ryan Coogler after 25 years, allowing long-term revenue generation.
- This arrangement marks a departure from earlier studio policies that resisted relinquishing intellectual property rights to filmmakers.
- The rise of streaming platforms has significantly increased the long-term commercial value of films through repeated licensing and global distribution.
- The ownership model highlighted by Sinners has renewed debate on creative control, intellectual property, and revenue sharing in the global film industry.

Finke River Recognised as the World's Oldest Flowing River

- Scientists have identified Australia's Finke River as the world's oldest surviving river system, with geological origins dating back approximately 300 to 400 million years.
- The river is believed to have originated during the Devonian or Carboniferous period, making it older than the age of dinosaurs.
- Known as Larapinta to the Arrernte Indigenous people, the river flows through the Northern Territory and South Australia for over 640 kilometres.
- The Finke River originates in the MacDonnell Ranges and is formed by the confluence of Davenport and Ormiston creeks, with tributaries including Ellery Creek and the Palmer and Hugh rivers.
- A unique geological feature of the river is antecedence, as it cuts directly through the MacDonnell Ranges, indicating that the river existed before the mountains rose during the Alice Springs Orogeny.

- The river is intermittent in nature, appearing mostly as disconnected waterholes and flowing as a continuous river only after heavy rainfall in Australia's arid interior.

High Seas Treaty Comes into Force

- The High Seas Treaty, formally known as the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Agreement, has entered into force after achieving the required number of ratifications.
- The treaty applies to the high seas, which lie beyond the 200-nautical-mile Exclusive Economic Zones of coastal states and account for nearly two-thirds of the world's oceans.
- These international waters comprise about 95 per cent of the ocean's total volume but have historically lacked a comprehensive legal framework for biodiversity protection.
- A key provision of the treaty is the establishment of Marine Protected Areas in international waters to conserve critical habitats, biodiversity hotspots, and vulnerable marine ecosystems.
- The agreement mandates Environmental Impact Assessments for activities proposed in the high seas that could cause significant harm to marine biodiversity.
- The treaty establishes a Conference of Parties as the main decision-making body, supported by scientific and technical committees to oversee implementation and adapt conservation measures. The High Seas Treaty complements existing frameworks such as the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and supports global biodiversity and climate targets.

Amazon Stingless Bees Become World's First Insects With Legal Rights

- Native Amazonian stingless bees became the first insects in the world to be granted legal rights after Peru's Satipo municipality approved a landmark ordinance in late 2025.
- The ordinance applies within the Avireri VRAEM Biosphere Reserve and recognises stingless bees as rights-bearing entities with the right to exist, flourish, and regenerate in their natural habitats.
- Stingless bees, or meliponines, are primary pollinators responsible for pollinating over 80% of Amazonian flora, including globally important crops such as coffee, cocoa, and avocados.
- The legislation responds to threats from deforestation, climate change, pesticide use, and competition from invasive European honeybees.
- Conservationists view the move as a significant expansion of the global "rights of nature" framework, potentially influencing biodiversity policy worldwide.

APPOINTMENTS

Three Additional Solicitors General Appointed for the Supreme Court

- The Central Government appointed Senior Advocates Davinder Pal Singh, Kanakamedala Ravindra Kumar, and Anil Kaushik as Additional Solicitors General for the Supreme Court of India.
- The appointments were approved by the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet and notified by the Department of Personnel and Training.
- The three advocates have been appointed for a tenure of three years from the date of assumption of charge or until further orders, whichever is earlier. The appointment strengthens the Union Government's legal representation before the Supreme Court.

PV Sindhu Elected Chair of BWF Athletes' Commission

- Indian badminton star PV Sindhu was elected Chair of the BWF Athletes' Commission for the 2026–2029 term.
- As Chair, she will also serve on the Badminton World Federation Council, giving athletes direct representation in governance.
- Sindhu succeeds Greysia Polii, the Tokyo 2020 Olympic gold medallist who retired in 2022.
- She has been a member of the Athletes' Commission since 2017 and an Integrity Ambassador since 2020.
- PV Sindhu remains India's most successful Olympic badminton player and the country's first badminton world champion.

Rakesh Aggarwal Given Additional Charge as NIA Director General

- The Union Ministry of Home Affairs assigned additional charge of Director General of the National Investigation Agency to IPS officer Rakesh Aggarwal on December 30, 2025.
- Aggarwal, a 1994-batch Himachal Pradesh cadre officer, is currently serving as Special Director General of the NIA and will hold the additional charge until a regular appointment is made.
- His appointment followed the premature repatriation of the outgoing NIA chief, Sadanand Vasant Date, to his parent Maharashtra cadre.
- Aggarwal has handled multiple high-profile investigations related to terrorism, radicalisation, cross-border networks, terror financing, and hawala-based funding mechanisms.
- Established under the NIA Act, 2008 after the 26/11 Mumbai attacks, the NIA functions as India's premier agency for investigating terrorism and national security-related offences across jurisdictions.

Centre Appoints New Chief Justices for Kerala, Patna and Meghalaya High Courts

- The Ministry of Law and Justice notified a major judicial reshuffle on January 2, 2026, appointing new Chief Justices to the Kerala, Patna, and Meghalaya High Courts based on recommendations of the Supreme Court Collegium.
- Justice Soumen Sen, who was serving as the Chief Justice of the Meghalaya High Court, was transferred and appointed as the Chief Justice of the Kerala High Court, where he will assume office after the retirement of incumbent Chief Justice Nitin Madhukar Jamdar on January 9, 2026.
- Following Justice Sen's transfer, Justice Revati Prashant Mohite Dere, a senior judge of the Bombay High Court, was appointed as the new Chief Justice of the Meghalaya High Court.
- Justice Sangam Kumar Sahoo, previously a judge of the Orissa High Court, was appointed Chief Justice of the Patna High Court, and will take charge from the date he assumes office.
- These appointments were made by the President of India under Articles 217 and 222 of the Constitution, following the Supreme Court Collegium's meeting held on December 18, 2025.

Delcy Rodríguez Appointed Interim President of Venezuela

- Following the US-led Operation Absolute Resolve and the capture of President Nicolás Maduro, Venezuela's Executive Vice President Delcy Rodríguez was sworn in as interim president under constitutional provisions governing presidential absence.
- The operation involved extensive US military assets and resulted in Maduro and his wife being transported to the United States to face narcoterrorism-related charges.
- Under Articles 233 and 234 of Venezuela's Constitution, the executive vice president automatically assumes presidential duties in cases of temporary or absolute absence.
- Venezuela's Supreme Tribunal of Justice formally endorsed Rodríguez's appointment for an initial 90-day period, with the backing of the armed forces.
- Despite US claims of cooperation, Rodríguez publicly condemned the operation as an illegal kidnapping and demanded Maduro's immediate release.
- Statements by US leadership emphasizing Venezuela's oil reserves have reinforced perceptions that economic and strategic interests played a significant role in the intervention.

Justice A. Muhamed Mustaque Appointed Chief Justice of Sikkim High Court

- The Central Government notified the appointment of Justice A. Muhamed Mustaque as the Chief Justice of the Sikkim High Court, following the recommendation of the Supreme Court Collegium.
- Justice Mustaque was sworn in on January 5, 2026, becoming the 24th Chief Justice of the Sikkim High Court.
- The appointment was made by the President of India under Article 217(1) of the Constitution, in consultation with the Chief Justice of India.
- The recommendation was approved by the Supreme Court Collegium headed by Surya Kant in its meeting held on December 18, 2025.
- The oath of office was administered by Om Prakash Mathur at Lok Bhawan in Gangtok.
- Prior to this elevation, Justice Mustaque served as a judge of the Kerala High Court and had earlier functioned as the Acting Chief Justice of the Kerala High Court in 2024.

A.K. Balasubrahmanian Appointed Chairman of AERB

- The Government of India appointed A. K. Balasubrahmanian as the Chairman of the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board, marking a key leadership transition in India's nuclear regulatory framework.
- AERB was constituted in 1983 under the Atomic Energy Act, 1962, and functions as India's apex authority for nuclear and radiation safety.
- The board regulates nuclear installations, radiation facilities, and radioactive sources to protect public health, worker safety, and the environment.
- AERB formulates safety standards, conducts regulatory inspections, issues licenses, and enforces compliance across India's nuclear ecosystem.
- Although administratively under the Department of Atomic Energy, AERB maintains functional independence in regulatory decision-making.

Justice Revati Mohite Dere Becomes Chief Justice of Meghalaya High Court

- Justice Revati P. Mohite Dere was sworn in as the Chief Justice of the High Court of Meghalaya on January 10, 2026, at a ceremony held at the Durbar Hall of Lok Bhavan, Shillong, where the oath of office was administered by Meghalaya Governor C.H. Vijayashankar.
- Her appointment was recommended by the Supreme Court Collegium headed by Chief Justice Suren Kant on December 18, 2025, and she assumed charge of one of India's smallest High Courts, which has a sanctioned strength of only four judges.
- Justice Mohite Dere became the second woman to serve as Chief Justice of the Meghalaya High Court since its establishment in 2013, with Justice T. Meena Kumari being the first woman to hold the position.
- She previously served at the Bombay High Court, where she was appointed as an Additional Judge on June 21, 2013, and elevated as a permanent Judge on March 2, 2016.
- During her more than twelve years of judicial service at the Bombay High Court, she rose to become the second senior-most judge and was associated with several constitutionally and socially significant benches.

DB Venkatesh Varma Appointed Chair of UN Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters

- Senior Indian diplomat DB Venkatesh Varma was nominated by the UN Secretary-General to chair the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters for the 2026–27 term.
- This appointment marks the first time an Indian has been selected to lead this high-level UN advisory body.
- The Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters provides expert advice on nuclear disarmament, conventional arms control, weapons of mass destruction, and emerging military technologies.
- India's leadership of the ABDM reflects its long-standing advocacy for universal, non-discriminatory, and verifiable nuclear disarmament.
- India continues to follow a doctrine of credible minimum deterrence and a declared no-first-use policy.

New Appointments to ITBP and BSF Leadership

- Shatrujeet Singh Kapoor was appointed as Director General of the Indo-Tibetan Border Police, the force responsible for guarding India's border with China along the Line of Actual Control.
- Praveen Kumar was appointed as Director General of the Border Security Force, which secures India's borders with Pakistan and Bangladesh.
- The ITBP, established in 1962, specialises in high-altitude and mountain warfare along the 3,488-kilometre India-China border.
- The BSF, established in 1965, is India's largest border guarding force with over 2.65 lakh personnel.
- Both appointments come amid heightened border security challenges and ongoing geopolitical tensions.

Shri Praveen Vashista Appointed Vigilance Commissioner

- The President of India appointed Shri Praveen Vashista as Vigilance Commissioner in the Central Vigilance Commission through a warrant dated December 12, 2025.
- Shri Vashista assumed charge on January 16, 2026, after taking oath before the Central Vigilance Commissioner, who was authorized by the President under the Central Vigilance Commission Act, 2003.
- His appointment was made under Section 4(1) of the CVC Act, 2003, following his voluntary retirement from the Indian Police Service.

- The Central Vigilance Commission is a statutory body consisting of a Central Vigilance Commissioner and two Vigilance Commissioners, appointed by the President on the recommendation of a selection committee.
- As Vigilance Commissioner, Shri Vashista will oversee vigilance administration across central government organisations and advise authorities on corruption prevention and disciplinary matters. Vigilance Commissioners hold office for a term of four years or until attaining the age of 65 years, whichever is earlier.

SPORTS

Smriti Mandhana Becomes Second Indian to Reach 10,000 International Runs

- Indian vice-captain Smriti Mandhana became the second Indian woman and fourth overall to cross 10,000 runs in international cricket.
- She achieved the milestone during the fourth T20I against Sri Lanka at Thiruvananthapuram on 28 December 2025.
- Mandhana is the fastest woman cricketer to reach 10,000 runs, achieving the feat in just 281 innings across formats.
- She also holds the record for the fastest ODI century by an Indian, scoring a hundred off 50 balls against Australia.
- Mandhana has now equalled Meg Lanning's record for most international centuries in women's cricket. Her achievements underline her status as one of the most complete batters in modern women's cricket.

Deepti Sharma Becomes Highest Wicket-Taker in Women's T20Is

- Indian all-rounder Deepti Sharma became the highest wicket-taker in Women's T20 Internationals with 152 wickets on December 30, 2025.
- She surpassed Australia's Megan Schutt during the fifth T20I against Sri Lanka at Thiruvananthapuram, dismissing Nilakshika Silva LBW.
- Deepti also became the first cricketer in history to achieve the double milestone of 1,000 runs and 150 wickets in T20 Internationals.
- Her achievements capped a landmark year that included being named Player of the Tournament in India's maiden ICC Women's World Cup triumph.
- Deepti's consistency, longevity, and all-round impact have placed her among the most influential players in the history of women's T20 cricket.

Indian Women's Hockey End 2025 with Asia Cup Silver

- The Indian Women's Hockey Team concluded 2025 with a silver medal at the Women's Asia Cup held in Hangzhou, China, after losing the final 1–4 to the host nation.
- India made a strong start in the final by scoring in the first minute through Navneet Kaur but could not contain sustained Chinese pressure.
- The Asia Cup performance reinforced India's strong position in continental hockey, building on their 2024 Asian Champions Trophy victory.
- However, the year also highlighted challenges at the global level, as India finished last in the 2024-25 FIH Pro League and were relegated to the Nations Cup.
- Veteran forward Navneet Kaur emerged as a consistent performer across tournaments, scoring key goals in both continental and international competitions.

BCCI Signs ₹270 Crore Gemini Sponsorship Deal Ahead of IPL 2026

- The Board of Control for Cricket in India has signed a sponsorship agreement worth ₹270 crore with Google's artificial intelligence platform Gemini for a period of three years ahead of the Indian Premier League 2026.
- The deal reinforces the IPL's position as one of the most commercially valuable sporting leagues in the world, offering unparalleled brand visibility and marketing reach.
- Gemini's entry into Indian cricket sponsorship follows the involvement of ChatGPT as a sponsor of the Women's Premier League, indicating rising competition among global AI platforms for prominence in India's sports ecosystem.
- The participation of artificial intelligence platforms highlights the growing convergence of technology, digital economy, and sports marketing in India.

- Tata Group continues to remain the title sponsor of the IPL, while the tournament attracts multiple domestic and international corporate sponsors across sectors.
- IPL 2026 is scheduled to begin on March 26, 2026, and conclude on May 31, 2026, with matches hosted across several Indian cities.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

World's First ITVISMA Gene Therapy Administered in Abu Dhabi

- Abu Dhabi became the first location globally to administer ITVISMA gene therapy for spinal muscular atrophy in late December 2025.
- The one-time gene therapy was administered at Sheikh Khalifa Medical City under the supervision of the Department of Health – Abu Dhabi.
- ITVISMA replaces the defective SMN1 gene responsible for spinal muscular atrophy using an adeno-associated viral vector.
- The therapy received accelerated approval from the UAE's drug regulator in November 2025.
- The achievement reinforces Abu Dhabi's leadership in genomics, precision medicine, and advanced healthcare for rare diseases.

ISRO Successfully Tests Upgraded SSLV Third Stage

- The Indian Space Research Organisation successfully conducted a static test of the upgraded third stage (SS3) of the Small Satellite Launch Vehicle on December 30, 2025.
- The test was conducted at the Solid Motor Static Test Facility of Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota, and lasted 108 seconds.
- The upgraded SS3 features a lightweight carbon-epoxy motor casing, reducing inert mass and increasing payload capacity by approximately 90 kilograms.
- SSLV is designed as a three-stage all-solid launch vehicle to meet launch-on-demand requirements for small satellites with rapid turnaround.
- The successful test qualifies the upgraded stage for flight operations and aligns with Atmanirbhar Bharat objectives through indigenous development of advanced propulsion technologies.

DRDO Successfully Tests Pralay Missile in Salvo Mode

- The Defence Research and Development Organisation successfully conducted a consecutive salvo launch of two Pralay tactical ballistic missiles from the same launcher off the coast of Odisha.
- The test demonstrated the missile's reliability, precision, and operational readiness, with both missiles following their intended quasi-ballistic trajectories.
- Pralay is a solid-fuel, surface-to-surface missile with a range of 150–500 km and the capability to carry multiple conventional warhead types.
- Its road-mobile, canisterised configuration allows rapid deployment, with launch readiness achieved in under 10 minutes.
- The successful test enhances India's conventional deterrence and strengthens its tactical strike capabilities.

Hyderabad Start-ups Build Mini Satellites for ISRO Launches

- Hyderabad-based startup TakeMe2Space launched India's first AI-enabled "thinking satellite," MOI-TD, on ISRO's SSLV mission in December 2025, enabling in-orbit data inference rather than mere data collection.
- Founded by Ronak Samantray, TakeMe2Space aims to democratise access to space by developing modular satellite platforms and a "pay-per-use" satellite playground in low Earth orbit.
- The company had earlier validated its Radiation Shielding Experimental Module on ISRO's POEM platform in January 2024, demonstrating private sector readiness for in-orbit experimentation.
- Another Hyderabad startup, EON Space Labs, developed MIRA, India's lightest indigenous space telescope weighing just 502 grams, which successfully completed NASA-standard thermo-vacuum testing.
- Hyderabad is emerging as a major space-tech hub alongside companies like Skyroot Aerospace and Dhruva Space, reflecting rapid growth of India's private commercial space ecosystem.

Suryastra Long-Range Rocket Launcher

- The Indian Army signed a ₹292.69 crore emergency procurement contract with Pune-based NIBE Limited on January 3, 2026, for the indigenous Suryastra long-range rocket launcher system.
- The contract was concluded under Emergency Procurement Powers, which allow fast-tracked acquisitions up to ₹300 crore to address urgent operational requirements.
- Suryastra is India's first Made-in-India universal multi-calibre rocket launcher capable of firing multiple types of rockets and guided munitions from a single platform.
- The system offers long-range precision strike capability, with engagement ranges extending up to 150 km and potentially 300 km, significantly enhancing India's artillery firepower.
- The launcher has been developed through a technology collaboration with Elbit Systems, based on the proven Precise and Universal Launching System architecture, and customized for Indian operational needs.
- The system is mounted on a Bharat Earth Movers Limited high-mobility 6×6 vehicle, providing excellent off-road mobility and rapid redeployment across varied terrains.

India Becomes First Country to Commercially Produce Bio-Bitumen

- India became the world's first country to achieve commercial-scale production of bio-bitumen, marking a major global milestone in sustainable infrastructure and green construction technology.
- Bio-bitumen is an eco-friendly alternative to conventional petroleum-based bitumen, produced from renewable organic sources such as agricultural waste, biomass, lignin, and vegetable oils instead of crude oil derivatives.
- The innovation significantly reduces carbon emissions, lowers dependence on fossil fuels, and supports circular economy principles by converting agricultural and industrial waste into value-added infrastructure material.
- The bio-bitumen is produced using indigenously developed Indian technology that converts renewable biomass into high-quality binding material suitable for road construction.
- Raw materials include rice husk, sugarcane bagasse, forestry waste, and industrial lignin by-products, all of which are abundantly available in India.

UN Declares 2026 International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists

- The United Nations declared 2026 as the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists to highlight the ecological, economic, and cultural importance of rangelands and pastoral communities.
- Rangelands include grasslands, savannas, shrublands, and tundra, covering approximately 54 percent of the world's land surface.
- These ecosystems support over one billion people globally, including pastoralists, agro-pastoralists, and Indigenous communities, while storing carbon and sustaining biodiversity.
- Pastoralist communities depend on mobile livestock grazing systems adapted over centuries to variable and harsh environments.
- Rangelands play a crucial role in global food security by producing meat, milk, and animal products in regions unsuitable for crop farming.
- In India, rangelands across Rajasthan, Gujarat, and Himalayan regions support communities such as Rabaris, Gujjars, Bhotiyas, and Gaddis. The observance aligns with multiple Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDGs 1, 2, 13, and 15.

Keyi Panyor to Become India's First Bio-Happy District

- Keyi Panyor in Arunachal Pradesh has been designated as India's first Bio-Happy District, pioneering an integrated model of biodiversity conservation and human well-being.
- Keyi Panyor became the 26th district of Arunachal Pradesh on March 1, 2024, and is known for its rich biodiversity, pristine forests, and indigenous cultures.
- The initiative revives the concept of "Biohappiness" coined by M. S. Swaminathan, which links ecological conservation with nutrition, health, and livelihoods.
- The project is being implemented by the M. S. Swaminathan Research Foundation in collaboration with the district administration.
- The initiative will study local farming systems, agro-biodiversity, traditional knowledge, and ecological landscapes to guide sustainable development policies.

Hubble Discovers Starless Dark Matter Cloud Near Messier 94

- The Hubble Space Telescope discovered a rare starless dark matter cloud near the spiral galaxy Messier 94, challenging conventional models of galaxy formation.
- Messier 94 is located approximately 16 million light-years from Earth in the constellation Canes Venatici and is known for its ringed structure and active galactic nucleus.
- Dark matter constitutes about 85 percent of the universe's total matter content and does not emit, absorb, or reflect light, making it detectable only through gravitational effects.
- The newly identified cloud is unusual because it contains dark matter without any associated stars or visible galaxies, unlike typical dark matter halos that surround luminous matter.
- Hubble detected the cloud through gravitational lensing, a phenomenon in which dark matter bends and distorts light from background objects, allowing astronomers to map invisible mass distributions.

Rajnath Singh Commissions ICGS Samudra Pratap

- Defence Minister Rajnath Singh commissioned Indian Coast Guard Ship (ICGS) Samudra Pratap at Goa Shipyard Limited, marking the induction of India's first indigenously designed and built pollution control vessel.
- ICGS Samudra Pratap is a hybrid, sea-going pollution control vessel constructed entirely in India, with more than 60 percent indigenous content, representing a major milestone in Atmanirbhar Bharat in maritime capability.
- Built by Goa Shipyard Limited under a ₹583 crore contract signed in June 2021, the vessel is the first of two pollution control ships being constructed for the Indian Coast Guard.
- The ship displaces approximately 4,170 tonnes, has a length of 114.5 metres and a beam of 16.5 metres, and is capable of achieving speeds exceeding 22 knots.
- Samudra Pratap is equipped with advanced pollution detection systems, oil spill recovery equipment, dedicated pollution response boats, and modern firefighting systems to handle marine environmental emergencies.

One Satellite Briefly Survives PSLV-C62 Mission Failure

- The PSLV-C62 mission suffered a critical anomaly during launch, preventing its satellites from reaching their intended orbits.
- Due to the malfunction, multiple satellites were deployed into incorrect orbital trajectories, severely limiting their operational viability.
- Despite the failure, one satellite managed to activate and transmit data briefly before communication was lost.
- The brief transmission provided valuable telemetry, demonstrating the robustness of satellite systems even under adverse launch conditions.
- The Indian Space Research Organisation has initiated a detailed failure analysis to determine the root cause of the anomaly.
- The investigation will rely on launch vehicle telemetry and satellite data to improve future mission reliability.

BOOKS AND AUTHORS

Goa CM Pramod Sawant launches 2nd edition of *History That India Ignored*

- In January 2026, Pramod Sawant launched the second edition of the book *History That India Ignored* in Panaji.
- The book is authored by Prem Prakash, who is described as a veteran journalist and Chairman of Asian News International.
- The work was first published in April 2025 by Vitasta Publishing Private Limited, and the second edition aimed to bring renewed attention to its themes.
- The book focuses on lesser-known dimensions of India's freedom struggle, including unsung heroes and revolutionary movements that are often underrepresented in mainstream narratives.
- It includes discussion of the Indian National Army associated with Subhas Chandra Bose and presents armed resistance as an additional strand alongside political and non-violent mobilization.
- It also references early and significant episodes such as the Vellore Mutiny and the Battle of Imphal, and it is presented as useful for competitive exam preparation due to its examinable topics.

Book on Droupadi Murmu released by a sanitation worker at Andhra University

- A book on Droupadi Murmu was released at Andhra University in Visakhapatnam, and the release was carried out by Lakshmamma, a woman sanitation worker associated with road-cleaning work there.
- The book's title is *Agni Sarassulo Vikasinchina Kamalam Droupadi Murmu*, and it is authored by Yarlagadda Lakshmi Prasad, who is also described as president of the Viswa Hindi Parishad.
- The title is described as metaphorical, conveying the idea of a lotus blooming amid hardship to reflect the President's rise through struggle to the highest constitutional office.
- The event drew attention because it was conducted in an informal setting—under a tree on the university campus—rather than in a conventional auditorium or ceremonial hall.
- The choice of a sanitation worker to release the book was presented as a deliberate gesture to emphasize equality, dignity of labour, humility, and inclusiveness in public life.
- The author stated that the President's life is intended as inspiration for women, tribal communities, and marginalized sections, and the book launch was framed as reinforcing respect for every citizen's dignity.

C. P. Radhakrishnan releases Hindi edition of *Palanivelu GUTS*

- C. P. Radhakrishnan released the Hindi edition of *Palanivelu GUTS* at a book event in New Delhi.
- The book is the autobiography of C. Palanivelu, described as a renowned surgeon, and it presents his professional journey from humble beginnings to wider recognition.
- The Vice-President described the autobiography as an account highlighting courage, perseverance, and ethical innovation in medicine, along with a message of individual responsibility and giving back to society.
- The Hindi edition was presented as significant because it expands access to a wider readership, enabling more people to engage with the author's life story and ideas.
- The event highlighted Dr. Palanivelu's role in advancing laparoscopic and robotic surgery, including the statement that he introduced laparoscopic surgery in Coimbatore in 1991 and set up an early centre for such procedures in South India.
- It also referenced his efforts to train surgeons and promote cost-effective techniques, linking the narrative to broader themes of service, mentorship, and improved access to healthcare.

IMPORTANT DAYS

1) 126th Birth Anniversary of Udham Singh

- The 126th birth anniversary of Udham Singh is observed as a remembrance of a revolutionary associated with avenging the Jallianwala Bagh massacre and symbolising resistance to colonial injustice.
- He was born on 26 December 1899 in Sunam in Sangrur district of Punjab and, after being orphaned early, grew up in the Central Khalsa Orphanage in Amritsar.
- A defining episode in his life is described as his presence during the Jallianwala Bagh massacre on 13 April 1919, when troops under Reginald Dyer fired on an unarmed gathering, causing large-scale deaths and injuries
- He is stated to have joined the Ghadar Party in 1924, travelled to connect with revolutionaries abroad, and was arrested in 1927 for possession of firearms, leading to a five-year imprisonment.
- On 13 March 1940, he assassinated Michael O'Dwyer at Caxton Hall in London, was tried and sentenced to death, and was executed on 31 July 1940 at Pentonville Prison, later being remembered as Shaheed-i-Azam Udham Singh.

2) 194th Birth Anniversary of Savitribai Phule

- The 194th birth anniversary of Savitribai Phule recalls her role as India's first woman teacher and as a pioneering reformer who challenged caste and gender discrimination through education.
- She was born on 3 January 1831 in Naigaon, Maharashtra, belonged to the Mali community, and was married at a young age to Jyotirao Phule, who supported her education at home amid social opposition.
- She co-founded the first girls' school in Pune in 1848 and is described as becoming the first female teacher and headmistress in India.
- The account notes that she faced harassment, insults, and physical attacks while going to school, but continued teaching to expand education for girls and marginalised communities.

- Her social reform work is described as including efforts for Dalit upliftment, opposition to child marriage, support for widow remarriage, and the opening of shelters for widows and orphaned children, with her birth anniversary observed as Women's Education Day in Maharashtra.

3) World Braille Day 2026

- World Braille Day is observed on 4 January to highlight the importance of Braille for education, equality, independence, and dignity for persons with visual impairments.
- The day marks the birth anniversary of Louis Braille, who lost his eyesight early and developed a tactile reading-and-writing system based on six raised dots.
- The text notes that the United Nations declared 4 January as World Braille Day in 2019, reinforcing Braille as a right linked to inclusion rather than merely an aid.
- Braille is described as foundational for literacy and learning across subjects, while also supporting employment and public safety through usage on medicine labels, elevator buttons, and public signage.
- The note adds that Braille remains relevant despite screen readers and voice assistants because tactile reading supports education and skill development, and because access gaps persist in textbooks, inclusive classrooms, and accessibility implementation.

4) Pravasi Bharatiya Divas 2026

- Pravasi Bharatiya Divas is observed on 9 January 2026 to recognise the contribution of the overseas Indian community and to mark Mahatma Gandhi's return to India from South Africa on 9 January 1915.
- The programme began in 2003 and is described as aiming to strengthen ties with a diaspora estimated at over 35 million NRIs and PIOs.
- Since 2015, the conventions have been held biennially, and 2026 is described as a non-convention year in which large central events are not expected while regional events and embassy-level programmes may occur.
- The summary lists recent editions as Indore in 2023 (17th) and Bhubaneswar in 2025 (18th), with the 19th convention expected in 2027.
- The note highlights diaspora contributions through remittances, investment, entrepreneurship, cultural links, and policy dialogue on issues such as OCI cards, voting, property, and skill mobility, and it also mentions the Pravasi Bharatiya Express tourist train initiative operated by IRCTC under the Pravasi Teerth Darshan Yojana.

5) World Hindi Day 2026

- World Hindi Day is observed globally on 10 January 2026 to promote Hindi's international presence and to highlight its cultural and contemporary relevance.
- The first official observance is stated to have taken place on 10 January 2006 during the tenure of Manmohan Singh.
- The date is linked in the text to 10 January 1949, described as the first time Hindi was used in the United Nations General Assembly.
- The account notes that India has been organising World Hindi Conferences since 1975 through the Ministry of External Affairs in countries with significant Hindi-speaking communities.
- The note describes the day as encouraging Hindi's use in diplomacy, education, research, literature, cultural exchange, and digital platforms, while also mentioning that an official theme for 2026 had not been announced in the provided text.

6) National Youth Day 2026

- National Youth Day is celebrated across India on 12 January to commemorate the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda and to inspire youth towards values and nation-building.
- The Government of India declared 12 January as National Youth Day in 1984 to connect young people with Vivekananda's ideals and encourage their participation in development and civic life.
- The text recounts Vivekananda's early life as Narendra Nath Dutta in Kolkata and notes his association with Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, followed by extensive travel across India that shaped his social and spiritual outlook.
- It highlights his international role in presenting Indian philosophies and refers to his 1893 address at the Parliament of the World's Religions in Chicago as a defining moment in global recognition.

- The note describes nationwide observances through school and college programmes, youth conferences, leadership workshops, cultural events, and service activities by groups such as NCC and NSS, with the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports extending celebrations into a broader National Youth Week.

7) Indian Army Day 2026

- Indian Army Day is observed on 15 January to honour the courage, discipline, and sacrifice of India's soldiers and to mark a historic post-independence military leadership transition.
- The day commemorates 15 January 1949, when Gen K. M. Cariappa took over as the first Indian Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army, succeeding Francis Roy Bucher.
- The 2026 observance is described as special because the Army Day Parade is held in Jaipur, and it is stated to be the first time the parade takes place in a public area outside a cantonment.
- The parade venue is noted as Mahal Road, Jagatpura, Jaipur, and the account mentions that recent parades rotated across cities such as Bengaluru (2023), Lucknow (2024), and Pune (2025).
- The highlights include the participation of multiple Army entities, display of modern platforms and aerial elements, and a first public appearance of a newly raised Bhairav Battalion described as positioned for drone-enabled and multi-domain operations following Operation Sindoor.

8) National Startup Day 2026

- National Startup Day is observed on 16 January 2026 to mark 10 years of the Startup India Initiative, described as a major driver of India's innovation-led growth.
- The note states that, as of December 2025, India hosts over two lakh startups, with nearly half emerging from Tier II and Tier III cities alongside major hubs like Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Mumbai, and Delhi-NCR.
- It describes startups as contributing to technology adoption, productivity, jobs, financial inclusion, and solutions across sectors such as agri-tech, telemedicine, microfinance, tourism, and ed-tech.
- It further states that over 45% of recognised startups have at least one woman director or partner, presenting this as an indicator of inclusive entrepreneurship.
- The summary outlines key support mechanisms including DPIIT-led Startup India, the ₹10,000 crore Fund of Funds for Startups managed by SIDBI, the Startup India Seed Fund Scheme, the Credit Guarantee Scheme for Startups, and wider ecosystem programmes like Atal Tinkering Labs and rural enterprise support under SVEP.

9) Parakram Diwas 2026

- Parakram Diwas is observed on 23 January 2026 to honour Subhas Chandra Bose and to commemorate his birth anniversary as a "Day of Courage."
- The note states that he was born on 23 January 1897 in Cuttack, Odisha, cleared the ICS exam, and resigned to join India's freedom struggle.
- It describes him as a leader associated with the Indian National Army and cites slogans and greetings linked to him, including "Delhi Chalo" and "Jai Hind."
- The Government of India is stated to have announced Parakram Diwas on 19 January 2021 during the 125th birth anniversary celebrations, after which it has been observed annually.
- The text describes typical observances through patriotic and educational programmes in schools and institutions, including speeches, essays, debates, and cultural events, especially in places such as Kolkata, Delhi, and Cuttack.

10) National Voters Day 2026

- National Voters Day is observed on 25 January 2026 and is described as India's 16th National Voters Day, aimed at strengthening democratic participation and informed voting.
- The date marks the foundation day of the Election Commission of India, established on 25 January 1950, just before India became a Republic.
- The observance began in 2011 as an initiative to increase voter awareness and address low registration, particularly among young and first-time voters.
- The stated objectives include promoting voter education, increasing enrolment on electoral rolls, encouraging youth participation, and improving accessibility and trust in the electoral process.

- The note describes activities such as registration camps, pledge ceremonies, school and college competitions, distribution of voter ID cards to newly enrolled voters, and outreach campaigns coordinated by the Election Commission with state authorities and civil society.

11) National Tourism Day 2026

- National Tourism Day is observed in India on 25 January 2026 to highlight tourism's role in economic growth, employment, heritage preservation, and cultural exchange.
- The note describes the day as encouraging responsible and sustainable travel practices while promoting awareness about India's diverse attractions.
- It states that India's focus on tourism developed over time to showcase monuments, landscapes, wildlife, traditions, and festivals to both domestic and international travellers.
- The significance is described in terms of supporting allied sectors such as hospitality, transport, handicrafts, food services, tour operations, and local businesses, while also generating resources for conserving heritage sites and cultural assets.
- The account lists common observances such as cultural programmes, exhibitions, seminars, workshops, awareness drives, travel fairs, and recognition for contributions to tourism, alongside messaging that tourism strengthens India's global identity through varied regions and landmark destinations.

RANKINGS

Hurun India Rich List 2025: Jayshree Ullal Tops Indian Professional CEOs

- The Hurun India Rich List 2025 has ranked Jayshree Ullal as the richest Indian professional manager in the world, with an estimated net worth of ₹50,170 crore, placing her ahead of Satya Nadella and Sundar Pichai.
- The list, as presented, shows Satya Nadella with a net worth of ₹9,770 crore and Sundar Pichai with ₹5,810 crore, with Pichai stated to be ranked seventh among Indian-origin executives.
- The sharp difference in their net worth is attributed in the text to equity ownership and long-term leadership in a high-growth company, rather than conventional executive compensation structures.
- Jayshree Ullal is described as President and CEO of Arista Networks since 2008, and the account highlights that she joined when the company was very small and operating from a law firm basement
- Her professional trajectory is described as including early work in the semiconductor industry and a major career phase at Cisco, where she helped build the switching division into one of the company's most profitable verticals.
- The write-up presents her rise as significant for India's global technology footprint and for women's leadership in a traditionally male-dominated sector, while linking her wealth creation to innovation leadership and equity participation.

2) Bengaluru Ranked Best Indian City for Women in 2025

- Bengaluru has been ranked the best city for women in India in 2025 in a nationwide City Inclusion Index study released by Avtar, a Chennai-based workplace inclusion firm, covering 125 Indian cities.
- The top five cities listed in the study are Bengaluru with a score of 53.29, Chennai with 49.86, Pune with 46.27, followed by Hyderabad and Mumbai, indicating strong performance by southern and western metros.
- The index evaluates women's inclusion through two pillars, namely Social Inclusion and Industrial Inclusion, which together assess the ecosystem for women's safety, opportunities, and career resilience.
- Social inclusion is described as measuring safety and security, access to health and education, mobility and transport, and overall liveability, while industrial inclusion is described as measuring formal employment availability, skilling opportunities, workplace inclusion practices, and women's workforce participation.
- The text notes that Chennai ranks highest on social inclusion, whereas Bengaluru leads on industrial inclusion due to a strong corporate ecosystem, a high concentration of formal sector jobs, and the dominance of technology and services industries.
- The top ten cities identified are Bengaluru, Chennai, Pune, Hyderabad, Mumbai, Gurugram, Kolkata, Ahmedabad, Thiruvananthapuram, and Coimbatore, and the study emphasizes that women-friendly cities combine inclusive social systems with inclusive industries.

3) IREDA Secures 'Excellent' MoU Rating for the Fifth Consecutive Year

- Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency Ltd. (IREDA) has secured an 'Excellent' rating in its Memorandum of Understanding evaluation with the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy for FY 2024–25, scoring 96.42 out of 100.
- The MoU rating is described as an annual evaluation mechanism for government enterprises that measures performance parameters such as work output, operational efficiency, and financial discipline.
- The text states that this is the fifth consecutive year in which IREDA has received an 'Excellent' rating, which is presented as evidence of sustained operational efficiency, financial discipline, and good corporate governance.
- It also notes that IREDA had received a 'Fair' rating of 45.83 in FY 2019–20, after which reforms were undertaken to improve systems, processes, and organisational work culture.
- The Chairman and Managing Director, Pradip Kumar Das, described the achievement as a matter of pride and credited employee dedication, stakeholder trust, and support from the Government of India while reaffirming IREDA's commitment to strengthening India's clean energy ecosystem.
- The CMD also expressed gratitude to Union Minister Pralhad Joshi, Minister of State Shripad Yesso Naik, MNRE Secretary Santosh Kumar Sarangi, and the Board of Directors for their guidance and support.

4) Henley Passport Index 2026: India Ranked 80th with Access to 55 Destinations

- The Henley Passport Index 2026 has ranked India at the 80th position globally, stating that Indian passport holders have access to 55 destinations through visa-free, visa-on-arrival, or e-visa arrangements.
- The text notes that this represents an improvement from the previous year's rank of 85, while also stating that substantial limitations remain for popular destinations in Europe and North America
- The index is described as being compiled by Henley & Partners and using International Air Transport Association data to measure how many destinations passport holders can access without needing a prior visa.
- The 2026 edition is described as covering 277 countries and territories, enabling comparative assessment of travel freedom across sovereign states, regions, and special administrative zones.
- The write-up states that India shares the 80th position with Nigeria and Algeria, and it also notes that Bangladesh and Pakistan rank lower, indicating a regional mobility gap within South Asia.
- The top-ranked passport is stated to be Singapore with access to 192 destinations, while Afghanistan is described as the weakest at rank 101 with access to 24 destinations, creating a stated gap of 168 destinations between the highest and lowest.

5) NITI Aayog's Export Preparedness Index 2024: Maharashtra Leads Large States

- NITI Aayog has released the Export Preparedness Index 2024, which ranks Indian States and Union Territories on export readiness and performance across the period FY22 to FY24.
- The index ranks Maharashtra first among large states, followed by Tamil Nadu and Gujarat, and it is presented as highlighting how state-level ecosystems influence national export competitiveness.
- The framework is described as using four pillars, thirteen sub-pillars, and seventy indicators, with weightage assigned to export infrastructure, business ecosystem, policy and governance, and export performance.
- States and Union Territories are grouped into large states, small states, north-eastern states, and union territories, and each group is classified into leaders, challengers, and aspirers for comparative learning and benchmarking.
- Among large states, the leaders listed include Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, and Andhra Pradesh, while challengers include Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, Kerala, and West Bengal, and aspirers include Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Bihar, and Jharkhand.
- The summary states that district-level focus is a notable feature of EPI 2024, and it quotes B V R Subrahmanyam's emphasis that strong domestic foundations and competitive district ecosystems are critical as India expands free trade and economic partnership engagements.

6) WEF Global Risks Report 2026: Key Risks in the Next 2 and 10 Years

- The World Economic Forum's Global Risks Report 2026, described as the 21st edition, presents a picture of rising global fragmentation and an "Age of Competition" marked by intensified rivalry through trade restrictions, sanctions, technology controls, and information warfare.

- The report defines a global risk as a threat or event capable of causing major negative impact on a large scale across populations, economies, and ecological systems, and it is described as being based primarily on expert surveys across sectors.
- It identifies geoeconomic confrontation as the most likely crisis trigger in 2026, describing it as the use of economic tools such as sanctions, tariffs, technology export controls, and supply-chain restrictions as instruments of strategic power.
- Alongside this, the report highlights state-based armed conflict and cyber insecurity as significant risks, noting the potential for infrastructure disruption, price instability, displacement, and threats to critical systems like banking, grids, transport, hospitals, and government databases.
- It also warns about misinformation and disinformation driving polarization and institutional distrust, while stating that adverse AI outcomes, including deepfakes, job displacement, bias, surveillance, and autonomous weapons, are among major long-term concerns.
- The long-term outlook is described as dominated by environmental risks such as extreme weather and biodiversity loss, and the report also presents inequality as a highly interconnected risk that can amplify unrest, insecurity, and governance challenges in a multipolar or fragmented world order.

7) Responsible Nations Index 2026: India Ranked 16th Among 154 Countries

- India has been ranked 16th among 154 countries in the Responsible Nations Index 2026, which is described as a framework launched by the World Intellectual Foundation to assess responsible national conduct beyond economic size.
- The index is described as measuring responsibility in three dimensions: internal responsibility towards citizens, environmental responsibility in resource management and climate action, and external responsibility towards peace, cooperation, and global stability.
- India's rank is presented as reflecting balanced performance across governance, environmental efforts, and global engagement, and the text notes that developing countries can demonstrate strong social and ethical outcomes despite resource constraints.
- The country-wise table in the text lists Singapore as rank 1 with a score of 0.61945, while India is listed at rank 16 with a score of 0.551513, followed by France at rank 17 with 0.54835.
- The bottom-ranked countries listed include Afghanistan at rank 145 and the Central African Republic at rank 154 with a score of 0.35715, indicating a wide spread in index outcomes.
- The index is described as using transparent, globally sourced data and multiple indicators to support comparability, with an intent to promote accountability and people-centric, sustainable policy approaches.

8) Asia Manufacturing Index 2026: India Ranked 6th Among 11 Asian Economies

- India has been ranked sixth among eleven Asian countries in the Asia Manufacturing Index 2026, which is described as an annual assessment released by Dezan Shira & Associates headquartered in Hong Kong.
- The index evaluates manufacturing competitiveness using eight pillars—economy, political risk, business environment, international trade, tax policy, infrastructure, workforce, and innovation—further broken into forty-three sub-parameters.
- India's mid-table position is described as reflecting strengths such as a large domestic market, improving infrastructure, and a growing workforce, while also highlighting gaps in execution speed, policy stability, and innovation depth.
- The text states that China retained the top position, Malaysia rose to second for the first time, Vietnam slipped to third, and Singapore moved to fourth ahead of South Korea at fifth, indicating intensified regional competition.
- It suggests that continued focus on ease of doing business, logistics efficiency, skill development, and technology adoption is important for India to improve its ranking in future editions.
- The summary frames the index as a comparative indicator of long-term manufacturing readiness and competitiveness across major Asian economies.

9) Numbeo Safety Index 2026: Qingdao Safest Globally, Mangaluru Safest in India

- The Numbeo Safety Index 2026 rankings, covering 304 cities worldwide, identify Qingdao in China as the world's safest city and Mangaluru in Karnataka as the safest city in India based on safety perception scores.

- The index is described as an annual crowd-sourced ranking by Numbeo that measures perceived safety and crime levels using survey responses on factors such as walking alone at night, violent crime, property crime, and overall security.
- It explains that responses are scored from -2 to +2, processed statistically to reduce bias, and converted into a 0 to 100 safety score, with cities grouped into categories from very low to very high safety.
- The table provided lists Mangaluru with a safety score of 74.4 and a global rank of 46, followed by Ahmedabad at 68.5, Jaipur at 65.3, Coimbatore at 62.0, and Thiruvananthapuram at 61.0 among Indian cities.
- India's overall country ranking is stated as 70th globally with a safety score of 55.8 in the moderate category, while Delhi is cited as ranking 255th globally, indicating internal variation between cities.
- The note states that Numbeo was established in 2009 and is headquartered in Belgrade, Serbia, and it describes the platform as the world's largest crowd-sourced database for multiple quality-of-life indicators, naming Mladen Adamovic as CEO.

SUMMIT's AND MOU's

5th National Conference of Chief Secretaries Chaired by the Prime Minister

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi chaired the 5th National Conference of Chief Secretaries in New Delhi, with the three-day conference beginning on December 26, 2025.
- The conference aims to deepen Centre–State cooperation through structured dialogue focused on long-term national development and cooperative federalism.
- It serves as a high-level administrative platform bringing together Chief Secretaries of States and Union Territories along with senior central government officials.
- The theme of the conference, "Human Capital for Viksit Bharat," emphasizes the role of health, education, skills, and empowerment in national development.
- Discussions focused on early childhood education, school education, skilling, higher education, and sports as key pillars for leveraging India's demographic dividend.
- Special sessions addressed governance priorities such as deregulation, technology in governance, AgriStack, tourism development, Atmanirbhar Bharat, and post-LWE development strategies.

Rajasthan Hosts Regional AI Impact Conference 2026

- The Rajasthan Regional AI Impact Conference was held on January 6, 2026, as a key step toward advancing inclusive, ethical, and responsible artificial intelligence in India.
- The conference brought together policymakers, industry experts, startups, academia, and government officials to discuss AI applications in governance, infrastructure, innovation, and workforce development.
- It served as a precursor to the India AI Impact Summit 2026 scheduled for February 15–20, 2026, highlighting strong Centre–State collaboration in AI policy.
- Key announcements included a programme to train one million youth in AI skills and a ₹10,000 crore commitment under the India AI Mission.
- Rajasthan launched its AI and Machine Learning Policy 2026 along with an AI portal to promote transparent, accountable, and innovation-driven AI adoption.
- Multiple national and state-level initiatives and MoUs were announced to strengthen AI literacy, skilling, institutional collaboration, and the regional AI ecosystem.

India International Conference on Democracy and Election Management (IICDEM) 2026

- The Election Commission of India will host the inaugural IICDEM 2026 from January 21 to 23, 2026, at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi.
- The conference aims to position India as a global hub for dialogue and cooperation on democratic governance and election management.
- Nearly 100 international delegates from Election Management Bodies, along with academic experts and international organizations, are expected to participate.
- The theme, "Democracy for an inclusive, peaceful, resilient and sustainable world," reflects India's emphasis on democratic resilience and inclusive governance.

- The programme includes plenary sessions, thematic discussions, working groups, bilateral meetings, and the launch of India's electoral information network.
- The event coincides with India's chairship of the Council of Member States of International IDEA for 2026, reinforcing India's leadership in global democratic cooperation.

National Textiles Ministers' Conference 2026 Held in Guwahati

- The National Textiles Ministers' Conference 2026 commenced on January 8 in Guwahati, jointly organized by the Ministry of Textiles and the Government of Assam.
- The two-day conference brings together textile ministers and senior officials from all States and Union Territories to shape India's textile sector strategy.
- Held under the theme "India's Textiles: Weaving Growth, Heritage & Innovation," the conference reflects the guiding ethos of "Vikas Bhi, Virasat Bhi."
- Discussions focused on infrastructure development, export expansion, raw materials, technical textiles, new-age fibres, and sustainability in textile production.
- Special emphasis was placed on PM MITRA Parks to create integrated textile value chains and boost India's global competitiveness.
- A dedicated conclave highlighted the textile potential of the North-Eastern region, including silk varieties, bamboo-based textiles, and women-led enterprises.

India Launches Raisina Science Diplomacy Initiative 2026

- India launched the Raisina Science Diplomacy Initiative 2026 to strengthen the integration of science, technology, and foreign policy.
- The initiative is jointly led by the Office of the Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India and the Observer Research Foundation.
- It will operate alongside the Raisina Dialogue from March 5 to 7, 2026, in New Delhi, embedding science diplomacy into India's flagship geopolitical forum.
- The initiative focuses on governance of emerging technologies, research security, technology control regimes, and equitable participation in global standards.
- It aims to engage scientists, policymakers, industry leaders, startups, and international counterparts through plenary sessions and expert deliberations.
- The initiative reflects India's intent to bridge scientific cooperation with diplomatic strategy in a multipolar and technology-driven world.

Bharat Electricity Summit 2026 to Be Held in New Delhi

- India will host the Bharat Electricity Summit 2026 from March 19 to 22 at Yashobhoomi, New Delhi, as announced by the Union Power Minister.
- The summit is a global conference-cum-exhibition focused on clean energy transition, resilient electricity systems, and sustainable power infrastructure.
- Held under the theme "Electrifying Growth, Empowering Sustainability, Connecting Globally," it highlights India's leadership in the energy transition.
- The event will feature over 50 conference sessions, more than 500 exhibitors, and participation from policymakers, industry leaders, and global experts.
- Key discussions will cover clean energy deployment, grid resilience, battery storage, energy efficiency, and innovation in electricity systems.
- A dedicated Buyer–Seller Meet will facilitate global partnerships, investment mobilization, and cross-border collaboration in the power sector.

India AI Impact Summit 2026: Shaping Inclusive and Responsible AI

- India will host the India AI Impact Summit 2026 from February 16 to 20 at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi, as the first global AI summit in the Global South.
- The summit focuses on inclusive, ethical, and people-centric AI aligned with national initiatives such as Digital India and the IndiaAI Mission.

- It is guided by the principles of People, Planet, and Progress and structured around seven thematic Chakras covering governance, innovation, inclusion, and growth.
- The summit will showcase AI applications in healthcare, agriculture, education, finance, and governance to support development outcomes.
- Major highlights include the India AI Impact Expo, AI Compendium, and flagship challenges promoting youth, women-led innovation, and startups.
- Anchored by MeitY and supported by national digital institutions, the summit aims to shape global AI governance from a development-oriented perspective.

Davos 2026: Key Takeaways from the World Economic Forum

- The World Economic Forum Annual Meeting 2026 in Davos was held under the theme "A Spirit of Dialogue," bringing together nearly 3,000 global leaders.
- Discussions emphasized dialogue and multilateral cooperation amid rising geopolitical tensions, technological disruption, and economic uncertainty.
- Artificial intelligence, trade realignments, workforce reskilling, and technology governance emerged as central themes of the summit.
- Leaders highlighted the need for balanced AI regulation that supports innovation while addressing ethical risks, misinformation, and job displacement.
- Global trade discussions focused on resilient supply chains, strategic partnerships, and reduced overdependence on single regions.
- The summit reinforced the importance of continuous dialogue as a tool for managing global challenges despite persistent divisions.

ECONOMY

India Appointed Vice Chair of the Kimberley Process

- India has been appointed as the Vice Chair of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme for the year 2025.
- As per established practice, India is expected to assume the Chair of the Kimberley Process in 2026.
- The Kimberley Process was established in 2003 to prevent conflict diamonds from entering the global diamond trade.
- India is the world's largest diamond cutting and polishing centre, processing nearly 90 percent of rough diamonds by volume.
- Surat in Gujarat serves as the primary hub of India's diamond industry and employs a large skilled workforce.
- India previously chaired the Kimberley Process in 2008 and played a role in strengthening compliance mechanisms.

India Becomes World's Fourth Largest Economy, Surpasses Japan

- India officially surpassed Japan to become the world's fourth-largest economy in nominal GDP terms in calendar year 2025, with an estimated GDP of approximately $4.18 trillion.
- The announcement was confirmed by NITI Aayog CEO B.V.R. Subrahmanyam, citing IMF data from the World Economic Outlook.
- India now ranks behind only the United States, China, and Germany, having doubled its GDP from $2 trillion in 2014 to over $4 trillion in 2025.
- Real GDP growth reached 8.2% in Q2 FY 2025-26, marking a six-quarter high and reinforcing India's position as the fastest-growing major economy.
- Structural reforms such as removal of over 47,000 compliances, trade agreements including the India-UK FTA, and strong institutional endorsements from IMF, World Bank, OECD, and ADB have supported sustained growth momentum.
- Employment initiatives such as the PM Viksit Bharat Rozgar Yojana and Skill India Mission aim to convert economic expansion into long-term job creation and demographic dividend utilisation.

Why Silver Recorded a 160% Price Surge in 2025

- Silver prices surged from around $30 per ounce at the start of 2025 to a historic peak of $80 per ounce by December 30, marking a 160% annual rise.
- The rally was driven by global economic uncertainty triggered by US trade policies, a weakening dollar, and heightened geopolitical risks.
- China's announcement of strict silver export controls effective January 1, 2026 intensified supply fears, given China's dominance in global silver refining.
- Industrial demand now accounts for over half of global silver consumption, driven by solar energy, electric vehicles, semiconductors, AI data centres, and 5G infrastructure.
- Extreme volatility emerged in late December as margin hikes by the CME temporarily cooled prices before a sharp rebound, underscoring speculative as well as structural forces.

RBI's Financial Stability Report 2025

- The Reserve Bank of India released its December 2025 Financial Stability Report, affirming that India's financial system remains resilient despite global uncertainty, based on the collective assessment of the Financial Stability and Development Council sub-committee.
- India's real GDP growth remained robust in the first half of FY 2025–26, recording 7.8% in Q1 and 8.2% in Q2, supported by strong private consumption and sustained public capital expenditure.
- Scheduled Commercial Banks recorded a sharp improvement in asset quality, with the Gross Non-Performing Assets ratio declining to about 2.1% by September 2025, marking a multi-decadal low.
- Capital adequacy levels remained comfortably above regulatory thresholds, with public sector banks reporting CRAR of around 16% and private sector banks exceeding 18%.
- The RBI cautioned that risks are emerging from unsecured retail lending, fintech expansion, exposure to stablecoins, and sectors vulnerable to potential US tariff hikes.

Third Round of Privatisation of Airports

- The Union Government announced plans to privatise 11 airports under the Public-Private Partnership model by the end of the financial year 2025–26 as part of its broader infrastructure monetisation strategy.
- This initiative represents the third phase of airport privatisation in India, following the first phase in 2006 involving Delhi and Mumbai airports and the second phase where six airports were awarded to private operators.
- Under the proposed bundling strategy, profitable airports will be paired with smaller or underperforming airports to improve commercial viability and attract private investment.
- The privatisation programme is part of the National Monetisation Pipeline, which aims to unlock value from public infrastructure assets through structured leasing while retaining public ownership.
- Unlike earlier revenue-sharing arrangements, this round will adopt a per-passenger fee model under which airport operators will pay fixed charges per passenger to the Airports Authority of India. Major private airport operators such as Adani Airport Holdings Ltd and GMR Airports Ltd are expected to participate in the bidding process.
- At present, 14 airports in India operate under PPP arrangements, with evidence of improved infrastructure quality, passenger services, and operational efficiency.

India Emerges as World's Top Rice Producer

- Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan announced on January 5, 2026, that India has overtaken China to become the world's largest rice producer, marking a historic milestone in global agriculture.
- India's rice production reached 150.18 million tonnes in 2025, surpassing China's production of 145.28 million tonnes and ending China's long-standing dominance in rice output.
- According to the United States Department of Agriculture's December 2025 assessment, India now contributes more than 28 percent of total global rice production, firmly establishing itself as the world's leading rice-producing country.
- The production surge has been driven largely by the widespread adoption of short-duration, high-yielding, and water-efficient rice varieties across major rice-growing states.

- Modern varieties such as PB126, PR131, and PB121, which mature faster, resist diseases, and require less irrigation water, have significantly boosted productivity in Punjab, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh.

Delhi Government Brings Finances Under RBI Framework with Historic MoU

- The Government of NCT of Delhi signed a landmark Memorandum of Understanding with the Reserve Bank of India on January 6, 2026, formally bringing Delhi's public finances under the RBI's full banking, cash management, and debt management framework for the first time.
- The MoU was signed at the Delhi Secretariat in a meeting chaired by Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, who also holds the Finance portfolio, in the presence of senior officials including the Additional Chief Secretary (Finance) and the Chief Secretary.
- Under the agreement, the RBI will act as the banker, debt manager, and financial agent of the Delhi Government, enabling professional cash management, structured market borrowings, and integration with national public finance systems.
- Delhi will now be able to raise funds through State Development Loans in the open market at competitive interest rates of around 7 percent, replacing earlier high-cost borrowings that carried interest rates of 12–13 percent.

FSS Becomes First Payments Company to Receive ISO/IEC 42001 Certification

- Financial Software and Systems became the first payments technology company across India, the Middle East, the Asia-Pacific region, and South Africa to achieve ISO/IEC 42001 Certification Lead status, marking a major global milestone in responsible artificial intelligence governance.
- The "Certification Lead" status represents a higher level of organisational maturity, as it recognises not only adoption of the ISO/IEC 42001 standard but also the capability to lead enterprise-wide implementation of structured AI governance frameworks.
- ISO/IEC 42001:2023 is a joint standard issued by the International Organization for Standardization and the International Electrotechnical Commission, titled Information Technology — Artificial Intelligence — Management System, and is the world's first certifiable AI management system standard.
- By achieving this certification, FSS has demonstrated a strategic shift from fragmented and ad-hoc use of artificial intelligence to a disciplined, organisation-wide AI governance model aligned with global best practices.
- The certification was granted following an independent assessment by TÜV SÜD, whose validation confirms the robustness, accountability, and maturity of FSS's AI risk management and governance structures.
- Headquartered in Chennai and operating globally for over two decades, FSS provides end-to-end payments and transaction processing solutions and is positioned as a key player in shaping responsible AI adoption in the fintech ecosystem.

RBI Notifies Foreign Exchange Management (Guarantees) Regulations, 2026

- The Reserve Bank of India notified the Foreign Exchange Management (Guarantees) Regulations, 2026, creating a consolidated regulatory framework for guarantees involving Indian and foreign entities.
- The new regulations replace earlier fragmented provisions under FEMA and clearly define permissible guarantee transactions and compliance requirements.
- Authorised Dealer Category-I banks continue to play a central role, with clearly prescribed procedures for issuing, confirming, and reporting guarantees to the RBI.
- The regulations emphasise prudent risk management by requiring assessment of counterparty risk and ensuring guarantees are backed by legitimate underlying transactions.
- Permissible guarantees include those supporting trade, investment, and lawful business activities, while speculative or prohibited capital account transactions are expressly barred.

Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu Lead NITI Aayog's Export Preparedness Index 2024

- NITI Aayog released the Export Preparedness Index (EPI) 2024, the fourth edition of the index since its launch in August 2020, to assess the export readiness of Indian States and Union Territories in alignment with India's goal of achieving USD 1 trillion in merchandise exports by 2030 and the Viksit Bharat @2047 vision.
- The EPI 2024 evaluates the strength, resilience, and inclusiveness of sub-national export ecosystems by examining how effectively states and UTs support export-led growth.

- The index framework is structured around four major pillars, namely Export Infrastructure, Business Ecosystem, Policy and Governance, and Export Performance, together comprising 13 sub-pillars and 70 indicators.
- Export Infrastructure and Export Performance each carry a weightage of 20 percent, while the Business Ecosystem pillar assesses factors such as macroeconomic stability, cost competitiveness, human capital, access to finance, MSME ecosystem, and industrial environment.
- Among large states, Maharashtra ranked first, followed by Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, and Andhra Pradesh, reflecting strong logistics, industrial capacity, and export diversification.
- In the category of small states, North Eastern states, and Union Territories, Uttarakhand emerged as the top performer, followed by Jammu and Kashmir, Nagaland, Dadra and Nagar Haveli & Daman and Diu, and Goa.
- States and Union Territories are classified as Leaders, Challengers, or Aspirers based on their level of export preparedness, enabling peer comparison and targeted policy learning.

MS Sahoo Committee for National Pension System Reforms

- The Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority constituted a 15-member high-level expert committee on January 13, 2026, under the chairmanship of M.S. Sahoo to develop a regulatory framework for assured payout products under the National Pension System.
- M.S. Sahoo is the Founder of Dr. Sahoo Regulatory Chambers and a former Chairperson of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India, bringing extensive experience in financial regulation and institutional reform.
- The committee has been mandated to function as a standing advisory body on structured pension payouts, with its core responsibility being the design of a regulatory architecture for assured pension products within the NPS framework.
- A key focus area of the committee is to examine the tax treatment and legal clarity of assured payouts, particularly for subscribers who remain within the NPS ecosystem during the payout phase instead of exiting the system entirely.
- The constitution of the committee follows PFRDA's consultation paper issued on September 30, 2025, which sought stakeholder views on introducing assured pension products under NPS.

Uttarakhand Awarded 'Leader' Status in Startup India Ranking

- Uttarakhand was recognised as a "Leader" in the States' Startup Ecosystem Ranking (5th Edition) released by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
- The States' Startup Ranking is an annual capacity-building exercise launched by DPIIT in February 2018 to assess the efforts of states and Union Territories in building robust startup ecosystems.
- States scoring between the 50th and 69th percentile are categorised as "Leaders," those between the 70th and 89th percentile as "Top Performers," and those above the 90th percentile as "Best Performers."
- Uttarakhand secured Leader status in Category A, which includes states and Union Territories with a population of over one crore.
- Other Leader states in Category A include Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, and Telangana, while Manipur, Meghalaya, and Nagaland were Leaders in Category B.
- Gujarat was ranked as the Best Performer for the fifth consecutive time, alongside Arunachal Pradesh and Goa, while Karnataka, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, and Himachal Pradesh were Top Performers.
- Sunfox Technologies Private Limited from Uttarakhand won the Innovation Trailblazers Award at the National Startup Awards 5.0, announced on National Startup Day 2026. A total of 34 states and Union Territories participated in the fifth edition of the ranking exercise.

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