

Weekly Current Affairs 17 May to 23rd May 2026

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IMPORTANT ONE LINERS

NATIONAL

Supreme Court Expands Maternity Leave for Adoptive Mothers

In the News: The Supreme Court of India delivered a landmark judgment in *Hamsaanandini Nanduri v. Union of India*, striking down the three-month age limit imposed on adopted children under Section 60(4) of the Code on Social Security, 2020, for the purpose of availing maternity benefit. A two-judge bench of Justices J.B. Pardiwala and R. Mahadevan held that maternity benefits extend to all forms of motherhood, including adoption, and are not confined to biological childbirth. The Court read down Section 60(4) to entitle all adoptive mothers to twelve weeks of maternity benefit from the date of handover of the child, irrespective of the child's age at the time of adoption.

Key Points:

- **The Impugned Provision and the Challenge:** Section 60(4) of the Code on Social Security, 2020, which is the pari materia provision of Section 5(4) of the Maternity Benefit Act, 1961, had restricted maternity benefit of twelve weeks only to women adopting a child below the age of three months. The petitioner, an adoptive mother of two children, challenged this provision under Article 32 of the Constitution, arguing that the three-month age limit created an artificial and unreasonable classification among adoptive mothers. She contended that the restriction bore no rational nexus to the object of the statute and was practically unworkable, given that the legal process of adoption under the Juvenile Justice Act, 2015 and the CARA Regulations, 2022 takes at least two to three months, making it nearly impossible to complete adoption before the child crosses the three-month age threshold.
- **Constitutional Violations Found by the Court:** The Supreme Court held that the three-month age restriction violated Article 14 of the Constitution, which guarantees equality before law and equal protection of the laws, as it created an unjustified and under-inclusive classification among adoptive mothers. The Court found no reasonable distinction between a woman who adopts a child aged less than three months and one who adopts a child aged three months or above. The Court further held that the restriction violated Article 21, which protects life and personal liberty and has been interpreted to include the right to dignity and personal autonomy. The Court observed that adoption constitutes an exercise of reproductive and decisional autonomy under Article 21, and denying maternity benefit based on the child's age deprives both the mother and the child of wholesome motherhood and sufficient care for rehabilitation into the new family.
- **The Court's Ruling and Relief Granted:** The Supreme Court struck down the three-month age limit under Section 60(4) of the Code on Social Security, 2020, as unconstitutional for being violative of Articles 14 and 21 of the Constitution. The Court read down the provision to entitle all adoptive mothers, irrespective of the age of the adopted child, to twelve weeks of maternity benefit from the date on which the child is handed over to the adoptive mother. Justice Pardiwala, writing the judgment, prefaced the decision with a verse by poet Fleur Conkling Heyliger, observing that the transition into motherhood does not occur in the brief moment when legal formalities are completed but is a gradual process that takes shape in the heart of the mother.
- **Code on Social Security, 2020 - Background:** The Code on Social Security, 2020, which came into effect on November 21, 2025, is one of the four labour codes enacted by Parliament to consolidate and simplify India's labour laws. It consolidates laws relating to social security, including maternity benefit, employees' compensation, provident fund and gratuity. The other three labour codes are the Industrial Relations Code, 2020, the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020, and the Code on Wages, 2019. Maternity benefit in India was originally governed by the Maternity Benefit Act, 1961, which was amended in 2017 to introduce provisions for adoptive and commissioning mothers, before being subsumed into the Code on Social Security, 2020.

India Revises Export Duties on Petrol and Diesel

In the News: The Government of India revised the Special Additional Excise Duty (SAED) on the export of petroleum products through Notification No. 22/2026-Central Excise, amending the earlier Notification No. 06/2026-Central Excise dated March 26, 2026. The export duty on petrol was raised to Rs 3 per litre, while the export duty on diesel was reduced from Rs 23 to Rs 16.50 per litre and the export duty on Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF) was revised to Rs 16 per litre from earlier notified Rs 33 per litre. The revision came within a day of the government raising retail fuel prices for the first time since the Iran war began.

Key Points:

- **Petrol Export Duty Raised:** The Government of India imposed a Special Additional Excise Duty of Rs 3 per litre on the export of petrol, effective from May 16, 2026. The increase in petrol export duty is intended to compensate for the revenue loss arising from the reduction in export duties on diesel and Aviation Turbine Fuel. The notification was issued by the Ministry of Finance under Section 5A of the Central Excise Act, 1944 read with Section 147 of the Finance Act, 2002, and the revised rates are subject to fortnightly review based on average international prices of crude oil, petrol, diesel and ATF.
- **Diesel and ATF Export Duties Reduced:** The Special Additional Excise Duty on diesel exports was reduced by Rs 6.50 per litre, from Rs 23 to Rs 16.50 per litre, to push diesel exports and compensate oil companies for losses in recovery. The export duty on Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF) was cut by Rs 17 per litre, from Rs 33 to Rs 16 per litre, a move that could benefit the aviation sector by lowering operational fuel costs. The differential reduction in diesel and ATF export duties reflects the government's strategy to promote the competitiveness of Indian petroleum product exports in international markets while maintaining a balanced revenue framework.
- **Domestic Fuel Prices and Excise Duties:** Despite the revision of export duties, the existing excise duty rates on petrol and diesel cleared for domestic consumption remain unchanged. However, the domestic retail prices of both diesel and petrol were raised by Rs 3 per litre under the administered pricing mechanism, and state-level sales taxes on fuel were also increased. This was the first revision in retail fuel prices since the Iran war began, signalling a gradual alignment of domestic prices with rising international crude oil costs and the need to reduce the under-recovery burden on oil marketing companies.
- **Fortnightly Review Mechanism for Export Duties:** The Special Additional Excise Duty rates on petroleum product exports are reviewed on a fortnightly basis by the government. The revision is based on the average international prices of crude oil, petrol, diesel and ATF during the period since the last review. This mechanism allows the government to respond dynamically to fluctuations in global energy markets and to calibrate the tax burden on exports to balance revenue generation with the competitiveness of Indian refineries in international fuel trade.
- **Background on Special Additional Excise Duty:** The Special Additional Excise Duty (SAED) on petroleum product exports, commonly referred to as the windfall tax, was first introduced by the Indian government to capture excess profits made by domestic refiners and oil companies during periods of elevated global crude oil prices. The duty framework applies to exports of petrol, diesel and ATF outside India and is distinct from the regular excise duties levied on petroleum products meant for domestic consumption.

CCPA Issues Notices to Amazon, Flipkart, Meesho, JioMart

In the News: The Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) launched a detailed investigation into major e-commerce platforms, including Amazon, Flipkart, Meesho and JioMart, over the sale and advertisement of an allegedly unregistered agrochemical product marketed as Cyclosinone Herbicide. The consumer rights watchdog, which operates under the Department of Consumer Affairs, had issued notices to these platforms directing them to remove the listings and explain their due diligence mechanisms. The action followed a complaint routed through the Agriculture Ministry, based on representations made by the Crop Care Federation of India.

Key Points:

- **The Product and the Complaint:** Cyclosinone Herbicide was being marketed on major e-commerce platforms as a weed-control chemical for killing or suppressing unwanted weeds, grasses and broadleaf plants on farms, lawns, orchards and landscaped areas. The Crop Care Federation of India alleged that the herbicide was being sold online despite not being registered under the Insecticides Act, 1968. The complaint further alleged that the product listings and promotional content failed to disclose key information such as the active ingredient and precise chemical composition, depriving consumers, particularly farmers, of critical safety and usage details.
- **CCPA's Findings and Action:** The CCPA observed serious deficiencies in how the product was listed across online marketplaces. It noted that the listings allegedly omitted disclosure of the active ingredient and chemical composition, valid licence numbers and their validity period, statutory safety warnings relating to hazardous substances, and Principal Authorization Certificates required under the law. The CCPA has sought details from the platforms regarding the date of initial listing, the duration for which the product remained available, total number of listings since January 2024, particulars of sellers associated with the listings, and the due diligence systems adopted to ensure compliance with applicable laws governing online sale of hazardous substances.
- **Legal Framework - Insecticides Act, 1968:** As per Section 18 of the Insecticides Act, 1968, no person, either directly or through another person on their behalf, can sell, stock, exhibit for sale, distribute, transport or use any pesticide that is not

registered under the law. The CCPA has also cited Rule 10(E) of the Insecticides (Second Amendment) Rules, 2022, which specifically governs the sale of insecticides through e-commerce entities. This rule mandates that online platforms verify the validity of licences issued to sellers before permitting the sale of insecticides on their portals and ensure compliance with consumer protection norms.

- **About the Central Consumer Protection Authority:** The Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) is a regulatory body established under the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, operating under the Department of Consumer Affairs. It is empowered to regulate matters relating to violation of consumer rights, unfair trade practices and misleading advertisements. The CCPA's action in this case is expected to push e-commerce platforms to strengthen their verification mechanisms for sellers of pesticides and agrochemicals. Experts have noted that e-commerce platforms cannot escape responsibility when hazardous or unregistered agrochemical products are sold through their portals, as farmers rely on such platforms for genuine and safe products, and any lapse in verification or disclosure can directly impact agricultural safety and consumer trust.

Sikkim to Implement Anand Marriage Act, 1909 from June 1, 2026

In the News: The Union Law Ministry has notified that the Anand Marriage Act, 1909, which provides Sikh couples with a distinct legal framework to register marriages solemnised under the traditional Anand Karaj ceremony, will come into force in Sikkim from June 1, 2026. The notification, issued on May 14, 2026, follows the state government's framing of the Sikkim Anand Marriage Registration Rules, 2026, enabling Sikh couples in the state to directly register marriages under their traditional rites instead of relying on the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955.

Key Points:

- **Enforcement of the Act in Sikkim:** The Central Government has formally appointed June 1, 2026 as the date on which the provisions of the Anand Marriage Act, 1909 will officially come into force in Sikkim. Until now, Sikh couples in the state were required to register their marriages under the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 due to the absence of state-level rules for the Anand Marriage Act. With the new notification, members of the Sikh community in Sikkim will now be able to directly register marriages conducted under the traditional Anand Karaj ceremony, ensuring legal recognition under their own religious framework.
- **Sikkim Anand Marriage Registration Rules, 2026:** The Sikkim state government has framed and notified the Sikkim Anand Marriage Registration Rules, 2026, which establish localised mechanisms for the registration of Sikh marriages. These rules were framed in compliance with a landmark Supreme Court ruling in September 2025 in the Amanjot Singh Chadha vs Union of India case, which directed states to address administrative gaps in implementing the law. The notification of these rules removes the procedural void that had persisted in the state since the 2012 amendment to the Act.
- **Background of the Anand Marriage Act:** The Anand Marriage Act was originally enacted in 1909 to provide legal recognition to Sikh marriages performed under the Anand Karaj ceremony. The Act was amended in 2012 to introduce state-level mechanisms for the registration of such marriages, allowing Sikh couples to register directly under the Act rather than under the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955. However, several states, including Sikkim, had not framed the necessary rules for implementation even after the 2012 amendment, leaving Sikh couples with limited options for legal registration of their marriages.
- **Supreme Court Directive:** The Supreme Court of India, in its September 2025 ruling in the Amanjot Singh Chadha vs Union of India case, directed states to formulate the required rules for implementation of the Anand Marriage Act. The Court observed that the absence of state-level provisions had forced Sikh couples to either forgo registration altogether or register under the broader Hindu marriage laws, effectively denying them equal access to legal safeguards under their own religious tradition. Sikkim's notification of the rules and the Centre's subsequent enforcement of the Act bring the state in line with the Supreme Court's directive.

Andhra Pradesh Offers ₹30,000 for Third Child, ₹40,000 for Fourth Under New Policy

In the News: Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu on May 16, 2026 announced financial incentives of Rs 30,000 for families on the birth of a third child and Rs 40,000 for a fourth child as part of the state government's efforts to address the declining population trend. Speaking at a public meeting in Narasannapeta in Srikakulam district during the SwarnaAndhra-SwachAndhra cleanliness programme, Naidu said the decision had already been taken and further details would be announced within a month.

Key Points:



- **Financial Incentive Structure:** The Andhra Pradesh government will provide Rs 30,000 immediately after the birth of a third child and Rs 40,000 for a fourth child to families in the state. This builds on an earlier proposal announced on March 5, 2026, in the state Legislative Assembly, to offer Rs 25,000 as an incentive for the birth of a second child. Health Minister Satya Kumar Yadav subsequently confirmed that the government had decided to extend the financial incentives to families having a third child and subsequent children, making the scheme progressively structured across second, third, and fourth births.
- **Demographic Concerns Behind the Policy:** CM Naidu cautioned that the population growth rate in Andhra Pradesh is slowing and stressed the need to maintain the replacement-level Total Fertility Rate (TFR) of 2.1 children per woman for population stability. At the Raisina Dialogue on March 7, 2026, Naidu highlighted that while India's national TFR stands at approximately 2.2, the southern Indian states have a TFR of around 1.5, far below the replacement level. He warned that declining birth rates and ageing populations in numerous countries have adversely impacted their economies and argued that children should be viewed as an asset rather than a liability.
- **Andhra Pradesh's New Population Management Policy:** Andhra Pradesh became the first state in India to introduce a formal Population Management Policy aimed at tackling declining fertility rates. CM Naidu unveiled the policy at the Raisina Dialogue in New Delhi, emphasising that India's demographic dividend advantage would remain only up to 2047. He noted that while India currently benefits from a young population, several southern states are already trending towards ageing demographics, necessitating proactive policy intervention to sustain economic growth and future parliamentary representation.

V. D. Satheesan Takes Oath as Kerala Chief Minister

In the News: Senior Congress leader V. D. Satheesan was sworn in as the 13th Chief Minister of Kerala on May 18, 2026 at a packed Central Stadium in Thiruvananthapuram, marking the return of the Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF) to power in the state after a decade of Left Democratic Front (LDF) rule. Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar administered the oath of office to Satheesan along with his 20-member Cabinet. The swearing-in ceremony was attended by top Congress leaders including party president Mallikarjun Kharge, Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, and Wayanad MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra.

Key Points:

- **Election Results and CM Selection:** The UDF swept the Kerala Assembly elections held on April 9, 2026, winning 102 of the 140 seats, decisively ousting the Pinarayi Vijayan-led LDF government, which was reduced to 35 seats, while the BJP won 3 seats, its best-ever performance in Kerala. The results were declared on May 4, and after 11 days of hectic lobbying in a three-cornered race involving Satheesan, K. C. Venugopal, and Ramesh Chennithala, Satheesan (61) was named the Congress Legislature Party leader. Satheesan, who served as the Leader of the Opposition for the preceding five years, is credited with revitalising the party's grassroots base in the state.
- **Cabinet Composition and Party Representation:** The 21-member Cabinet, including the Chief Minister, comprises 12 ministers from the Congress, five from the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML), and one minister each from Kerala Congress (Joseph), Kerala Congress (Jacob), Communist Marxist Party (CMP), and Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP). Key ministers include Ramesh Chennithala, K. Muraleedharan, A. P. Anil Kumar, state party chief Sunny Joseph, and IUML leader P. K. Kunhalikutty. The Cabinet includes two women ministers and two members from the Scheduled Caste community, with 14 first-time faces. O. J. Janeesh (37) is the youngest minister in the Cabinet.
- **First Cabinet Decisions and Welfare Measures:** Immediately after the swearing-in, the new Cabinet held its first meeting at the state secretariat and approved several welfare measures. These include free rides in state-run KSRTC buses for women from June 15, a Rs 3,000 increase in the monthly honorariums of Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs), and the formation of a dedicated department for the welfare of the elderly. Satheesan noted that Kerala would be the first state in India to have such a department and expressed intent to study Japan's model for elderly welfare for possible replication.
- **Indira Guarantees and Poll Promises:** The free bus rides for women and the elderly welfare department were among the five "Indira Guarantees" promised by the UDF ahead of the April 9 assembly polls. The remaining poll promises include a monthly stipend of Rs 1,000 for girl students in colleges, an increase in welfare pension to Rs 3,000, health insurance coverage up to Rs 25 lakh per household, and interest-free loans of up to Rs 5 lakh for young entrepreneurs. Satheesan stated that all remaining promises would be implemented in a phased manner.

IAS Officer Saurabh Vijay Takes Charge as CEO of UIDAI

In the New: IAS officer Saurabh Vijay assumed charge as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI). A 1998-batch Indian Administrative Service officer of the Maharashtra cadre and a civil engineer from IIT-Delhi, Vijay brings wide administrative and international experience across governance, finance and policy to the leadership of India's Aadhaar-issuing authority.

Key Points:

- **About Saurabh Vijay:** Saurabh Vijay is a 1998-batch IAS officer belonging to the Maharashtra cadre. He holds a degree in civil engineering from the Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi (IIT-Delhi). Prior to joining UIDAI, he served as Principal Secretary (Expenditure) in the Finance Department of the Government of Maharashtra, bringing significant experience in public finance and fiscal management to his new role.
- **Key Positions in State Government:** Vijay has held several important positions in the Government of Maharashtra across diverse sectors. These include Principal Secretary (Planning and Development Commissioner), Principal Secretary (Tourism), Secretary (Medical Education), and Secretary (Higher and Technical Education). His experience across planning, tourism, and education sectors reflects a broad administrative career spanning multiple domains of governance and public policy.
- **Central Deputation and International Experience:** Beyond his state-level roles, Vijay has served on central deputation in significant positions, including as Director at the President's Secretariat in New Delhi. He also served as Advisor to the Executive Director representing the constituency of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Sri Lanka at the World Bank in Washington D.C. This international exposure adds a global governance perspective to his profile as he takes charge of one of India's most critical digital identity institutions.
- **About UIDAI:** The Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) is a statutory authority established under the provisions of the Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery of Financial and Other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Act, 2016, and functions under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY). UIDAI is responsible for issuing Aadhaar numbers, which serve as unique 12-digit identity numbers for residents of India, and managing the world's largest biometric identification system. The authority plays a central role in India's Digital Public Infrastructure ecosystem, enabling targeted delivery of government subsidies, benefits and services.

JANANI Platform Launched for Maternal & Child Healthcare

In the News: The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has launched JANANI (Journey of Antenatal, Natal and Neonatal Integrated Care), a digital platform designed to strengthen maternal and child healthcare services across India. The platform comprehensively monitors and maintains digital health records of women during their reproductive age, covering antenatal care, delivery, postnatal care, newborn care, home-based newborn and young child care, and family planning. Till date, over 1.34 crore beneficiaries have registered on the platform.

Key Points:

- **About the JANANI Platform:** JANANI stands for Journey of Antenatal, Natal and Neonatal Integrated Care and has been developed as an upgraded version of the existing reproductive and child healthcare tracking system. The platform creates a continuous digital health record for women and children across different stages of care, including antenatal care, delivery preparedness, childbirth and postnatal care, newborn and young child monitoring, and family planning services. It aims to ensure that no mother or child is missed during critical stages of care by enabling seamless tracking of maternal and child health services.
- **Key Features of the Platform:** One of the key features of JANANI is its QR-enabled digital Mother and Child Health (MCH) card, which makes healthcare records portable, easily accessible, and trackable across healthcare centres. The platform includes automated alerts for high-risk pregnancies, real-time monitoring dashboards, and due-date reminders for healthcare services. These features enable health workers to intervene earlier when complications such as gestational diabetes, hypertension, anaemia, or other pregnancy complications are detected, potentially improving both maternal and infant survival outcomes.
- **Impact on Rural Healthcare:** Digital healthcare systems like JANANI can be especially useful in rural and underserved areas where access to specialists and hospitals is limited. By enabling healthcare workers to access records quickly and monitor care timelines, the platform improves coordination between Anganwadi workers, ASHA workers, Primary Healthcare Centres (PHCs), and hospitals. The system helps reduce missed check-ups, supports vaccination and newborn monitoring,

strengthens healthcare accountability, and improves continuity of care in regions that face significant challenges in maternal and child healthcare delivery.

- **Focus on High-Risk Pregnancies and Long-Term Care:** The JANANI platform is expected to help identify women at higher risk during pregnancy through continuous monitoring and digital alerts, enabling timely intervention to prevent serious health outcomes. Experts note that maternal health often receives attention only during childbirth, while long-term care after delivery - including conditions such as postpartum anaemia, thyroid problems, and mental health issues - remains neglected. JANANI aims to address this gap by improving long-term monitoring and ensuring mothers continue receiving care even after delivery.

Bharat Forge to Set Up India's First Private Marine Gas Turbine Facility in Andhra Pradesh

In the News: Bharat Forge Limited, through its Aerospace division, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Government of Andhra Pradesh to establish India's first private-sector Marine Gas Turbine (MGT) repair, overhaul, and indigenous development complex in Visakhapatnam. The MoU was signed at the Aerospace and Defence Investment Conclave in Puttaparthi in the presence of Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu.

Key Points:

- **About the Facility:** The complex will be developed over approximately 80 acres within the Andhra Pradesh Defence Manufacturing Corridor and will be co-located with the Naval Dockyard, INS Eksila, and the Eastern Naval Command Headquarters at Visakhapatnam. It is expected to generate around 750 direct and indirect employment opportunities and will also serve as a regional repair and overhaul hub for friendly foreign navies.
- **Two-Phase Development Plan:** Phase 1 will establish a full Marine Gas Turbine Repair and Overhaul complex capable of hot section restoration of blades, vanes, and combustion liners, component manufacturing, a non-destructive evaluation (NDE) laboratory, and a 72-hour turnaround capability for the Naval Dockyard. Phase 2 will establish India's first private-sector MGT Development and Assembly Hall with a full-spectrum hot test cell scalable across all propulsion ratings, enabling the development and qualification of an indigenous marine gas turbine on Indian soil for the first time.
- **What are Marine Gas Turbines:** Marine Gas Turbines (MGTs) are propulsion systems used in naval warships and other marine platforms. They offer a high power-to-weight ratio, compact size, and rapid acceleration, making them critical for the speed and operational readiness of frontline surface combatants. Gas turbines are the propulsion backbone of the Indian Navy's major warships.
- **About Bharat Forge and Kalyani Group:** Bharat Forge Limited, the flagship company of the Pune-based Kalyani Group, is a global provider of high-performance, safety-critical components across automotive, oil and gas, power, aerospace, rail, and marine sectors. In defence, the Kalyani Group manufactures artillery systems, protected vehicles, ammunition, missiles, and air defence solutions. The company is listed on both BSE and NSE (NSE: BHARATFORG).
- **India's Defence Industrial Corridors:** The Andhra Pradesh Defence Manufacturing Corridor is part of India's broader strategy to boost domestic defence production. India has two major defence industrial corridors - the Uttar Pradesh Defence Industrial Corridor (covering Agra, Aligarh, Chitrakoot, Jhansi, Kanpur, and Lucknow) and the Tamil Nadu Defence Industrial Corridor (covering Chennai, Coimbatore, Hosur, Salem, and Tiruchirappalli). The government permits 100% FDI in the defence sector under the automatic route for sectors relating to the manufacture of components and equipment.
- **Concurrent Defence Developments in Andhra Pradesh:** The conclave at Puttaparthi also witnessed the foundation stone laying for the nearly Rs. 16,000 crore Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA) infrastructure project - India's fifth-generation stealth fighter programme - along with several other defence and drone city projects, positioning Andhra Pradesh as a major hub for aerospace and defence manufacturing.

SC Allows Euthanasia of Rabid and Dangerous Stray Dogs

In the News: The Supreme Court of India, for the first time, permitted the euthanasia of rabid, incurably ill, or demonstrably dangerous stray dogs to curb the growing threat to human life and public safety. A three-judge bench of Justices Vikram Nath, Sandeep Mehta, and N.V. Anjaria issued the landmark directions in a suo motu case (City Hounded by Strays, Kids Pay Price, In Re), noting that dog-bite cases across India jumped nearly 70% between 2022 and 2024, with 3.7 million dog bites and 54 suspected rabies deaths reported in 2024 alone.

Key Points:

- **Scope of the Euthanasia Direction:** The Court permitted civic authorities to euthanise stray dogs only in areas where the stray dog population has reached alarming proportions and where frequent dog bites or aggressive attacks pose a continuing

threat to public safety. The direction is restricted to rabid, incurably ill, or demonstrably dangerous/aggressive dogs and does not permit indiscriminate culling. Euthanasia must follow a comprehensive assessment by qualified veterinary experts.

- **Legal Framework Governing the Order:** The Court directed that euthanasia must be carried out strictly in accordance with the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960, the Animal Birth Control (ABC) Rules, 2023, and the Animal Welfare Board of India's (AWBI) Standard Operating Procedure. The ABC Rules, 2023, are regulatory in character and mandate the sterilisation, vaccination, and humane management of stray dog populations. The Court clarified that the ABC Rules cannot be elevated to confer a perpetual or unqualified right of existence upon stray animals in every public location.
- **Pan-India Directions to High Courts:** In a sweeping move, the Court directed all High Courts across India to register suo motu writ petitions to monitor compliance with its stray dog management orders. Chief Secretaries of all States and Union Territories were directed to file updated compliance affidavits before their respective High Courts by August 7, 2026, failing which they will be held personally responsible and face contempt proceedings.
- **Directions Regarding National Highways:** The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) was directed to address the issue of stray cattle and animals on national highways and expressways in a time-bound manner and establish a monitoring and coordination framework for the same.
- **Background and Timeline of the Case:** The Supreme Court took suo motu cognisance of the issue on July 28, 2025, after a newspaper report highlighted a six-year-old girl's death from rabies in Delhi. On August 11, 2025, a two-judge bench ordered the rounding up of all stray dogs from Delhi-NCR. On August 22, 2025, a three-judge bench modified the order, directing that sterilised and vaccinated dogs be returned to their original localities, except those infected with rabies or exhibiting aggression. On November 7, 2025, the Court issued further directions on fencing public spaces and removing strays from institutional areas. The May 19, 2026 order dismissed all pleas seeking modification of the November 2025 directions.
- **Constitutional and Rights Dimension:** The Court observed that the right to live with dignity under Article 21 of the Constitution encompasses a person's right to move freely without the threat of harm from dog-bite attacks. The bench noted that it cannot remain oblivious to harsh ground realities where children, international travellers, and elderly people have fallen victim to dog-bite incidents, and warned that if such conditions continue unchecked, civic life would regress towards a Darwinian state of "survival of the fittest."

Military Exercise PRAGATI 2026 Kicks Off in Meghalaya with Forces from 12 Nations

In the News: The multilateral military exercise PRAGATI 2026 commenced at Umroi Military Station, Meghalaya, on May 20, 2026. The exercise is being conducted by the Indian Army with participation from 12 friendly foreign nations. It aims to strengthen military cooperation, interoperability and regional security coordination in the Indian Ocean Region.

Key Points:

- **Exercise Launch:** PRAGATI 2026 began at Umroi Military Station in Meghalaya under the aegis of the Indian Army. The participating contingents were given a traditional welcome, reflecting India's cultural heritage and defence diplomacy. For exams, remember the location: Umroi, Meghalaya.
- **Meaning of PRAGATI:** PRAGATI stands for Partnership of Regional Armies for Growth and Transformation in the Indian Ocean Region. The exercise provides a platform for participating armies to exchange professional experience and improve mutual understanding. It is relevant for questions on India's regional defence cooperation.
- **Participating Countries:** The 12 participating nations are Bhutan, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Philippines, Seychelles, Sri Lanka and Vietnam. These countries represent India's engagement with South Asia, Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean Region. This links the exercise with India's Act East and maritime security outreach.
- **Training Focus:** The exercise focuses on joint training, interoperability and operational coordination among regional armies. Reports also highlight counter-terrorism training and operations in challenging terrain. For competitive exams, connect this with military diplomacy, internal security and joint operational readiness.

India Postpones First International Big Cat Alliance Summit

In the News: India has postponed the first International Big Cat Alliance Summit, which was scheduled to be held in New Delhi on June 1, 2026. The summit was being organised along with the Fourth India-Africa Forum Summit, as several African countries are important big cat range countries. The new dates will be announced later after consultations with participating countries and stakeholders.

Key Points:



- **Reason for Postponement:** The IBCA Summit was postponed after the Fourth India-Africa Forum Summit was deferred. India and the African Union decided to hold the summit later due to the evolving public health situation in parts of Africa. For exams, this topic is linked with India-Africa relations, health diplomacy and environmental diplomacy.
- **About the IBCA Summit:** The summit was planned as the first major global meeting under the International Big Cat Alliance framework. It aimed to bring together heads of state, experts and conservation partners to discuss big cat conservation. A key expected outcome was the proposed Delhi Declaration on Big Cat Conservation.
- **Seven Big Cat Species Covered:** The International Big Cat Alliance focuses on the conservation of tiger, lion, leopard, snow leopard, cheetah, jaguar and puma. These species are important indicators of ecosystem health. For prelims, remember that India hosts five of these seven big cat species.
- **Background of IBCA:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the International Big Cat Alliance in April 2023 during the commemoration of 50 years of Project Tiger. The Union Cabinet later approved its establishment with headquarters in India. For exams, connect IBCA with Project Tiger, NTCA, MoEFCC and global biodiversity conservation.

India's Death Rate Stays Above Pre-Covid Level

In the News: India's Sample Registration System Statistical Report 2024 has recorded the country's Crude Death Rate at 6.4 deaths per 1,000 population. This remains above the pre-Covid level of 6.0 recorded in 2019 and 2020. The report was released by the Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner, India, and also recorded India's Total Fertility Rate at 1.9 children per woman.

Key Points:

- **Crude Death Rate Trend:** India's Crude Death Rate stood at 6.4 in 2024, the same as in 2023. It is lower than the Covid-period peak of 7.5 in 2021, but still above the pre-pandemic level. For exams, CDR means the number of deaths per 1,000 population in a year.
- **Rural-Urban Mortality Gap:** The rural death rate remained unchanged at 6.8, which kept the national death rate flat. The urban death rate declined slightly from 5.7 in 2023 to 5.6 in 2024. This is important for questions on rural healthcare, demographic transition and public health infrastructure.
- **Fertility Below Replacement Level:** India's Total Fertility Rate remained at 1.9 children per woman in 2024. It stayed below the replacement level of 2.1 for the fifth consecutive year. This indicates a long-term fertility decline and is relevant for population policy and demographic dividend topics.
- **Birth Rate and Infant Mortality:** India's Crude Birth Rate declined marginally from 18.4 in 2023 to 18.3 in 2024. The Infant Mortality Rate improved from 25 in 2023 to 24 in 2024. For exams, IMR means deaths of children below one year per 1,000 live births.

SC Orders Mandatory FIRs in Missing Child Cases

In the News: The Supreme Court directed police stations across India to immediately register FIRs in missing child and missing person cases without waiting for a preliminary inquiry. The Court said such FIRs must include the relevant kidnapping provisions under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). The order came amid concern that nearly 47,000 children remain untraced across the country.

Key Pointers:

- **Mandatory FIR Registration:** Police must register an FIR immediately whenever a child or person is reported missing. The Court clarified that families cannot be asked to search first, and police cannot delay action for preliminary verification.
- **Presumption of Kidnapping:** The Supreme Court said missing child cases should be treated seriously from the beginning by proceeding on the presumption of kidnapping or abduction. This is important for exams because it links child protection, criminal law, and police accountability under the BNS framework.
- **Anti-Human Trafficking Units:** If circumstances suggest trafficking or organised crime, the case must be transferred to the Anti-Human Trafficking Unit without waiting for long procedural delays. The Court also directed that AHTUs across the country be made fully functional with proper powers and infrastructure.
- **National Data Grid and Coordination:** The Court directed the Ministry of Home Affairs to create or strengthen a national data grid connecting police stations with portals related to trafficking, missing children and missing women. This aims to improve coordination among police, Child Welfare Committees, District Child Protection Units and child care institutions.

- **Aadhaar Verification and Restoration:** The Court supported Aadhaar verification or Aadhaar creation for rescued or recovered children to help identify them and reunite them with families. It also stressed that the focus should not stop at recovery; authorities must ensure safe restoration after due verification.

CAFE III and ADAS Norms to Shape Auto-Component Growth

In the News: India's upcoming CAFE III norms and phased ADAS safety requirements are expected to reshape the automobile and auto-component sector. CAFE III is scheduled from 1 April 2027 to 31 March 2032, while ADAS-linked safety systems are being pushed for heavy vehicle categories. These rules are important for exams because they connect environment policy, transport safety, manufacturing, emissions control and auto-component localisation.

Key Pointers:

- **CAFE III Norms:** CAFE stands for Corporate Average Fuel Efficiency and regulates the average fuel consumption of a manufacturer's vehicle fleet. The draft CAFE 2027 standards will apply from 1 April 2027 to 31 March 2032. They aim to improve fuel efficiency and reduce carbon dioxide emissions from passenger vehicles.
- **Applicability of CAFE III:** The norms apply to M1 category passenger vehicles, which include passenger cars with seating capacity of up to nine persons including the driver. The vehicle's gross weight must not exceed 3,500 kg. Quadricycles, invalid carriages and certain special-purpose vehicles are excluded.
- **Implementing Authority:** The standards are linked to the Ministry of Power and the Bureau of Energy Efficiency. Manufacturers will have to report fuel consumption and carbon dioxide performance data for compliance assessment. This makes CAFE III relevant for questions on energy conservation, climate policy and transport regulation.
- **ADAS Safety Norms:** The government has decided to implement ADAS systems in the first phase for M2, M3, N2 and N3 vehicle categories, mainly buses and goods vehicles. Key systems include Lane Departure Warning, Driver Drowsiness Warning, Blind Spot Information and Moving Off Information systems.
- **Impact on Auto-Component Industry:** CAFE III and ADAS norms are expected to increase demand for sensors, electronic control units, software, emission-control systems and safety technologies. Component suppliers may gain from higher "content per vehicle" even if vehicle sales growth remains moderate. This is why the rules are seen as a growth trigger for advanced auto-component manufacturing.

Operation Navjeevan

In the News: Maoists surrendered before Jharkhand Police in Ranchi under Operation Navjeevan. The surrendered cadres included 25 members of CPI (Maoist) and 2 members of Jharkhand Jan Mukti Parishad (JJMP). The development is important for exams as it relates to Left Wing Extremism, internal security, surrender-cum-rehabilitation policy and counter-insurgency strategy.

Key Pointers:

- **About Operation Navjeevan:** Operation Navjeevan is a Jharkhand Police initiative focused on encouraging Maoists and extremists to give up violence. Its core idea is surrender, rehabilitation and reintegration into mainstream society. The word "Navjeevan" means "new life," reflecting the shift from armed activity to peaceful civilian life.
- **Groups Involved:** The surrendered cadres belonged mainly to the banned CPI (Maoist) and the extremist outfit JJMP. News reports stated that 25 were CPI (Maoist) insurgents, while two were from JJMP. This is relevant for prelims because CPI (Maoist) is linked with India's Left Wing Extremism challenge.
- **Security and Surrender Context:** The surrender took place before senior officers of Jharkhand Police, with the involvement of forces such as Jharkhand Jaguar and CRPF. Such operations combine security pressure with rehabilitation incentives. This reflects India's dual approach of enforcement and mainstreaming in LWE-affected areas.
- **Rehabilitation Angle:** Surrendered extremists are generally supported through rehabilitation measures such as financial assistance, vocational training, education support and reintegration support. Jharkhand Police records mention benefits like rehabilitation assistance, house-related support, tuition fee support, vocational training and government job-related provisions. This makes the topic important for governance and internal security questions.

BSF's 1st All-Women Everest Expedition

In the News: The Border Security Force's first all-women Mount Everest Expedition Team successfully scaled Mount Everest on 21 May 2026 under Mission Vande Mataram. The four-member team reached the 8,848.86-metre summit and sang Vande

Mataram from the world's highest peak. The expedition was linked to the BSF Diamond Jubilee year and the 150th anniversary of Vande Mataram.

Key Pointers:**Historic Summit:**

The BSF's all-women mountaineering team created history by becoming the force's first such team to summit Mount Everest. The achievement is important for exams as it connects security forces, women empowerment, adventure sports and national symbolism. ITBP's 14-member team (11 climbers + 3 support) also summited the same day.

Team Members:

The expedition team included Constables Kouser Fatima, Munmun Ghosh, Rabeka Singh and Tsering Chorol. They represented Ladakh, West Bengal, Uttarakhand and Kargil, showing the national and regional diversity within India's border-guarding force.

Mission Vande Mataram:

The expedition was named Mission Vande Mataram and was flagged off from Delhi on 6 April 2026 by BSF Director General Praveen Kumar. It was planned as part of the BSF's Diamond Jubilee celebrations and the 150th anniversary of the national song.

Environment and Geography Link:

The team also supported the Clean Himalaya - Clean Glaciers campaign by collecting waste from Everest camps. Mount Everest is located in the Himalayas on the Nepal-China border and is known as Sagarmatha in Nepal and Chomolungma in Tibet.

INTERNATIONAL

ISIS Second-in-Command Abu-Bilal al-Minuki Killed in Nigeria

In the News: The Presidents of the United States and Nigeria announced the killing of Abu-Bilal al-Minuki, described as the second-in-command of ISIS globally, in a joint US-Nigeria military operation. US President Donald Trump stated that the operation was carried out by American forces alongside the Armed Forces of Nigeria to eliminate what he called "the most active terrorist in the world." Nigerian President Bola Tinubu confirmed that al-Minuki was killed along with several of his lieutenants during a precision strike on his compound in the Lake Chad Basin area of Metele in Borno State, northeast Nigeria.

Key Points:

- The Military Operation:** The Nigerian army described the strike as a meticulously planned and highly complex precision air-land operation carried out between midnight and 4 am local time in Metele, Borno State, in northeast Nigeria. Borno has been the epicentre of a long-running insurgency by the Boko Haram armed group and its splinter faction, the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP). US President Trump announced the operation on the social media platform Truth Social, stating that Abu-Bilal al-Minuki thought he could hide in Africa but American intelligence sources had been tracking his activities. Nigerian President Tinubu expressed appreciation for the partnership with the United States in advancing shared security objectives.
- Who Was Abu-Bilal al-Minuki:** Abu-Bilal al-Minuki, also known as Abu-Mainok, was born in Borno State, Nigeria in 1982. He was a former prominent Boko Haram leader who pledged allegiance to ISIS in 2015 and rose through the ranks of ISWAP following the disappearance of veteran commander Mamman Nur in 2018. He was designated as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist by the United States on June 8, 2023. The Nigerian army described him as a key operational and strategic figure who provided guidance to ISIS entities outside Nigeria on media operations, economic warfare and weapons manufacturing, and who oversaw ISIS-linked operations across the Sahel and West Africa, including attacks against ethnic and religious minority communities.
- Role Within the Global ISIS Network:** Al-Minuki served as the senior leader of ISIS's al-Furqan Office, one of the group's most active and established regional networks. These regional offices are tasked with providing ISIS affiliates with operational direction and access to international funding. The al-Furqan Office oversaw activities in Nigeria and neighbouring countries, in addition to the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) network operating across the western Sahel. In 2018, he was linked to the kidnapping of more than 100 schoolgirls in Dapchi in northeastern Nigeria's Yobe State. The Nigerian army stated that his death removes a critical node through which ISIS coordinated and directed operations across different regions of the world.

The latest Ebola outbreak is now a global health emergency

In the News: The Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the epidemic of Ebola disease caused by Bundibugyo virus in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Uganda a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC). As of May 16, 2026, eight laboratory-confirmed cases, 246 suspected cases and 80 suspected deaths had been reported in Ituri Province of the DRC, while two confirmed cases, including one death, had been reported in Kampala, Uganda, among individuals who had travelled from the DRC. The WHO stated that the event does not meet the criteria for a pandemic emergency but requires urgent international coordination and cooperation.

Key Points:

- **Declaration of PHEIC and Its Basis:** The WHO Director-General determined that the Bundibugyo virus disease outbreak constitutes a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) under Article 12 of the International Health Regulations (IHR), 2005. The declaration was based on three key factors: the event is extraordinary due to the scale and nature of the outbreak, it poses a public health risk to other countries through international spread of the disease, and it requires coordinated international action to understand the extent of the outbreak and implement control measures
- **Scale and Spread of the Outbreak:** The outbreak is centred in Ituri Province of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, affecting at least three health zones including Bunia, Rwampara and Mongbwalu. The high positivity rate of initial samples collected, with eight positives among 13 samples, along with increasing trends in suspected cases and clusters of deaths across the province, indicate a potentially much larger outbreak than what is currently being detected and reported. International spread has already been documented, with two confirmed cases reported in Kampala, Uganda on May 15 and 16, 2026, among individuals travelling from the DRC, both of whom were admitted to intensive care units.
- **Challenges Complicating the Response:** The WHO noted significant uncertainties regarding the true number of infected persons and the geographic spread of the outbreak, with limited understanding of epidemiological links between known or suspected cases. At least four healthcare worker deaths in a clinical context suggestive of viral haemorrhagic fever have been reported from the affected area, raising concerns about healthcare-associated transmission and gaps in infection prevention and control measures. Ongoing insecurity, a protracted humanitarian crisis, high population mobility, the urban nature of the current hotspot and a large network of informal healthcare facilities further compound the risk of spread. Unlike Ebola-Zaire strains, there are currently no approved Bundibugyo virus-specific therapeutics or vaccines available.
- **WHO Recommendations for Affected and Neighbouring Countries:** The WHO has advised the DRC and Uganda to activate their national emergency management mechanisms, establish emergency operation centres and implement comprehensive control measures including enhanced surveillance, contact tracing, infection prevention and control, risk communication, laboratory diagnostic testing and case management. Confirmed cases must be isolated with no international travel until two negative diagnostic tests conducted at least 48 hours apart, while contacts must be monitored daily with no international travel for 21 days after exposure. Countries sharing land borders with the DRC have been advised to urgently enhance their preparedness, including active surveillance across health facilities, community surveillance for unexplained deaths and access to qualified diagnostic laboratories.

PM Modi Receives Sweden's Top Civil Honour During Official Visit

In the News: Prime Minister Narendra Modi was conferred with Sweden's Royal Order of the Polar Star, Commander Grand Cross, during his two-day official visit to Gothenburg on May 17, 2026. The award is the highest distinction that can be given to a Head of Government by the Scandinavian nation. This marks PM Modi's 31st international honour, underscoring his growing global stature and India's expanding diplomatic engagements worldwide.

Key Points:

- **Royal Order of the Polar Star:** The Royal Order of the Polar Star was instituted in 1748 and is intended to recognise personal endeavours for Sweden or for Swedish interests, particularly within public activities, as well as the successful performance of public tasks and duties. PM Modi was conferred the Commander Grand Cross rank, the highest level of this historic order. He was received by his Swedish counterpart, Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson, at Gothenburg Airport at the start of the two-day visit.
- **31st International Honour for PM Modi:** The Swedish distinction is the 31st global honour bestowed upon PM Modi, continuing a trend of international recognition that has accelerated in recent years. In 2026 alone, PM Modi had earlier received the Medal of the Knesset during his visit to Israel in February. Other recent honours include the First Class of the

Order of Oman and the Great Honour Nishan of Ethiopia, both conferred in December 2025, and the Royal Order of the Polar Star from Sweden in May 2026.

- **Select Major International Honours Received:** PM Modi has been honoured by nations across multiple continents, reflecting India's deepening bilateral ties globally. Notable recognitions include the Grand Cross of the Legion of Honour from France (2023), the Order of St. Andrew the Apostle from Russia (2019), the Legion of Merit from the United States (2020), the Order of the Druk Gyalpo from Bhutan (2021), and the Order of the Nile from Egypt (2023). Other honours include the King Abdulaziz Sash from Saudi Arabia (2016), the Order of Zayed from the UAE (2019), and the Grand Commander of the Order of the Niger from Nigeria (2024).
- **Recent Honours from 2024-2026:** In the most recent phase, PM Modi received honours from several countries including Kuwait (Mubarak Al-Kabeer Order, December 2024), Mauritius (Grand Commander of the Order of the Star and Key of the Indian Ocean, March 2025), Sri Lanka (Sri Lanka Mitra Vibhushana, April 2025), Cyprus (Grand Cross of the Order of Makarios III, June 2025), Ghana (Officer of the Order of the Star of Ghana, July 2025), Brazil (Grand Collar of the National Order of the Southern Cross, July 2025), and Namibia (Order of the Most Ancient Welwitschia Mirabilis, July 2025). These recognitions span nations across South Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Europe, Latin America, and the Caribbean.

India rejects Court of Arbitration ruling on Indus Waters Treaty

In the News: India rejected the latest ruling issued by the so-called Court of Arbitration on the Indus Waters Treaty. The Ministry of External Affairs stated that the Court of Arbitration was illegally constituted and that India has never recognised its authority. The ruling related to "maximum pondage" under the Indus Waters Treaty, but India declared that any proceeding, award, or decision issued by this body is null and void. India also reiterated that its decision to hold the Indus Waters Treaty in abeyance remains in force.

Key Points:

- **India's Rejection of the Award:** India categorically rejected the latest so-called award issued by the Court of Arbitration. The Ministry of External Affairs stated that India had also rejected all earlier pronouncements of this body. India maintained that the Court of Arbitration was illegally constituted and had no recognised authority.
- **Issue of Maximum Pondage:** The award issued on May 15, 2026, concerned maximum pondage under the Indus Waters Treaty. Maximum pondage is linked to the storage capacity used in hydroelectric projects. India rejected the award because it does not accept the legitimacy of the arbitration body.
- **MEA's Official Position:** MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said India has never recognised the establishment of the so-called Court of Arbitration. He stated that any proceeding, award, or decision issued by it is null and void. This reflects India's consistent position against the authority of this arbitration mechanism.
- **Indus Waters Treaty in Abeyance:** India reiterated that its decision to hold the Indus Waters Treaty in abeyance remains in force. This means India continues to maintain its earlier position on the treaty's present status. The latest ruling has not changed India's stand on the treaty or on the arbitration process.

Singapore as India's 2nd-Largest Export Market

In the News: Singapore has replaced the United Arab Emirates (UAE) as India's second-largest export destination in April 2026, amid the prolonged closure of the Strait of Hormuz since March 2, 2026. Exports to Singapore surged by 180% in April to USD 3.20 billion compared to USD 1.14 billion a year ago, while exports to the UAE declined by 36% to USD 2.18 billion. The shift reflects a broader realignment of India's trade flows triggered by the ongoing West Asia conflict.

Key Points:

- **Trade Route Realignment Due to Strait of Hormuz Closure:** The Strait of Hormuz, a narrow waterway between Iran and Oman that accounted for about a fifth of global oil flows before the conflict, has been effectively closed since March 2, 2026. The closure has forced Indian traders to find alternate routes and transshipment hubs for exports, leading to a significant diversion of trade away from the UAE towards Singapore. Both Singapore and the UAE are transshipment hubs with which India has Free Trade Agreements (FTAs), but the disruption in West Asia has tilted the balance decisively towards Singapore. The United States continues to remain India's largest export destination.
- **Shift in Import Partners and Energy Sources:** The West Asia war has also reshaped India's import landscape, with energy exporters such as Oman, Peru, and Nigeria breaking into India's top 20 import sources for the first time. Shipments from Oman alone more than tripled in April to USD 1.48 billion compared to USD 429.58 million a year ago. Imports from Qatar

fell sharply by 47% in March to USD 537.34 million compared to USD 1.03 billion during March 2025, although imports from Saudi Arabia recovered to USD 3.85 billion in April from USD 2.06 billion in March.

- **Impact on Global Energy Supply and Prices:** West Asian oil producers, including Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the UAE, Qatar, and Bahrain, collectively shut in 10.5 million barrels per day (bpd) of crude oil production in April, up from 8.9 million bpd in March, according to the US Energy Information Administration (EIA). The estimated shut-in in April represents a little over 10% of global liquid fuels consumption. The resulting global energy supply crisis has led to a sharp jump in energy prices worldwide, directly affecting India's import bill and economic outlook.
- **Pressure on Indian Rupee and Domestic Measures:** The West Asia conflict has directly impacted the Indian rupee, which has fallen to multiple record lows against the US dollar, tumbling 5.2% since the end of February 2026. To counter further pressure on the currency, the Indian government has introduced austerity measures, including a hike in import duty on precious metals. Oil marketing companies also increased pump prices of petrol and diesel for the first time in four years to reduce foreign currency outflow and manage fuel consumption amid the energy crisis.

US Clears Apache and M777 Support Deals for India

In the News: The United States Department of State approved the possible sale of support services and related equipment for AH-64E Apache attack helicopters to India at an estimated cost of USD 198.2 million. In a parallel approval, Washington also cleared sustainment support for India's M777A2 Ultra-Light Howitzers valued at USD 230 million. Both proposed sales will proceed through Foreign Military Sale (FMS) channels, reinforcing the deepening US-India strategic defence partnership.

Key Points:

- **Apache Helicopter Support Package:** India has requested the purchase of AH-64E Apache sustainment support services, including US Government and contractor engineering expertise, technical and logistics support services, comprehensive technical data and publications, and personnel training programmes. Boeing Company and Lockheed Martin will serve as the principal contractors for the deal. The AH-64E Apache Guardian is among the world's most advanced attack helicopters, equipped with advanced sensors, long-range precision weapons, and networked battlefield communications, and is deployed across India's frontline commands for counter-insurgency operations and border security.
- **M777A2 Howitzer Sustainment Deal:** The US also approved India's request for long-term sustainment support for M777A2 Ultra-Light Howitzers, with UK-based BAE Systems in Cumbria serving as the principal contractor. The non-major defence equipment items covered under this deal include ancillary items, spares, repair and return services, training programmes, technical assistance, field service representatives, and depot capability enhancement. India inducted 145 M777 howitzers, which weigh just 4.2 tonnes and can be airlifted by Chinook helicopters for rapid deployment in high-altitude terrain along the Line of Actual Control with China.
- **Strategic and Security Objectives:** The US Department of State stated that both proposed sales will support US foreign policy and national security objectives by strengthening the US-India strategic relationship. The approval recognises India as a major defence partner and an important force for political stability, peace, and economic progress in the Indo-Pacific and South Asia regions. The deals are expected to improve India's capability to meet current and future threats, strengthen its homeland defence, and deter regional threats.
- **Foreign Military Sale (FMS) Framework:** Both transactions will be conducted through the FMS channels, the US Government's official programme for defence sales to allied and partner nations. FMS transactions involve direct government-to-government transfers with US Department of Defense oversight, ensuring quality control, technology protection, and strategic alignment. The Department of State confirmed that the proposed sales will not alter the basic military balance in the region and will have no adverse impact on US defence readiness.
- **Broader US-India Defence Cooperation:** The approvals continue a trajectory of accelerating defence ties between Washington and New Delhi, with bilateral defence trade exceeding USD 20 billion over the past decade. Major previous acquisitions by India from the US include C-130J transport aircraft, P-8I maritime patrol aircraft, CH-47 Chinook heavy-lift helicopters, and the M777 howitzers themselves. The Apache sustainment deal represents a shift from one-off equipment purchases to a long-term partnership model encompassing maintenance, upgrades, training, and technology transfer.

India and Norway Elevate Ties to Green Strategic Partnership During PM Modi's Historic Official Visit

In the News: During Prime Minister Narendra Modi's first-ever visit to Norway on May 18-19, 2026 - the first by an Indian Prime Minister in 43 years - India and Norway elevated their bilateral relationship to a Green Strategic Partnership. Following delegation-level talks with Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Store in Oslo, both leaders outlined a comprehensive

framework for increased collaboration in areas ranging from clean energy and climate resilience to the blue economy and green shipping.

Key Points:

- **Green Strategic Partnership and Key Sectors:** India and Norway declared the upgradation of their bilateral ties to a Green Strategic Partnership, focusing on enhanced collaboration in clean energy, climate resilience, blue economy and green shipping. Prime Minister Modi expressed hope that India's scale, speed and talent, combined with Norway's technology and capital, would enable Indian companies to develop global solutions. Norway will also be joining the Indo-Pacific Initiative, signalling a deeper strategic alignment between the two countries.
- **Agreements and MoUs Signed:** Multiple Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) were signed during the bilateral meeting in sectors including high-tech health solutions, digital health, and Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI). An MoU between ISRO and Norway's space agency was signed to deepen cooperation in the space sector. A Triangular Cooperation Agreement was also signed, under which India and Norway will jointly provide human development solutions to countries of the Global South using India's Digital Public Infrastructure.
- **Trade, Technology and Future-Ready Cooperation:** Concrete steps were taken to ensure outcomes from the recently implemented Trade and Economic Partnership between the two countries. Collaboration was specifically envisioned in areas of high-tech, Artificial Intelligence and start-ups to make the partnership future-ready. Norwegian industry leaders at the India-Norway Business and Research Summit in Oslo suggested streamlining regulatory frameworks in India to improve ease of doing business, reflecting growing business interest between the two nations.
- **3rd India-Nordic Summit:** Prime Minister Modi also participated in the 3rd India-Nordic Summit in Oslo on May 19, 2026, where India and the Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden) decided to elevate their collective relationship to a Green Technology and Innovation Strategic Partnership. PM Modi held separate bilateral meetings with the Prime Ministers of Iceland (Kristrun Frostadottir), Finland (Petteri Orpo) and Denmark (Mette Frederiksen), discussing areas such as clean energy, trade, sustainability, digitalisation, fisheries, geothermal energy and carbon capture and storage.
- **Shared Vision on Global Order and Diplomacy:** Both leaders reiterated their common belief in a rules-based world order and commitment to dialogue and diplomacy. PM Modi stated that whether it is Ukraine or West Asia, India and the Nordic nations will continue to support efforts for peace and an early end to conflicts, emphasising a clear and united stand on terrorism with "no compromise, no double standards." Both leaders also agreed that reform of multilateral institutions is both necessary and urgent, and highlighted the importance of the India-EU Free Trade Agreement as the beginning of a new golden era in relations.

PM Modi Receives Grand Cross of the Royal Norwegian Order of Merit

In the News: His Majesty King Harald V of Norway conferred upon Prime Minister Narendra Modi the 'Grand Cross of the Royal Norwegian Order of Merit' in a special ceremony hosted in Oslo. The award is Norway's highest honour bestowed on foreign Heads of Government and is conferred in recognition of outstanding service in the interest of Norway and humankind. This is Prime Minister Modi's 32nd international honour.

Key Points:

- **The Grand Cross of the Royal Norwegian Order of Merit:** The Grand Cross is the highest grade of the Royal Norwegian Order of Merit, awarded for exceptional service in advancing Norway's interests and international relations. The honour was conferred upon Prime Minister Modi by His Majesty King Harald V during a special ceremony in Oslo on May 18, 2026. PM Modi expressed deep gratitude to the King and the people of Norway for the honour, dedicating the award to the historic friendship between India and Norway.
- **Significance of the Visit:** Prime Minister Modi arrived in Oslo on a two-day visit from Sweden, marking his maiden visit to Norway and the first visit by an Indian Prime Minister to the country in 43 years. The conferment stands as a symbol of the deep bonds of goodwill that exist between India and Norway, and is expected to guide their journey of friendship and collaboration into the future. PM Modi called the honour a tribute to the enduring warmth, trust, and affection shared between the people of India and the people of Norway.
- **Back-to-Back International Honours:** A day before receiving the Norwegian honour, Prime Minister Modi was awarded Sweden's prestigious 'Royal Order of the Polar Star, Commander Grand Cross' in recognition of his exceptional contributions to bilateral ties and his visionary leadership. The Swedish award is the highest honour conferred on foreign Heads of Government by Sweden. The Grand Cross of the Royal Norwegian Order of Merit marks PM Modi's 32nd international honour, reflecting the growing global recognition of India's diplomatic engagement under his leadership.

- **About the Royal Norwegian Order of Merit:** The Royal Norwegian Order of Merit is a Norwegian order of chivalry established to honour individuals who have rendered distinguished services in the interest of Norway and humanity. The Grand Cross is the highest grade within this order and is reserved for foreign Heads of State and Government. The order recognises contributions to advancing Norway's interests, strengthening international relations, and promoting cooperation between nations.

India Becomes Bangladesh's Second-Largest Trading Partner, Surpassing the US in Major Trade Shift

In the News: According to data released by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) in May 2026, India has reclaimed its position as Bangladesh's second-largest trading partner by February 2026, marginally surpassing the United States. India accounted for 8.47% (Tk 123.28 billion) of Bangladesh's total external trade, while the US followed closely with an 8.46% share (Tk 123.17 billion). China continues to hold the top position with a 21.21% share.

Key Points:

- **Shifting Trade Dynamics:** The position of Bangladesh's second-largest trading partner has been fluctuating between India and the US since mid-2025. The US had briefly overtaken India in May 2025 (US trade: \$1.17 billion vs India's \$1.05 billion) and again in August 2025 and January 2026. India traditionally held the second position for over 15 years before this recent back-and-forth began, reflecting changing geopolitical and trade dynamics in the region.
- **India-Bangladesh Bilateral Trade Profile:** India's exports to Bangladesh stood at approximately \$11.38 billion in FY 2024-25, while India's imports from Bangladesh were around \$2.33 billion, resulting in a significant trade surplus in India's favour. India's major exports to Bangladesh include petroleum products, cotton and yarn, vehicles, cereals, organic chemicals, machinery, and spices. Bangladesh primarily exports cotton fabrics, readymade garments, jute and jute products, footwear, and spices to India.
- **Nature of Trade with Key Partners:** Bangladesh's trade relationship with its top three partners differs significantly. Trade with China and India is import-dominated - Bangladesh imports industrial raw materials, capital machinery, electronics, chemicals, and essential food commodities. In contrast, trade with the US is export-driven, led by Bangladesh's massive readymade garment (RMG) shipments, which account for over 80% of the country's total export earnings.
- **US-Bangladesh Trade Dynamics:** The US's recent rise as a competitor for the second position is attributed to increased American engagement following trade tensions between Washington and Beijing, with US buyers turning to Bangladesh for garments previously sourced from China and India. The US also introduced a new cotton policy in 2025 under which countries using US-origin cotton in manufacturing qualify for zero-tariff access when exporting finished goods to the US.
- **India's Geographical and Strategic Advantage:** India benefits from geographical proximity to Bangladesh, resulting in lower freight costs and faster delivery of goods. India granted Bangladesh duty-free access to all products (excluding arms and drugs) in 2011 under the South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) framework. Both countries also engage through sub-regional groupings like BBIN (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal) and BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation).
- **Other Major Trading Partners of Bangladesh:** After China, India, and the US, Indonesia ranks fourth (driven by imports of edible oils, industrial raw materials, and coal), followed by Brazil in fifth position (imports of soybean, edible oils, sugar, and agricultural commodities). Bangladesh's heavy dependence on imported raw materials and food commodities continues to shape its overall trade pattern, with China, India, and the US expected to remain dominant partners in the near term.

Google and Blackstone Launch \$5 Billion AI

In the News: Blackstone (NYSE: BX), the world's largest private owner of data centers, announced a joint venture with Google (Alphabet Inc.) to create a new US-based AI cloud company. Blackstone will invest an initial \$5 billion in equity capital, with the total investment potentially reaching \$25 billion including leverage. The venture aims to bring its first 500 megawatts (MW) of data center compute capacity online by 2027.

Key Points:

- **Structure of the Joint Venture:** The new US-based company will offer data center capacity, operations, networking, and Google Cloud's Tensor Processing Units (TPUs) as a compute-as-a-service offering. Blackstone will hold a majority ownership stake in the venture, while Google will supply TPU hardware, software, and operational services. The venture will be headed by Benjamin Treynor Sloss, formerly Google's Chief Programs Officer.
- **What are TPUs:** Tensor Processing Units (TPUs) are custom semiconductor chips designed and developed by Google, purpose-built for AI computations. Unlike Nvidia's general-purpose GPUs, TPUs are specifically optimised for training and



inference of advanced AI models. Google first manufactured its TPU in 2015 and uses them to run its Gemini AI model. Other notable TPU customers include Anthropic and Citadel Securities.

- **Business Model - Compute-as-a-Service (CaaS):** The venture introduces a new commercial model where enterprises can rent large-scale AI processing capacity and surrounding infrastructure instead of building their own hardware. This gives customers an additional channel to access Google's TPUs beyond the standard Google Cloud platform, offering more choice and flexibility for running AI workloads.

India-Nordic Summit 2026

In the News: Prime Minister Narendra Modi participated in the 3rd India-Nordic Summit held in Oslo, Norway, alongside leaders of five Nordic nations - Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden. The summit elevated bilateral ties to a "Green Technology and Innovation Strategic Partnership" and addressed key areas including trade, defence, space, AI governance, and counter-terrorism. This was PM Modi's first visit to Norway in 43 years since Indira Gandhi travelled there in 1983.

Key Points:

- **Summit Background and Participants:** The 3rd India-Nordic Summit was hosted by Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Store. Previous summits were held in Stockholm (2018) and Copenhagen (2022). The leaders decided that the 4th India-Nordic Summit will be hosted by Finland. India is the only country besides the US to have summit-level ties with the Nordic group collectively.
- **Trade and Economic Integration:** The leaders highlighted the implementation of the India-EFTA Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) and the conclusion of the India-EU Free Trade Agreement. A major shared objective under TEPA is driving USD 100 billion in investments into India, projected to create one million direct jobs. India-Nordic bilateral trade currently stands at approximately USD 19 billion, with a combined Nordic GDP of USD 2 trillion.
- **Space and Defence Cooperation:** A new Framework Agreement was announced between ISRO and the Norwegian Space Agency. Sweden confirmed a payload for India's upcoming Venus Orbiter Mission (Shukrayaan-1). India highlighted that Nordic defence firms can now avail 100% FDI in Indian Defence Industrial Corridors in Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.
- **Climate Action and Blue Economy:** Iceland was welcomed as a new member of LeadIT 2.0, a public-private platform for decarbonising heavy industries. Norway formally joined India's Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI). The leaders committed to transitioning the shipping industry to low-carbon models and adhering to the Hong Kong Convention for environmentally safe ship recycling.
- **Global Geopolitics and Security:** The Nordic countries explicitly reiterated their support for India gaining a permanent seat on a reformed UN Security Council and backed India's application to the Nuclear Suppliers' Group (NSG). The joint statement strongly condemned cross-border terrorism, specifically referencing the 2025 attacks in Pahalgam and New Delhi, and committed to disrupting global terror financing channels.
- **About the Nordic Region:** The Nordic region comprises Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden. Scandinavia is a narrower term referring only to Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. Denmark, Sweden, and Finland are EU members, while Norway and Iceland participate via the European Economic Area (EEA) and EFTA. Inter-governmental cooperation is maintained through the Nordic Council (established 1952, headquartered in Copenhagen), with Finland holding its Presidency for 2026. The broader Nordic-Baltic Eight (NB8) coalition also includes Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, currently chaired by Estonia for 2026.

New Delhi Hosts 68th APO Governing Body Meeting with Asia-Pacific Delegates

In the News: New Delhi hosted the 68th Session of the Asian Productivity Organization Governing Body Meeting at Bharat Mandapam from May 20 to 22, 2026. The meeting was hosted by the Government of India as the Chair of the APO. It brought together senior delegates from APO member economies and focused on productivity-led growth, APO Vision 2030, governance reforms and regional cooperation.

Key Points:

- **About the Meeting:** The 68th APO Governing Body Meeting was held in New Delhi under India's chairmanship. It included senior government officials, policymakers, productivity experts and heads of National Productivity Organizations. For exams, remember that the Governing Body is the highest decision-making body of APO.
- **Key Agenda:** The meeting discussed the APO Vision 2030 framework, institutional reforms and the preliminary budget for the 2027-28 biennium. It also reviewed annual and financial reports, Secretariat performance and procedural recommendations. This makes it important for international organisations and economic governance topics

- **India's Institutional Role:** The event was hosted by the National Productivity Council under DPIIT, Ministry of Commerce and Industry. NPC is India's National Productivity Organization and works on training, research, consultancy and capacity building. For exams, link NPC with productivity promotion and industrial development.
- **Leadership Transition:** At the meeting, Prof. Anwar Sanusi, APO Director for Indonesia, assumed charge as APO Chair for 2026–27. He succeeded Amardeep Singh Bhatia, APO Director for India and Secretary, DPIIT. The leadership transition is relevant for current affairs-based organisation questions.
- **About APO:** The Asian Productivity Organization is an intergovernmental organisation established in 1961. It works to improve productivity in the Asia-Pacific region through cooperation, research and capacity building. For prelims, connect APO with productivity, innovation, industry, agriculture, services and public sector reforms.

PM Modi Receives FAO Agricola Medal in Rome for Sustainable Agriculture and Rural

In the News: Prime Minister Narendra Modi was conferred the FAO Agricola Medal 2026 at the FAO Headquarters in Rome on May 20, 2026. The award was presented by Dr. Qu Dongyu, Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. It recognised PM Modi's leadership in food security, sustainable agriculture and rural development.

Key Points:

- **About the FAO Agricola Medal:** The Agricola Medal is one of FAO's major recognitions for contributions to agriculture, food security and nutrition. It is awarded to leaders who support sustainable agricultural development. For exams, remember that FAO is a specialised agency of the United Nations headquartered in Rome, Italy.
- **Reason for the Award:** The award recognised India's efforts in improving agricultural productivity, food security and farmer welfare. It also highlighted India's role in sustainable agriculture and rural development. This topic is important for questions on agriculture policy, food systems and global development.
- **Technology in Agriculture:** PM Modi highlighted India's use of Digital Public Infrastructure, AI-based advisory systems, drones and remote sensing in agriculture. He also referred to the development of climate-resilient crop varieties. For exams, connect this with smart farming, climate-resilient agriculture and agri-tech innovation.
- **Water Efficiency Measures:** The speech referred to initiatives such as Per Drop More Crop, micro-irrigation and precision farming. These schemes are linked with water conservation and sustainable agriculture. They are important for GS topics such as climate change, resource efficiency and farmer income.
- **India, FAO and Millets:** PM Modi recalled India's association with FAO and its support for the global promotion of millets. The International Year of Millets 2023 is important for nutrition security and climate-resilient cropping. For exams, link millets with food security, sustainable farming and India's Global South outreach.

Who Is Dr Soumya Swaminathan? Former WHO Scientist Elected Fellow of the Royal Society

In the News: Former WHO Chief Scientist Dr Soumya Swaminathan has been elected a Fellow of the Royal Society (FRS) in May 2026. The fellowship is one of the world's most prestigious honours in science. She is known for her major contributions to tuberculosis research, HIV, public health, epidemiology and science policy.

Key Pointers:

- **About Dr Soumya Swaminathan:** Dr Soumya Swaminathan is an Indian paediatrician, clinical scientist and public health expert. Her work mainly focuses on tuberculosis, HIV, epidemiology and health systems research. She is important for competitive exams related to science, health and global institutions.
- **Major Positions Held:** She served as Director General of ICMR and Secretary of the Department of Health Research from 2015 to 2017. She later worked as WHO's Deputy Director-General for Programmes. In 2019, she became the first Chief Scientist of the World Health Organization.
- **About the Royal Society:** The Royal Society is the United Kingdom's national academy of sciences. It is considered the oldest scientific academy in continuous existence. Election as a Fellow recognises major contributions to natural knowledge, including science, medicine and engineering.
- **Indian Science Milestone:** Her election is significant because her father, Dr M S Swaminathan, was also elected Fellow of the Royal Society in 1973. This makes it a rare father-daughter distinction in Indian science. It also highlights India's contribution to global scientific research and public health leadership.

Trump's green card rule explained: What it means for visa holders in the US

In the News: The Trump administration announced a new U.S. immigration policy on 22 May 2026. The rule changes how many temporary visa holders can apply for a U.S. Green Card. USCIS said Adjustment of Status from within the U.S. will now be allowed mainly in extraordinary circumstances.

Key Pointers:

- **New Green Card Rule:** Temporary visa holders seeking permanent residence may generally have to apply from their home country. The process may shift from in-country Adjustment of Status to overseas consular processing. This means applicants may need to approach U.S. consulates abroad for permanent residence applications.
- **Legal Basis:** The rule is linked to Section 245(a) of the Immigration and Nationality Act. This section deals with adjustment of status for eligible non-citizens already present in the U.S. USCIS has described the benefit as discretionary, not an automatic legal right.
- **Who May Be Affected:** The policy may affect students, temporary workers, spouses of U.S. citizens, refugees and asylum seekers. It is especially relevant for Indian students and skilled workers in the U.S. Many such applicants move from temporary visas to permanent residency through Green Card applications.
- **Government's Argument:** The Trump administration said the change restores the original purpose of temporary visas. USCIS argued that temporary stay should not automatically become a pathway to permanent residence from within the U.S. The government also presented it as a step to reduce misuse of immigration procedures.

Saudi Arabia Joins International Big Cat Alliance

In the News: Saudi Arabia has joined the International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA) as its newest member country. With this, the India-led alliance now has 26 member countries and five observer nations. The development is important for global wildlife diplomacy, especially as IBCA works for the conservation of seven major big cat species.

Key Pointers:

- **Saudi Arabia Becomes New Member:** Saudi Arabia has officially joined the International Big Cat Alliance as its latest member country. This expands the global conservation platform and strengthens cooperation among countries linked to big cat habitats and protection.
- **About International Big Cat Alliance:** IBCA is a treaty-based inter-governmental international organisation headquartered in India. It was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 9 April 2023 during the event marking 50 years of Project Tiger.
- **Seven Big Cats Covered:** The alliance focuses on the conservation of tiger, lion, leopard, snow leopard, cheetah, jaguar and puma. These species are important for maintaining ecological balance because they act as apex predators in their habitats.
- **India's Conservation Diplomacy:** IBCA highlights India's leadership in wildlife conservation and biodiversity diplomacy. It brings together range countries, non-range countries, scientific organisations and conservation partners for coordinated action.

India Records 97 of World's 100 Hottest Cities

In the News: India was reported to have 97 of the world's 100 hottest cities on 22 May 2026, according to a real-time temperature ranking cited by media reports. The extreme heat was concentrated across northern, central and eastern India, with several cities crossing 45°C. Balangir in Odisha and Sasaram in Bihar were reported around 48°C, while Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh touched about 47°C. This was a live weather snapshot and not an annual climate ranking.

Key Points:

- **India Dominates Global Heat Ranking:** According to AQL.in's live ranking cited by reports, Indian cities occupied 97 places in the global top 100 hottest cities list. The only three non-Indian cities in the list were from Nepal, including Dhangadhi, Nepalgunj and Lumbini Sanskritik. For exams, this is important under climate change, disaster management and extreme weather events.
- **Worst-Affected Regions:** The heatwave mainly affected north, central and eastern India, including parts of Odisha, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. Cities such as Balangir, Sasaram, Varanasi, Muzaffarnagar, Ayodhya, Patiala, Warangal, Haridwar, Gwalior and Dhanbad were among the intensely hot locations. This regional spread shows how heatwaves are no longer limited to traditional desert areas.

- **IMD Heatwave Warning:** The India Meteorological Department said heatwave to severe heatwave conditions were likely to continue over plains of northwest India, central India, east India and parts of peninsular India. This makes IMD important for exam questions related to weather forecasting, early warning systems and climate risk governance. IMD functions under the Ministry of Earth Sciences and issues colour-coded weather alerts.
- **Heatwave Criteria in India:** As per NDMA and IMD criteria, a heatwave is generally considered when maximum temperature reaches at least 40°C in plains and 30°C in hilly regions. A heatwave may also be declared based on departure from normal temperature or absolute maximum temperature thresholds. For exams, remember that severe heatwaves are linked with higher departures from normal or very high actual temperatures.
- **Public Health and Infrastructure Impact:** Extreme heat increases the risk of dehydration, heat exhaustion and heatstroke, especially among children, elderly people, outdoor workers and people with chronic illnesses. Reuters reported over 300 suspected heat-related illness cases in Andhra Pradesh between March and mid-May 2026. The heatwave also raised electricity demand sharply, showing links between climate stress, health systems and power infrastructure.

India and Cyprus Sign Strategic Partnership Deal Covering Defence, Trade, and Cybersecurity

In the News: India and Cyprus elevated their bilateral relationship to a Strategic Partnership during talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Cyprus President Nikos Christodoulides in New Delhi. The visit took place from 20 to 23 May 2026 and was significant because Cyprus was holding the Presidency of the Council of the European Union. The partnership covers defence, trade, investment, cybersecurity, maritime security, technology, education and connectivity.

Key Pointers:

- **Strategic Partnership Upgrade:** India and Cyprus upgraded their earlier Comprehensive Partnership into a Strategic Partnership to reflect new geopolitical and economic realities. This is important for exams as it shows India's growing engagement with Europe, the Mediterranean region and EU-linked partners.
- **Defence and Security Cooperation:** Both sides agreed to deepen defence and security ties, including defence industry collaboration, search and rescue cooperation, maritime security and regular naval engagement. A roadmap for bilateral defence cooperation for 2026-2031 was also concluded between the two Ministries of Defence.
- **Cybersecurity and Counter-Terrorism:** India and Cyprus welcomed the establishment of a Cybersecurity Dialogue and signed an MoU to create a Joint Working Group on Counter-Terrorism. This makes the issue relevant for internal security, cyber threats, terrorism financing, radicalisation and emerging technology misuse.
- **Trade, Investment and Innovation:** The two countries agreed to expand cooperation in trusted supply chains, financial services, maritime logistics, clean energy, space, science and technology. Cyprus was highlighted as an important source of investment into India, while both sides also supported stronger startup, AI and digital innovation links.
- **Connectivity and India-EU Link:** Cyprus joined the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative, and both sides discussed the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor and a Bilateral Connectivity Dialogue. For competitive exams, this links India-Cyprus ties with maritime routes, Europe connectivity, UNCLOS, Indo-Pacific strategy and India-EU cooperation.

Global Housing Crisis 2026: 3.4 Billion People Trapped in the Affordability Trap

In the News: UN-Habitat released the World Cities Report 2026: The Global Housing Crisis during the 13th World Urban Forum held in Baku, Azerbaijan. The report warns that nearly 3.4 billion people worldwide lack secure, safe and adequate housing. It highlights housing affordability, informal settlements, homelessness, climate risks and weak urban governance as major global concerns.

Key Pointers:

- **Scale of Housing Crisis:** The report states that up to 3.4 billion people worldwide lack access to adequate housing. This includes people living in overcrowded homes, unsafe settlements and poorly serviced neighbourhoods. For exams, this is important under urbanisation, poverty, SDGs and inclusive development.
- **Informal Settlements and Homelessness:** More than 1.1 billion people live in informal settlements or slums, while over 300 million experience homelessness. These figures show that the housing crisis is not only about ownership, but also about dignity, tenure security and basic services. It is relevant for SDG 11, which focuses on sustainable cities and communities.
- **Affordability Trap:** The global house price-to-income ratio has risen, showing that housing prices are increasing faster than incomes. Around 44% of households globally spend more than 30% of their income on housing or rent, reflecting rising rental stress. This makes housing unaffordable for low-income and middle-income groups.



- **Climate-Housing Link:** The report highlights that climate-related hazards may destroy nearly 167 million homes by 2040. Housing is also linked to emissions, as housing alone accounts for an estimated 17-21% of total emissions. This makes climate-resilient housing a key part of urban planning and disaster risk reduction.
- **Baku Call to Action:** The World Urban Forum adopted the Baku Call to Action, urging governments to treat housing as part of a wider urban system. It links housing with land, transport, infrastructure, services, livelihoods, finance and climate resilience. The call stresses people-centred, locally led and climate-resilient solutions for cities.

ENVIRONMENT

CAFE III Fuel Efficiency Norms Likely by May-End

In the News: The Government of India is likely to notify the final Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) III norms by the end of May 2026, with industry executives expressing growing confidence that the long-awaited fuel-efficiency rules are nearing completion. The notification has undergone a last-minute recalibration to align the framework with India's accelerated ethanol roadmap, shifting the reference fuel from E20 to E25/E27. The final norms will leave automakers with less than 11 months to prepare for implementation from April 1, 2027, forcing them to lock in product plans, supplier contracts and capital-allocation decisions.

Key Points:

- **CAFE III Norms and the E25 Recalibration:** The Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) is updating the core compliance formula of the CAFE III norms to recalibrate the reference fuel from E20 to E25/E27, aligning the framework with India's accelerated ethanol blending roadmap. The exercise primarily involves updating the chemical and conversion-factor assumptions used to calculate certified CO2 emissions during laboratory testing, rather than rewriting the policy architecture. The core CAFE III targets remain unchanged, and only the underlying chemistry and conversion math are being updated so that automakers are assessed on vehicle efficiency rather than being penalised for the properties of a higher-ethanol fuel.
- **Government's Urgency and Policy Objectives:** The matter has received attention at the highest levels of government, with the Prime Minister's Office understood to have urged the BEE not to let technical recalibration delay the final notification. The urgency reflects the government's broader objectives of reducing dependence on imported crude oil, expanding ethanol use and accelerating the adoption of cleaner technologies. Industry officials have confirmed that all major consultations have been completed and that the remaining inputs are largely suggestions rather than objections, with the final notification expected by the end of May 2026.
- **Impact on Technology Choices and Compliance Economics:** CAFE III will reshape the economics of technology choices in India's passenger vehicle market by determining fleet-average fuel-efficiency targets and how compliance credits are assigned to battery electric vehicles, strong hybrids and flex-fuel technologies. Incorporating E25 into the testing baseline could provide an implicit compliance cushion, as higher ethanol content lowers the certified carbon intensity of petrol on paper. Combined with proposed super-credits for flex-fuel vehicles, this could ease near-term compliance pressure and broaden the technology options available to manufacturers.
- **Automaker Preparedness and Flex-Fuel Strategies:** Leading automakers are already preparing distinct flex-fuel strategies in anticipation of the CAFE III norms. Maruti Suzuki is expected to deploy ethanol-compatible technology in high-volume models, Toyota Kirloskar Motor is combining flex-fuel engines with strong hybrids, and Tata Motors has said its flex-fuel technology is ready for launch around late 2026 or early 2027. With automakers already finalising their FY28 product and powertrain strategies, the final rulebook is critical for shaping technology bets, capital allocation and competitive positioning through the rest of the decade.
- **What is CAFE (Corporate Average Fuel Economy):** Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) norms are fuel-efficiency standards that require automobile manufacturers to meet a prescribed fleet-average CO2 emission target across all passenger vehicles sold in a given compliance period. The norms are administered by the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) under the Ministry of Power and are aimed at improving the fuel efficiency of vehicles, reducing vehicular emissions and lowering India's dependence on imported crude oil. CAFE III is the third phase of these norms, scheduled for implementation from April 1, 2027, and will set stricter emission and efficiency benchmarks compared to the earlier CAFE I and CAFE II phases.



No new dams in upper Ganga: The Centre's long-winding road to 'consensus' on the issue

In the News: The Union Government has informed the Supreme Court that it is not in favour of allowing any new hydroelectric projects in the upper reaches of the Ganga in Uttarakhand. The decision mainly applies to the Alaknanda and Bhagirathi river basins, which form the headwater system of the Ganga. The Centre will allow only seven existing or substantially built projects to continue with safeguards.

Key Points:

- **Centre's Stand Before Supreme Court:** The Centre told the Supreme Court that no new hydroelectric projects should be permitted in the upper Ganga basin. Only seven projects that are already commissioned or at an advanced stage will be allowed to continue. This topic links environmental governance, judicial oversight, hydropower policy and Himalayan ecology.
- **Geographical Focus:** The issue concerns the Alaknanda and Bhagirathi river basins in Uttarakhand. These rivers are key headwater streams of the Ganga and pass through an ecologically fragile Himalayan region. For prelims, remember that the decision concerns the upper Ganga reaches, not the entire Ganga basin.
- **Background of the Issue:** The debate became prominent after the 2013 Kedarnath disaster, when the Supreme Court ordered scrutiny of hydroelectric projects. Expert committees examined the impact of multiple projects on biodiversity, river flow and disaster risk. This makes the topic important for environment and disaster management.
- **Projects Allowed to Continue:** The seven projects include Tehri Stage-II, Tapovan Vishnugad, Vishnugad Pipalkoti, Singoli Bhatwari, Phata Byung, Madhmaheshwar and Kaliganga-II. These projects are being allowed because they have already made substantial physical or financial progress. The Centre has said they must follow strict environmental safeguards.

SCIENCE AND TECH

IN-SPACE Leads Indian Space-Tech Delegation to Italy

In the News: The Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre (IN-SPACE) led a delegation of nine Indian space-tech firms to Space Meetings Veneto 2026 in Venice, Italy, during May 11-15, 2026, to expand global partnerships and strengthen the international footprint of India's private space ecosystem. The Indian delegation held strategic talks with the Italian Space Industry Study Group to explore deeper commercial and technological cooperation, and several Indian firms signed MoUs and framework agreements with Italian and European space companies during the event.

Key Points:

- **MoUs and Partnerships Signed:** Karnataka-based Astrobase Space Technologies signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Impulso Space to support customer access and explore launch opportunities through integrated mission management and launch service networks. Kepler Aerospace signed a framework agreement with Apogeo Space to expand global Ground Station as a Service (GSaaS) infrastructure and strengthen satellite collaboration between India and Europe. VyomIC showcased its technologies and announced a strategic collaboration focused on building next-generation navigation and resilient infrastructure technologies.
- **India Space Pavilion at Venice:** For the first time, IN-SPACE set up a dedicated 50 square metre India Space Pavilion at the Space Meetings Veneto to showcase the Indian space sector to a global audience. The pavilion included dedicated exhibition space and meeting venues for Indian companies to display their products and services to delegates from across the world. Space Meetings Veneto 2026, held at Venezia Terminal Passeggeri in Venice, is branded as Italy's major space event for Europe, with the previous edition witnessing participation from around 400 companies, over 5,000 B2B meetings and 3,500 participants from 25 countries.
- **India-Italy Space Cooperation Framework:** The delegation visit is part of the broader India-Italy Joint Strategic Action Plan 2025-2029, announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni during their meeting at the G20 Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in November 2024. It follows the successful Italian Aerospace Delegation's visit to India in September 2025, co-organised by IN-SPACE and the Italian Trade Agency in coordination with the Italian Space Agency (ASI). During the 2025 visit, around 13 Italian private sector entities held road shows in Hyderabad, Bengaluru and New Delhi, facilitating networking opportunities with approximately 180 Indian space companies.
- **About IN-SPACE and India's Space Reforms:** IN-SPACE has been formed under the Department of Space (DOS) to promote, enable, authorise and supervise Non-Government Entities (NGEs) and academia to undertake space activities as part of the Government of India's historic space sector reforms. Dr. P.K. Jain, Director of Program Management and Authorization

Directorate at IN-SPACe, stated that India's participation at Space Meetings Veneto reflects the growing global confidence in the country's space capabilities and private sector ecosystem.

Sweden Joins India's Venus Orbiter Mission – Shukrayaan

In the News: During Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Gothenburg, Sweden, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and Sweden's National Space Agency signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for collaboration on India's Shukrayaan mission - the country's first dedicated mission to study Venus. The agreement was among the key outcomes of the bilateral summit, during which India and Sweden elevated their relationship to a strategic partnership.

Key Points:

- **Shukrayaan Mission Overview:** Shukrayaan, meaning "Venus Craft" in Sanskrit, is India's first dedicated Venus exploration mission, planned for launch on 29 March 2028 using ISRO's LVM-3 rocket - the same launch vehicle that carried Chandrayaan-3 to the Moon. The Venus Orbiter Mission was approved by the Union Cabinet in September 2024 with a budget of approximately Rs 1,236 crore. After a 112-day journey, the spacecraft will enter a specialised elliptical orbit ranging from 500 km to 60,000 km above the Venusian surface on July 19, 2028, enabling data capture from varying altitudes. The mission successfully completed its Preliminary Design Review in April 2026.
- **India-Sweden Space Collaboration:** Under the space agreement, the Swedish Institute of Space Physics (IRF) will provide a scientific instrument called the Venusian Neutrals Analyser (VNA), which will be integrated into a larger plasma package named VISWAS (Venus Ionospheric and Solar Wind Particle AnalySer), developed by India's Space Physics Laboratory in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala. The VNA will measure neutral particles escaping from Venus's upper atmosphere due to solar wind interaction, helping scientists understand how Venus has gradually lost its atmosphere over millions of years. India-Sweden space cooperation dates back to the 1980s, with Sweden having contributed instruments to India's earlier Chandrayaan missions as well.
- **Scientific Objectives and Payloads:** The Shukrayaan mission aims to study Venus's surface, atmosphere, and the interaction between the Sun's energy and the planet. Venus, often called Earth's twin sister due to its similar size, has surface temperatures exceeding 460 degrees Celsius, thick clouds of sulphuric acid, and extremely high atmospheric pressure, making it a subject of deep scientific curiosity about why two similarly born planets evolved so differently. The mission will carry 19 scientific payloads in total, with key international contributions including Russia's Space Research Institute providing the Venus Infrared Atmospheric Gases Linker (VIRAL).
- **Broader Diplomatic Context:** The ISRO-Sweden space agreement was part of a wider bilateral summit in Gothenburg that saw India and Sweden elevate their ties to a strategic partnership. Other key outcomes of the summit included the launch of the India-Sweden Technology and Artificial Intelligence Corridor (SITAC), the Joint Innovation Partnership 2.0, and a shared commitment to double bilateral trade over the next five years. Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson expressed pride in partnering with India on the Venus mission, reflecting ISRO's growing international credibility following the success of Chandrayaan-3 and the cost-effective Mangalyaan Mars mission.

SPORTS

Vaibhav Sooryavanshi Creates IPL History with Most Sixes by an Indian in a Single Season

In the News: Rajasthan Royals' 15-year-old opener Vaibhav Sooryavanshi created IPL history by smashing 43 sixes in the 2026 season, surpassing Abhishek Sharma's previous Indian record of 42 sixes set during the 2024 edition. He achieved the milestone during a quick-fire knock of 46 off 21 balls against Delhi Capitals, featuring five fours and two sixes.

Key Points:

- **Record-Breaking Achievement:** Sooryavanshi became the holder of the all-time Indian record for the most sixes in a single IPL season, overtaking Abhishek Sharma's mark of 42 set in 2024. He reached the landmark with his second six against Delhi Capitals in his 12th match of IPL 2026. The feat placed him ahead of prominent Indian names such as Virat Kohli, Suryakumar Yadav, and Shreyas Iyer in single-season six-hitting tallies.
- **Season Performance and Strike Rate:** Sooryavanshi finished among the top run-scorers for Rajasthan Royals, accumulating 486 runs in the season at a remarkable strike rate of 234.78. His tally included one century and two half-centuries, establishing him as the primary scoring threat in the RR batting lineup. His aggressive approach at the top of the order consistently set the tone for the team's innings throughout the tournament.

- **Position in All-Time IPL Six-Hitting Records:** Despite his record-breaking Indian tally, Sooryavanshi's 43 sixes still trail the overall IPL record of 59 sixes, set by Chris Gayle during the 2012 season. Other players ahead of him in the all-time list include Andre Russell with 52 sixes in 2019, Gayle again with 51 in 2013, and Jos Buttler with 45 for Rajasthan Royals in 2022. With at least two matches remaining, and more if RR qualify for the playoffs, Sooryavanshi has the opportunity to climb further up this elite list.
- **Youngest Player to Hold the Indian Record:** At just 15 years of age, Sooryavanshi became the youngest cricketer ever to hold the Indian record for most sixes in an IPL season. His precocious talent and fearless strokeplay have signalled a generational shift in aggressive batting standards within the IPL. The achievement has drawn widespread attention to his potential as a future mainstay in Indian white-ball cricket.
- **Match Context Against Delhi Capitals:** In the match where Sooryavanshi broke the record, Rajasthan Royals posted 193 for 8, with contributions from Dhruv Jurel (53) and Riyan Parag (51) complementing his explosive start. Delhi Capitals' bowling attack, led by Mitchell Starc with four wickets and supported by Lungi Ngidi and Madhav Tiwari, managed to check RR's scoring after the initial onslaught. The result kept Rajasthan Royals in contention for a playoff berth in IPL 2026.

CIC Exemption of BCCI from the RTI Act, 2005

In the News: The Central Information Commission (CIC) ruled that the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) is not a "public authority" under Section 2(h) of the Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005. The order, delivered by Information Commissioner P.R. Ramesh, overturns a 2018 CIC decision that had declared the BCCI a public authority and directed it to appoint Public Information Officers.

Key Points:

- **CIC's Ruling and Legal Basis:** The CIC held that the BCCI does not satisfy the definition of "public authority" under Section 2(h) of the RTI Act, noting that it is a society registered under the Tamil Nadu Societies Registration Act, 1975, and was neither established by the Constitution nor created by any law enacted by Parliament. The Commission distinguished between a body "created by statute" and one "merely governed by statute" after being formed through private initiative, holding that the BCCI falls in the latter category and that registration under a statute gives legal recognition, not statutory status.
- **Absence of Government Control and Financing:** The CIC found no "deep or pervasive control" exercised by the government over the BCCI's administration, management, or internal functioning, noting that its office bearers are elected internally, no government nominee sits on its committees, and government approval is not required for its decisions. The Commission also held that the BCCI is financially self-sustaining, generating revenue independently through media rights, sponsorships, broadcasting agreements and ticket sales, and that tax exemptions or the use of government-owned stadiums do not amount to "substantial financing" under the RTI Act.
- **Supreme Court Precedents Relied Upon:** The CIC drew heavily on the Supreme Court's 2005 judgment in Zee Telefilms Ltd v Union of India, which held that the BCCI is not "State" under Article 12 of the Constitution as it has no government shareholding or significant financial assistance from the state. The Commission also relied on Thalappalam Service Cooperative Bank Ltd v State of Kerala (2013), which established that "control" under Section 2(h) must be "substantial and pervasive" over management, policy, administration and financial affairs, not mere regulatory supervision.
- **Background and Earlier Developments:** The case originated from an RTI application filed with the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports by a Delhi resident seeking information about the BCCI's authority to select national players and the government's control over cricket administration. In 2018, then-Information Commissioner M. Sridhar Acharyulu had declared the BCCI a public authority, but the Madras High Court set aside that order and remanded the matter for fresh consideration. The Lodha Committee and the Law Commission (275th Report, 2018) had both recommended bringing the BCCI under the RTI Act, but these recommendations were never enacted into binding law.

AWARDS AND HONOURS

Indian-Origin Scientists Receive Order of Mapungubwe

In the News: Two Indian-origin public health scientists - Professor Salim Abdool Karim and Professor Keertan Dheda - were formally awarded the Order of Mapungubwe, South Africa's highest civilian honour, by President Cyril Ramaphosa at a ceremony in Pretoria. They were among 38 individuals recognised for exceptional achievements benefiting South Africa and the global community.

Key Points:

- **About the Order of Mapungubwe:** The Order of Mapungubwe is South Africa's highest civilian national order, instituted on December 6, 2002. It is named after the ancient Kingdom of Mapungubwe, an Iron Age civilisation that flourished around 1075-1220 CE in present-day Limpopo Province. The Order has four classes - Platinum, Gold, Silver, and Bronze - and its first recipient (Platinum) was former President Nelson Mandela in 2002.
- **Prof. Salim Abdool Karim (Gold):** Prof. Karim was awarded the Order of Mapungubwe in Gold for his monumental contributions to medical science, particularly his groundbreaking research into HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis (TB) epidemiology and his exceptional leadership in national health policy development. He was also commended for his data-driven leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Prof. Karim's Institutional Role:** He serves as the Director of the Centre for the AIDS Programme of Research in South Africa (CAPRISA) and is a professor at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. His work is recognised for bridging the gap between laboratory research and community-level healthcare delivery.
- **Prof. Keertan Dheda (Silver):** Prof. Dheda was conferred the Order of Mapungubwe in Silver for his pioneering research in pulmonology that has revolutionised the clinical and public health management of tuberculosis and drug-resistant respiratory infections. He was recognised as an acclaimed international expert in the field.
- **Prof. Dheda's Institutional Affiliations:** Based at the University of Cape Town (UCT), Prof. Dheda holds the DST-NRF Research Chair in Interrupting Antimicrobial Resistance Amplification. He also heads the Division of Pulmonology and the Respiratory Service at the historic Groote Schuur Hospital and directs the Centre for Lung Infection and Immunity at the UCT Lung Institute.
- **Comparison with India's Civilian Honours:** India's highest civilian awards are the Bharat Ratna (established 1954) and the Padma Awards (Padma Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan, Padma Shri). South Africa's Order of Mapungubwe is comparable to India's Bharat Ratna in terms of its stature as the nation's top civilian recognition for outstanding contributions.

Taiwan Travelogue Wins International Booker Prize 2026 as First Mandarin-Translated Winner

In the News: Taiwanese writer Yáng Shuāng-zǐ and translator Lin King won the International Booker Prize 2026 for *Taiwan Travelogue*. The award was announced at Tate Modern, London, making it the first book translated from Mandarin Chinese to win the prize. The novel has gained attention for bringing Taiwan's colonial history and translated literature into global focus.

Key Pointers:

- **Historic First for Mandarin Literature:** *Taiwan Travelogue* became the first winning book translated from Mandarin Chinese in the history of the International Booker Prize. It also made Yáng Shuāng-zǐ the first Taiwanese author and Lin King the first Taiwanese-American translator to win the award.
- **Author and Translator:** The book was written by Yáng Shuāng-zǐ, a Taiwanese writer, and translated into English by Lin King. For exams, remember that the International Booker Prize gives equal importance to the author and the translator.
- **Prize Money and Objective:** The International Booker Prize carries £50,000, which is divided equally between the writer and translator. The prize promotes fiction translated into English and highlights the role of literary translators in world literature.
- **Theme and Setting of the Novel:** *Taiwan Travelogue* is set in Japanese-occupied Taiwan in the 1930s and is framed as a historical travel narrative. It explores colonialism, language, power, class, identity and love through a layered postcolonial story.
- **Previous Recognition:** The novel had earlier won the U.S. National Book Award for Translated Literature in 2024. It was originally published in Mandarin in 2020 and later translated into English, helping Taiwanese literature reach a wider global readership.

UN honours Major Abhilasha Barak with Gender Advocate Award

In the News: Indian Army officer Major Abhilasha Barak has been honoured with the 2025 United Nations Military Gender Advocate of the Year Award. She is serving with the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) as Commander of the Female Engagement Team in the Indian Battalion. The recognition is important for exams as it connects UN peacekeeping, women in armed forces, gender-sensitive security and India's global peacekeeping role.

Key Pointers:

- **Award Recognition:** Major Abhilasha Barak received the 2025 UN Military Gender Advocate of the Year Award for her contribution to gender-responsive peacekeeping. The award recognises military peacekeepers who integrate gender perspectives into UN peacekeeping activities. She is India's first woman combat helicopter pilot.
- **Role in UNIFIL:** She is serving with the Indian Battalion in UNIFIL, the UN peacekeeping mission in Lebanon. Her role as Commander of the Female Engagement Team is important because such teams help improve interaction with women and vulnerable communities in conflict zones.
- **Reason for Honour:** Major Barak was recognised for outreach and community engagement with women and adolescent girls. She also contributed to gender sensitisation training for peacekeepers, which is linked to the UN's Women, Peace and Security agenda.
- **India's Third Recipient:** She became the third Indian peacekeeper to receive this honour. Earlier Indian recipients include Major Suman Gawani, associated with UNMISS, and Major Radhika Sen, associated with MONUSCO. This is useful for static-current affairs linkage in defence and international organisations

