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IMPORTANT ONE LINERS

NATIONAL

PM Modi in Cyprus

In the News: On **June 15–16, 2025**, Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited **Cyprus**, marking his **first trip to the island in over two decades**. He was officially welcomed by President **Nikos Christodoulides** at Larnaca Airport, and the visit focused on strengthening India–Cyprus ties, strategic cooperation, and economic partnerships.

Key Points:

- After arriving in Cyprus, PM Modi participated in a **business roundtable** in Limassol alongside President Christodoulides and prominent business leaders from both countries. The discussions spanned sectors including manufacturing, technology, defence, logistics, shipping, tourism, AI, and green infrastructure.
- During the roundtable, the Prime Minister emphasized that **India is on track to become the world's third-largest economy**, attributing this to reforms, policy stability, digital transformation, and ease of doing business. He invited Cypriot businesses to invest in India's growing sectors—including infrastructure, shipbuilding, civil aviation, fintech, and digital payments—highlighting the **India–Greece–Cyprus Business & Investment Council**, the **UPI-Eurobank initiative**, and a MoU between **Cyprus Stock Exchange** and **NSE International Exchange (GIFT City)**.
- On **June 16**, PM Modi and President Christodoulides held **bilateral talks in Nicosia** and signed multiple cooperation agreements. These covered strategic areas like trade, investment, digital cooperation, regional and global security, including discussion of the **India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC)** and Cyprus's support for India on counter-terrorism and territorial integrity amid tensions with countries like Turkey.
- The visit also involved **people-to-people engagement**, with enthusiastic receptions from the Indian diaspora in Limassol, cultural welcomes at the airport, and PM Modi's expression of gratitude for the warm reception. A special honor was announced: Cyprus would award Modi the **Grand Cross of the Order of Makarios III**, the nation's highest civilian award.
- Beyond bilateral cooperation, the visit highlighted Cyprus's upcoming **EU Council presidency (early 2026)**. Both leaders expressed optimism about concluding an **India–EU Free Trade Agreement by year-end 2025**, positioning Cyprus as a vital gateway for India into the European Union.

Proposed AC Temperature–Control Norms Build on 2018 Guidelines

In the News: On **June 10–11, 2025**, Union Power and Urban Affairs Minister Manohar Lal Khattar announced new regulations for air conditioners in India, mandating that all new residential, commercial, and vehicle-installed AC units operate within a temperature band of **20 °C to 28 °C**. The move aims to significantly reduce energy consumption and ease strain on the national power grid.

Key Points:

- The new norms establish **20 °C as the minimum** and **28 °C as the maximum** setpoint for cooling and heating on all new ACs—a revision from previous defaults of **16 °C to 30 °C**—building on earlier government guidance that had recommended a default setting of **24 °C** for indoor spaces in 2018.
- Energy officials highlighted that **each 1 °C increase** in set temperature leads to approximately **6% energy savings**, a change that could alleviate peak-load stress on the grid and reduce blackouts during heatwaves.
- Government estimates indicate that standardising AC settings across households, offices, malls, and vehicles could save consumers **₹18,000–20,000 crore** over three years while cutting peak demand by an estimated **60 GW by 2035**.
- The policy is being introduced alongside a **₹5,400 crore viability gap fund** to support 30 GWh of battery storage projects—aimed at bolstering renewable energy usage and further stabilising the electricity system.
- This initiative marks the first time ACs used in **vehicles and commercial spaces** (other than room ACs) will fall under central energy-efficiency regulations.

India Marks 10 Years of IDY: Visakhapatnam Chosen as National Host

In the News: On June 21, 2025, India will celebrate the 11th International Day of Yoga (IDY), marking a decade since its inauguration in 2015. **Visakhapatnam** (Vizag), Andhra Pradesh, has been officially selected as the **national host city** for the flagship event, hosting a large-scale celebration aligned with the theme "Yoga for One Earth, One Health."

Key Points:

- **Host City Designation:** Visakhapatnam will serve as the national hub for IDY 2025, with Prime Minister Modi scheduled to lead the main event on June 21.
- **Venue Overview:** The primary setup spans a 26.5 km coastal stretch from RK Beach (Kalimata Temple area) to Bheemili, divided into 127 compartments to accommodate around **500,000 participants**. Water stations, medical teams, volunteers, lifeguards, and surveillance infrastructure are being put in place.
- **Security & Logistics:** Deployment of around 8,000 police personnel, lifeguards, enhanced CCTV surveillance, and coordination with bus services and South Coast Railway are key components of the operational blueprint. A contingency venue at Andhra University is also prepared.
- **Field Review by Officials:** A high-level delegation including AYUSH Secretary **Vaidya Rajesh Kotecha**, AP Special Chief Secretary **K. Vijayanand**, Joint Secretary **Monalisa Dash**, and District Collector **M. N. Harendhira Prasad**, has conducted site inspections at RK Beach, Rishikonda Beach, Andhra University, and GITAM University to finalize coordination, security, and crowd management protocols.
- **Yogandhra Initiative:** Andhra Pradesh has launched a comprehensive campaign to promote yoga: **Outreach:** Targeting **1 lakh+ locations** across the state. **Participation:** Over **2 crore citizens** expected to engage in daily yoga. **Certification Goal:** Train and certify **20 lakh yoga practitioners** through camps in schools, universities, prisons, and public spaces.
- **Event Theme:** The national celebration aligns with IDY 2025's theme: **"Yoga for One Earth, One Health,"** emphasizing the synergy between individual wellness and planetary health.
- **Scale of Participation:** In addition to the 5 lakh participants expected in Visakhapatnam, over **100,000 satellite IDY events** are planned nationwide, including at historic, cultural, and wellness landmarks.
- **Strategic Vision:** The event embodies PM Modi's vision of making yoga a "people-centric movement," extending its reach to the grassroots and "last mile" communities, reinforcing India's role in global wellness and cultural diplomacy.

MGNREGS Spending Cap: Centre's Rationale and the Legal Backlash

In the News: On June 16, 2025, the Union Finance Ministry announced a **60% expenditure cap** on MGNREGS for the first half (April–September) of FY 2025–26, integrating it into the Monthly/Quarterly Expenditure Plan (MEP/QEP) framework. This marks a notable shift from the scheme's traditional demand-driven model.

Key Points:

- **Cap Introduction:** For the first time, MGNREGS spending has been limited to **60% of the ₹86,000 crore annual allocation** during H1 FY 26.
- **Centre's Rationale:** Address chronic overspending—historically, over **70%** of funding is used by September, leading to mid-year supplementary allocations. Reduce pending dues, which averaged ₹15,000–₹25,000 crore over the past five years. Ensure fiscal discipline and prevent depletion of resources before year-end.
- **Financial Snapshot (as of June 2025):** Budget: ₹86,000 crore. Released: ~28%, Pending dues from FY 25: ₹19,200 crore; FY 26 dues: ₹3,262 crore. Estimated: ~50% of the budget tied up in clearing previous liabilities.
- **Demand-Driven Model Undermined:** MGNREGS responds to rural distress and agricultural cycles (e.g., higher demand during droughts or monsoon delays), but the cap limits this flexibility. Example: In 2023, drought-driven spikes in Karnataka consumed over 70% of the budget within six months.
- **Legal Backlash:** MGNREGS is a **statutory right** under the 2005 Act, mandating work within 15 days and timely wage payment. Courts have ruled that financial constraints cannot override statutory obligations (e.g., Swaraj Abhiyan v Union of India 2016; Ratlam 1980; Paschim Banga 1996). The cap potentially denies legally guaranteed employment, violating the Act.
- **Practical Concerns:** Unclear mechanism post-cap—states may either refuse work to meet the cap or delay wage payments. Existing issues of wage delays and pending unemployment allowances may worsen. Civil society and worker unions have criticized the move as diluting the scheme's purpose.
- **Programmatic Tension:** There is growing concern that short-term fiscal discipline is being prioritized over the scheme's role as a rural economic lifeline and legal guarantee. The move may set a precedent of treating statutory rights as discretionary in budget planning.

India's 16th Census Announced for 2027

In the News: On June 16, 2025, the Ministry of Home Affairs issued the official Gazette notification launching India's **16th**

decennial Census, slated to begin in two phases: **October 1, 2026**, for snow-bound regions, and **March 1, 2027**, for the rest of the country. This major exercise will feature **caste enumeration for the first time since Independence**, alongside a fully digital operation.

Key Points:

- **Official Notification & Timeline:** Gazette notification issued June 16, 2025. Two-phase count: snow-bound areas (Ladakh, J&K, HP, Uttarakhand) begin Oct 1, 2026; national count starts Mar 1, 2027.
- **Digital-First Census:** The first fully digital census—featuring GPS-tagged households, geofencing, real-time data entry via mobile apps (in 16 Indian languages), and built-in validation alerts for demographic anomalies.
- **Caste Enumeration Restored:** Caste data collection resumes—first since 1931 (OBC data last gathered in 1951), with full caste inclusion for the 16th census, following government approval on April 30, 2025.
- **Scale & Governance:** Around **3.4 million enumerators** and **130,000+ supervisory staff**, overseen by Home Minister Amit Shah, Home Secretary Govind Mohan, and Census Commissioner Mritunjay Kumar Narayan. Preparation reviews emphasized **data security** and operational readiness.
- **Policy Implications:** The census will underpin the **Women's Reservation Bill** (allocating 1/3 Lok Sabha and assembly seats), inform **delimitation**, and serve as the basis for updating the NPR and future policymaking.
- **Delayed & Deferred:** Originally due in 2021, it was postponed due to COVID-19 and delimitation-linked delays; administrative boundaries freeze extended several times until a firm schedule emerged.

India Launches 'DhartiAaba Janbhagidari Abhiyan' – Largest-Ever Tribal Empowerment Campaign

In the News: On June 16, 2025, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs launched the DhartiAaba Janbhagidari Abhiyan, a historic, nationwide benefit-saturation campaign aimed at empowering tribal communities across India.

Key Points:

- **Campaign Launch:** Initiated by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs under union minister Jai Oram, with support from Minister of State Durga Das Uikey, the campaign commenced on June 15, 2025 and will run through June 30, 2025.
- **Massive Coverage:** Reaches across 549 tribal-dominated districts, 2,900+ blocks, and 207 districts with Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs), covering around 100,000 villages and habitations.
- **Objectives:** Ensure benefit saturation—that every eligible tribal household receives entitlements—through integrated delivery of government schemes at doorstep via camps.
- **Entitlements Delivered:** Services include Aadhaar enrolments/updates, Ayushman Bharat cards, Jan Dhan bank accounts, PM-Kisan enrollment, pensions, scholarships, life/accident insurance, skill training, and livelihood program registrations.
- **Community-Led Implementation:** Over 125 District Magistrates and Deputy Commissioners have mobilized Panchayati Raj Institutions, tribal leaders, and local staff to ensure last-mile delivery with active community participation (Janbhagidari).
- **Integration with Major Schemes:** Operates under the broader frameworks of PM-JANMAN and DAJGUA and is part of the Janjatiya Gaurav Varsh, celebrating tribal heritage and dignity.
- **Camp-Based Model:** Village/ habitation-level benefit saturation camps provide real-time grievance redressal and scheme enrollment.

Lucknow Aims for UNESCO City of Gastronomy Title

In the News: Lucknow—India's historic capital of Awadh—was officially nominated by India's Ministry of Culture and the Uttar Pradesh government for inclusion in UNESCO's Creative Cities Network under the "City of Gastronomy" category.

Key Points:

- **Nomination Submitted:** The detailed nomination dossier, compiled by consultant Abha Narain Lambah, was submitted to UNESCO's World Heritage Centre in early June 2025, marking India's official bid.
- **Heritage Cuisine Highlighted:** Lucknow's rich culinary heritage—centered on royal Awadhi traditions—is the core of the proposal. Featured delicacies include Tunday, Kakori, Galawati, and Seekh kebabs; aromatic biryani; nihari; chaats; breads like Bajpai ki Puri; and sweets such as kulfi, jalebi, imarti, and Motichur ke laddoo.
- **Cultural and Culinary Identity:** The nomination emphasizes the city's various communities—Brahmins, Baniyas, Kayasthas, Khatris, and working classes—who contribute to the vibrant continuation of Awadhi techniques like dum-pukht cooking and refined spice layering.

- **Global Context:** If approved, Lucknow will become the second Indian city after Hyderabad to earn the UNESCO creation “City of Gastronomy” title and will join other global gastronomic hubs like Alba (Italy) and Arequipa (Peru).
- **Next Steps:** Additional data is being submitted by the end of June 2025. Pending UNESCO review, field visits by experts may follow to validate the city's culinary heritage.
- **Tourism & Recognition Impact:** The bid is expected to foster cultural tourism and emphasize sustainable culinary traditions at a time when Lucknow hosts international events like G20 and UP Investors' Summits—drawing approximately 48 million visitors annually.
- **UNESCO Criteria Alignment:** The nomination aligns with UNESCO's requirements—leveraging indigenous ingredients, traditional practices, vibrant food scenes, culinary festivals, and sustainability—to showcase Lucknow's distinct food identity.

Indian Navy Inducts INS Arnala, Strengthening Coastal Defence

In the News: On **June 18, 2025**, the Indian Navy formally commissioned **INS Arnala**, its first Anti-Submarine Warfare Shallow Water Craft (ASW-SWC), at the Naval Dockyard in Visakhapatnam. The ceremony, under Eastern Naval Command, was presided over by **Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan** and hosted by **Vice-Admiral Rajesh Pendharkar**, Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief.

Key Points:

- **Commissioning Ceremony:** INS Arnala was inducted on June 18, 2025, in Visakhapatnam, with CDS General Anil Chauhan officiating and Vice-Admiral Rajesh Pendharkar hosting.
- **Type & Mission Roles:** As India's first ASW shallow-water craft, it is designed for subsurface surveillance, anti-submarine operations, search and rescue (SAR), low-intensity maritime missions, minelaying, and coordinated operations with naval aircraft.
- **Technical Specs:** Length: ~77 m, Displacement: >1,490 t (gross tonnage), Propulsion: Diesel-engine with water-jet—largest Indian warship using this combo, Draught: ~2.7 m, ideal for littoral zones.
- **Armament & Sensors:** Features lightweight torpedoes, ASW rockets, hull-mounted & towed low-frequency sonar, advanced combat management systems, and cutting-edge sensors and electronic-warfare systems.
- **Shipbuilders & Indigenous Content:** Lead ship built by **GRSE** in partnership with **L&T Kattupalli**; series includes 16 vessels (8 by GRSE/L&T, 8 by Cochin Shipyard) under **Make in India/Aatmanirbhar Bharat**. Over **80% indigenous content** with contributions from BEL, Mahindra Defence, MEIL, and L&T.
- **Strategic Importance:** Enhances coastal defence and underwater threat detection in shallow littoral waters. Reflects the Navy's evolution from a “buyer's navy” to a “builder's navy.” Fortifies India's maritime capabilities across its ~7,500 km coastline and the broader Indian Ocean Region.
- **Historical Naming:** Named after **Arnala Fort** (off Vasai, Maharashtra), built in 1737 by Chimaji Appa, signifying India's maritime legacy.
- **Background & Series Expansion:** INS Arnala (P68) is the lead corvette of the ASW-SWC class. Delivered to the Navy on **May 8, 2025**, following contractor sea trials concluded by March 2025. All 16 vessels are expected in service by 2026, replacing the aging Abhay-class corvettes.

Bihar Pioneers India's First Mobile-Based e-Voting System

In the News: The Bihar State Election Commission announced that Bihar became the **first Indian state** to introduce a **mobile-based e-voting system** for the upcoming municipal and urban body elections scheduled on **June 28, 2025**.

Key Points:

- **System Launch & Timeline:** Set to debut in municipal and urban body elections on **June 28, 2025**, via two Android apps—**e-Voting SECBHR** (developed by C-DAC) and another by Bihar SEC.
- **Inclusivity Goals:** Enables remote voting for **migrant labourers, Divyang (differently-abled) voters, pregnant women, senior citizens**, and the **seriously ill**, removing the need to visit polling booths.
- **Digital Security & Transparency:** Features include **blockchain, liveness detection, live face scan and face match**, and an **audit trail** akin to VVPATs to ensure transparency and tamper resistance.
- **Early Adoption:** Approximately **10,000 voters** have registered so far; target is to enable about **50,000 voters** to use e-voting in the pilot phase.

- **Precedent in Digital Electoral Innovation:** Bihar is no stranger to election technology—previously implemented **face recognition for voter verification, OCR for counting, and digital locking of EVM strong rooms.**
- **Global Context:** Joins the ranks of jurisdictions such as **Estonia** in enabling secure remote mobile voting, marking a significant step toward global standards

The Tea Board of India Amends Pan-India Auction Rules

In the News: The Tea Board of India announced amendments to the pan-India auction rules under the **Bharat Auction model**, following the recommendations of the **Ramaseshan Committee**, aimed at improving price discovery and safeguarding seller interests across the country.

Key Points:

- **Amendment Launch Date:** The new auction rules will come into effect from **July 1, 2025**, across all regions under the Bharat Auction platform.
- **Objective:** To enhance **price discovery**, ensure **fair trade practices**, and **protect sellers** through better control over sample distribution and auction transparency
- **Seller Control on Samples:** In South India, sellers will now have **full control** over the distribution of trade samples, helping them manage how product qualities are represented.
- **Ramaseshan Committee:** Set up to evaluate auction architecture; its recommendations form the backbone of the amended rules for improved market structure.
- **Bharat Auction Model:** A **pan-India electronic auction** system where bids are placed prior to lots going live—now refined to better reflect market realities.
- **Tea Board Role:** As statutory regulator since 1953 (HQ-Kolkata), the Board oversees auctions, licensing, quality control, and now, the implementation of these systemic improvements.

Centre Approves ₹2,006.40 Crore Assistance to Himachal Pradesh for 2023 Disaster Recovery

In the News: On June 18–19, 2025, a high-level committee chaired by Union Home Minister Amit Shah approved **₹2,006.40 crore** in central aid to Himachal Pradesh. The package supports recovery and reconstruction following the devastating floods, landslides, and cloudbursts during the 2023 monsoon season.

Key Points:

- **Total Aid Approved:** ₹2,006.40 crore sanctioned for post-disaster relief and rebuilding efforts.
- **Breakdown of Funds:** ₹1,504.80 crore will be allocated under the National Disaster Response Fund's Recovery and Reconstruction Window; this follows an earlier ₹633.73 crore approved on December 12, 2023.
- **Damage Overview:** July–August 2023 saw heavy monsoon rains and cloudbursts across HP, resulting in extensive flooding, landslides, and infrastructure damage; official loss estimates run into the thousands of crores.
- **Key Committee Members:** The aid package was approved by a committee including the Home, Finance, and Agriculture Ministers, along with the NITI Aayog Vice-Chairperson.
- **Political Reactions:** BJP leaders—including Amit Shah and J.P. Nadda—praised the move, calling it crucial relief support, while the Congress-led state government described the funds as inadequate relative to estimated losses.
- **Wider Relief Efforts:** The same committee also approved ₹1,658.17 crore for Uttarakhand (Joshimath subsidence response) and ₹555.27 crore for Sikkim (2023 GLOF incident). Additionally, ₹7,253.51 crore was earmarked for mitigation projects across multiple states targeting urban floods, landslides, forest fires, lightning, drought, and GLOFs.
- **Complementary Funds:** This central aid supplements ₹20,264.40 crore released under SDRF and ₹5,160.76 crore under NDRF during the 2024–25 financial year, along with mitigation funds under SD MF and NDMF

Operation Sindhu: India Evacuates Nationals from Conflict-Hit Iran

In the News: On **June 18 & 19, 2025**, India launched *Operation Sindhu* to evacuate Indian nationals—primarily students—from areas affected by the Iran–Israel conflict. The first batch of **110 students** safely returned to Delhi after being moved through Armenia and Qatar.

Key Points:

- **Launch & Coordination:** Initiated on June 18, the operation is led by India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), with missions in Tehran, Yerevan, and Doha coordinating logistics.

- **Evacuation Route:** Students were escorted from northern Iran (Urmia) to Armenia, flew out from Yerevan on June 18–19 via chartered flights, and landed in New Delhi under supervision.
- **Scale of Operation:** Nearly **1,000 Indians** are being evacuated across three special flights from Mashhad, Iran, amid Iran's decision to open its airspace to facilitate the mission.
- **MEA Support Systems:** A 24×7 control room and helpline have been set up in Tehran and New Delhi to assist nationals with registration, travel logistics, and ongoing evacuations.
- **Safety Risks:** Operation Sindhu was launched in response to missile strikes, drone attacks, internet shutdowns, and power outages—some students reported seeing missiles fall near their dormitories.
- **Government Messaging:** MEA emphasized “highest priority” was being given to citizen safety, expressing gratitude to Iran and Armenia for supporting the evacuation.
- **Expansion to Israel:** Citing growing volatility, New Delhi extended the operation to include evacuation from Israel. Citizens opting to leave are being transferred via land to neighbouring countries, then flown back to India.
- **Comparative Context:** Operation Sindhu mirrors previous efforts—such as *Operation Ganga* that evacuated students from Ukraine in 2022—highlighting India's proactive crisis response

Delhi Set for First Cloud-Seeding Trial by June-End

In the News: By mid-to-late June 2025, Delhi will initiate its **first-ever cloud-seeding pilot**, aiming to **artificially induce rainfall** during high-pollution periods as a strategy to clear smog and test its viability as an air-quality mitigation tool.

Key Points:

- **Project Launch:** Cloud-seeding trials approved in early May by Delhi Cabinet; first flight anticipated **by end-June**, pending final clearances and suitable cloud conditions.
- **Pilot Timeline:** Up to **five sorties**, each about **1–1.5 hours**, over separate days, potentially within a week.
- **Budget & Funding:** ₹3.21 crore total—₹2.75 crore allotted for five trials at ₹55 lakh each; ₹66 lakh for equipment, logistics, and storage. Fully funded by Delhi Government's Dept of Environment.
- **Execution Partners:** Designed and implemented by **IIT Kanpur** in collaboration with IMD, with scientific oversight and operational planning.
- **Technology:** Utilizes **Cessna aircraft** fitted with flare-based dispersal systems for a proprietary mix of **silver iodide nanoparticles**, iodized salt, rock salt, and hygroscopic agents.
- **Area & Airspace:** Trials cover **~100 sq km** zones in northwest and outer Delhi. Sensitive zones (Lutyens' area, IGI Airport, Rashtrapati Bhawan, Parliament) are excluded per aviation protocols.
- **Trigger Conditions:** IMD provides real-time weather data—cloud type (notably nimbostratus at 500–6,000 m), moisture (>50%), altitude, wind, dew point—to decide optimal seeding windows.
- **Air Quality Monitoring:** **Continuous Ambient Air Quality Monitoring Stations (CAAQMS)** will track PM2.5 and PM10 concentrations to assess short-term effects.
- **Regulatory Status:** All major clearances obtained; final DGCA technical approvals pending and expected **before month-end**. Ministry of Defence has approved flights from Hindon Air Base.
- **Objective vs Limitations:** Primary aim is to test the method's potential to induce rain—not directly to reduce pollution, though rainfall is known to help curb particulate matter. Experts stress it's a **temporary, experimental measure**, not a replacement for systemic pollution control.

PM Modi Flags Off India's First Locomotive Export to Guinea from Bihar

In the News: On **June 20, 2025**, Prime Minister Narendra Modi ceremonially flagged off India's first-ever **export-bound diesel locomotive**, built at the **Marhowra Diesel Locomotive Factory** in Saran, Bihar. This milestone marks the beginning of India's entry into the global locomotive market.

Key Points:

- **Flag-off Event:** PM Modi flagged off the first locomotive produced at Marhowra for export to the **Republic of Guinea**, under the “Make in India – Make for the World” initiative.
- **Export Deal Details:** India will export **150 state-of-the-art ES43ACi diesel locomotives** to Guinea over the next three years, as part of a deal worth approximately **₹3,000 crore**.

- **Factory Profile:** Established in **2018** as a PPP between **Indian Railways and Wabtec**, the Marhowra plant has capacity for **170 locomotives annually**—100 for domestic use and the rest for export.
- **Technical Specs:** Each locomotive is **4,500 HP**, featuring **AC propulsion, regenerative braking, microprocessor-based controls, ergonomic cabs** (with refrigerator, microwave, waterless toilet), **fire-detection systems**, and compatibility with **standard, broad, and Cape gauge tracks**.
- **Purpose & Project Use:** The locomotives will support the **TransGuinée Railway**, assisting in the **Simandou iron ore project**—Africa's largest mining initiative
- **Manufacturing & Employment:** Since launch, the plant has delivered **over 700 locomotives to Indian Railways**. It currently employs around **285 direct** and **1,200+ indirect** workers; export operations will create more jobs locally.
- **Strategic Impact:** This marks India's emergence as a **global hub** for heavy-rail manufacturing, showcasing capabilities under the Atmanirbhar Bharat and Make in India programs. It enhances India–Africa trade, strengthens economic ties with Guinea, and boosts Bihar's industrial profile.
- **Event Context:** The flag-off took place during PM Modi's **fourth visit** to election-bound **Bihar**, where he also launched several development projects, including the **Patliputra–Gorakhpur Vande Bharat Express**, new railway lines, battery energy storage systems, sewage treatment plants, water supply and housing initiatives.

Performance Grading Index (PGI) 2.0

In the News: On **June 18, 2025**, the Union Ministry of Education unveiled the **PGI 2.0**, an enhanced version of the Performance Grading Index assessing the **2022-23 and 2023-24** performance of states and union territories in school education across **73 indicators and six key domains** on a **1,000-point scale**.

Key Points:

- **Framework Revision:** PGI 2.0 (initiated 2021–22) aligns with **NEP 2020** and **SDG 4**, using data from **UDISE+**, **NAS 2021**, **PM-POSHAN**, and portal sources to evaluate 73 indicators across six domains: Learning Outcomes, Access, Infrastructure & Facilities, Equity, Governance Processes, and Teacher Education & Training.
- **Grading Scale:** Total score out of 1,000; split into ten bands from **Daksh** (941–1000, top) to **Akanshi-3** (up to 460, bottom)
- **Top Performer:** **Chandigarh** topped with **719 points (Grade Prachesta-1)**, leading in infrastructure, equity, digital governance, and retention; though no region reached the **Daksh** band.
- **High Performers (Prachesta-3):** Ten states/UTs—including **Punjab, Delhi, Gujarat, Kerala, Maharashtra, and Rajasthan**—scored 581–640.
- **Bottom of the Table:** **Meghalaya** ranked lowest with **417 (Akanshi-3)**. Ten other states including **Telangana, Assam, Bihar, Jharkhand, and Chhattisgarh** were in the **Akanshi-2** category (461–520).
- **Improvements Noted:** **24 out of 36** states/UTs improved scores year-on-year; **12 declined**.
- **Best gains in Access:** **Bihar and Telangana**, measured by enrolment, retention, and reducing out-of-school children.
- **Infrastructure gains:** **Delhi, Jammu & Kashmir, and Telangana** showed notable improvements in facilities like toilets, water, electricity, and digital resources.
- **Learning Outcomes & Equity:** Despite data lag (NAS 2021), no state hit the top band in learning outcomes; equity gaps persist though slight narrowing is observed.
- **Policy Insights:** PGI 2.0 serves as a **data-driven tool** to inform targeted reform aligned with NEP 2020 and SDG 4, highlighting areas needing urgent intervention: outcomes, governance, infrastructure, and equity.

MDNIY Launches 'Yoga Bandhan' to Strengthen Global Unity Before IDY 2025

In the News: On June 17, 2025, the **Morarji Desai National Institute of Yoga (MDNIY)**, under the Ministry of AYUSH, launched **'Yoga Bandhan'**, one of the 10 **Signature Events** ahead of **International Day of Yoga (IDY) 2025**. The initiative promotes **global unity and cultural diplomacy** through shared yoga practice, positioning yoga as a medium for international collaboration and peace.

Key Points:

- **Campaign Launch:** MDNIY inaugurated **'Yoga Bandhan'** on June 17, 2025, as a prelude to the **10th International Day of Yoga** observed on June 21. The initiative uses the concept of **'Bandhan' (bond)** to foster unity across borders

- **Global Participation:** Yoga ambassadors and practitioners from **15 countries** participated in the event in Delhi, featuring global cultural exchange and academic dialogue around yoga.
- **Institutional Collaboration:** Indian Embassies, cultural bodies, and yoga institutions worldwide are collaborating to host **workshops, demonstrations, and seminars**, reinforcing cross-border institutional ties.
- **Leadership Support:** Vaidya Rajesh Kotecha, Secretary of the Ministry of AYUSH, highlighted India's role in global wellness and cited that approx. **95% of Indians are aware of AYUSH**, with around **35% practicing yoga**.
- **Digital Engagement:** The campaign encourages participants to share photos and videos using the **#YogaBandhan** hashtag, expanding its digital footprint.
- **Soft Power & Cultural Diplomacy:** As part of India's broader strategy, 'Yoga Bandhan' reinforces the **Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam** philosophy—"the world is one family"—while promoting people-to-people ties and inclusivity.

India Moves to 'One Nation, One Time'

In the News: On **June 18, 2025**, Union Minister Pralhad Joshi announced the government's intention to make **Indian Standard Time (IST)** the **sole mandatory time reference** for all legal, commercial, digital, and administrative functions across India. The policy, known as **"One Nation, One Time,"** aims to enhance national coordination, improve cybersecurity, and eliminate discrepancies brought on by multiple time sources.

Key Points:

- **Policy Launch:** Declared by Union Minister Pralhad Joshi, the **One Nation, One Time** initiative will be enforced under the **Legal Metrology (Indian Standard Time) Rules, 2025**.
- **Scope & Coverage:** IST will be the **exclusive reference** for all sectors—**banks, stock exchanges, telecom, transportation, utilities, SEBI**, and critical infrastructure. The use of alternate time sources like GPS will be forbidden, unless specifically authorized.
- **Cybersecurity & Synchronization:** The move aims to tackle time spoofing, enhance integrity of **financial transactions**, billing, and timestamping in logs and communications, while safeguarding against cyber vulnerabilities.
- **Infrastructure Setup:** The government is establishing **five Regional Reference Standard Laboratories** (Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Bhubaneswar, Faridabad, Guwahati) equipped with **atomic clocks** and synchronizing via NTP/PTP networks supported by **CSIR-NPL** and **ISRO**.
- **Digital Sovereignty:** Mandating IST aligns with the **Atmanirbhar Bharat** vision, strengthening India's **digital autonomy** and reducing reliance on foreign time references.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** A roundtable with over 100 representatives from telecom, banking, railways, and utilities was held to ensure industry readiness and seamless transition.

Yoga Sangam 2025: India Gears Up for a Historic International Day of Yoga

In the News: On **June 21, 2025**, the **Ministry of AYUSH** will lead **Yoga Sangam 2025**, the flagship event of the **11th International Day of Yoga (IDY)**, uniting participants at **over 100,000 locations** nationwide and globally. Led by **PM Narendra Modi** from Visakhapatnam, the event aims to amplify **thematic focus**: "Yoga for One Earth, One Health", celebrating a decade of mass yoga with synchronized wellness practices and international outreach.

Key Points:

- **Event Scale:** *Yoga Sangam 2025* will feature a synchronized **Common Yoga Protocol (CYP)** session on **June 21, 2025, from 6:30 AM to 7:45 AM**, held at more than **1 lakh locations**, including schools, workplaces, and community spaces.
- **Record Participation:** Registrations have surpassed **four lakh institutional groups**, with over **50,000 organizations** already committed and millions expected to take part.
- **Leadership & Outreach:** The central ceremony in **Visakhapatnam** will be led by **PM Modi**, supported by state leaders and **100+ global embassies** curating events abroad, reinforcing India's cultural diplomacy and global wellness messaging.
- **Unified Theme:** IDY 2025 carries the banner **"Yoga for One Earth, One Health"**, highlighting the convergence of personal wellness with planetary sustainability—a message that resonates with India's **G20 ethos** of One Earth, One Family, One Future.
- **Signature Events:** Yoga Sangam is one of **10 Signature Events** identified by the Ministry of AYUSH (including Yoga Bandhan, Yoga Park, Yoga Samavesh) each tailored to amplify yoga's reach, impact, and inclusivity.

INTERNATIONAL

"No Kings" Protests: Why 5 Million People Took to Streets Against the Trump Administration

In the News: On **June 14, 2025**, the United States witnessed the largest coordinated anti-Trump protests since the start of his second presidency, as more than **5 million people** gathered across **over 2,000 cities and towns** under the banner **"No Kings"** to oppose what they viewed as authoritarian policies and to reject the symbolism of Donald Trump's 79th birthday military parade.

Key Facts:

- Protesters in more than **2,100 locations** raised slogans like **"Let freedom ring! We don't want a king!"**, denouncing President Trump's perceived **authoritarian leanings**, including aggressive ICE raids and rescheduling of a \$45 million military parade to mark both the **79th birthday of the president** and the **250th anniversary of the U.S. Army**.
- Although the majority of demonstrations were peaceful, isolated clashes occurred in several cities. Notably, **Los Angeles authorities** used tear gas and rubber bullets, and a **person in Salt Lake City was critically injured in a shooting**.
- The protests drew diverse coalitions, including the grassroots group **50501**, civil rights advocates, elected leaders, and celebrities like **Mark Ruffalo, Glenn Close, and Jimmy Kimmel**, who publicly criticized Trump's policies.
- Organizers deliberately avoided staging events in **Washington, D.C.**, to contrast the spectacle of Trump's parade with grassroots demonstrations nationwide. They termed the day a **"Day of Defiance,"** emphasizing unity and democratic values across communities.
- The protests were primarily fueled by disapproval of Trump's **hardline immigration enforcement**, perceived dismantling of democratic institutions, and moves viewed as militaristic and monarchical—an outlook that participants believed endangered **civil liberties and the rule of law**.

Iran to Exit Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty

In the News: On June 16, 2025, amid escalating Israeli airstrikes and an IAEA resolution declaring Iran non-compliant, Iran's parliament began drafting a bill to withdraw from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)—a move that could significantly alter the international nuclear order.

Key Points:

- Withdrawal Underway:** Iran's Foreign Ministry confirmed that its parliament is preparing legislation to exit the NPT, though no final decision has been made yet.
- Triggering Factors:** The draft legislation was prompted by recent Israeli airstrikes on Iran's nuclear and military facilities, coupled with a rebuke from the IAEA for alleged non-compliance.
- NPT Obligations Affected:** Exiting the treaty would free Iran from IAEA oversight, transparency obligations, and the prohibition against pursuing nuclear weapons—heightening global proliferation concerns.
- Iran's Stance:** Tehran asserts its nuclear program remains peaceful and governed by Supreme Leader Khamenei's religious ban on nuclear weapons. Officials stress that withdrawal doesn't equate to weaponization but remains a strategic option.
- Geopolitical Ramifications:** Analysts warn that Iran's exit could undermine the credibility of the NPT, trigger regional nuclear proliferation, and complicate diplomatic efforts involving the U.S., Europe, Russia, and China.
- Iran's Strategic Options:** In addition to treaty withdrawal, Iran may seek leverage through threats to block the Strait of Hormuz—endangering global oil flows.

Global Out-of-School Population

In the News: According to UNESCO's 2025 Global Education Monitoring (GEM) report, an estimated **272 million** children, adolescents, and youth were out of school in 2023—**21 million more** than previously estimated.

Key Points:

- Scale of the Issue:** As of 2023, approximately 272 million young people were not enrolled in education. This includes roughly **78 million** of primary-school age, **64 million** of lower secondary age, and **130 million** of upper secondary age.
- Revised Estimates:** The count was adjusted upward by 21 million due to improved data collection and modelling by UIS and GEM, revealing more extensive exclusion than earlier thought.
- Slow Progress Toward Targets:** Despite global efforts, the out-of-school population has declined only around **1%** over the past decade, leaving about **251 million** excluded as of late 2024.

- **Regional Disparities:** Sub-Saharan Africa has seen rising exclusion. In 2021, about **244 million** children and youth aged 6–18 was out of school globally; over **98 million** of them were in Sub-Saharan Africa.
- **Gender Imbalance:** Globally, girls are disproportionately affected, with an estimated **7 million more girls** than boys out of school, driven by barriers such as early marriage, poverty, and cultural norms.
- **Impact of COVID-19 and Crisis Shocks:** The pandemic, which affected 1.6 billion learners, severely disrupted education—many children never returned, and recovery efforts remain uneven, especially for marginalized groups and regions lacking remote learning infrastructure.
- **SDG 4 Benchmarks Missed:** Countries collectively aim to reduce out-of-school numbers by 165 million by 2030. But by 2025, they are projected to be **75 million** short of national targets in primary and secondary age cohorts.

3rd UN Ocean Conference (UNOC3) — Nice, France

In the News: The third United Nations Ocean Conference convened in Nice, co-hosted by France and Costa Rica. The summit brought together 175 countries and over 12,000 participants, including heads of state, ministers, scientists, NGOs, and private sector leaders, all united to accelerate action on SDG 14: Life Below Water.

Key Points:

- **Theme & Structure:** Framed around “Accelerating action and mobilizing all actors,” the conference featured plenary sessions, Ocean Action Panels, alongside special events such as the One Ocean Science Congress, Blue Economy & Finance Forum, and Ocean Rise & Coastal Resilience Summit.
- **Nice Ocean Action Plan:** Delegates adopted a two-part plan that included a political declaration titled “Our Ocean, Our Future: United for Urgent Action” and more than **800 voluntary commitments** aimed at protecting marine biodiversity, combating plastic pollution, promoting sustainable fisheries, and expanding marine protected areas (MPAs).
- **High Seas Treaty Progress:** During the conference, **18 new countries** ratified the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction Treaty (High Seas Treaty), bringing total ratifications to 49. Ratification by 60 countries is needed for the treaty to enter into force—expected by **January 2026** after ratification thresholds are met.
- **Marine Protected Areas (“30×30”):** Commitments were made to significantly expand MPAs. Oceans currently have about 8–10% protection; the goal is to reach **30% by 2030**, with several new sites pledged around the world.
- **Deep-Sea Mining Moratorium:** Over **33 countries** supported a call for a precautionary moratorium on deep-sea mining and regulatory frameworks for high seas resource management.
- **Financing Gap & Commitments:** Financial pledges totaled around **US \$10 billion**, including €3 billion from the European Investment Bank and Asian Development Bank for plastic pollution, and \$2.5 billion from CAF (Latin America & Caribbean). An additional €8.7 billion was announced in Monaco to support a blue economy over five years—still far short of the estimated \$175 billion annual requirement.
- **Governance & Accountability:** Calls intensified for robust ocean governance, clearer international regulation, and strengthened data systems to attract private investment. Stakeholders emphasized that ocean protection will require transparent enforcement and systemic policy frameworks.
- **Leadership & Advocacy:** UN Secretary-General António Guterres warned that current ocean exploitation must switch to protection, highlighting the ocean’s critical role in climate mitigation. President Macron announced that once ratified, the High Seas Treaty would enter into force on **1 January 2026**.

G7 Summit Begins (51st G7 Leaders' Summit) – Kananaskis, Canada, 16–17 June 2025

In the News: The 51st G7 Summit kicked off in Kananaskis, Alberta, Canada, on June 16, 2025, hosted by Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney. Leaders from G7 nations and invited partners—including PM Modi—gathered to discuss global issues like climate, AI, security, and trade amidst tensions in the Middle East and shifts in U.S. diplomacy.

Key Points:

- **Summit Opening & Attendance:** The summit began June 16–17, with Mark Carney hosting. Participating leaders include PM Modi (India invited), Donald Trump (USA), Keir Starmer (UK), Macron (France), Merz (Germany), Meloni (Italy), and Shigeru Ishiba (Japan), along with outreach invitees such as Zelenskyy, Albanese, Sheinbaum, Ramaphosa, Lee Jae-myung, and Lula.
- **Key Themes:** Major agendas include energy security, AI- energy nexus, climate change, global trade stability, and security challenges arising from conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East.

- **PM Modi's Engagement:** Prime Minister Modi—attending his sixth G7—will engage with leaders on energy, tech innovation, and security, sharing India's perspective as the world's fifth-largest economy.
- **Trump's Abrupt Departure:** U.S. President Trump left the summit early on June 16, citing escalating Israel–Iran tensions, evacuation warnings for Tehran, and pressing issues back in Washington. His exit disrupted discussions and highlighted U.S.–allied strains.
- **Diplomatic Ripples:** His departure cast a shadow over the summit, prompting efforts by remaining leaders to reaffirm the G7's role in addressing global crises—from Gaza conflict to Russia-Ukraine war—while maintaining trade and climate commitments.
- **Notable Interactions:** The summit included informal rapport moments—such as South Korean President Lee Jae-myung joking with Australian PM Albanese—and a strong presence from the Indian diaspora during PM Modi's arrival

India–France Joint Exercise 'Shakti 2025' Begins in France

In the News: On **June 18, 2025**, the **8th edition** of the biennial India–France joint Army exercise "**Shakti 2025**" commenced at **Camp Larzac**, La Cavalerie, France, running until **July 1, 2025**.

Key Points:

- **Exercise Timeline & Location:** Held from June 18 to July 1 at Camp Larzac, La Cavalerie, in Southern France
- **Objectives:** Focused on enhancing **multi-domain operations** in **sub-conventional/ semi-urban scenarios**, aligned with **UN Chapter VII** mandates
- **Indian Contingent:** Approximately **90 personnel** led by a battalion of the **Jammu & Kashmir Rifles**, supplemented by soldiers from other arms & services
- **French Counterpart:** An equal-strength unit, **90 troops** from the **13th Foreign Legion Half-Brigade (13th DBLE)**, representing the French Army.
- **Training Modules:** Cover joint drills, Tactics, Techniques and Procedures (TTPs), modern equipment handling, physical endurance, and interoperability exercises designed for **peacekeeping and asymmetric threat responses**
- **Diplomatic & Strategic Importance:** Exercise Shakti strengthens **military diplomacy**, fosters **professional camaraderie**, and reflects the deepening **Indo-French defence cooperation** and strategic alignment in the **Indo-Pacific region**

Operation True Promise 3: Iran's Retaliatory Strike Redefines Modern Warfare

In the News: On **June 13–17, 2025**, Iran launched **Operation True Promise 3**, a sustained and multi-phased missile and drone campaign targeting Israeli military bases, civilian infrastructure, and key strategic facilities, in response to Israeli airstrikes on Iran's nuclear and military installations.

Key Points:

- **Operation Timeline:** Began **June 13**, with continued large-scale missile/drone barrages through **June 17**, marking the **third direct Iranian strike** (True Promise I & II occurred in 2024).
- **Scale & Phases:** More than **9–12 waves** executed, each targeting military airbases, IDF HQs, and civilian zones; operators reported involvement of **over 100–150 missiles per wave**, sometimes accompanied by drones.
- **Targets & Damage:** Key targets included: **The Kirya** (IDF HQ, Tel Aviv), **Weizmann Institute** (Rehovot), **Haifa oil refinery** and **power plant**, Residential neighborhoods: **Bat Yam**, **Rishon LeZion**, and others.
- **Casualties & Damage:** Dozens of civilians killed/injured (e.g., 5–10 deaths), hundreds wounded, hundreds of residential and institutional structures damaged. Shockwaves reportedly affected the **US embassy**, though no injuries were reported there.
- **Defense Interception:** Israel's multi-layered defenses—including **Iron Dome**, **David's Sling**, and **Arrow systems**—successfully intercepted most incoming threats, although some warheads penetrated these shields and caused damage.
- **Modern Warfare Shift:** The protracted barrage underscores a shift toward **hybrid warfare**—combining ballistic missiles, drones, precise targeting, layered air defenses, and calculated escalation calibrated to test enemy defenses.
- **Strategic Implications:** Signals Iran's capacity to sustain high-volume, direct strikes despite losses in military infrastructure. Highlights limitations in Israel's air defenses under prolonged stress. Increases regional tensions, with the U.S. reinforcing defenses across the Middle East.

UN Declares 2026 as International Year of the Woman Farmer

In the News: On **June 18, 2025**, the **UN General Assembly** officially adopted a resolution declaring **2026 as the International Year of the Woman Farmer**, recognizing their crucial contributions to global food systems and calling for stronger policies to support them.

Key Points:

- **Official Declaration:** The resolution (Agenda A/78/251), passed by consensus on **June 18, 2025**, designates 2026 as the International Year of the Woman Farmer.
- **Purpose & Objectives:** Seeks to shine a spotlight on women's roles in agriculture, raise awareness about the obstacles they face (land rights, credit, technology), and advance several UN Sustainable Development Goals—especially gender equity and food security.
- **Global Support:** Spearheaded by the United States and co-sponsored by over 123 UN member states, reflecting widespread global consensus and political will.
- **FAO Involvement:** The Food and Agriculture Organization will lead efforts—awareness campaigns, policy frameworks, and gender-transformative programs—to address systemic discrimination and economic disparities for women farmers.
- **Key Statistics:** Globally, women constitute nearly **39%** of the agricultural workforce—averaging **60–80%** in developing nations—yet own just **8.3%** of farmland in some countries, e.g., India
- **Implementation Themes:** Initiatives will focus on: Securing land rights and financial inclusion. Expanding access to tools, credits, and climate-resilient technology. Promoting women's leadership and representation in agricultural decision-making. Fostering partnerships across governments, private sector, academia, and civil society

International Labour Conference Adopts Landmark Biological Standards

In the News: The **113th International Labour Conference (ILC)** in Geneva concluded with the **first-ever international Labour Convention (No. 192)** and complementary **Recommendation (No. 209)** aimed at protecting workers from **biological hazards** in workplaces globally—defining a new benchmark in occupational health & safety.

Key Points:

- **Historic Convention (C192):** Legally binding obligations for governments and employers to prevent or control exposure to biological risks—viruses, bacteria, fungi, parasites, toxins, prions and allergens—across all work sectors.
- **Recommendation (No. 209):** Offers technical guidance on risk assessments, emergency preparedness, early warning systems, training, and defining routes of exposure like airborne or vector-borne transmission.
- **Mandatory Worker Protections:** Employers must assess and manage risks with worker involvement, ensuring timely information, training, and accessible occupational health services. Workers gain rights to refuse unsafe work and report without fear.
- **Inclusive Governance:** Framework recognizes high-risk sectors—healthcare, agriculture, forestry, construction—and calls special protections for vulnerable groups: pregnant/breastfeeding women, young, migrant workers.
- **Pandemic & Climate Relevance:** Designed to prepare workplaces for future outbreaks and biological threats, taking into account environmental and climate-related factors.
- **Multi-Standard Conference Outcomes:** Alongside C192, ILC adopted resolutions on transitioning informal workers, early-stage standard-setting for platform economy work, amendments to maritime labour laws, and Palestine's upgraded observer status.

51st G7 Summit 2025 – Countries, Key Issues & India's Role

In the News: The 51st G7 Summit was held from **June 15–17, 2025**, in **Kananaskis, Alberta, Canada**, under the presidency of Canadian PM Mark Carney, focusing on protecting communities, building energy and digital security, and forming future partnerships.

G7 Members & Invitees:

- **Core members:** Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the UK, the US (+EU as participant).
- **Invitees:** India, Australia, Brazil, Mexico, South Africa, South Korea, Ukraine, with Indonesia initially invited then withdrawing.

Key Issues Discussed:

- **Israel–Iran & Ukraine Crises:** Leaders affirmed Israel’s right to self-defence and labelled Iran a primary source of regional instability; Russia–Ukraine debate was strained with no consensus on a joint statement. Zelenskiy secured C\$2 billion in Canadian aid but faced opposition from the US.
- **Trade & Tariffs:** With ongoing US trade tensions, a US-UK trade pact was announced; broader USMCA adjustments remained unresolved
- **AI & Tech Governance:** Canada advanced AI ethics frameworks (Hiroshima Code, OECD guidelines). Commitments included human-centric AI, public–private AI adoption, countering deepfakes, and supporting digital infrastructure globally. India emphasized responsible AI and showcased UPI/Aadhaar as models.
- **Critical Minerals & Clean Energy:** Launch of a Critical Minerals Action Plan; emphasis on recycling, responsible sourcing, and partnerships in Global South.
- **Wildfire & Disasters:** Adoption of the Kananaskis Wildfire Charter to enhance cooperation on forecasting, response, and prevention.
- **Transnational Threats:** Pledge to develop frameworks to combat foreign interference, migrant smuggling, and other cross-border crimes.
- **India’s Participation & Role:**
 - PM Modi attended as an outreach partner—his 12th invite and sixth summit since 2003.
 - Engaged in outreach sessions: Addressed **energy security**, highlighting diversification, technology, and Infrastructure.
 - Held bilateral meetings with Canada, Germany, Mexico, South Africa, South Korea, and Ukraine.

PM Modi’s Historic Croatia Visit

In the News: On **June 18, 2025**, Prime Minister Narendra Modi completed the first-ever official visit by an Indian Prime Minister to **Croatia**, marking a watershed moment in bilateral relations and reinforcing Delhi’s strategy to enhance India–Europe connectivity and cooperation.

Key Points:

- **Historic Visit:** PM Modi’s visit from **June 15–19, 2025** formed the final leg of a three-nation tour (Cyprus, Canada, Croatia) and marked the first-ever visit of an Indian Prime Minister to Croatia. •
- **Diplomatic Engagement:** Received with full ceremonial honors at Zagreb’s **Banski Dvori palace**, he held delegation-level talks with PM Andrej Plenković that spanned trade, defence, technology, space, cultural exchange, and counter-terror efforts.
- **IMEC & Connectivity:** Both leaders emphasised Croatia’s role as a **gateway to Central & Southeast Europe**, leveraging key Adriatic ports (Rijeka, Split, Ploče) and connecting India with Europe via the **India–Middle East–Europe Corridor (IMEC)**.
- **Strategic Significance:** Croatia’s EU & NATO membership positions it as a vital political interlocutor, capable of influencing EU decision-making—particularly around the pending **India–EU Free Trade Agreement**.
- **MoUs & Agreements:** Four Memoranda of Understanding were inked in the areas of **agriculture, science & technology, culture exchange**, and establishing a **Hindi Chair at the University of Zagreb**, laying the groundwork for deeper collaboration.
- **Sectoral Cooperation:** Agreed to expand cooperation in **ports and shipping, digitalisation, AI, renewables, pharma, tourism, railway infrastructure, and defence-industrial partnerships**.
- **Security & Counter-terror:** Croatia reiterated solidarity, particularly after support following the Pahalgam terror attack. Both nations reaffirmed firm opposition to terrorism and emphasised dialogue and diplomacy over military conflict.
- **Cultural & People-to-People:** Continued momentum in **Indology, yoga, Indian culture**, and historical ties (first Croatian Sanskrit grammar in 1790). Both sides aimed to deepen cultural exchanges, tourism, start-up linkages, and workforce mobility initiatives.
- **Global & Regional Impact:** Joint support for **UN reforms, climate action**, and a **free trade agreement with the EU**. Reinforced diplomatic consensus on upholding sovereignty, international law, and opposing military aggression.

India-Cyprus Sign MoU to Enable UPI Services for Cross-Border Payments

In the News: During Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s visit to Cyprus (June 15–16, 2025), India and Cyprus signed a landmark **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** to enable **UPI-based cross-border payment services**, aimed at facilitating seamless digital transactions for Indian tourists, businesses, and investors in Cyprus..

Key Points:

- **MoU Signing:** NPCI International Payments Ltd (NIPL) and Eurobank Cyprus formalized an agreement to introduce **UPI infrastructure** in Cyprus for instant transactions.
- **Events & Context:** The MoU was a key outcome of discussions at the **Limassol business roundtable** (June 15, 2025), co-chaired by PM Modi and President Christodoulides, alongside an MoU between **NSE International Exchange (GIFT City)** and the **Cyprus Stock Exchange**.
- **User Benefits:** Indian tourists and travelers will be able to make real-time, secure UPI payments in Cyprus, avoiding currency conversion—enhancing convenience and fostering tourism. Cypriot merchants and businesses also gain exposure to India's large digital consumer base.
- **Strategic Importance:** Cyprus's geographic position as a **gateway to Europe/Mediterranean** and its role in EU policymaking make it a valuable launchpad for UPI's expansion into Europe.
- **Broader Cooperation:** The deal complements the **NSE-Cyprus Stock Exchange MoU**, facilitating **dual listings** and bolstering cross-border financial flows via GIFT City's international exchange arm.
- **UPI's Global Reach:** UPI, launched in April 2016 by NPCI, already supports international payments in countries like France, Sri Lanka, and the UK, positioning India's **fintech leadership globally**.

Hunger Hotspots

In the News: On **June 16, 2025**, the **Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)** and **World Food Programme (WFP)** released their joint **"Hunger Hotspots: Early Warning on Acute Food Insecurity – June to October 2025"** report. The report designates **Sudan, South Sudan, Mali, Haiti, and Palestine** as **global hunger hotspots of highest concern**, urging urgent humanitarian intervention.

Key Points:

- **Report Scope:** Covers **13 countries** with deteriorating food security, identifying **five** at highest risk of famine—Sudan, South Sudan, Mali, Haiti, and Palestine—and **other high-concern nations** including Yemen, DRC, Myanmar, and Nigeria.
- **Leading Drivers:** Conflict, economic shocks, climate-related disasters (flooding, drought), restricted humanitarian access, and funding shortages are the primary triggers of acute food insecurity.
- **Sudan:** Famine conditions confirmed in some regions; ongoing civil strife has displaced millions. Nearly **25 million people** face acute food insecurity; famine risk remains extreme.
- **South Sudan:** Floods, conflict, and economic turmoil have placed **7.7 million people** in crisis or worse, with about **63,000 in famine-like conditions**. Flooding worsens pre-existing vulnerability.
- **Mali & Haiti:** In Mali, violence and soaring grain prices threaten **2,600 people** with starvation by August. Haiti grapples with gang violence and displacement; thousands are in catastrophic hunger.
- **Palestine (Gaza):** Gaza's **2.1 million residents** face severe food insecurity; nearly **500,000 at risk of famine** by September.
- **Other High-Risk Areas:** Yemen, DRC, Myanmar, and Nigeria are flagged as very high concern; additional hotspots include Burkina Faso, Chad, Somalia, and Syria.
- **Call to Action:** The report stresses immediate, large-scale humanitarian aid—both funding and physical access—to prevent starvation and famine. FAO Director-General QU Dongyu emphasised sustaining agriculture amidst crises.
- **WFP Statement:** Cindy McCain, WFP Executive Director, described the analysis as a **"red alert"**, warning that without funding and safe access, **"we cannot save lives."**

Indian Funds in Swiss Banks Triple in 2024, Driven by Financial Institutions

In the News: On June 19, 2025, the **Swiss National Bank (SNB)** released its annual data revealing that **Indian-linked funds in Swiss banks** more than **tripled in 2024**, rising from CHF 1.04 billion in 2023 to CHF 3.54 billion (~₹37,600 crore), marking a dramatic rebound.

Key Points:

- **Overall Surge:** Total liabilities towards Indian clients in Swiss banks increased from CHF 1.04 billion in 2023 to **3.54 billion in 2024**, the highest since 2021.
- **Institutional Drivers:** The sharp rise was largely due to inflows via **banks and other financial institutions**, not direct individual deposits.
- **Individual Deposits:** These rose modestly by **11%**, reaching CHF 346 million (~₹3,675 crore), and accounted for just **10%** of the total Indian-linked funds.

- **Portfolio Breakdown:** Holdings include CHF 3.02 billion via other banks, CHF 41 million in trusts, and CHF 135 million in bonds and other instruments.
- **Global Rank:** India moved up to **48th place** globally in foreign client funds held in Swiss banks, compared to 67th in 2023.
- **Black Money Claims:** Swiss authorities emphasize that these figures do **not automatically indicate illicit funds** and stress their cooperation with India in tax transparency via automatic information exchange.
- **BIS Data:** Complementary BIS data, which tracks non-bank individual deposits, also showed a modest **6% rise**, totaling USD 74.8 million (~₹650 crore) in 2024.

India Ranks 13th Globally in Investment Curiosity

In the News: According to a new analysis by **Broker Chooser**, India secured the **13th position globally** in **online investment curiosity** in 2024, driven primarily by growing interest in the **stock market** and **cryptocurrencies**, especially among young retail investors.

Key Points:

- **Global Ranking:** India scored **2,629 investment-related searches per million people per month**, placing it 13th worldwide in terms of online investment interest.
- **Top Search Categories:** The most searched investment terms were **stocks** (1,138 searches), followed by **forex** (625), **crypto** (501), and **general investing tips** (259).
- **Youth-Driven Trend:** The surge in search activity is largely attributed to **younger Indians**, who are increasingly exploring retail investing avenues beyond traditional assets like real estate and gold.
- **Comparative Strength:** India's interest in stock investing is **four times higher than South Africa's** and **over 50% more** than Malaysia's search volume in the same category.
- **Top Performers:** Countries leading the investment curiosity ranking include **Australia, Singapore, and Kenya**, placing ahead of India in per-capita online searches.
- **Platform Influence:** The rise is also fueled by **increased usage of mobile trading apps**, systematic investment plans (SIPs), and investment education shared via **social media influencers**.

Israel's Fordow Nuclear Facility

In the News: On **June 19, 2025**, escalating tensions between **Israel and Iran** led to intensified scrutiny of Iran's **Fordow Fuel Enrichment Plant**, a deeply buried uranium enrichment facility near Qom. The **International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)** confirmed Fordow remains **undamaged by recent airstrikes**, whilst analysts warn that only a U.S. **GBU-57 "bunker-buster"** bomb could breach its deep fortifications.

Key Points:

- **Hidden Underground:** Fordow is located approximately **80–90 m underground**, beneath a mountain near Qom. Initially built under an IRGC missile base, it was later converted to a uranium enrichment site in 2009.
- **Enrichment Activity:** Originally used to enrich uranium up to **5%**, Fordow was repurposed for higher enrichment after 2019, producing up to **83.7% U-235**, nearing weapons-grade levels.
- **JCPOA Context:** Under the 2015 **nuclear deal**, Iran agreed to cease enrichment at Fordow. However, it resumed enrichment clandestinely post-2019, including adding new centrifuge cascades.
- **Strategic Target:** Israel's **June 13–15, 2025** air campaign targeted several Iranian sites including Natanz and Isfahan. Fordow remains intact due to its depth, posing a challenge that appears to require **U.S. GBU-57 bunker-buster bombs**.
- **Destruction Challenges:** The **GBU-57 MOP** is the only conventional munition capable of penetrating Fordow, but its use would escalate regional conflict and risks civilian fallout.
- **IAEA Monitoring:** Fordow remains under **IAEA monitoring**, though access has been limited since Iran suspended the **Additional Protocol**. Its strategic fortified status raises proliferation and security concerns.
- **Escalation Risk:** The possible use of U.S. bunker-busters or unilateral Israeli strike on Fordow could trigger wider **military confrontation** in the Middle East.

UK Parliament Passes Assisted Dying Bill

In the News: On **June 20, 2025**, the **UK House of Commons** passed the **Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill** by a narrow margin of **314–291**, marking a historic shift in public policy. The bill, which now heads to the **House of Lords**, would legalize

assisted dying for **mentally competent, terminally ill adults in England and Wales** with a life expectancy of six months or less.

Key Points:

- **Parliamentary Vote & Details:** MPs voted **314 in favour** and **291 against**, allowing terminally ill adults to receive medical assistance to die, subject to approval by **two doctors** and an oversight **panel** that includes legal and mental health professionals.
- **Free Vote & Leadership Position:** The **Labour government under Keir Starmer remained neutral**, with a free vote allowed; Starmer personally voted in support. The bill was introduced by MP **Kim Leadbeater**.
- **Safeguards & Amendments:** Key amendments include **mental capacity checks, reflection periods**, and safeguards against coercion. However, critics argue that **judicial oversight has been diluted** and protections for the vulnerable remain insufficient.
- **Support vs Opposition:** Trial advocates argue the law provides **dignity and compassionate choice**, while opponents—including **faith groups, disability rights activists**, and some healthcare professionals—warn of risks to vulnerable groups and potential ethical erosion.

ECONOMY

Govt Notifies SEZ Reforms to Boost Semiconductor & Electronics Component Manufacturing

In the News: The Department of Commerce notified a set of amendments to the **Special Economic Zone (SEZ) Rules, 2006**, designed to facilitate semiconductor and electronic component manufacturing in India. These changes aim to relax land and operational requirements, spur high-tech investments, and strengthen the nation's position in the global semiconductor value chain.

Key Points:

- Under the revised SEZ rules, the minimum contiguous land area requirement for zones exclusively dedicated to semiconductor or electronics component manufacturing has been **reduced from 50 hectares to just 10 hectares**, easing land acquisition for such high-tech projects.
- The government has amended rules to allow the **SEZ Board of Approval** to relax the requirement for encumbrance-free land in cases where parcels are mortgaged or leased to central or state authorities, simplifying financing and land-use arrangements.
- An update to customs valuation norms in SEZs—under the revised Rule 53—now permits units to **include the value of free-of-cost goods received or supplied** in their **Net Foreign Exchange (NFE) calculations**, enabling a more accurate assessment of export performance.
- Additionally, Rule 18 has been amended to permit semiconductor and electronics component manufacturing units in SEZs to **sell products into the Domestic Tariff Area** upon payment of applicable duties, thereby facilitating domestic linkages.
- These reforms are intended to **attract pioneering investments**, address the capital-intensive and import-dependent nature of semiconductor manufacturing, **spur growth of the semiconductor ecosystem**, and **create high-skilled employment opportunities**.
- Following these changes, the SEZ Board has approved proposals from **Micron Semiconductor Technology India Pvt Ltd (MSTI)** and **Aequs Group**, paving the way for new SEZs in **Sanand, Gujarat**, and **Dharwad, Karnataka**, respectively.
- Micron plans to invest **₹13,000 crore** in a **37.6-hectare** semiconductor SEZ in Sanand, while Aequs Group will invest **₹100 crore** in an **11.55-hectare** electronics components SEZ in Dharwad.

India's Unemployment Rises to 5.6% in May 2025 Amid Post-Harvest Slowdown

In the News: The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation released the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) for May 2025, revealing that **India's unemployment rate rose to 5.6%**—up from 5.1% in April—primarily due to a post-harvest dip in agricultural employment.

Key Points:

- **Overall Unemployment:** Increased to **5.6%** in May from **5.1%** in April 2025.
- **Agricultural Impact:** The decline in farm jobs post-Rabi harvest led rural unemployment to climb, with the share of agricultural workers falling from **45.9%** to **43.5%**.

- **Gender Disparity:** Female unemployment stood at **5.8%**, slightly higher than male unemployment at **5.6%**
- **Youth Unemployment:** Youth aged 15–29 in urban areas saw a rise to **17.9%** (from 17.2%), while rural youth unemployment reached **13.7%** (from 12.3%).
- **Labour Force Participation (LFPR):** Overall LFPR dropped to **54.8%** (from 55.6%), with rural at **56.9%**, urban at **50.4%**, and female rural LFPR declined to **36.9%**.
- **Worker-Population Ratio (WPR):** Fell to **51.7%** (from 52.8%), with rural at **54.1%** and urban at **46.9%**
- **Seasonal & Weather Effects:** Seasonal agricultural cycles and summer heat reduced outdoor employment, notably for rural women who often revert to unpaid domestic roles.
- **Broader Economy:** Despite unemployment uptick, India's economy is robust with 7.4% growth in Q1 (Jan–Mar) and a forecasted 6.5% growth for FY 2025–26; manufacturing slowed in May due to weak demand and inflation

Anuradha Thakur Appointed to SEBI Board, Set to Join RBI Central Board Soon

In the News: Senior IAS officer Anuradha Thakur, a 1994-batch from the Himachal Pradesh cadre and currently serving as Officer-on-Special-Duty in the Department of Economic Affairs (DEA), was appointed as a **part-time member of the SEBI board** and is expected to join the **RBI Central Board** following her confirmation as Economic Affairs Secretary, effective **July 1, 2025**.

Key Points:

- **Board Induction:** Thakur officially joined SEBI as a part-time (ex-officio) board member, effective **June 16, 2025**, alongside RBI Deputy Governor M. Rajeshwar Rao and Corporate Affairs Secretary Deepti Gaur Mukerjee.
- **DEA Secretary Appointment:** Appointed as the first woman Secretary of DEA, effective **July 1, 2025**, succeeding Ajay Seth (retiring June 30).
- **RBI Board Role:** As Economic Affairs Secretary, she will also serve as an ex-officio member of the RBI Central Board, replacing Ajay Seth and joining alongside Financial Services Secretary Nagaraju Maddirala.
- **Professional Background:** Thakur has previously held senior roles at SFIO and DIPAM, contributing to initiatives like Air India disinvestment and monetisation reforms. She has also served as Additional Secretary in MCA.

ENVIRONMENT

GFW 2024 Report on Indian Forests

In the News: The Global Forest Watch (GFW) 2024 assessment—covering tree cover and primary forest loss across India—reveals concerning trends. India lost approximately **18,200 hectares of primary forest** in 2024, signalling a continued decline in natural forests and rising carbon emissions.

Key Points:

- **Primary Forest Loss Surge:** India saw **18,200 ha** of primary (humid) forest deforested in 2024, up from **17,700 ha** in 2023. Since 2001, primary forest losses total **348,000 ha**, representing **15% of total tree cover loss**.
- **Overall Tree Cover Decline:** From 2001–2024, India lost **2.31 million ha** of tree cover—a **7.1%** drop—resulting in roughly **1.29 Gt CO₂e** emissions. In 2024, about **150,000 ha** of natural forest were lost, translating to **68 Mt CO₂e**. **Regional Hotspots:** Assam and North-East India bear the brunt, accounting for **74%** of the nation's tree cover loss during 2001–2024. Assam alone lost **3,400 sq km** (~169 sq km in 2023), releasing ~**174 Mt CO₂**. In **Andhra Pradesh**, **468 ha** of primary forest vanished in 2024—the second-highest since 2017. The state lost **5,730 ha** of natural forest, emitting **1.75 Mt CO₂e**. Districts like **East Godavari** and **Visakhapatnam** made up **76%** of this loss.
- **Drivers Behind Losses:** **Agricultural expansion, deforestation, infrastructure development, urbanisation, and commodity production** are leading causes. Human-caused **Forest fires**, exacerbated by climate change, drove global primary forest losses, though specific Indian data focus on land use change.
- **Environmental Impact:** Losses contribute to **carbon emissions**, disrupt **climate regulation, biodiversity, and livelihoods**, particularly in sensitive northeastern ecosystems.
- **Gains vs Losses:** India recorded some tree cover gains (e.g., Andhra Pradesh added **194,000 ha** between 2002–2020), but these falls short compared to losses.

Green Fertiliser Breakthrough Wins \$2M Food Planet Prize 2025

In the News: Swedish startup NitroCapt AB was awarded the **\$2 million Food Planet Prize 2025** for its pioneering green

fertilizer technology. The breakthrough method produces nitrogen fertilizer using **air, water, and renewable electricity**, drastically reducing emissions compared to conventional fossil-fuel-based production.

Key Points:

- **Prize & Recognition:** NitroCapt secured the **\$2 million Food Planet Prize**, the world's largest environmental award, in recognition of its potential to revolutionize sustainable agriculture.
- **Innovative Process:** The company's proprietary method uses **plasma technology** to extract nitrogen from air, combining it with water and green energy to create fertilizer—eliminating fossil fuel dependence and cutting energy usage by tenfold.
- **Decarbonising Fertilizer Sector:** Traditional nitrogen fertilizer production contributes significantly to global greenhouse gas emissions—comparable to the aviation industry. NitroCapt's solution enables **local, low-emission fertilizer production**, reducing logistical needs and supporting resilient food systems.
- **Scaling Up:** Prize funding will accelerate NitroCapt's transition from pilot stage to **commercial-scale production**, enabling broader deployment. CEO Gustaf Forsberg emphasized the importance of scaling to "start shifting the use of nitrogen fertilizers to sustainable fertilizers."
- **Global Impact & Localisation:** The technology's modular design allows localized manufacturing near farms, reducing transport emissions and enhancing access—particularly beneficial in regions with fragmented fertilizer supply, including parts of **Africa**.
- **Expert Praise:** The Food Planet Prize jury noted that the solution: Reduces global energy consumption in fertilizer production. Uses only **green electricity**. Produces clean nitrate fertilizer supporting soil health and sustainable farming.

State of India's Environment 2025 in Figures

In the News: The Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) and Down To Earth (DTE) released the State of India's Environment in Figures 2025, presenting a data-driven snapshot across four thematic areas—environment, agriculture, public health, and human development—using 48 indicators to evaluate all 36 states and union territories.

Key Points:

- **Overall Performance:** No state achieved a score above 70/100 in environmental performance. Even top-ranked states struggle with untreated sewage, river pollution, and waste management.
- **Top Performers & Regional Gaps:** While Andhra Pradesh, Sikkim, and Goa lead in select domains, populous states like Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Bihar, and West Bengal—together accounting for nearly half the population—performed poorly across most indicators.
- **Freshwater Crisis:** Punjab saw rampant groundwater exploitation—156.87% extraction rate—with over 75% of its administrative blocks deemed overexploited. Contamination with uranium, fluoride, arsenic, nitrates, and iron impacted several districts.
- **Agricultural & Land Trends:** Agricultural land declined from 62.33% in 1952–53 to 58.69% by 2022–23. There's been a shift toward tubewell irrigation—43.34% dependency nationally, with Punjab among the most dependent.
- **Forest & Mangrove Cover:** India's total forest cover stands at approximately 21.7% of its land area (~80.9 million hectares). Mangrove cover remains around 4,992 km², with concerns about marginal declines.
- **EnviStats Launch:** The government's MoSPI released EnviStats India 2025 on June 5, offering statistics on annual mean temperature (up 0.69 °C since 2001), renewable vs. thermal power production, fish production, electricity, sanitation, and Ramsar wetland sites (91 in number).
- **Temperature & Climate Signals:** Mean annual temperatures rose from 25.05 °C in 2001 to 25.74 °C in 2024, with both highs and lows trending upward. Rainfall remained variable without clear long-term pattern.
- **Power & Renewable Energy Shift:** Between 2013–14 to 2023–24, thermal energy output increased from ~792 TWh to ~1,326 TWh, while renewable energy rose from ~65.5 TWh to ~225.8 TWh.
- **Fishery & Wetland Preservation:** Inland fish production rose from 6.14 million to 13.91 million tonnes (2013–14 to 2023–24). India now has 91 Ramsar sites—totaling 1.36 million hectares.
- **Urgent Call:** CSE Director Sunita Narain warned that the nation cannot afford complacency; most states remain vulnerable across multiple environmental and development dimensions.

NISHAD Designated as Global Rinderpest Holding Facility

In the News: On June 17, 2025, India's ICAR–National Institute of High Security Animal Diseases (NIHSAD) in Bhopal was formally designated by the FAO and WOAHA as a **Category A Rinderpest Holding Facility (RHF)**, placing it among an exclusive group of six labs worldwide authorised to securely hold Rinderpest Virus-Containing Material (RVCN) .

Key Points:

- **Global Recognition:** NIHSAD joins premier facilities in the UK, USA, France, Japan, and Ethiopia, earning Category A status for secure storage of all RVCN (excluding vaccine seeds).
- **Eradicated Yet Vigilant:** Rinderpest—a highly contagious viral disease also known as cattle plague—was globally eradicated in 2011. However, preserved samples still pose biosecurity risks, necessitating strict containment.
- **BSL-3 Containment Standards:** NIHSAD, India's premier Biosafety Level-3 laboratory, originally established in 1984 and designated as its national RVCN repository in 2012, also functions as a WOAHA reference lab for avian influenza and Newcastle disease within the One Health framework.
- **Rigorous Approval Process:** India applied for RHF status in 2019. A joint FAO–WOAHA inspection in March 2025 validated NIHSAD's biosafety protocols, emergency preparedness, and inventory controls, granting one-year Category A designation.
- **One Health Commitment:** Secretary Alka Upadhyaya highlighted India's legacy in eradicating rinderpest and now sustaining global animal health control—a responsibility affirmed by this international recognition.

Bonn Climate Change Conference Begins (SB 62) – Bonn, Germany, 16–26 June 2025

In the News: On **16 June 2025**, over **5,000** delegates from nearly 200 countries, including government officials, scientists, indigenous groups, and NGOs, gathered in Bonn for the UNFCCC's **62nd session of Subsidiary Bodies (SB 62)**—a key mid-year climate meeting shaping outcomes ahead of **COP30 in Belém**.

Key Points:

- **Purpose & Structure:** SB 62 includes the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) and for Scientific & Technological Advice (SBSTA), addressing technical and policy aspects.
– Agenda covers climate finance mobilization, Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA), transparency frameworks, technology transfer, just transition, agriculture, and ocean-climate links.
- **Opening Ceremony & Cultural Feature:** Held 17 June, featuring a photography exhibition— “A Love Letter to Multilateralism”—with welcome remarks from UN Executive Secretary Simon Stiell and Bonn's mayor.
- **Sharm el-Sheikh Dialogue Workshop:** First of two 2025 workshops focusing on climate finance capacity, low-emission transition planning, and just transitions underway on 17–18 June.
- **Ocean Dialogue:** A two-day session on integrating ocean-based measures in NDCs, emphasizing finance, adaptation, biodiversity synergy, and capacity-building.
- **Just Transition & Equity:** UNFCCC health community urged nations to back fossil-fuel phaseout and prioritize finance for health/co-benefits. Experts from University of Bristol emphasized Global North–South equity and inclusion of vulnerable voices in negotiations.
- **Agenda Dispute & U.S. Absence:** Sessions delayed when developing nations demanded explicit agenda items on finance from developed countries and trade-related climate measures; U.S. absence noted as Trump-era withdrawal continues.
- **Setting Stage for COP30:** SB 62 outcomes are being prepared to feed into COP30 in Brazil (10–21 Nov 2025), paving final decisions on adaptation metrics, finance roadmap, mitigation ambition, and transparency systems.

India Hosts First Assembly of the International Big Cat Alliance in New Delhi

In the News: On **June 16, 2025**, India convened the **first Assembly** of the **International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA)** in New Delhi. The Assembly was chaired by **Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav** and included ministerial delegations from nine countries—Bhutan, Cambodia, Eswatini, Guinea, Liberia, Suriname, Somalia, Kazakhstan, and India. During the gathering, Yadav was elected as IBCA President, and **S.P. Yadav** was appointed Director General. The Assembly also ratified the headquarters agreement, operational workplan, rules, and financial regulations. The IBCA, launched in March 2024 by India under the National Tiger Conservation Authority, encompasses **95 range countries** dedicated to conserving seven major big cat species.

Key Points:

- **Assembly Date & Venue:** Held on **16 June 2025** in New Delhi; presided over by Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav.
- **Leadership Appointments:** Bhupender Yadav elected as **President**, S.P. Yadav appointed **Director General** of IBCA.
- **Member Participation:** Delegations from nine nations attended, demonstrating early international engagement.

- **Governance Framework:** Assembly ratified the **Headquarters Agreement**, workplan, procedural rules, and financial regulations to formalize operations.
- **IBCA Composition:** A coalition of **95 range countries** aimed at conserving **seven big cat species**—Tiger, Lion, Leopard, Snow Leopard, Cheetah, Jaguar, Puma .
Objectives & Strategy: The Alliance focuses on **global collaboration, knowledge exchange**, capacity building, technical and financial support, anti-poaching coordination, sustainable livelihoods, and strengthening conservation policy across member nations.
- **India's Role:** As host and secretariat, backed by a government-provided ₹150 crore corpus (2023–28), India demonstrates leadership in wildlife conservation.

India Emerges as Third-Largest Power Generator Globally: IEA Report

In the News: On June 19 and 20, 2025, the International Energy Agency (IEA) released its *World Energy Investment 2025* report, which revealed that over the past five years, India has recorded the global **third-largest growth in power generation capacity**, trailing only behind China and the United States.

Key Points:

- **Rapid Capacity Growth:** India ranks third worldwide in increase of electricity generation capacity during the past five years.
- **Surging Demand:** Expansion is driven by rising residential and commercial power use—particularly from air conditioners, appliances, and industrial activities.
- **Clean-Energy Push:** Over the period, clean energy—especially solar PV—made up more than half of non-fossil capacity investments. In 2024 alone, 83 % of power-sector investments went into clean energy.
- **DFI Funding Leader:** India received approximately USD 2.4 billion in development-finance-institution funding in 2024 to expand clean energy generation.
- **Rising FDI Flows:** Foreign direct investment in the power sector reached about USD 5 billion in 2023, nearly double the pre-pandemic level.
- **Coal Still Dominant:** Despite investment surges, coal continues to meet around two-thirds of India's energy demand; fossil fuels still dominate the energy mix.
- **Non-Fossil Share:** Non-fossil generation capacity now stands at roughly 44 % as of 2024—moving India closer to its 2030 target of 50 % non-fossil energy .

India Ranks 71st in WEF Energy Transition Index 2025 Despite Efficiency Gains

In the News: On June 18, 2025, the World Economic Forum (WEF), in partnership with Accenture, published its *Fostering Effective Energy Transition 2025* report. India slipped from 63rd in 2024 to **71st** out of 118 countries .

Key Points:

- **Rank Decline:** India moved down eight places, landing at 71st globally.
- **Overall Score:** India scored **53.3**—with a system performance sub-score of **60.4** and transition readiness at **42.7**.
- **Efficiency Gains:** Strong progress in reducing energy intensity and methane (CH₄) emissions have been noted.
- **Clean Energy Investment:** Enhanced regulatory framework and increased financing for renewables have contributed to improved investment capacity.
- **Access and Equity:** Significant strides made in expanding energy and clean fuel access across regions.
- **Persistent Challenges:** Despite the gains, India still faces hurdles in energy security, grid reliability, dependence on imported fuels, and rural energy access.
- **Global Context:** The ETI rose by 1.1% YoY—the fastest since pre-COVID—though energy security remains the weakest dimension globally. Top-ranked countries include Sweden, Finland, and Denmark

India's Green India Mission Revised

In the News: On **June 17–18, 2025**, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change released a revised roadmap for the **Green India Mission (GIM)**—a key National Action Plan on Climate Change initiative. The update emphasizes **restoration of vulnerable ecosystems, carbon sink expansion**, and **livelihood improvement**, aligning the mission with India's **2030 climate commitments**.

Key Points:

- **Mission Overview:** Launched in **2014**, GIM aims to **increase forest/tree cover on 5 m ha** and **improve quality on another 5 m ha**, while supporting **3 million rural households** and contributing to carbon sequestration.
- **Revised Targets & Scale:** The roadmap envisions restoring a total of **24.7 m ha** by 2030—potentially sequestering **3.39 billion tonnes of CO₂**—thus exceeding national commitments of **2.5–3 billion tonnes**.
- **Focus Ecosystems:** The revised mission prioritizes restoration of: **Aravalli Ranges** (linked with ₹16,053 cr Aravalli Green Wall across 8 lakh ha), **Western Ghats** (afforestation, mining-site rehab, groundwater recharge), **Himalayas**, and **Mangrove ecosystems. Landscape-**
- **Based Approach:** Emphasis on **regionally tailored micro-ecosystem restoration**, oriented around ecological vulnerability and guided by scientific inputs (e.g., Wildlife Institute of India and Forest Survey of India).
- **Implementation Strategy:** Includes restoring open forests, agroforestry, plantations on wastelands, and greening along highways/railways. Forest Survey of India estimates restoring open forests across 15 m ha could capture **1.89 billion tonnes of CO₂**.
- **Funding & Uptake:** From 2019–20 to 2023–24, **₹624.7 cr** allocated to 18 states, with **₹575.6 cr** utilized; between 2015-21, **11.22 m ha** under afforestation via central and state programmes.
- **Livelihood & Ecological Balance:** The revised framework shifts from prior plantation-only models to **community-centric ecological restoration** aimed at sustaining forest-dependent livelihoods and improving ecosystem health.

FRA Cells Setup to Facilitate Forest Rights Act

In the News: In **June 2025**, the **Union Ministry of Tribal Affairs** approved the creation of **324 district-level** and **17 state-level FRA Cells** under the **Dharti Aba Janjatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyaan (DAJGUA)**. This marks the first time the **Centre has directly funded administrative units** to fast-track the implementation of the **Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006**.

Key Points:

- **New Administrative Units:** FRA Cells are facilitation bodies established at district and state levels to support tribal claimants and Gram Sabhas with documentation, claim filing, and data management.
- **Coverage & Funding:** Sanctioned across **18 States/UTs**, each district cell receives **₹8.67 lakh**, while each state cell gets **₹25.85 lakh**, funded centrally under DAJGUA.
- **Operational Role:** These cells assist with paperwork, evidence collection, Gram Sabha resolutions, land demarcation, village revenue classification, and digital record-keeping—without overruling statutory bodies like Gram Sabhas or DLCs.
- **Pendency Reduction:** Aimed at expediting disposal of FRA claims—14.45% of 51.11 lakh across 21 states remain pending—with top installations in high-pendency areas such as Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Telangana, Maharashtra, Assam, and Jharkhand.
- **Policy Shift:** This marks a significant **shift in central government role** from advisory (training, fund disbursement) to active implementation, reflecting renewed commitment to forest rights delivery.

SPORTS**Inaugural FIFA Club World Cup 2025**

In the News: On June 14, 2025, the newly revamped **32-team FIFA Club World Cup** began in the United States, marking a historic shift from the smaller annual tournament. Spanning June 14 to July 13 across 12 North American venues, the event features elite clubs like **Manchester City, Real Madrid, PSG, Bayern Munich**, and **Inter Miami**, with the final set for July 13 at MetLife Stadium in New Jersey.

Key Points:

- **Tournament Launch & Format:** Kicked off at Hard Rock Stadium, Miami Gardens, on June 14 with Inter Miami vs Al Ahly. The competition features **eight groups of four**, with group winners and runners-up progressing to knockout rounds, culminating in the final at MetLife Stadium on July 13.
- **Prize Money & Coverage:** The prize pool totals around **US \$1 billion**, awarding up to **\$125 million** to the champions. DAZN is streaming all matches globally for free, with select games also airing on Channel 5 (UK), TNT Sports (US), and others like Foxtel and Telefe.

- **Venues & Scale:** Held in **12 U.S. cities**—including Miami Gardens, Seattle (Lumen Field), Cincinnati (TQL Stadium), and East Rutherford (MetLife)—totaling **63 matches**. Five of these stadiums will also host the 2026 Men's World Cup.
- **Star Power on Display:** Features top-tier talent like **Lionel Messi, Kylian Mbappé, Jude Bellingham, Harry Kane, and Kingsley Coman**, who scored the first goal of the tournament. Major clubs include PSG, Manchester City, Chelsea, Real Madrid, Bayern Munich, River Plate, Boca Juniors, and Seattle Sounders.
- **Opening Ceremony:** Took place at Hard Rock Stadium, headlined by **French Montana** and **Swae Lee**, promoting the event as a global football celebration.
- **Controversies & Criticism:** Notable absentees include Manchester United, Arsenal, and Liverpool—limited to two clubs per country based on UEFA Champions League performance. Concerns over fixture congestion, player fatigue, and broadcast rights; critics claim FIFA's expansion prioritizes commercial gain over sporting integrity. Legal issues arose due to multi-club ownership rules (e.g., Club Le ón/ Pachuca), and selection of Inter Miami via Supporters' Shield rather than playoff performance.

SCIENCE & TECH

ISRO Conducts First Successful Rocket Launching Test with Payload in Uttar Pradesh

In the News: On **June 14, 2025**, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), in collaboration with private partner **Thrust Tech India Limited** and under the guidance of **IN-SPACE** and the **Astronautical Society of India**, successfully conducted its first rocket launch test carrying a payload from **Kushinagar, Uttar Pradesh**. This achievement marks the first time a satellite was launched via rocket from the soil of Uttar Pradesh.

Key Facts:

- The **rocket lifted off at 5:14:33 PM** and ascended to an altitude of approximately **1.1 km**, at which point it deployed a small satellite payload.
- The payload successfully descended under a parachute and landed within a **400-metre radius** of the designated drop zone, while the **15-kg rocket** also returned safely.
- This test served as part of the preparatory activities for the **IN-SPACE CANSAT and Model Rocketry India Student Competition 2024–25**, with the main launch event scheduled for **October–November 2025**, expected to include around **900 student-built satellites**.
- ISRO scientist **Abhishek Singh** and Thrust Tech India's director **Vinod Kumar** confirmed the test's success, emphasizing that it aims to **generate interest in space technology among students and youth** across India.

Honda Successfully Tests Reusable Rocket

In the News: On **June 17, 2025**, Honda R&D achieved a breakthrough by launching and autonomously landing a **6.3 m experimental reusable rocket** at its Taiki, Hokkaido test site—reaching approximately **271–300 m** altitude and touching down within **37 cm** of the target after a **56-second VTOL** flight.

Key Points:

- **Flight & Landing Success:** The VTOL demonstration rose to ~271 m, hovered briefly, descended, and landed precisely—underscoring robust flight stability and controlled descent capabilities.
- **Size & Weight Comparison:** The rocket is modest—6.3 m tall, with a dry weight of ~900 kg and wet weight ~1,312 kg—significantly smaller than SpaceX's Falcon 9, which towers around 70 m and weighs ~550 tonnes at liftoff.
- **Tech Features:** It uses **VTOL design**, featuring four retractable landing legs and aerodynamic fins scaled-down from Falcon-like designs; these ensure landing precision and flight control.
- **Strategic Step:** Honda aims for a **suborbital launch by 2029**. The current test was for technology validation only, with no commercial launch plans announced.
- **Industry Impact:** Honda joins a select group—including SpaceX, Blue Origin, JAXA, Innovative Space Carrier, and Toyota-backed ventures—in advancing reusable launch tech—a significant diversification for an automotive heritage company.
- **Applications:** Potential use cases include **launching small satellites** for earth observation, climate monitoring, and communications—benefiting both space activities and Honda's broader ecosystem strategy.

APPOINTMENTS AND RESIGNATIONS

Blaise Metreweli Becomes MI6's First Female Chief in Historic Appointment

In the News: On June 15, 2025, Prime Minister Keir Starmer and the UK government announced that Blaise Metreweli, currently Director-General of Technology & Innovation at MI6, will become the first-ever female Chief (codenamed 'C') of the Secret Intelligence Service, starting October 1, 2025, succeeding Sir Richard Moore.

Key Points:

- **Historic Advancement:** Metreweli's appointment marks a milestone as MI6's 18th chief and first woman in the 116-year history of the agency.
- **Professional Background:** Joined MI6 in 1999; served in both operational roles in the Middle East and Europe, and as a director in MI5. Current role: Director-General, Technology & Innovation ("Q") at MI6. Education: BA in Anthropology from Pembroke College, Cambridge; 1997 Women's Boat Race winner.
- **Leadership Transition:** Metreweli will formally take office on October 1, 2025, when Sir Richard Moore retires after a five-year tenure.
- **Official Endorsements:** PM Starmer called the appointment "historic," highlighting global threats from state and cyber adversaries. Foreign Secretary David Lammy praised her "wealth of experience" in intelligence and technology.
- **Reflecting Agency Shift:** MI6 now aligns with MI5 and GCHQ, which have both previously been led by women—Stella Rimington, Eliza Manningham-Buller, and Anne Keast-Butler respectively—marking a broader cultural shift.
- **Mandate & Mandate:** As Chief, Metreweli will oversee international espionage operations and report directly to the Foreign Secretary, navigating heightened threats from nations such as China, Russia, Iran, and emerging cyber actors.
- **Cultural Resonance:** Dubbed a case of life mirroring fiction, her rise mirrors iconic portrayals like Judi Dench's "M" in James Bond, bringing real-world representation to the intelligence community.

Amitabh Kant Steps Down as G20 Sherpa After 45 Years of Public Service

In the News: On June 16, 2025, Amitabh Kant formally resigned from his role as India's G20 Sherpa, marking the culmination of a remarkable 45-year career in public administration. He expressed gratitude to Prime Minister Modi and announced plans to pursue opportunities in think tanks, startups, and academic spheres.

Key Points:

- **Resignation Timeline:** Kant submitted his resignation on June 16, 2025. He assumed the Sherpa role in July 2022 for India's G20 Presidency.
- **45-Year Bureaucratic Career:** A 1980-batch IAS officer (Kerala cadre), Kant held roles including Tourism Secretary (Kerala), Joint Secretary, Secretary of DIPP, CEO of NITI Aayog (2016–2022), and finally G20 Sherpa.
- **G20 Achievements:** As Sherpa, he led preparations for the 2023 New Delhi Summit—achieving unanimous agreement on the Leaders' Declaration, expanded meetings across all Indian states/UTs, and secured inclusion of the African Union in the G20.
- **Landmark Initiatives:** At NITI Aayog, Kant spearheaded the Aspirational Districts Programme, digital public infrastructure, PLI schemes, Atal Innovation Mission, Green Hydrogen Mission, Advanced Chemistry Cells—and previously launched Make in India, Startup India, Ease of Doing Business, Incredible India, and Kerala: God's Own Country campaigns.

AWARDS

Sahitya Akademi Yuva & Bal Sahitya Puraskar 2025

In the News: On June 18, 2025, the Sahitya Akademi announced the **Yuva Puraskar** for 23 young writers and the **Bal Sahitya Puraskar** for 24 authors, recognizing outstanding literary contributions made between January 2019 and December 2023. Each award carries a cash prize of ₹50,000 and a copper plaque.

Key Points:

- **Yuva Puraskar Awardees:** Advait Kottary (English) – Siddhartha: The Boy Who Became the Buddha – novel
Parvati Tirkey (Hindi) – Phir Uzna – poetry collection
Latshmihar (Tamil) – recognized under Tamil language Prasad Suri (Telugu) – awarded for Telugu literature.
Akhil P Dharmajan (Malayalam) – Ram c/o Anandhi – novel **Yuva Puraskar**.

- **Other Notables:** From Odisha: **Subrat Kumar Senapati** (Odia) and **Fagu Baskey** (Santali) Additional recognized languages: Assamese, Bengali, Bodo, Gujarati, Kannada, Kashmiri, Konkani, Maithili, Manipuri, Marathi, Nepali, Punjabi, Rajasthani, Sanskrit, Sindhi, Urdu
- **Bal Sahitya Puraskar Awardees:** **Nitin Kushalappa MP** (English) – Dakshin: South Indian Myths and Fables Retold **Sushil Shukla** (Hindi) – Ek Batey Bara – short stories collection. **Kirtida Brahmbhatt** (Gujarati) – Tinchak – poetry for children. **Suresh Sawant** (Marathi) – Aabhalmaya – children's poetry. **Nayana Adarkar** (Konkani) – Belabaicho Shankar Aani Haer Kanyo. **Rajkishore Parhi** (Odia) – Kete Phula Phutichhi
- **Award Framework: Eligibility:** Yuva Puraskar for writers ≤35 years; Bal Puraskar for children's literature (ages 9–16)– **Languages Covered:** 23 for Yuva and 24 for Bal, including English– **Selection Process:** Entries published within the past 5 years, vetted by language-specific juries, approved at Executive Board meeting chaired by President Madhav Kaushik

