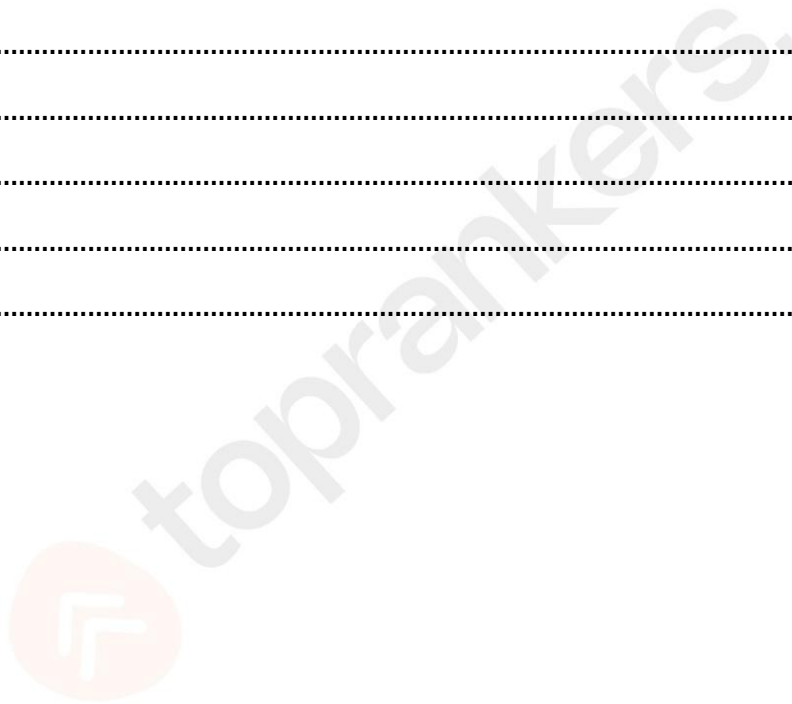


## Weekly Current Affairs 12th April to 18th April 2026

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## IMPORTANT ONE LINERS

### NATIONAL

#### India Uzbekistan Joint Exercise DUSTLIK 2026 Begins

**In the News:** The Indian Army contingent has departed for Uzbekistan to participate in the 7th edition of Exercise DUSTLIK, the annual India-Uzbekistan joint military exercise, scheduled from April 12 to April 25, 2026. The exercise is being held at the Gurumsaray Field Training Area in Namangan, Uzbekistan, reflecting the growing defence cooperation between the two nations.

#### Key Points:

- **About Exercise DUSTLIK:** Exercise DUSTLIK is an annual bilateral military exercise conducted alternately in India and Uzbekistan. It was established to foster military cooperation and enhance the combined capabilities of both nations' armed forces. The previous (6th) edition was held in April 2025 at the Foreign Training Node in Aundh, Pune, India.
- **Composition of Participating Forces:** The Indian contingent comprises 60 personnel — 45 from the Indian Army, drawn primarily from a battalion of the MAHAR Regiment, and 15 from the Indian Air Force. The Uzbekistan side similarly fields approximately 60 personnel from its Army and Air Force, ensuring balanced bilateral participation.
- **Objectives and Operational Focus:** The primary objective is to enhance joint operational capabilities in semi-mountainous terrain. Key focus areas include physical endurance, joint planning, tactical drills, and specialised combat skills. Specific activities include land navigation, strike missions on enemy positions, and seizure of hostile areas. The exercise will also establish a unified command-and-control framework for coordinated joint operations.
- **Validation Drill:** The exercise will culminate in a 48-hour validation drill designed to assess joint operational readiness, with particular emphasis on neutralising unlawful armed groups — reflecting the shared security concerns of both nations in the Central Asian region.

#### Indian Navy Commanders Conference 2026 to Begin in Delhi

**In the News:** The Indian Navy is set to host the first edition of its biannual Commanders' Conference 2026 at Nausena Bhawan, New Delhi, from April 14 to April 16, 2026. The apex-level conference will bring together the Chief of the Naval Staff, operational commanders, and senior naval leadership to review operational readiness, strategic priorities, and capability development in line with India's evolving maritime security environment.

#### Key Points:

- **Purpose and Significance:** The Commanders' Conference is a biannual apex-level meeting of Indian Navy leadership that serves as a comprehensive platform for reviewing the Navy's operational posture, capability development, and strategic alignment with national security objectives. This edition holds special significance in the context of swift naval deployments to safeguard India's energy security amid ongoing conflict in West Asia, and in reaffirming operational doctrines post Operation Sindoor.
- **Operational Focus Areas:** Senior naval leadership will review plans to address multi-dimensional challenges in the current geo-strategic environment. Key areas of deliberation include enhancing blue-water naval capabilities, combat readiness, sustaining operations, operational logistics, human resource management, and training and maintenance practices to ensure mission effectiveness.
- **Indian Maritime Doctrine (IMD):** The deliberations will align with the Indian Maritime Doctrine, which elaborates the Indian Navy's four key roles in national security — military, diplomatic, constabulary, and benign. Overall preparedness to deliver military success across these roles will be a central theme of the conference.
- **MAHASAGAR Vision:** The conference will further the Government of India's vision of MAHASAGAR — Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security Across Regions — reflecting India's commitment to being a net security provider.



in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). Discussions will emphasise expanding international cooperation, promoting indigenisation, and advancing innovation to position the Indian Navy as the 'Preferred Security Partner' in the IOR and Indo-Pacific region.

### FIU-IND and I4C MoU on Financial Crimes

**In the News:** The Financial Intelligence Unit-India (FIU-IND) and the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to establish a coordinated framework for intelligence sharing. The partnership aims to secure India's digital payment ecosystem and combat cyber-enabled financial crimes through a "Whole of Government" approach.

#### Key Points:

- **Objective of the MoU:** The MoU establishes a formal framework for intelligence sharing between the two agencies, aimed at enhancing fraud detection protocols, preventing financial crimes, and facilitating asset recovery. The collaboration seeks to place robust guardrails around India's rapidly transforming digital economy by mitigating the misuse of telecom and banking resources.
- **Operational Synergy:** The agreement enables both agencies to jointly develop red flag indicators and guidelines for financial institutions, allowing them to proactively identify and report suspect financial transactions before losses occur. It also facilitates real-time intelligence sharing and coordination among Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs), banks, and financial institutions.
- **About FIU-IND:** The Financial Intelligence Unit-India (FIU-IND) is the central national agency responsible for receiving, processing, analysing, and disseminating information relating to suspect financial transactions. It plays a key role in coordinating efforts against money laundering and the financing of terrorism, and serves as India's nodal agency for financial intelligence under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).
- **About I4C:** The Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) is an attached office of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) that provides a comprehensive ecosystem for Law Enforcement Agencies to tackle cybercrime. It has developed several key platforms including the National Cybercrime Reporting Portal (NCRP), Cyber-Police, and a Suspect Registry — all of which are secure platforms enabling real-time intelligence sharing and proactive action against cybercrime, including online financial fraud.

### Supreme Court of India Clarifies Legal Status of Voting and Election Participation Rights

**In the News:** The Supreme Court of India, in a bench comprising Justices B.V. Nagarathna and R. Mahadevan, reiterated that the right to vote and the right to contest elections are not fundamental rights but purely statutory rights, while setting aside a Rajasthan High Court order that had struck down eligibility conditions for cooperative society elections.

#### Key Points:

- **The Core Ruling:** The Supreme Court held that neither the right to vote nor the right to contest elections is a fundamental right under the Constitution. Both are purely statutory rights — created, conferred, and regulated entirely by law — and exist only to the extent granted by Parliament or state legislatures. They are not guaranteed under Part III (Fundamental Rights) of the Constitution.
- **Background of the Case:** The ruling arose from a dispute over elections to District Milk Producers' Cooperative Unions in Rajasthan, operating under the Rajasthan Co-operative Societies Act, 2001. Certain bye-laws had been framed prescribing eligibility conditions for candidates contesting elections to managing committees, including minimum milk supply for a specified number of days, minimum quantity supplied, operational status of the society, and audit classification standards.

- **High Court's Decision Overturned:** A Single Judge of the Rajasthan High Court struck down these bye-laws in 2015, a decision affirmed by a Division Bench in 2022. The Supreme Court set aside both orders, holding that the bye-laws merely prescribed eligibility conditions and did not amount to unconstitutional disqualifications.
- **Two Distinct Rights:** The Court clarified that the right to vote and the right to contest elections are two separate rights with different thresholds. The right to vote enables a member to exercise franchise within the statutory scheme, while the right to contest is a distinct and additional right that may legitimately be subjected to stricter qualifications, eligibility conditions, and disqualifications.
- **Cooperative Societies Not 'State' Under Article 12:** The Court held that cooperative societies are not "State" under Article 12 of the Constitution and do not ordinarily discharge public functions. Therefore, disputes relating to their internal governance and elections do not generally warrant interference under Article 226 (writ jurisdiction of High Courts).
- **Statutory Framework Governing Electoral Rights:** Electoral rights in India are governed by the Representation of the People Act, 1950 (which governs electoral rolls and voter eligibility) and the Representation of the People Act, 1951 (which governs conduct of elections, qualifications, and disqualifications). These statutes define who can vote, who can contest, and the grounds for disqualification.
- **Doctrinal Lineage — Settled Law Since 1952:** This position is not new. It was first established in *N.P. Ponnuswami v. Returning Officer* (1952), reaffirmed in *Jagan Nath v. Jaswant Singh* (1954), and further upheld in *Kuldip Nayar v. Union of India* (2006). The *PUCI v. Union of India* (2003) ruling held that while the right to vote is statutory, the right to know about candidates is part of Article 19(1)(a).

### World Bank Releases \$340 Million for Andhra Pradesh's Amaravati Capital City Project

**In the News:** The World Bank has released \$340 million for the Amaravati Capital Phase-I development project in Andhra Pradesh, with an additional \$130–150 million expected by the end of April. The funding reflects continued global institutional support for India's ambitious greenfield capital city project.

#### Key Points:

- **Funding Released:** The World Bank has disbursed \$340 million so far under the Amaravati Capital Phase-I project. An additional \$130–150 million is expected to be released by the end of April 2026 from both the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) combined.
- **Total Committed Funding:** The World Bank and the Asian Development Bank have jointly committed \$1.6 billion — \$800 million each — for the Amaravati Capital Phase-I development. In addition, the Government of India has committed ₹15,000 crore toward the project, of which ₹1,400 crore has already been allocated.
- **About AIUDP and PforR Framework:** The project is being implemented under the Amaravati Integrated Urban Development Programme (AIUDP), using the Program-for-Results (PforR) framework. Under this model, fund disbursements are linked to the achievement of specific results and milestones rather than following a fixed time-based schedule, ensuring accountability and performance-driven development.
- **Loan Terms:** The World Bank loan carries an interest rate of approximately 8 to 8.5 percent, subject to fluctuation based on international rates. The loan comes with a six-year grace period and a total maturity of 29 years, with repayment commencing on June 15, 2031.
- **Infrastructure Progress:** Core infrastructure development is underway, including arterial and neighbourhood roads, housing buildings, and city-wide systems for water supply, wastewater, and stormwater drainage. Flood management works are also progressing steadily, with over 35 percent of works completed across six locations.
- **Urban Governance and Capacity Building:** During the first 14 months, the primary focus has been on strengthening key institutions and building the governance capacity required to establish Amaravati as an inclusive, well-managed city. Key assessments and studies are underway to set up urban governance and management systems to attract investors.

## Indian Navy to Convene Senior Leadership for First Commanders Conference of 2026

**In the News:** The Indian Navy hosted the first edition of its biannual Commanders' Conference 2026 at Nausena Bhawan, New Delhi, from April 14 to April 16, 2026. The apex-level conference brought together senior naval leadership to review operational readiness, strategic priorities, and capability development amid heightened regional and global maritime security concerns.

### Key Points:

- **About the Conference:** The Indian Navy Commanders' Conference is a biannual apex-level meeting of senior naval leadership. This first edition of 2026 was held over three days at Nausena Bhawan, New Delhi, and served as a comprehensive platform to review the Navy's operational posture, capability development, and strategic alignment with national security objectives.
- **Operational Focus Areas:** Senior commanders, led by the Chief of the Naval Staff, reviewed plans to address multi-dimensional challenges in the current geo-strategic environment. Key focus areas included enhancing blue-water capabilities, combat readiness, operational logistics, training, human resource management, and sustainable maintenance practices.
- **Technology Integration:** The conference deliberated on the implementation of the Artificial Intelligence (AI) roadmap for pan-Navy solutions and the deployment of data-driven technologies for seamless operations. The effective employment of uncrewed systems and innovation-driven solutions were also reviewed.
- **Broader Maritime Vision:** Deliberations aligned with India's vision of becoming the 'Preferred Security Partner' in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and the Indo-Pacific. The conference also emphasised expanding international cooperation, furthering indigenisation and innovation, and sustaining blue-water naval capabilities.
- **MAHASAGAR Initiative:** The conference furthered the Government of India's vision of MAHASAGAR — Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security Across Regions — as a guiding framework for India's cooperative maritime security engagement with regional partners.
- **Indian Maritime Doctrine (IMD):** The overall preparedness reviewed at the conference aligned with the Indian Navy's four key roles as elaborated in the Indian Maritime Doctrine, which provides the doctrinal framework for the Navy's military, diplomatic, constabulary, and benign roles in national security.

## Supreme Court Grants Divorce Using Article 142 Powers

**In the News:** The Supreme Court of India invoked its extraordinary powers under Article 142 of the Constitution to dissolve a marriage in a case where the wife withdrew her consent from a mediated divorce settlement after receiving a substantial portion of the agreed financial amount, and subsequently filed a domestic violence case against the husband and his family.

### Key Points:

- **Background of the Dispute:** The couple had entered into a mediated settlement for divorce, under which the husband paid ₹75 lakh as the first instalment, ₹14 lakh for a car, and returned jewellery listed in the agreement. However, after receiving these benefits, the wife withdrew her consent and filed a domestic violence case against the husband and his family members.
- **Wife's Allegations:** The wife alleged that jewellery worth ₹120 crore and gold biscuits worth ₹50 crore had been deliberately excluded from the settlement to avoid scrutiny by tax authorities. The Court rejected these claims entirely, noting the absence of any such mention in the settlement agreement or in private communications between the parties.
- **Court's Observations:** The bench termed the wife's submissions "highly egregious" and criticised her apparent disregard for legal processes. The Court further noted that the domestic violence complaint lacked specific allegations and appeared to have been filed as a retaliatory measure rather than a genuine grievance.
- **Article 142 – Power to Grant Complete Justice:** Article 142 of the Constitution exclusively empowers the Supreme Court to pass any order necessary to provide "complete justice" in a case before it. The Court invoked this power to dissolve the marriage and quash all civil and criminal proceedings between the parties, including the domestic violence case.

- **Landmark Constitution Bench Ruling (Contextual):** In T.P.(C) No. 1118/2014, a Constitution Bench led by Justice S.K. Kaul (with CJI Sanjiv Khanna, and Justices A.S. Oka, Vikram Nath, and J.K. Maheshwari) held on May 1, 2023 that the Supreme Court has the power to grant divorce on the ground of irretrievable breakdown of marriage under Article 142, even when parties approach the SC directly without appealing from a lower court and even without mutual consent of both parties.
- **Final Verdict and Directions:** Invoking Article 142, the Court dissolved the marriage, quashed all civil and criminal proceedings between the parties, and directed the husband to pay the remaining ₹70 lakh as the final settlement amount.
- **Key Legal Takeaways:** Article 142 empowers the Supreme Court to pass orders for complete justice; mediation settlements once validated by courts are legally binding; domestic violence complaints require specific allegations for prosecution; and abuse of legal provisions can invite strict judicial action, including adverse orders against the petitioner.

### India's 1,000-km Quantum Communication Breakthrough

**In the News:** Union Minister for Science & Technology Dr. Jitendra Singh announced that India, under the National Quantum Mission (NQM), has successfully demonstrated a 1,000-km quantum communication network — one of the longest in the world — achieved in less than two years of the mission's launch, well ahead of its eight-year target.

#### Key Points:

- **The Milestone:** A 1,000-km Quantum Key Distribution (QKD) network was successfully demonstrated using indigenous technology developed by QNu Labs, a deep-tech startup supported under the NQM. DST Secretary Dr. Abhay Karandikar described it as "a landmark advancement in secure quantum communication," noting progress ahead of envisaged timelines.
- **What is QKD:** Quantum Key Distribution (QKD) is a highly secure method of sharing secret encryption keys using quantum particles (photons). If anyone attempts to intercept the key, the quantum particles get disturbed due to the observer effect and no-cloning rule, immediately alerting the users about the intrusion, making it virtually unhackable.
- **About the National Quantum Mission (NQM):** The NQM was approved by the Union Cabinet in April 2023 and launched in October 2024. Implemented by the Department of Science and Technology (DST), it carries a total budget of ₹6,003 crore over eight years (2023–24 to 2030–31), with the aim of positioning India as a global leader in quantum science and technology.
- **RDI Funding Progress:** Under the Research, Development and Innovation (RDI) funding framework, the Technology Development Board (TDB) received over 100 proposals within two months, while the Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC) received nearly 200 applications including projects in cancer research, gene therapy, and bio-manufacturing.
- **Financial Instruments:** The government is deploying Optionally Convertible Debt (OCD) as a new financial instrument to support startups without immediate equity dilution, helping attract private investment alongside public funding.
- **Institutional Framework:** The mission has established four dedicated Thematic Hubs (T-Hubs) in top academic institutions to build research infrastructure and execute its goals across the key verticals of quantum computing, communication, sensing, and materials.

### Samrat Choudhary to take oath as Bihar CM after Nitish Kumar's resignation

**In the News:** In a significant political development, Nitish Kumar resigned as Chief Minister of Bihar on April 14, 2026, marking the end of a two-decade-long era in Bihar politics. Current Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary is set to take oath as the new Chief Minister, marking a historic shift as Bihar is poised to get its first BJP Chief Minister.

**Key Points:**

- **Nitish Kumar's Resignation:** Nitish Kumar, who has dominated Bihar politics since 2005, resigned as Chief Minister on April 14, 2026. His resignation came at the final cabinet meeting, where he dissolved the Council of Ministers. In his farewell speech, he highlighted achievements across sectors including education, health, and rural development, and reaffirmed his commitment to the people of Bihar.
- **New Chief Minister – Samrat Choudhary:** Current Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary has been elected as the BJP legislature party leader and is set to take oath as Bihar's new Chief Minister. This marks a historic moment as Bihar will get its first Chief Minister from the BJP. The coalition, backed by NDA MLAs, is set to form the new government.
- **Nitish Kumar's Legacy:** Nitish Kumar's tenure spanning over two decades is associated with significant improvements in infrastructure, law and order, and governance in Bihar. He maintained political relevance through various strategic alliances and is credited with transforming the state through social welfare schemes and inclusive development initiatives.
- **Nitish Kumar's Entry into Rajya Sabha:** Following his resignation, Nitish Kumar is set to become a member of the Council of States (Rajya Sabha), completing a rare legislative milestone. He has previously served in the Lok Sabha, the Bihar Legislative Assembly, and the Bihar Legislative Council. With this, he will join a select group of leaders — including Lalu Prasad Yadav and the late Sushil Kumar Modi — who have served in all four legislative bodies in India.

**Delimitation, women's reservation, balancing North-South divide: Key takeaways from proposed Bills**

**In the News:** The Union government introduced three landmark Bills in April 2026 — the Constitution (One Hundred and Thirty-First Amendment) Bill, 2026, the Delimitation Bill, 2026, and an amendment to the Women's Reservation Act, 2023 — proposing to expand the Lok Sabha to up to 850 seats, conduct delimitation on the basis of the 2011 Census, and implement 33% reservation for women in Parliament and State Assemblies, with effect from the 2029 General Elections.

**Key Points:**

- **Expansion of Lok Sabha:** The Constitution Amendment Bill proposes increasing the cap on Lok Sabha seats from the current 543 to up to 850, with 815 seats from States and 35 from Union Territories. The government proposes a 50% pro-rata increase in seats across all states, with Lok Sabha strength likely rising to 816 seats under the working proposal.
- **Women's Reservation – Implementation:** Parliament had passed the Constitution (106th Amendment) Act, 2023 in September 2023, reserving one-third of seats for women in the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies. However, its implementation was tied to delimitation after the first Census post-enactment. Since the delayed 2021 Census (now commencing April 2026) would push implementation beyond 2030, the new Bills propose to de-link women's reservation from a fresh Census and base delimitation on the 2011 Census instead, enabling implementation from 2029. Approximately 273 out of 816 seats will be reserved for women, allocated by lottery and valid for 15 years.
- **Revised SC/ST Quotas:** Under the proposed expansion, seats reserved for Scheduled Castes are set to rise from 84 to 136, and for Scheduled Tribes from 47 to 70. The women's quota will apply vertically, ensuring one-third of seats within SC and ST categories are also reserved for women.
- **Delimitation and the North-South Divide:** Delimitation has been a politically sensitive issue for 50 years. Southern states — Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and Karnataka — fear that population-based delimitation would reduce their seat share, effectively penalising them for successfully implementing population control policies. To address this, the government has proposed maintaining the relative weightage of states constant (e.g., Tamil Nadu increasing from 39 to 59 seats; Uttar Pradesh from 80 to 120), so no state loses representation.
- **Delimitation Commission:** The Delimitation Bill, 2026 provides for the establishment of a Delimitation Commission — a high-powered independent body comprising a Chairperson (serving or retired Supreme Court Judge), the Chief Election Commissioner, and State Election Commissioners. A Commission is expected to be set up by June 2026 to redraw boundaries before the 2029 polls. Its orders have the force of law and cannot be challenged in any court.

- **Constitutional Background on Freeze:** The 42nd Amendment Act, 1976 froze Lok Sabha seat allocation on the 1971 Census to protect southern states from reduced representation. The 84th Amendment Act, 2001 extended this freeze until the first Census after 2026. The inter-state seat allocation has thus remained based on 1971 data, while the 2002 Delimitation Commission only redrew internal constituency boundaries.

### Chhattisgarh Vedanta Plant Blast Leaves 10 Dead

**In the News:** A devastating boiler explosion at a thermal power plant operated by Vedanta Limited in Sakti district, Chhattisgarh, claimed at least 14 lives and left 19 workers injured on April 14, 2026. The blast occurred at the Singhitarai power plant between 2:00 pm and 2:30 pm during routine operations, triggering chaos as superheated steam rained down on workers who were on their lunch break or present in open spaces.

#### Key Points:

- **The Incident:** A rupture in the boiler tube of Unit 1 of Vedanta's coal-based thermal power plant in Singhitarai village caused a high-pressure steam burst. Superheated steam at approximately 600 degrees Celsius fell on labourers, causing severe burn injuries. Many victims were contract workers employed by sub-contractor NGSL, which operates and maintains the unit.
- **Casualties and Relief:** At least 14 people were killed and 19 injured. The injured were shifted to hospitals in Raigarh and Bilaspur districts. PM Narendra Modi announced an ex gratia of ₹2 lakh from the PMNRF for the next of kin of each deceased and ₹50,000 for the injured. Chhattisgarh CM Vishnu Deo Sai announced ₹5 lakh for families of the deceased and ₹50,000 for the injured from the state government.
- **Cause of the Blast:** Preliminary findings indicate the explosion was triggered by a rupture in the boiler tube leading to a high-pressure steam leak. Experts note that such failures are often linked to pressure imbalances, overheating, or inadequate maintenance. A detailed investigation is underway to confirm the exact cause.
- **Emergency Response:** Rescue operations were swiftly launched by police, fire services, and district authorities. Sakti SP Prafull Thakur confirmed all workers were rescued after the boiler was cooled down. A magisterial inquiry has been ordered by Sakti Collector Amrit Vikas Topno.
- **Government Response:** CM Vishnu Deo Sai described the incident as "extremely distressing and heart-wrenching" and assured a thorough and impartial investigation, stating that those found guilty will face "the strictest possible action." Vedanta Limited confirmed it is cooperating fully with authorities and coordinating with medical teams.
- **About the Plant:** The Vedanta thermal power plant at Singhitarai, Sakti district, has an installed capacity of approximately 1,200 MW. Sakti is a relatively new administrative district in Chhattisgarh.

### e-SafeHER Initiative

**In the News:** Reliance Foundation and C-DAC, Hyderabad — a scientific society under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), Government of India — have jointly launched e-SafeHER, a Cyber Security Awareness Training programme aimed at enabling one million women across rural India to safely and confidently participate in the digital ecosystem.

#### Key Points:

- **About e-SafeHER:** It is a cybersecurity training initiative aimed at building a gender-responsive, community-led model of digital safety and inclusion, particularly targeting rural women who are increasingly engaging with digital platforms for financial transactions, livelihoods, and access to essential services.
- **Institutional Framework:** The programme is anchored under MeitY's Information Security Education and Awareness (ISEA) Programme and implemented by C-DAC, Hyderabad in partnership with Reliance Foundation. C-DAC will lead the development, localisation, and multilingual adaptation of cybersecurity training content, while Reliance Foundation will leverage its grassroots presence for community-based delivery.

- **Objective – Cyber Sakhis:** The initiative aims to develop "Cyber Sakhis" — trained women who promote safe digital practices, cybersecurity awareness, and confidence in online transactions within their communities, working particularly through women's Self-Help Groups (SHGs).
- **Target and Timeline:** The programme aims to reach one million women by 2029 through a phased, multi-stakeholder approach. It will begin in Madhya Pradesh and Odisha before scaling nationwide.
- **Delivery Model:** The programme follows a peer-led, community-based model using localised content, audio-visual modules, and blended learning approaches. Cybersecurity awareness is embedded into existing women's empowerment and digital literacy programmes, ensuring continuity without requiring parallel infrastructure.

### Financial Intelligence Unit-India (FIU-IND): Role, Functions and Importance in Preventing Money Laundering

**In the News:** The Financial Intelligence Unit-India (FIU-IND) continues to play a central role in India's anti-money laundering framework, operating under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002, and functioning as the nodal agency for collecting, analysing, and disseminating financial intelligence to combat money laundering and related financial crimes.

#### Key Points:

- **Establishment & Mandate:** FIU-IND was set up by the Government of India in November 2004 under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002, as the central national agency for receiving, processing, analysing, and disseminating information relating to suspect financial transactions.
- **Reporting Structure:** FIU-IND is an independent body that reports directly to the Economic Intelligence Council (EIC), which is headed by the Finance Minister of India. It functions under the Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance.
- **Collection of Financial Reports:** FIU-IND acts as the central reception point for key financial reports, including Cash Transaction Reports (CTRs), Suspicious Transaction Reports (STRs), cross-border money transfer reports, property transaction reports, and reports related to non-profit organisations.
- **Information Sharing:** FIU-IND shares financial intelligence with law enforcement agencies, intelligence agencies, regulatory bodies, and foreign Financial Intelligence Units (FIUs) to enable swift action against financial crimes.
- **Coordination Role:** FIU-IND strengthens the collection and sharing of financial intelligence through an effective national, regional, and global network to combat money laundering and related crimes.
- **Punitive Powers:** Under the PMLA, FIU-IND has the authority to impose penalties on entities that fail to comply with financial reporting regulations.
- **Authorities under PMLA (Section 48):** The classes of authorities under FIU-IND include (a) Director / Additional Director / Joint Director, (b) Deputy Director, (c) Assistant Director, and (d) such other officers as may be appointed under the Act.
- **Organisational Structure:** FIU-IND is a multidisciplinary body with approximately 75 staff members drawn from the Income Tax Department (CBDT), Customs & GST (CBIC), Reserve Bank of India (RBI), SEBI, the Department of Legal Affairs, and intelligence agencies. It is headed by a Director holding the rank of Joint Secretary.

### Economic Corridor Between Delhi and Dehradun Inaugurated By PM Modi: A New Era for Regional Development

**In the News:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the Delhi-Dehradun Economic Corridor, marking a landmark moment in India's infrastructure development and connectivity between Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, and Uttarakhand. The inauguration coincided with the festive occasions of Baisakhi, Bohag Bihu, and Puthandu, as well as Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's birth anniversary.

#### Key Points:

- **Project Overview:** The Delhi-Dehradun Economic Corridor is a world-class expressway designed to enhance regional connectivity, boost trade, tourism, and employment, and reduce travel time and costs between Delhi and Dehradun. It represents a multi-dimensional development initiative, not merely a road project.

- **Investment & Employment:** The project has seen an investment of ₹12,000 crore in construction, generating livelihoods for thousands of engineers, labourers, and transport workers, both during and after construction.
- **Route Coverage:** The corridor passes through Ghaziabad, Baghpat, Baraut, Shamli, and Saharanpur, revitalising these cities in Uttar Pradesh along with strengthening connectivity to Uttarakhand.
- **Tourism Boost:** The corridor will significantly improve access to key destinations including Dehradun, Haridwar, Rishikesh, Mussoorie, and the Char Dham circuit (Yamunotri, Gangotri, Kedarnath, Badrinath), boosting hotels, transport, homestays, and the local economy.
- **Wildlife & Environmental Protection:** A nearly 12-km elevated wildlife corridor has been constructed as part of the expressway to ensure safe movement of animals, including elephants, while protecting forests and biodiversity — reflecting the government's commitment to balancing development with nature.

### Tata Semiconductor Manufacturing Gets Special Economic Zone Nod in Dholera

**In the News:** The Government of India has officially notified a Special Economic Zone (SEZ) for Tata Semiconductor Manufacturing Pvt Ltd at Dholera, Gujarat, on April 9, 2026. Backed by a proposed investment of ₹91,000 crore, the project aims to establish India's first chip fabrication unit. The SEZ was approved by the Board of Approval under the Department of Commerce and is expected to generate 21,000 jobs across an area of 66.16 hectares.

#### Key Points:

- **SEZ Notification:** The Department of Commerce officially notified the Special Economic Zone for Tata Semiconductor Manufacturing Pvt Ltd on April 9, 2026. The SEZ is designated exclusively for electronic hardware, software, and IT/ITeS services and is located at Dholera, Gujarat.
- **Investment and Scale:** The project involves a proposed investment of ₹91,000 crore, making it one of India's largest semiconductor initiatives. The SEZ will be developed over an area of 66.16 hectares and is expected to generate approximately 21,000 direct jobs.
- **India's First Chip Fab Unit:** The Tata Semiconductor facility at Dholera will establish India's first chip fabrication unit, significantly reducing the country's dependence on imported semiconductors and strengthening domestic production capacity.
- **Board of Approval:** The SEZ was cleared by the Board of Approval, which is the highest authority for SEZ-related matters in India. It is chaired by the Commerce Secretary and operates under the Department of Commerce.
- **Other Semiconductor SEZs Approved:** Five new semiconductor-focused SEZs have been notified so far in India, including CG Semi (₹2,150 crore), Kaynes Semicon (₹681 crore), Micron Semiconductor Technology India (₹13,000 crore), and the Hubballi Durable Goods Cluster (₹100 crore).
- **About SEZs:** Special Economic Zones are designated areas within a country where business and trade laws differ from the rest of the nation. They offer benefits such as tax incentives, duty-free imports, simplified regulatory procedures, and improved infrastructure to attract investment and boost exports. India's first Export Processing Zone (EPZ) — Asia's first — was set up at Kandla, Gujarat, in 1965. The SEZ Act was passed by Parliament in 2005 and came into force in 2006. As of March 31, 2024, India has over 280 operational SEZs.

### HAL and GE Aerospace Sign Key Deal to Co-Develop Advanced Jet Engines for India

**In the News:** Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) and GE Aerospace have concluded a key technical agreement for the co-production of the GE F-414-INS6 turbofan engine in India. The deal marks a significant milestone in India's defence self-reliance drive, as the engine will power three major indigenous fighter aircraft — the Tejas Mk-2, the Twin-Engine Deck Based Fighter (TEDBF), and the initial variant of the Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA). Commercial negotiations are expected to follow next.

**Key Points:**

- **Technical Agreement Signed:** HAL and GE Aerospace have concluded a key technical agreement for the domestic manufacture of the GE F-414-INS6 turbofan engine. Commercial terms are yet to be finalised, and once concluded, the deal will mark a major leap in India's indigenous defence production capacity.
- **Domestic Manufacturing Share:** Around 80% of the F-414-INS6 engine is set to be produced within India. As part of the arrangement, GE Aerospace will transfer intellectual property (IP) rights for all components manufactured locally, reducing India's dependence on foreign Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs).
- **Three Fighter Platforms Covered:** The F-414-INS6 engine will power three major indigenous Indian fighter jets — the Tejas Mk-2 (Indian Air Force), the Twin-Engined Deck Based Fighter or TEDBF (Indian Navy), and the initial version of the Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA).
- **Critical Technology Transfer:** The agreement includes transfer of advanced manufacturing technologies such as hot section coating, laser drilling, and crystal blade manufacturing — all of which are essential for producing modern, high-performance fighter jet engines.
- **Background and History:** India's pursuit of a high-thrust engine in the 95–100 kN class dates back to 2008, when GE's F-414 competed with the Eurojet EJ200. GE secured the deal, but initial US approval permitted only 58% technology transfer — significantly lower than the approximately 80% now on the table.

**Indian Navy Commanders Conference 2026 Begins at Nausena Bhawan, Focus on Maritime Security**

**In the News:** The first edition of the Indian Navy Commanders' Conference 2026 commenced on April 14, 2026, at Nausena Bhawan, New Delhi. The conference was inaugurated by Admiral Dinesh K. Tripathi, Chief of the Naval Staff (CNS), and brought together senior naval leadership, outstation Operational and Area Commanders, and Command and Naval Headquarters staff to review operational readiness and chart future maritime strategies.

**Key Points:**

- **Conference Commencement:** The Indian Navy Commanders' Conference 01/2026 began on April 14, 2026, at Nausena Bhawan, New Delhi. It was inaugurated by Admiral Dinesh K. Tripathi, Chief of the Naval Staff, who addressed the senior naval leadership assembled for the event.
- **Maritime Security Achievements:** The CNS commended the Indian Navy's role in safeguarding India's maritime interests, particularly energy security amid ongoing tensions in West Asia. He highlighted the increased tempo of operations and enhanced inter-service synergy as key accomplishments.
- **Combat Readiness and Technology:** The CNS emphasised the need for continued focus on combat preparedness and the integration of emerging technologies, including Artificial Intelligence (AI), cyber systems and autonomous platforms, to build a future-ready naval force.
- **Indian Ocean Region Commitments:** The CNS reiterated the Indian Navy's commitments in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and beyond, stressing the importance of a cohesive and credible approach through proactive engagements with Friendly Foreign Countries (FFCs) in bilateral and multilateral exercises.
- **CDS Address:** General Anil Chauhan, Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS), addressed the naval commanders on the changing geopolitical order and urged the Navy to plan for the rapidly evolving character of modern warfare, including economic and technological dimensions.
- **Key Facts — Indian Navy:** The Indian Navy was founded on January 26, 1950. Its headquarters is located at Nausena Bhawan, New Delhi. The Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Navy is President Droupadi Murmu. The Chief of the Naval Staff is Admiral Dinesh Kumar Tripathi, the Vice Chief is Vice Admiral Sanjay Vatsayan, and the Deputy Chief is Vice Admiral Tarun Sobti.

## Lok Sabha Introduces Women Quota, Delimitation Bills Amid Row

**In the News:** The Indian Parliament held a special sitting during which the Constitution Amendment Bill enabling women's reservation and delimitation of constituencies was introduced in the Lok Sabha. Union Home Minister Amit Shah assured that all elections until 2029 will be held based on the existing number of seats, while Prime Minister Narendra Modi strongly backed women's reservation implementation by 2029. The Opposition, led by Congress, strongly objected, calling the Bills anti-democratic and anti-federal.

### Key Points:

- **Women's Reservation Bill:** The Constitution Amendment Bill to enable women's reservation in legislatures was introduced in the Lok Sabha during the special Parliament session on April 16, 2026. PM Modi backed its implementation by the 2029 elections.
- **Delimitation Assurance:** Union Home Minister Amit Shah clarified that the Delimitation Commission law follows the old law with no changes, and all elections until 2029 will be conducted based on the existing number of seats and constituencies.
- **Southern States Representation:** Amit Shah assured that southern States' representation will not decrease post-delimitation. The five southern States' Lok Sabha seats will rise from 129 to 195, with their percentage share increasing marginally from 23.76% to 23.87%.
- **PM Modi's Stance:** PM Modi stated that no State will be discriminated against in delimitation, and acknowledged that the ruling party may benefit politically but assured fairness, offering the Opposition a "blank cheque to take credit" for the outcome.
- **Opposition Objections:** Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra accused the government of using women's reservation as a cover to redraw constituencies for electoral advantage, calling it an "open attack" on democracy.
- **Congress's Gaurav Gogoi:** Congress's deputy leader in the Lok Sabha, Gaurav Gogoi, termed the three Bills "anti-women, anti-caste census, anti-Constitution, and anti-federal structure," and accused the government of trying to push delimitation through the backdoor.
- **Voting Scheduled:** The voting on the passage of the Bills was scheduled to take place at 4 p.m. on April 17, 2026

## Setback for Women's Representation: Women's Reservation Bill 2026 Fails to Clear Constitutional Hurdle

**In the News:** The Constitutional 131st Amendment Bill, 2026 — aimed at reserving 33% of seats for women in Parliament and state assemblies — was defeated in the Lok Sabha despite receiving more votes in favour than against. The Bill failed to secure the constitutionally mandated two-thirds majority, marking the first constitutional amendment Bill introduced by the Modi government to be defeated in the Lok Sabha in 12 years.

### Key Points:

- **The Vote & Its Outcome:** Out of 528 members present and voting, 298 voted in favour and 230 against. The Bill required at least 352 votes (two-thirds of members present and voting) to pass — a threshold it fell short of by 54 votes. Despite clear majority support, the Bill was defeated due to the special majority requirement for constitutional amendments.
- **Constitutional Requirement — Special Majority:** Under the Indian Constitution, any Bill amending the Constitution requires a special majority — at least two-thirds of members present and voting, and not less than 50% of the total strength of the House. With the Lok Sabha's full strength at 543, the Bill needed a minimum of 360 votes at full strength. This provision ensures major constitutional changes are made only with broad political consensus, not just a simple majority.
- **The Bill's Scope — Beyond Women's Reservation:** The Bill was part of a broader delimitation package that also proposed an increase in the total number of Lok Sabha seats. Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi argued the Bill had little to do with women's reservation and was instead an attempt to redraw India's electoral map in a manner that would reduce representation for southern, northeastern, and smaller states. The government maintained the two issues — women's reservation and delimitation — cannot be viewed in isolation.

- **Delimitation Controversy:** Delimitation refers to the redrawing of electoral constituency boundaries based on population changes. Opposition parties argued that linking women's reservation with delimitation could disadvantage southern and smaller states — which have performed better on population control — by altering the political balance across regions. This concern became the central point of disagreement that prevented consensus.
- **Historical Background:** The idea of reserving legislative seats for women has been debated in India for over four decades. Women's representation in Parliament continues to remain relatively low. Previous attempts to pass similar legislation have also faced political hurdles. Globally, many countries have adopted gender quotas to improve legislative representation, making India's continued delay increasingly conspicuous.

### Harivansh Narayan Singh Makes History with Third Term as Deputy Chairman of Rajya Sabha

**In the News:** Coinciding with the birth anniversary of former Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar — nominated member Harivansh Narayan Singh was elected unopposed as the Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha for a third consecutive term, making history as the first nominated member to hold the post and the first to serve three consecutive terms in the role.

#### Key Points:

- **The Election:** The motion to elect Harivansh was moved by Leader of the House JP Nadda and seconded by S Phangnon Konyak, with four additional motions backing his candidature. Rajya Sabha Chairman CP Radhakrishnan formally declared him elected after the House voiced its approval. Leaders of both the ruling alliance and the opposition — JP Nadda and Mallikarjun Kharge — escorted him to the Chair, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi present in the House.
- **Historic Firsts:** Harivansh Narayan Singh becomes the first nominated member in Rajya Sabha history to be elected as Deputy Chairman, and the first to serve three consecutive terms in the position. Members across party lines noted he could match or surpass the four-term record of former Deputy Chairman Najma Heptulla.
- **Background & Vacancy:** The post had fallen vacant after Harivansh's earlier term ended on April 9, 2026. He was subsequently nominated to the Rajya Sabha by President Droupadi Murmu, paving the way for his re-election to the Deputy Chairman's post.
- **About Harivansh Narayan Singh:** A veteran journalist by background, Harivansh served as editor of the prominent Hindi newspaper *Prabhat Khabar* before entering Parliament. He has been widely praised for his calm, dignified handling of Rajya Sabha proceedings and his ability to maintain order even during sharp political divisions. His column series *'Hamara Sansad Kaisa Ho'* has been cited as a guide to parliamentary conduct.
- **Opposition's Concerns:** Leader of the Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge, while congratulating Harivansh, urged the Deputy Chairman to ensure fair speaking time for the Opposition, emphasising the importance of dissenting voices in a healthy democracy. He also pointed to the continued vacancy of the Deputy Speaker's post in the Lok Sabha since 2019, calling it inconsistent with constitutional expectations. Members of the Samajwadi Party and Trinamool Congress staged a brief walkout during the proceedings.

### India's Global Economy Rank Drops to 6th, But IMF Sees Rapid Rise Ahead

**In the News:** According to the IMF's April 2026 World Economic Outlook, India has slipped to the **6th position** among the world's largest economies, with a projected GDP of approximately \$4.15 trillion — marginally behind the United Kingdom at \$4.26 trillion. The drop, however, is attributed to currency and statistical factors rather than any slowdown in actual economic growth, and India remains on track to become the world's third largest economy by 2031.

#### Key Points:

- **Current Global Rankings (Nominal GDP):** As per IMF data, the top economies are — United States (\$32.3 trillion), China (\$20.85 trillion), Germany (\$5.45 trillion), Japan (\$4.38 trillion), United Kingdom (\$4.26 trillion), and India (\$4.15 trillion) at sixth place. India was briefly considered the fourth largest economy just a year prior.

- **Why Did India Slip?** The decline in ranking is not a reflection of poor economic performance but is driven by three key factors — rupee depreciation (which reduces India's GDP value when converted into US dollars for global comparisons), the dominance of a strong US dollar globally, and GDP base year revisions where India updated its calculation methodology, making nominal GDP appear smaller on paper.
- **India's Actual Growth Remains Strong:** In rupee terms, India's economy continues to grow robustly. The IMF projects India's real GDP growth at 6.5% for 2026, the highest among major economies." Domestic consumption, infrastructure development, digital sector expansion, manufacturing growth, and ongoing policy reforms continue to drive economic momentum.
- **Nominal vs. Real GDP — Key Distinction:** Global rankings are measured in nominal GDP terms (converted at current exchange rates), which makes them sensitive to currency fluctuations and statistical revisions. This is why India's ranking shifted despite maintaining strong real growth. A rupee appreciation — expected as crude oil prices ease post geopolitical tensions and as FPI inflows return — could positively impact India's dollar-denominated ranking.
- **India's Trajectory — Third Largest by 2031:** The IMF projects India will become the world's third largest economy by 2031, surpassing major economies on the strength of its expanding middle class, rising foreign investments, continued industrial and services sector growth, and flagship policy initiatives such as Make in India and Digital India. Many forecasts also see India returning to fourth place as early as 2027.

### Project Him Sarovar

**In the News:** Lieutenant Governor of Ladakh Vinai Kumar Saxena launched Project Him Sarovar — a scientific snow-harvesting and water conservation initiative aimed at addressing chronic water scarcity in the Union Territory of Ladakh. The project was inaugurated with the simultaneous start of excavation works for 50 water bodies across Leh and Kargil districts.

#### Key Points:

- **About the Project:** Project Him Sarovar is a sustainable water management initiative designed to capture and utilise underutilised snowmelt and glacial meltwater in Ladakh's high-altitude cold desert region. Much of this meltwater currently flows unused into rivers and streams every year, and the project aims to conserve it for productive use.
- **Need & Context:** Ladakh faces chronic water scarcity due to low precipitation, declining snowfall, melting glaciers, rising temperatures, and falling water tables. Growing demands from increasing tourism and the presence of armed forces have further intensified water stress in the region.
- **Project Design:** The initiative involves constructing 50 water bodies, each measuring 40×30 metres and 2 metres deep, using gravity-based systems and solar lift mechanisms — percolation tanks and small reservoirs — to store meltwater. The project has been designed using scientific methods, taking into account Ladakh's fragile ecosystem and unique climatic conditions.
- **Implementation Areas:** The project covers key regions in Leh (Nimoo, Nubra, Diskit, among others) and Kargil (Suru, Padum, among others), with water bodies developed in consultation with local communities to meet specific regional requirements.
- **Additional Components:** Beyond water conservation, the project includes plantation drives along riverbanks and roadsides to enhance green cover, development of winter sports and ice-skating facilities on frozen water bodies, and promotion of local crops such as apricot, seabuckthorn, and apples to support community livelihoods.
- **Stakeholder Support:** The project has received backing from the Indian Army, Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), Border Roads Organisation (BRO), and local communities, reflecting its broad collaborative approach.

### What does the Supreme Court's latest order mean for Bengal's deleted voters

**In the News:** Ahead of the West Bengal Assembly Elections scheduled for April 23 and April 29, 2026, the Supreme Court invoked its powers under Article 142 of the Constitution to allow individuals whose names were cleared by Appellate

Tribunals — up to two days before polling — to cast their votes. The order comes in the context of the controversial Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, which resulted in the deletion of 27.10 lakh voters' names in Bengal.

#### Key Points:

- **The SIR & Deletions:** The Election Commission of India (ECI) deployed around 700 judicial officers to review 60 lakh electors flagged by its centralised software for "logical discrepancies" in documents submitted during the Special Intensive Revision. Of these, 27.10 lakh electors were ordered to be deleted, and the electoral rolls were frozen as of the last date of filing nominations — April 6 (Phase 1) and April 9 (Phase 2).
- **Supreme Court's Article 142 Order:** Since the Representation of the People Act, 1951 freezes electoral rolls from the last date of nominations until the declaration of results, the Supreme Court used its extraordinary inherent powers under Article 142 to direct the ECI to publish supplementary electoral lists — beyond the statutory freeze — including names cleared by the Appellate Tribunals by April 21 (Phase 1) and April 27 (Phase 2).
- **Appellate Tribunals:** The Supreme Court ordered the establishment of 19 Appellate Tribunals, each comprising retired High Court judges, to hear appeals from deleted voters. Over 34 lakh appeals — against both wrongful deletions and alleged wrongful inclusions — have been filed, meaning each single-member tribunal faces an average of over 1.78 lakh appeals to dispose of within a very tight deadline.
- **Appeal Process:** Appeals can be filed on the ECI's ECINET website or physically at offices of District Magistrates, Sub-Divisional Magistrates, or Sub-Divisional Officers, who are required to digitise and upload them to the platform.
- **Earlier SC Position (April 13):** On April 13, the Supreme Court had declined to grant blanket interim voting rights to all deleted voters with pending appeals, with Chief Justice Surya Kant stating it was "entirely out of the question," as it would amount to suspending the voting rights of those individuals. The court had called the petitions "premature" and directed affected persons to first approach the Appellate Tribunals.
- **Article 142 — Key Concept:** Article 142 grants the Supreme Court the power to pass any order necessary to do "complete justice" in any matter before it, beyond what statute may ordinarily provide. Its invocation here reflects the exceptional nature of the situation, where statutory provisions under the Representation of the People Act, 1951 were inadequate to protect the voting rights of affected citizens.
- **Right to Vote:** Justice Joymalya Bagchi underlined that the right to vote "is not just constitutional, but sentimental — it is about being part of a democracy and helping elect a government," emphasising that due process must be protected and voters must not be "sandwiched between two constitutional authorities."

#### Ahmedabad's Kankaria Coaching Depot Becomes India's First 'Water Neutral' Railway Depot

**In the News:** Ahmedabad's Kankaria Coaching Depot has become India's first "water neutral" railway depot, achieving the milestone of treating and reusing as much water as it consumes. The depot saves nearly 1.60 lakh litres of water daily through an innovative multi-stage wastewater treatment system centred on phytoremediation, setting a new benchmark for eco-friendly railway operations in India.

#### Key Points:

- **Water Neutral Status:** The Kankaria Coaching Depot has achieved water neutrality, meaning it treats and reuses an amount of water equal to what it consumes, eliminating net freshwater depletion. This makes it the first railway depot in India to attain this distinction.
- **Scale of Water Savings:** The depot saves approximately 1.60 lakh litres of water every day, equivalent to more than 300 household water tanks. On an annual basis, this translates to approximately 5.84 crore litres of water saved, demonstrating the large-scale conservation impact of the initiative.
- **Phytoremediation — The Core Technology:** The central innovation behind the depot's water neutrality is phytoremediation, an eco-friendly, nature-based wastewater treatment technique that uses plants to naturally filter and purify contaminated water. Wastewater generated from activities such as coach washing and maintenance is



channelled through carefully designed natural systems where plants absorb pollutants and restore water quality, rather than being discarded.

- **Multi-Stage Treatment Process:** The water treatment system at the depot follows a three-stage purification process. In the first stage, wastewater passes through wetland-based systems where plants remove impurities. In the second stage, advanced filtration techniques — including sand and carbon filtration — further enhance water clarity and quality. In the final stage, ultraviolet (UV) disinfection ensures that the treated water is safe and suitable for reuse in railway operations.
- **Environmental Benefits:** The initiative significantly reduces the depot's dependence on freshwater sources, lowers wastewater discharge into the environment, and conserves natural water resources. The system also ensures compliance with environmental regulations and sustainability standards, promoting eco-friendly industrial practices within the Indian Railways network.

### Meghalaya Recognises Khasi and Garo as Official Languages After Long Deman

**In the News:** The Meghalaya State Cabinet approved the Meghalaya Official Languages Ordinance, 2026, officially recognizing Khasi and Garo as state languages alongside English. Chief Minister Conrad Sangma described the decision as historic, marking a significant step toward preserving indigenous identity and strengthening the case for inclusion of these languages in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution of India.

#### Key Points:

- **The Ordinance:** The Meghalaya State Cabinet approved the Meghalaya Official Languages Ordinance, 2026, granting official status to Khasi and Garo alongside English. The move repeals the earlier Meghalaya State Language Act, 2005, replacing it with a revised language policy framework.
- **Languages Granted Status:** Khasi and Garo, spoken by the two largest tribal communities in Meghalaya, have been granted official state language status. English will continue to function as a linking language for governance and communication.
- **Changes in Governance:** Once implementation frameworks are in place, state officials will be permitted to use Khasi and Garo in administrative processes, legislators will be able to speak and debate in these languages in the State Assembly, and the languages may also be introduced in government examinations and recruitment processes.
- **Push for Eighth Schedule Inclusion:** A key motivation behind granting official status is to strengthen Meghalaya's case for including Khasi and Garo in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution of India, which currently recognizes 22 official languages. Inclusion in the Eighth Schedule would entitle these languages to representation in official examinations, state support for language development and promotion, and greater national recognition.

## INTERNATIONAL

### Vivekananda Statue Unveiled in Seattle Boosts Cultural Diplomacy

**In the News:** The first-ever life-size statue of Swami Vivekananda in the United States was unveiled at Westlake Square in downtown Seattle. The bronze statue was jointly inaugurated by Seattle Mayor Katie Wilson and India's Consul General in Seattle, Prakash Gupta, on the occasion of ICCR Day, as part of India's broader cultural diplomacy initiatives.

#### Key Points:

- **Historic First:** The statue is the first life-size installation of Swami Vivekananda to be hosted by a city government anywhere in the United States. Located at Westlake Square — one of Seattle's busiest public spaces attracting over 400,000 visitors daily — the monument stands near prominent landmarks including the Amazon headquarters' 'Spheres', the Seattle Convention Centre, and the Seattle Centre Monorail.

- **The Statue:** The life-size bronze statue was sculpted by Indian artist Naresh Kumar Kumawat. It was gifted by the Indian Council of Cultural Relations (ICCR) to the City of Seattle in recognition of its "rich multicultural character and spirit of inclusivity."
- **ICCR and Cultural Diplomacy:** The Indian Council of Cultural Relations (ICCR), established in 1950, promotes India's cultural exchange with the world. The unveiling was held on the occasion of ICCR Day and forms part of India's efforts to strengthen people-to-people ties between India and the U.S. Pacific Northwest, and to promote India's philosophical and cultural legacy globally.
- **Significance of Seattle:** Seattle Mayor Katie Wilson noted that the monument reflects the city's inclusive spirit and strengthens cultural ties between India and the diverse metropolitan tech hub of the U.S. Pacific Northwest. The Consulate General of India in Seattle described the event as a milestone — "From Chicago 1893 to Seattle 2026."
- **About Swami Vivekananda:** Swami Vivekananda (1863–1902) was a renowned Indian philosopher, spiritual leader, and disciple of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. He is best known for his historic address at the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893, where he introduced Hindu philosophy and the message of universal brotherhood and unity of religions to a global audience. His teachings emphasised the oneness of all human beings and the harmony of faiths.

### Israel Appoints Roman Gofman as Mossad Chief Amid Rising Regional Security Concerns

**In the News:** Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has appointed Major General Roman Gofman, his military secretary, as the next Director of Mossad, following approval from the advisory committee on senior appointments. Gofman is set to assume office on July 2, 2026, for a five-year term.

#### Key Points:

- **The Appointment:** Major General Roman Gofman has been formally appointed as the next Director of the Mossad — Israel's Institute for Intelligence and Special Operations. The appointment was made by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu following clearance from the advisory committee on senior appointments.
- **Profile of Roman Gofman:** Gofman currently serves as the military secretary to Prime Minister Netanyahu. Netanyahu praised him as an outstanding officer who demonstrated "impressive resourcefulness" and an ability to think outside the box, particularly during the ongoing war.
- **Tenure and Assumption of Office:** Gofman is scheduled to assume the position of Mossad Director on July 2, 2026, for a term of five years.
- **About Mossad:** Mossad, formally known as the Israeli Institute for Intelligence and Special Operations, is Israel's national intelligence agency responsible for foreign intelligence gathering, covert operations, and counterterrorism activities. It is one of the most prominent intelligence agencies in the world.

### US-Iran Peace Talks in Islamabad Collapse Without Agreement, Deepening Regional Uncertainty

**In the News:** Historic US–Iran peace talks held in Islamabad, Pakistan, and mediated by Pakistani leadership collapsed after 21 hours of negotiations without producing any agreement, raising serious doubts over the fragile two-week ceasefire and the prospect of reopening the Strait of Hormuz.

#### Key Points:

- **Nature of Talks:** The Islamabad negotiations marked the first direct, high-level engagement between the United States and Iran since the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Pakistan brokered the talks following an appeal by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, which led to a six-day ceasefire announced four days before the negotiations began on April 11, 2026.
- **Iranian Delegation:** The Iranian side was led by Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, who stated that his country negotiated in good faith and presented "forward-looking initiatives," without specifying their content.

- **Core Sticking Points:** The key disagreements centred on Iran's nuclear programme, control and navigation rights over the Strait of Hormuz, and a deep lack of mutual trust between both delegations.
- **Iran's 10-Point Plan:** Iran entered the talks with a 10-point plan demanding the withdrawal of US forces from West Asia, the lifting of sanctions against Iran, and the right to control the Strait of Hormuz — all of which the US found unacceptable.
- **US Position:** Vice President J.D. Vance stated the American side presented its "final and best offer" which Iran did not accept, adding that the failure was "bad news for Iran much more than for the United States." President Trump's core goal was described as preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons.
- **Strait of Hormuz – Strategic Flashpoint:** Nearly one-fifth of the world's oil supply passes through the Strait of Hormuz. Iran claimed the strait is "completely under its control" and imposed restrictions on maritime traffic, with reports of naval mines in the waterway and limited passage for select vessels, causing global oil prices to soar.
- **Pakistan's Role:** Pakistan played a key diplomatic role in facilitating the talks. Vance praised Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal Asim Munir as "incredible hosts."

### Australia Names First Female Army Chief in Historic Move

**In the News:** Australia has announced a landmark appointment, naming Lieutenant General Susan Coyle as the first woman to head the Australian Army in its 125-year history. The decision, effective from July 2026, forms part of a broader leadership reshuffle within the country's defence forces and has been widely described as a defining moment for gender representation in Australia's armed forces.

#### Key Points:

- **Historic Appointment:** Lt Gen Susan Coyle will replace Lt Gen Simon Stuart as Chief of Army. Defence Minister Richard Marles described the appointment as "a deeply historic moment, one that should be noted." Prime Minister Anthony Albanese called the move "historic," emphasising its symbolic and institutional importance for future generations of women in the military.
- **Broader Leadership Reshuffle:** Australian Navy Chief Mark Hammond, a submariner who played a key role in the 2021 AUKUS pact between the US, UK, and Australia, will now head the nation's Defence Force as Chief of the Australian Defence Force (ADF). The current deputy chief of navy, Rear Admiral Matthew Buckley, will replace Hammond as Chief of Navy and will be promoted to the rank of Vice Admiral.
- **Career Background:** Coyle enlisted in the Army Reserves in 1987, earned a science degree at the Australian Defence Force Academy, and graduated from the Royal Military College in 1992 into the Royal Australian Corps of Signals. She is currently serving as Chief of Joint Capabilities since July 2024, overseeing the ADF's Space and Cyber Domains and National Support for Defence.
- **Expertise and Operational Experience:** Coyle's past appointments include Head of Information Warfare, Commander of Forces Command, Commander of Joint Task Force 633, and Commander of Task Group Afghanistan. She has been deployed to Timor Leste, Solomon Islands, Afghanistan, and West Asia, reflecting deep expertise in information warfare, space, and cyber operations.
- **Gender Representation in ADF:** Women currently constitute around 21% of the ADF and 18.5% of senior leadership roles. The ADF aims to raise overall female participation to 25% by 2030. Coyle's elevation marks the first time a woman will lead any service branch of the ADF.
- **Global Context – Women Leading Armies:** Coyle joins a small but growing list of women at the helm of national armed forces. Notable precedents include Lt Gen Jennie Carignan (Canada's Chief of Defence Staff, July 2024), Maj Gen Alenka Ermenc (Chief of General Staff, Slovenia, November 2018 — first woman to lead an army in a NATO member state), and Gen Dame Sharon Nesmith (Vice-Chief of the Defence Staff, UK, June 2024 — highest-ranking female officer in British history).

## The Islamabad Impasse: How the U.S.-Iran Conflict is Redrawing the Constitution of the Oceans

**In the News:** High-stakes negotiations between the United States and Iran in Islamabad collapsed after 21 hours of intense talks, with Iran accusing the US of "maximalism, shifting goalposts, and blockade tactics" that prevented the finalisation of what was being called the "Islamabad MoU." Following the breakdown, the US announced a sweeping maritime blockade of vessels entering or exiting Iranian ports, dramatically escalating tensions in the Strait of Hormuz and triggering a global debate over international maritime law under UNCLOS.

### Key Points:

- **The Islamabad Talks:** The negotiations represented the highest-level direct engagement between the US and Iran in 47 years. Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi stated that Iran had engaged in good faith but accused the US of derailing a near-final agreement. Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said a diplomatic breakthrough was still possible if the US abandoned "totalitarianism" and respected Iran's rights.
- **US Maritime Blockade:** The United States, through US Central Command (CENTCOM), announced enforcement of a sweeping maritime blockade from April 13, targeting all maritime traffic entering or exiting Iranian ports along the Arabian Gulf and Gulf of Oman, following a presidential directive by President Donald Trump after talks stalled over Iran's nuclear programme. CENTCOM clarified it would not impede ships transiting the Strait of Hormuz to non-Iranian ports.
- **Iran's Counter-Move:** Iran began imposing a mandatory security toll of up to \$2 million per vessel, payable in cryptocurrency or yuan, on ships transiting the Strait of Hormuz, arguing that as a non-ratifying party to UNCLOS, it retains the sovereign right to regulate passage and charge for security services in its territorial waters.
- **About UNCLOS:** The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), often called the "Constitution of the Oceans," is an international treaty adopted in 1982 and entered into force on November 16, 1994, after Guyana became the 60th nation to ratify it. As of 2026, it has 168 parties. It is governed through two key bodies — the International Seabed Authority (ISA), headquartered in Kingston, Jamaica, and the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS), headquartered in Hamburg, Germany.
- **Five Maritime Zones under UNCLOS:** UNCLOS defines five zones measured from the coastal baseline — (i) Internal Waters (full sovereignty, no automatic right of passage); (ii) Territorial Sea (up to 12 nautical miles, innocent passage allowed); (iii) Contiguous Zone (12–24 nautical miles, limited jurisdiction for customs, immigration, and sanitary laws); (iv) Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) (up to 200 nautical miles, sovereign rights over resources but freedom of navigation for others); and (v) High Seas (beyond 200 nautical miles, open to all nations as the common heritage of mankind).
- **Transit Passage vs. Innocent Passage:** The core legal dispute centres on two UNCLOS navigational rights. The US invokes Transit Passage (Article 38), which applies to international straits and guarantees continuous, unimpeded passage without tolls or suspension, even during armed conflict — making Iran's toll illegal under this view. Iran, having signed but never ratified UNCLOS, invokes only Innocent Passage (Article 25), which permits the coastal state to suspend passage or conduct inspections on security grounds, justifying its toll and vessel inspections.
- **Geography of the Strait:** At its narrowest, the Strait of Hormuz is only 21 nautical miles wide. Since both Iran (north) and Oman (south) can each claim a 12-nautical-mile Territorial Sea, their maritime claims overlap completely with no neutral or High Seas zone in between. However, under UNCLOS Article 44, states bordering international straits cannot hamper or suspend transit passage, meaning sovereignty does not confer the right to block or toll global commerce.
- **The US Legal Paradox:** The US has neither signed nor ratified UNCLOS, treating its navigational provisions as Customary International Law selectively. The US Senate's primary objection is Part XI, which mandates sharing deep-seabed mining technology and profits with developing nations. The US counter-blockade itself occupies a legal grey area, as UNCLOS does not explicitly authorise one country to blockade a strait to enforce transit passage rights against another.
- **Iran's Legal Paradox:** Iran signed UNCLOS in 1982 but never ratified it, claiming to be bound only by the older 1958 conventions that grant coastal states greater power to restrict passage on national security grounds. Tehran views UNCLOS as a Western-designed framework that undermines its sovereign rights.

## Donald Trump unveils plan for 'Arc de Trump' Monument in Washington, DC

**In the News:** The White House has unveiled plans for a massive gold-accented triumphal arch, officially dubbed the "Arc de Trump," which US President Donald Trump wants built in Washington, D.C. The proposed monument, inspired by the Arc de Triomphe in Paris, France, is intended to honour American heroes and symbolise national pride.

### Key Points:

- **The Monument:** The proposed "Arc de Trump" will stand approximately 250 feet (76 metres) tall, making it taller than both the United States Capitol and the Lincoln Memorial. It will feature a golden Lady Liberty-like torch and crown, gold inscriptions reading *"One Nation Under God,"* two gold eagles on top, and four gold lion statues as guards.
- **Design Inspiration:** The arch is modelled after the Arc de Triomphe in Paris, France. It is planned to be located near the Memorial Bridge, creating a grand entrance into Washington, D.C., from Arlington National Cemetery.
- **Purpose:** According to White House spokesman Davis Ingle, the arch will serve as a visual reminder of the sacrifices of American heroes throughout the country's 250-year history, celebrating the freedoms enjoyed by Americans today.
- **Approval Process:** The administration has officially filed plans with the Commission of Fine Arts — a panel composed of Trump allies — which will review the proposal. The project still requires multiple approvals and faces potential legal and financial scrutiny.
- **Funding:** American taxpayers will partially fund the project. As per the White House spending plan, the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) will dedicate \$2 million in special funds and \$13 million in matching funds to the project. Trump has also indicated that surplus funds from his White House ballroom project may be redirected towards the arch.
- **Part of Broader Capital Makeover:** The "Arc de Trump" is part of a wider effort to reshape Washington D.C.'s symbolic and cultural landscape. Other major initiatives include large-scale renovations of the Kennedy Center — rechristened to include Trump's name — which will close for two years from July, and the proposed National Garden of American Heroes, for which a Washington D.C. location is being considered.

## TIME100 2026 Highlights India's Global Influence

**In the News:** TIME magazine has unveiled its TIME100 2026 list of the world's most influential people, featuring a strong Indian presence across technology, entertainment, and culinary arts. Notable Indian names on the list include Sundar Pichai, Ranbir Kapoor, Vikas Khanna, and Neal Mohan, reflecting India's expanding cultural, intellectual, and technological footprint on the global stage.

### Key Points:

- **About TIME100:** The TIME100 is an annual list published by TIME magazine, recognising the world's most influential individuals across sectors including politics, business, science, entertainment, and the arts. The 2026 edition also features global figures such as Donald Trump, Xi Jinping, Zohran Mamdani, Ben Stiller, Ralph Lauren, and Victoria Beckham.
- **Sundar Pichai (Technology):** CEO of Google and Alphabet, Pichai is recognised for his role in taking artificial intelligence to the masses. His TIME100 profile, written by Andrew Ng, highlights how he has steered Google towards a more agile, innovation-led approach since becoming CEO in 2015, rolling out products like AI Studio and Gemini, now used by billions globally.
- **Ranbir Kapoor (Entertainment):** Ranbir Kapoor is the only Indian actor to feature on the TIME100 2026 list. His profile was written by actor Ayushmann Khurrana, who praised his distinctive approach to cinema — focusing on enriching the emotional experience of audiences rather than chasing box-office metrics. Kapoor is recognised for reshaping cinematic storytelling with restraint and emotional depth, bringing culturally rooted Indian narratives to a global audience.

- **Upcoming Project — Ramayana:** Kapoor's inclusion comes at a significant point in his career, with his upcoming film Ramayana, directed by Nitesh Tiwari, where he portrays Lord Rama. His first look was unveiled on April 2, 2026, on the occasion of Hanuman Jayanti. The film is set to release on Diwali 2026 and also stars Yash, Sai Pallavi, Sunny Deol, and others.
- **Vikas Khanna (Culinary Arts):** Celebrated Michelin-starred chef Vikas Khanna is described as a cultural bridge-builder, with his profile written by chef Eric Ripert. His New York restaurant Bungalow is positioned not just as a dining space but as a storytelling platform rooted in Indian heritage and memory, championing Indian culinary traditions on a global stage.
- **Neal Mohan (Technology):** Neal Mohan, also of Indian origin, features on the 2026 list, further underscoring India's strong representation in global technology leadership.

### Türkiye Outlines 'COP of the Future' Vision for COP31

**In the News:** The incoming presidency of the 31st Conference of the Parties (COP31) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) has set out an ambitious roadmap to strengthen multilateral climate action, emphasising implementation, inclusivity, and a new model of global cooperation as climate impacts intensify.

#### Key Points:

- **Host & Venue:** COP31 will be hosted by Türkiye in Antalya, where Türkiye will hold the presidency, host the summit, and lead the Action Agenda, while Australia will play a leading role in negotiations.
- **COP31 Presidency Decision:** The presidency was decided through the consensus-based process under the UNFCCC, which rotates hosting rights among regional groups. For COP31, the turn fell to the Eastern European Group, where Türkiye emerged as host. Australia had also mounted a competing bid but later partnered with Türkiye in a joint arrangement.
- **New Türkiye–Australia Partnership Model:** Australia's Minister for Climate Change and Energy, Chris Bowen, has been appointed COP31 President of Negotiations, with exclusive authority to lead the negotiations in consultation with Türkiye. This arrangement, formally welcomed at COP30, is based on shared purpose and a determination to deliver strong and practical results, connecting the Mediterranean and Pacific regions in a new era for climate diplomacy.
- **'COP of the Future' Vision:** The presidency set out a vision to deliver a "COP of the Future" built on lessons from past summits and focused on implementation. Three guiding principles — Dialogue, Consensus, and Action — will underpin the presidency, aimed at building trust among parties, ensuring ownership of outcomes, and transforming commitments into concrete, balanced, and applicable outputs.
- **Troika Approach:** The letter highlights the importance of the Troika approach linking past, current, and future presidencies — Brazil, Azerbaijan, and Türkiye — to ensure stability and predictability in climate negotiations.
- **Broad Action Agenda:** Key focus areas of Türkiye's Action Agenda include strengthening zero waste and circular economy approaches, accelerating the clean energy transition, supporting green and low-carbon industrialisation, increasing resilience of vulnerable regions and oceans, promoting food security and sustainable agriculture, advancing climate-resilient cities, and strengthening financial and institutional mechanisms.

### India-New Zealand FTA to Be Signed April 27

**In the News:** India and New Zealand are set to sign a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) on April 27, 2026, at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi. The agreement, whose negotiations were concluded in December 2025, aims to double bilateral trade to USD 5 billion within five years and attract nearly USD 20 billion in investments over 15 years. The signing will follow deliberations at the India-New Zealand Business Forum.

**Key Points:**

- **FTA Signing:** India and New Zealand will formally sign their Free Trade Agreement on April 27, 2026, at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi. Negotiations for the pact were concluded in December 2025.
- **Trade and Investment Targets:** The FTA aims to double bilateral merchandise and services trade to USD 5 billion within five years. It is also expected to attract approximately USD 20 billion in foreign investment over the next 15 years.
- **Market Access for India:** Under the agreement, India will receive zero-duty access for 100 per cent of its exports to New Zealand, significantly boosting Indian export competitiveness in the New Zealand market.
- **Tariff Concessions to New Zealand:** India will eliminate or reduce tariffs on around 95 per cent of New Zealand's exports. Key products benefiting from these cuts include wool, coal, wood products, wine, avocados and blueberries.
- **Sensitive Sector Exclusions:** India has excluded several sensitive sectors from tariff concessions to protect domestic farmers and industries. No duty reductions have been offered on dairy products (milk, cream, whey, yoghurt, cheese), onions, sugar, spices, edible oils and rubber.
- **Enhanced Mobility and Visa Pathways:** The FTA establishes a dedicated Temporary Employment Entry pathway for up to 5,000 skilled Indian professionals to be present in New Zealand at any given time for up to three years—targeting IT, healthcare, and "iconic" roles like AYUSH practitioners and chefs—complemented by a Working Holiday Scheme allowing 1,000 young Indians annually to live and work in the country for 12 months.
- **Current Trade Figures:** Bilateral merchandise trade stood at USD 1.3 billion in 2024–25, while total trade in goods and services was approximately USD 2.4 billion in 2024. Services trade alone contributed USD 1.24 billion, led by travel, IT and business services.

**Asian Development Bank Raises India GDP Growth Forecast to 6.9% for FY27**

**In the News:** The Asian Development Bank (ADB) raised India's GDP growth forecast to 6.9% for FY27, up from its earlier projection, citing strong domestic demand and improved investment activity. Growth is further projected to accelerate to 7.3% in FY28, reinforcing India's position as one of the fastest-growing major economies in the world.

**Key Points:**

- **ADB's Revised Forecast:** The ADB upgraded India's GDP growth estimate to 6.9% for FY27, driven primarily by sustained domestic consumption and increased investment activity. For FY28, growth is projected to strengthen further to 7.3%, supported by structural reforms and expanding infrastructure.
- **About ADB:** The Asian Development Bank is a regional multilateral development bank established in 1966, headquartered in Manila, Philippines. It supports economic and social development in Asia and the Pacific. India is one of its largest borrowers and a founding member.
- **Key Growth Drivers:** ADB identified two major pillars of India's growth — consumption and investment. Strong private consumption, fuelled by India's large population and expanding middle class, and rising public investment in infrastructure are the primary contributors. Gradual recovery in private sector investment and policy reforms improving ease of doing business further support the outlook.
- **FY28 Growth Projections:** The acceleration to 7.3% in FY28 is expected to be driven by expansion in infrastructure and manufacturing, continued policy reforms, and rising urban demand and middle-class consumption.
- **India's Global Economic Standing:** According to the latest IMF estimates, India has slipped to the sixth position among the world's largest economies in 2025, making ADB's optimistic long-term projections significant for India's ambition to reclaim higher rankings.

**Meghalaya Grants Official Status to Khasi and Garo**

**In the News:** The Meghalaya cabinet approved the Meghalaya Official Languages Ordinance 2026, granting official language status to Khasi and Garo alongside English. The ordinance repeals the Meghalaya State Language Act, 2005, and was described by Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma as a "historic and very important decision."

**Key Points:**

- **The Ordinance:** The Meghalaya Official Languages Ordinance 2026 makes Khasi and Garo co-official languages of the state alongside English, repealing the earlier Meghalaya State Language Act, 2005. All three languages — English, Khasi, and Garo — will now feature in government gazette notifications and official orders.
- **About Meghalaya & Its Languages:** Meghalaya, meaning "abode of clouds," became a full state on January 21, 1972. Its three major indigenous tribes — Khasi, Garo, and Jaintia — account for over 85% of the population. English, Khasi, and Garo were already recognised languages, but Khasi and Garo lacked formal official status until now.
- **Impact on Governance & Legislature:** The ordinance will gradually expand the use of Khasi and Garo in administration. Legislators will now be permitted to speak and debate in Khasi and Garo — in addition to English — during Assembly sessions.
- **Impact on Examinations & Recruitment:** Competitive and recruitment examinations will progressively be conducted in Khasi and Garo as well, opening greater opportunities for the state's youth. However, CM Sangma clarified this will take time, requiring logistical infrastructure, trained manpower, and framing of new rules.
- **English Continues as Link Language:** Inter-district communication and official file noting will continue in English, ensuring administrative continuity even as local languages gain prominence.
- **Eighth Schedule Connection:** The ordinance is also linked to a longstanding demand for the inclusion of Khasi and Garo in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution, which lists officially recognised languages of India. The state assembly had earlier passed a resolution to this effect, and CM Sangma stated the ordinance is intended to send a stronger message to the Government of India and Parliament on this demand.

**Philippines Joins US-Led Pax Silica Initiative to Boost Semiconductor Supply Chains**

**In the News:** The United States and the Philippines announced that Manila had joined the US-led Pax Silica initiative, becoming its 13th member. As part of the partnership, a 4,000-acre industrial hub is planned in Luzon to strengthen global supply chains for semiconductors, artificial intelligence, and critical minerals.

**Key Points:**

- **What is Pax Silica:** Pax Silica is a strategic initiative led by the United States aimed at building a secure and resilient technology supply chain covering the entire ecosystem — from mineral extraction and chip manufacturing to data infrastructure. The name derives from the Latin word "Pax" (meaning peace) and "Silica" (a key compound used in chip manufacturing), together signifying that the supply chain for new technologies should promote peace and prosperity.
- **Philippines Joins as 13th Member:** The Philippines officially joined Pax Silica, becoming the 13th formal signatory of the initiative. The other 12 members include the United States, Greece, Japan, South Korea, Singapore, Israel, the United Kingdom, Australia, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Finland, Sweden and India. Taiwan, the European Union, Canada, and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) participate as observers. Netherland is not a signatory only participated in the inaugural summit.
- **The 4,000-Acre Industrial Hub in Luzon:** The United States and the Philippines will jointly develop a 4,000-acre industrial hub located within the Luzon Economic Corridor, a key manufacturing and logistics region. The hub will focus on semiconductor production, electronics manufacturing, and the processing of critical minerals such as nickel, cobalt, and copper, positioning the Philippines as a key player in the global minerals-to-chips supply chain.
- **Strategic Significance for the Philippines:** The Luzon hub is expected to integrate the Philippines into the broader technology alliance being built by Washington and its partners, leveraging the country's rich critical mineral resources to contribute to the global semiconductor and artificial intelligence supply chain.
- **Friendshoring and Supply Chain Resilience:** The Pax Silica initiative reflects the broader US and allied strategy of "friendshoring" — shifting production to trusted partner countries to reduce overdependence on specific regions and mitigate risks of supply disruptions, particularly amid rising geopolitical tensions with China. The International Monetary Fund has noted that such structural shifts could significantly reshape global trade patterns.

## Keir Starmer and Emmanuel Macron Launch Global Maritime Security Initiative for Strait of Hormuz

**In the News:** French President Emmanuel Macron and British Prime Minister Keir Starmer co-chaired a summit at the Élysée Palace in Paris, bringing together 51 countries to advance plans for a multinational maritime security force to protect freedom of navigation through the Strait of Hormuz. India has also been officially invited to participate in the initiative.

### Key Points:

- **The Summit:** The meeting was held at the Élysée Palace in Paris on April 17, 2026, chaired jointly by French President Emmanuel Macron and British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, with 51 countries participating either in person or via video conference. German Chancellor Friedrich Merz and Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni were among the in-person attendees.
- **The Initiative:** The talks centred on what has been formally named the Strait of Hormuz Maritime Freedom of Navigation Initiative, a defensive multinational mission aimed at restoring free passage through the strait once a lasting ceasefire in the ongoing US–Israel war on Iran is in place.
- **Background — The Blockade:** Iran imposed a blockade on the Strait of Hormuz after the United States and Israel launched a war on Iran on February 28, 2026. The US subsequently imposed its own blockade on Iranian ports. Approximately one-fifth of the world's oil trade passes through the strait, and its closure has triggered warnings of higher inflation, food shortages, flight cancellations, and trapped over 20,000 seafarers aboard hundreds of vessels.
- **Conditions for Deployment:** A French presidential official stated that the mission would require an Iranian commitment not to fire on passing ships and a US commitment not to block vessels entering or leaving the strait before any deployment could proceed.
- **US Exclusion:** Washington was deliberately excluded from the talks. Macron clarified that the mission would be "strictly defensive" and limited to non-belligerent countries, as the US is an active party in the conflict.
- **India's Invitation:** India has been officially invited to join the initiative. Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal confirmed the invitation during a weekly media briefing, stating that New Delhi has been asked to contribute to a collaborative plan aimed at maintaining "uninterrupted navigation" through the Strait of Hormuz.

## OBITUARY

### Asha Bhosle No More: Iconic Voice of Indian Cinema Leaves Behind Unmatched Musical Heritage

**In the News:** Legendary playback singer Asha Bhosle passed away at the age of 92 at Breach Candy Hospital, Mumbai, due to multiple organ failure. She had been admitted the previous evening following extreme exhaustion and a chest infection. Her passing marks the end of a musical era spanning over eight decades, leaving behind an unparalleled legacy in Indian cinema and music.

### Key Points:

- **Early Life and Career:** Asha Bhosle began singing at the age of 10 and made her debut in a Marathi film in 1943, entering Hindi cinema in the late 1940s. Her breakthrough came with the film *Naya Daur* (1957). Rising in an era dominated by established names such as Lata Mangeshkar, Shamshad Begum, and Geeta Dutt, she carved a distinct identity through versatility and bold musical experimentation.
- **Signature Style and Iconic Collaborations:** Bhosle became especially renowned for cabaret, pop, and Western-influenced songs, frequently collaborating with her husband, the late composer R. D. Burman. She also worked extensively with composer O. P. Nayyar. She served as the primary playback voice for veteran actress Helen, with the duo creating over 270 songs together — delivering timeless tracks including *Piya Tu Ab To Aaja* (Caravan, 1971), *Yeh Mera Dil* (Don, 1978), and *Mehbooba Mehbooba* (Sholay, 1975).



- **Genre Mastery:** Bhosle's versatility extended across romantic songs, classical compositions, ghazals, folk music, and international styles. Her ghazal renditions in *Umrao Jaan* (1981), particularly *Dil Cheez Kya Hai*, earned her the National Film Award. She received a second National Award for her work in *Ijaazat* (1987).
- **Record-Breaking Career:** Asha Bhosle holds a place in the Guinness World Records for the most studio recordings by any artist. Her discography spans multiple Indian and foreign languages, reflecting an extraordinary linguistic and musical range that few artists in history have matched.
- **Awards and Honours:** Her contributions to Indian music were recognised with the Dadasaheb Phalke Award — the highest honour in Indian cinema — the Padma Vibhushan, and international recognition including two Grammy nominations for her global collaborations.
- **Beyond Playback Singing:** Bhosle continued to reinvent herself throughout her life. She ventured into acting with the film *Mai* (2013), composed music, and collaborated with artists across generations and nationalities — demonstrating a rare ability to evolve with changing times while retaining her iconic identity.

## AWARDS

### Sayani Gupta Honoured with Harvard South Asian Person of the Year Award 2026

**In the News:** Bollywood actress Sayani Gupta was named the Harvard South Asian 'Person of the Year' 2026 by the Harvard South Asian Association (Harvard SAA), recognising her outstanding contribution to storytelling, representation, and shaping South Asian identity on a global stage. She is set to be formally felicitated at Harvard University later this month.

#### Key Points:

- **The Award:** The Harvard South Asian Association annually presents the 'Person of the Year' honour to individuals who have significantly shaped South Asian culture, identity, and representation in public life. Harvard SAA describes itself as Harvard's premier organisation celebrating South Asian culture, creativity, and leadership.
- **Why Sayani Was Chosen:** The Harvard SAA recognised Sayani for consistently challenging conventions in cinema, bringing depth, boldness, and authenticity to her roles, and promoting inclusive storytelling that addresses social issues, identity, and gender dynamics.
- **Notable Works:** Sayani Gupta is an alumna of the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII), Pune, and has built a diverse body of work across film, theatre, and streaming — including *Four More Shots Please!*, *Article 15*, *Delhi Crime*, *Inside Edge*, and *Axone*.
- **Past Recipients:** The honour places Sayani among a distinguished list of past awardees, including renowned chef Vikas Khanna, who received the award in 2025.
- **Directorial Debut:** In a landmark year, Sayani is also stepping behind the camera as a writer-director. Her debut short film *Aasmani* is set to premiere at the WorldFest-Houston International Film Festival on April 25, 2026, followed by a screening at the Indie Meme Film Festival on April 26, 2026.

## ENVIRONMENT

### Draft CAFE-3 Norms Emphasise Carbon Credit Trading

**In the News:** The Government of India has shared the revised draft of Corporate Average Fuel Efficiency-3 (CAFE-3) norms with automakers, proposing a flexible compliance framework that eases penalty provisions and introduces carbon credit trading for the automobile sector. The norms will be implemented from April 2027, covering the period FY 2027-28 to FY 2031-32, and are aligned with India's net-zero target for 2070.

#### Key Points:

- **What are CAFE Norms?** Corporate Average Fuel Efficiency (CAFE) norms regulate the fuel efficiency and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions of passenger vehicles in India. Rather than setting standards for individual vehicles, they apply to the average



emissions across an automaker's entire fleet. Vehicle fuel efficiency is tested using the Modified Indian Driving Cycle (MIDC). The Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE), under the Ministry of Power, is the nodal agency for administering these norms.

- **Shift from Earlier Framework:** The draft CAFE-3 norms move away from the earlier distinction between small and large vehicles, instead focusing on reducing average CO<sub>2</sub> emissions across an Original Equipment Manufacturer's (OEM's) entire fleet. Emission targets will continue to tighten annually through FY32 and remain linked to the average weight of vehicles sold by each manufacturer.
- **Carbon Credit Trading — Key Feature:** The draft introduces a market-based carbon credit trading mechanism. Automakers that outperform their fleet-average fuel consumption targets accumulate surplus credits, which can be traded with manufacturers who fall short of their targets. This enables overperforming companies to monetise their efficiency gains while helping others achieve compliance at lower costs. All credit transactions must be reported to the designated regulatory authority.
- **Incentives for Cleaner Technologies — Technology Multipliers:** The draft provides higher weightage to low-emission vehicles to help manufacturers reduce their fleet average emissions. The multipliers are: Electric Vehicles (EVs) — 3x their sales volume; Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicles (PHEVs) — 2.5x; and Strong Hybrids — 1.6x. This broader recognition of hybrid technology addresses a key concern among manufacturers who felt the earlier framework was skewed exclusively toward EVs.
- **Carbon Neutrality Factor for Alternative Fuels:** The draft introduces a carbon neutrality factor that allows manufacturers to discount a portion of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions for vehicles using ethanol blends and CNG. Flex-fuel and hybrid ethanol vehicles receive the highest adjustment, while petrol vehicles using E20–E30 blends also receive a defined benefit — explicitly recognising biofuel pathways alongside electrification.
- **Incremental ICE Efficiency Gains:** Automakers can also earn compliance credits through certified efficiency technologies applied to existing Internal Combustion Engine (ICE) vehicles, including start-stop systems, regenerative braking, and improved thermal management — allowing companies to optimise conventional portfolios without relying solely on electrification.

### State of India's Bats Report

**In the News:** The 'State of India's Bats' report — the first comprehensive national bat assessment in nearly two decades — was released by the Nature Conservation Foundation (NCF) and Bat Conservation International (BCI), in collaboration with WWF India. The two-year study, conducted by 34 experts from 27 institutions, revealed that India is home to 135 bat species, while raising urgent concerns about data gaps, habitat loss, and conservation neglect.

#### Key Points:

- **The Report:** Titled State of India's Bats (2024–25), it is the first national bat assessment since the previous one nearly 20 years ago, which had recorded 120 species. The study calls for scaling up surveys, improving taxonomic clarity, and integrating bats into environmental policy and tourism planning.
- **Species Count & Endemism:** India hosts 135 bat species, including 16 endemic species. Of these, 4 are endemic to the Himalayas and Northeast India (e.g., the Sombre Bat, Meghalaya Thick-thumbed Bat), and 4 to the Western Ghats (e.g., Salim Ali's Fruit Bat, Srini's Long-fingered Bat). Only 7 species are classified as threatened by the IUCN, though the report warns this is likely an undercount.
- **Diversity Hotspots:** West Bengal (68 species), Meghalaya (66 species), and Uttarakhand (52 species) are India's top bat biodiversity hotspots. Punjab and Haryana reported the least diversity, with just 5 species each. Delhi has 15 bat species.
- **Data Deficiency Crisis:** 35 species remain unassessed or data deficient, with inadequate information on their taxonomy, distribution, and population. India has fewer than 50 dedicated bat researchers, and government data on bats remains extremely limited.

- **Habitat & Roosting Threats:** Most bat species roost outside protected forests — in caves, temples, forts, tree hollows, and urban structures. The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has displaced bat colonies at monuments like Qutb Minar, Feroz Shah Kotla, and Daulatabad Fort through bright lights, sealing of roosts, and chemical cleaning of bat guano.
- **Ecological Roles:** Bats are vital ecosystem service providers — acting as pollinators, seed dispersers, and natural pest controllers — making them indispensable for agricultural productivity and ecosystem stability. They also contribute to soil nutrient enrichment.

### The River Basin Management Scheme

**In the News:** The Centre has proposed to continue the River Basin Management (RBM) Scheme during the 16th Finance Commission period from 2026–27 to 2030–31, with a fully funded outlay of ₹2,183 crore, an increase from the ₹1,276 crore allocated in the previous phase (2021–22 to 2025–26). The scheme, under the Ministry of Jal Shakti, focuses on integrated water resource planning and development across major river basins in India.

#### Key Points:

- **Implementing Agencies:** The RBM Scheme is implemented through three organisations — the Brahmaputra Board, the Central Water Commission (CWC), and the National Water Development Agency (NWDA) — each responsible for distinct components of basin planning, survey, and project development.
- **Priority Basins and Regions:** The scheme focuses on strategically important but underdeveloped river basins, particularly those in the North Eastern Region and the Indus Basin in Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, including the Brahmaputra, Barak, Teesta, and Indus river systems, prioritised for national water security and cross-border water management.
- **Brahmaputra Board Component:** The Brahmaputra Board prepares and periodically revises basin master plans, undertakes anti-erosion works (including protection of Majuli Island in Assam), constructs raised platforms in flood-prone areas, and carries out drainage development and springshed management in the North Eastern Region.
- **CWC Component:** The Central Water Commission conducts surveys, field investigations, and prepares Detailed Project Reports (DPRs) for multipurpose water resource projects in the Brahmaputra, Barak, Teesta, and Indus basins, primarily in remote and difficult terrains of the North East and Jammu & Kashmir.
- **NWDA Component:** The National Water Development Agency conducts water balance studies and prepares Pre-Feasibility Reports, Feasibility Reports, and DPRs under the Interlinking of Rivers (ILR) programme. Of the 30 identified river link projects under the National Perspective Plan, Feasibility Reports have been completed for 26 and DPRs for 15, including the Kosi–Mechi intra-state link in Bihar.

## IMPORTANT DAYS

### Asha Bhosle No More: Iconic Voice of Indian Cinema Leaves Behind Unmatched Musical Heritage

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#### Key Points:

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extensively with composer O. P. Nayyar. She served as the primary playback voice for veteran actress Helen, with the duo creating over 270 songs together — delivering timeless tracks including *Piya Tu Ab To Aaja* (Caravan, 1971), *Yeh Mera Dil* (Don, 1978), and *Mehbooba Mehbooba* (Sholay, 1975).

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- **Beyond Playback Singing:** Bhosle continued to reinvent herself throughout her life. She ventured into acting with the film *Mai* (2013), composed music, and collaborated with artists across generations and nationalities — demonstrating a rare ability to evolve with changing times while retaining her iconic identity.

## STATIC

### India Commemorates Jallianwala Bagh Massacre Day, Honoring Victims of 1919 Tragedy

**In the News:** India observed the 107th Martyrdom Day of the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre, with President Droupadi Murmu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah, and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh paying tributes to the victims of the 1919 tragedy in Amritsar, Punjab. 2000 Indians who were killed or wounded, shot indiscriminately by the British under the command of Gen Michael O'Dyer on April 13, 1919 while participating in a peaceful public meeting.

#### Key Points:

- **Background – Rowlatt Act:** The massacre was preceded by widespread unrest against the Rowlatt Act, which permitted detention without trial. Mahatma Gandhi called for a Satyagraha movement in response, and the arrest of leaders Dr. Saifuddin Kitchlew and Dr. Satyapal further inflamed public anger in Punjab.
- **The Massacre – April 13, 1919:** On the occasion of Baisakhi, thousands of unarmed civilians gathered at Jallianwala Bagh to celebrate the festival and protest peacefully. British officer General Reginald Dyer ordered troops to open fire without warning, firing approximately 1,650 rounds in 10–15 minutes into the enclosed ground with only one narrow exit.
- **Aftermath and Repression:** Martial law was imposed across Punjab following the massacre, leading to mass arrests, harsh punishments, and severe restrictions on movement and civil liberties. Rabindranath Tagore renounced his knighthood in protest.
- **Hunter Commission:** The British government set up the Hunter Commission to investigate the incident. Although it criticized Dyer's actions, he was only forced to resign without facing any criminal punishment, widely seen as a failure of colonial justice.
- **Udham Singh's Act of Resistance:** In 1940, freedom fighter Udham Singh assassinated Michael O'Dwyer in London, holding him responsible for the massacre. This act came to symbolise delayed justice and the spirit of resistance against British colonial rule.
- **Jallianwala Bagh National Memorial:** Established under the Jallianwala Bagh National Memorial Act, 1951, the memorial preserves bullet-marked walls, the historic Martyrs' Well, and museum galleries with audio-visual storytelling. The Jallianwala Bagh National Memorial Trust observes the annual martyrdom day in memory of the victims.

## Ambedkar Jayanti 2026: Celebrating the life and vision of the architect of the Indian Constitution

**In the News:** India celebrated the 136th Birth Anniversary of Baba Saheb Dr. B. R. Ambedkar (Ambedkar Jayanti) with events across the country. The Dr. Ambedkar Foundation, under the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, organised a solemn commemoration at Prerna Sthal, Parliament House Premises, New Delhi, attended by the Vice-President, Prime Minister, Lok Sabha Speaker, and other senior dignitaries.

### Key Points:

- **Ambedkar Jayanti – Overview:** Observed annually on April 14, Ambedkar Jayanti marks the birth anniversary of Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar — social reformer, jurist, economist, and principal architect of the Indian Constitution. It is also known as B. R. Ambedkar Remembrance Day.
- **136th Birth Anniversary Celebrations (2026):** The Dr. Ambedkar Foundation organised the central event at Prerna Sthal, Parliament House Premises, New Delhi. Floral tributes were offered at Babasaheb's life-size statue by Vice-President C. P. Radhakrishnan, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, Leader of Opposition (Rajya Sabha) Mallikarjun Kharge, and several Union Ministers and dignitaries.
- **Cultural Programme:** The ceremony featured Buddhist chants by monks and soulful songs by artists from the Song & Drama Division, celebrating Babasaheb's vision and legacy. The event was open to the public, with thousands offering floral tributes throughout the day.
- **Birth and Early Life:** Dr. Ambedkar was born on April 14, 1891, in Mhow, Madhya Pradesh. Despite facing severe social discrimination, he pursued higher education at Columbia University and the University of London, becoming one of the most educated leaders of his era.
- **Key Contributions:** Dr. Ambedkar served as Chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Indian Constitution and was the first Law Minister of independent India. He was a champion of Dalit rights and social reform, and strongly advocated for education, labour rights, and gender equality.
- **Notable Works:** Dr. Ambedkar authored several influential works including Annihilation of Caste, The Problem of the Rupee, Who Were the Shudras?, and Thoughts on Pakistan.

## SPORTS

### Mitchell Starc and Deepti Sharma named Wisden's Leading Cricketers in the World for 2025

**In the News:** Mitchell Starc and Deepti Sharma have been named the Leading Cricketers in the World by the prestigious Wisden Cricketers' Almanack for their exceptional performances in the 2025 calendar year. The announcement was made ahead of the release of Wisden's 163rd edition.

### Key Points:

- **Mitchell Starc – Leading Men's Cricketer:** Australian pacer Mitchell Starc, 36, was named the Leading Men's Cricketer in the World after a dominant 2025 season. He claimed 55 Test wickets in 11 Tests at an average of 17.32, including a career-best haul of 6 for 9 against West Indies. He followed this with 31 wickets at 19.93 in the 2025–26 Ashes, playing a pivotal role in Australia's series-winning campaign.
- **Deepti Sharma – Leading Women's Cricketer:** Indian all-rounder Deepti Sharma, 28, earned the award for her central role in India's maiden Women's ODI World Cup victory in November 2025, held on home soil. She was named Player of the Tournament, scoring 215 runs at 30.71 and taking 22 wickets at 20.40. In the final against South Africa — won by India by 52 runs in Navi Mumbai — she contributed a run-a-ball 58 and a match-sealing 5 for 39.
- **Wisden's Five Cricketers of the Year:** Four Indian players featured prominently — Shubman Gill, Ravindra Jadeja, Rishabh Pant, and Mohammed Siraj — recognised for their performances in the thrilling 2–2 drawn Test series against England in 2025. The fifth cricketer of the year is England's Haseeb Hameed, who captained Nottinghamshire to the County Championship title, scoring 1,258 runs at an average of 66.00.

- **Wisden Trophy – Shubman Gill:** Gill became the fourth-ever winner of the Wisden Trophy for outstanding individual performance, awarded for his match-winning 430 runs in the second Test at Edgbaston. He is also India's Test captain.
- **Abhishek Sharma – Leading T20 Player:** Abhishek Sharma was named the Leading T20 Player in the World, having scored over 1,000 T20 runs in the calendar year at a strike rate exceeding 200.
- **About the Wisden Cricketers' Almanack:** First published in 1864, the Almanack is one of cricket's most authoritative annual publications. Its Five Cricketers of the Year is its oldest accolade, based predominantly on performances in the preceding English summer.

