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## IMPORTANT ONE LINERS

## NATIONAL

**Draft Registration Bill, 2025**

**In the News:** The Ministry of Rural Development (Department of Land Resources) released the draft Registration Bill, 2025—intended to replace the century-old Registration Act of 1908. It's part of a 30-day public consultation period ending by June 25, 2025.

**Key Points:**

- **Digital-First Registration:** The Bill enables end-to-end property registration digitally—document submission, authentication, fee payment, and issuance of e-certificates—all online, with optional in-person interaction. Identity verification can be done via Aadhaar or alternative government IDs.
- **Expanded Mandatory Registry:** New documents now compulsorily registrable include agreements to sell, power of attorney (POA), sale certificates, equitable mortgage deeds, and instruments related to company mergers/demergers—all added under Section 12.
- **Administrative Restructuring:** The Bill creates new registration roles (Additional/Assistant IGs, Digital Registrars, Technical Officers) and clarifies the responsibilities and powers of registering officers.
- **Enhanced Dispute Redressal:** Introduces appeal routes for denied registrations, incorrect entries, or fraud—with appellate officers/tribunals and possibly a state-level Resolution Authority.
- **Data Privacy & Digital Inclusion:** Public feedback (e.g., from Maharashtra workshop) recommends offline access points in rural areas, improved digital literacy drives, robust data encryption, restrictions on sharing personal info (like GPAs and wills), and compliance with the Personal Data Protection Act, 2023.
- **State Concerns & Revenue Impacts:** Telangana and some southern states have flagged concerns over mandatory online-only registration, potential for fraud without in-person slots, public access to sensitive docs (GPAs, wills), and uniform fee caps potentially reducing state stamp duty revenues (e.g., Telangana currently earns ~₹15,000 crore/year).

**ECI issues new rules for checking and verification of EVMs in case of a challenge by losing candidates**

**In the News:** The Election Commission of India (ECI) released a revised Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for checking and verification (C&V) of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) and VVPATs. This update follows the Supreme Court ruling of May 7, 2025, and aims to allow second- and third-place candidates to challenge election results with greater transparency.

**Key Points:**

- **Trigger: Supreme Court Directive:** The May 7, 2025 Supreme Court order requires the ECI not to erase machine data and to permit examination of the Symbol Loading Units (SLUs) during verification.
- **Who Can Apply & Scope:** Second- and third-placed candidates may request C&V of up to **5% of EVMs** per constituency, covering **20 Ballot Units, 10 Control Units, and 10 VVPATs**.
- **Burnt-Memory & SLU Inclusion:** The process now involves checking the EVM's burnt memory/microcontroller and gives candidates the option to include SLU data in mock polls to verify the authenticity of candidate symbols.
- **Tiered Fees**
  - ₹23,600 for a self-diagnostic test per EVM set (BU, CU, VVPAT)
  - ₹47,200 if a mock poll is desired
  - Refund of fees if tampering is detected.
- **Mock Poll Protocol:** Up to 1,400 votes per machine are cast in front of candidate representatives after self-diagnosis passes. VVPAT slips are counted against the Control Unit, and data/video is recorded.
- **Data Retention Extended:** Verification records, including VVPAT slips and video footage, are now retained for **three months** (up from one month) by District Election Officers.
- **Manufacturers & Certification:** Engineers from BEL and ECIL conduct the verification, and a certificate confirming no tampering is issued. Faulty EVMs are reported and quarantined.

**INS Tamal, India's last imported warship, to be commissioned on July 1**

**In the News:** On **July 1, 2025**, the Indian Navy will commission **INS Tamal**, a Tushil-class guided-missile stealth frigate built at Russia's Yantar Shipyard in Kaliningrad. Notably, this vessel is the final Indian warship constructed abroad, marking a strategic

transition toward indigenous shipbuilding. The ceremony will be led by Vice Admiral Sanjay J. Singh, Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Western Naval Command.

**Key Points:**

- **Final Foreign-Built Frigate:** INS Tamal is the **eighth Krivak/Talwar-class** and **second Tushil-class** frigate acquired from Russia, and the **last warship** India will commission from a foreign shipyard.
- **Specifications & Capabilities:**
  - **Displacement:** ~3,900 tonnes
  - **Length:** ~125 m, **Top speed:** >30 knots
  - **Armament:** BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles, Shtil-1 SAMs, 100 mm main gun, AK-630 CIWS, heavyweight torpedoes, RBU-6000 ASW rockets, HUMSA-NG Mk II sonar, advanced EW and radar systems.
- **Indigenisation:** Approximately **26 %** of onboard systems are Indian-made (ranging from 26 % to 33 % across sources), including critical components from BEL, Tata, Keltron, and BrahMos Aerospace.
- **Crew & Trials:** A crew of over **250 personnel**, trained in Russia under extreme winter conditions, completed **three months** of sea trials before delivery.
- **Strategic Shift:** This marks the close of foreign procurement under Project 11356. India is now focusing on domestic construction—including the two Tushil-class counterparts being built at Goa Shipyard under technology transfer—aligning with its **Make in India/Atmanirbhar Bharat** agenda

**DGCA's Comprehensive Special Audit Framework for Aviation**

**In the News:** On **June 19, 2025**, DGCA issued General Safety Circular 01 of 2025 launching a **Comprehensive Special Audit Framework**, following the AI 171 crash on June 12. The framework introduces 360-degree, integrated audits across India's aviation ecosystem.

**Key Points:**

- **Framework Launch & Purpose:** DGCA has transitioned from siloed inspections to **360-degree special audits**, evaluating airlines, airports, MROs, training academies, ANSPs, aerodromes, ground handlers, and even technology and emergency-response providers.
- **Audit Leadership & Team Composition:** Audits led by senior DGCA officials (Joint DG/Director), backed by **multidisciplinary teams**—including experts from Flight Standards, Air Safety, Airworthiness, Aerodrome Standards, Air Navigation Services, Licensing—and external specialists when needed.
- **Scope of Evaluation:** **Safety Management Systems (SMS)** effectiveness. **Operational practices** robustness (flight planning, crew coordination, disruption handling). **Regulatory compliance** (documentation, licensing, ICAO SARPs alignment).
- **Audit Methodology:** Methods include: on-site inspections, document reviews, staff interviews, ramp checks, simulations, and safety-data trend analysis.
- **Frequency & Triggers:** **Routine audits:** annual ecosystem-wide + thematic reviews. **Triggered audits:** in response to serious incidents (e.g., AI 171), regulatory breaches, or ICAO findings. In urgent cases—**no notice**; else **3–14 working days** advance notice.
- **Phases of Audit:** **Pre-audit (5–7 days):** planning, risk profiling, stakeholder meetings. **On-site (3–5 days):** opening meeting, facility review, interviews, daily debriefs. **Post-audit (10–15 days):** findings review, risk assessment, final report, action plan submission.
- **Findings categorized by risk:** **Critical (Level 1)** : fix within 7 days. **Major/minor:** fix within 30–90 days. Auditees must submit a detailed **Corrective Action Plan (CAP)** within 15 days.
- **Enforcement & Compliance:** Non-compliance may result in: advisories, warnings, restrictions, fines, operations suspension, or license revocation.
- **Confidentiality & Safety Culture:** Audit findings handled confidentially per ICAO Annex 19 to promote transparent reporting and establish a positive safety culture.
- **Alignment with Global Standards:** Framework integrates best practices from ICAO USOAP, India's National Aviation Safety Plan, FAA Category I restoration requirements, etc., aiming to enhance resilience and ensure international compliance.

### India to Launch First All-India Household Income Survey in 2026

**In the News:** The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) announced plans to conduct India's first-ever comprehensive nationwide Household Income Survey in February 2026. A Technical Expert Group (TEG), chaired by economist Dr. Surjit S. Bhalla, has been set up to guide the initiative.

#### Key Points:

- **Survey Launch:** MoSPI will kick off the Household Income Survey in February 2026 to estimate average rural and urban household incomes, as confirmed by then-Statistics Minister Rao Inderjit Singh.
- **Purpose & Scope:** This is the first dedicated survey focused exclusively on income distribution, aiming to understand income patterns, welfare impacts, and how technology adoption affects wages.
- **Technical Oversight:** A TEG has been formed under the leadership of Dr. Surjit Bhalla, former IMF Executive Director, with members from top institutes like ISI, NCAER, JNU, Hyderabad University, NSE, RBI, and more. Their role includes finalizing concepts, definitions, sampling design, methodology, estimation techniques, and integrating international best practices.
- **Historical Context:** Previous income data collection efforts—dating back to the 1950s (9th & 14th NSS rounds), 1960s integrated surveys, and mid-1980s pilots—were discontinued due to underreporting and reliability concerns. This survey aims to address those long-standing gaps.
- **Data Integration:** Beyond measuring incomes, the survey seeks to assess the impact of digital technology on wages and earnings.
- **Policy Significance:** The results will fill critical data gaps, offering granular insights for policy-making, targeting welfare programs, evaluating economic inequality, and aligning India's statistical systems with global benchmarks.

### Tripura Declared Fully Literate Under ULLAS

**In the News:** Tripura was officially declared India's third fully functionally literate state—joining Mizoram and Goa—after achieving a 95.6% adult literacy rate under the ULLAS – Nav Bharat Saaksharta Karyakram. Chief Minister Manik Saha and Preeti Meena (Director, Adult Education, Union Ministry of Education) announced the milestone at a ceremony in Agartala.

#### Key Points:

- **Literacy Threshold:** Under ULLAS criteria, states with 95%+ literacy among individuals aged 15+ (who missed formal education) qualify as “fully functionally literate”.
- **Program Overview:** Launched in 2022 under NEP 2020, ULLAS focuses on five pillars: foundational literacy & numeracy, life skills, basic & vocational education, and continuing education.
- **Progress in Numbers:** Literacy rose from 20.24% (1961) → 87.22% (2011 census) → 93.7% (2023–24 PLFS) → 95.6% (current).
- **Implementation Strategy:** Collaboration of 2,228 volunteer teachers, 943 social awareness centres, and Youth Literacy Corps driving door-to-door surveys and education even in remote areas. Use of ULLAS mobile app, DIKSHA, and multilingual educational materials (Bengali, English, Kokborok). Assessments through FLNAT (Foundational Literacy & Numeracy Assessment Test); passed individuals receive certification from NIOS and Education Ministry.
- **Functional Literacy Emphasis:** Beyond reading/writing, focus includes basic arithmetic, digital & financial skills, health/hygiene awareness, and vocational readiness.

### Assam Announces OBC Status for Trans Community and Reservations for Anganwadi Workers

**In the News:** Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma unveiled two transformative policies during a cabinet meeting: granting OBC status to the transgender community (limited to original Assamese residents with identity cards) and reserving 50% of supervisor-level posts for experienced Anganwadi workers.

#### Key Points:

- **OBC Status for Trans Community:** The transgender community in Assam has been officially classified as Other Backward Classes (socially and educationally backward) to improve their access to education, employment, and welfare services. Only transgender individuals who are native to Assam will be eligible, with eligibility verified and identity cards issued by district commissioners.
- **50% Reservation for Anganwadi Supervisors:** The quota for Anganwadi workers (with at least 10 years of service) in supervisor-level positions has been doubled from 25% to 50%. The remaining 50% of the posts will be filled through open recruitment to balance experienced staff with fresh talent.



- **Objective & Impact:** The OBC classification is aimed at social inclusion, helping marginalized individuals overcome discrimination and access affirmative benefits. The reserved supervisory roles offer long-serving Anganwadi workers greater career progression and recognition, strengthening frontline child nutrition and maternal support services.
- **Selective Eligibility for Both Measures:** Both initiatives include a residency requirement: only individuals originally from Assam will benefit, ensuring state-level prioritization and locally targeted upliftment

### JCB Prize for Literature Cancelled After 7 Editions: Here's What We Know

**In the News:** Mita Kapur—Literary Director of the JCB Prize—confirmed that the ₹25-lakh award has been discontinued after seven annual editions, with **no future editions planned**.

#### Key Points:

- **Discontinuation Details:** The JCB Literature Foundation applied in **March 2025** to revoke its Section 8 license, transitioning from a charitable foundation to a private limited company; soon after, the prize was quietly halted. No formal announcement or farewell event marked the end—simply no call for entries in 2025 and a media silence since last November.
- **Award Overview & Impact:** Launched in **2018**, the JCB Prize was India's most valuable fiction award (₹25 lakh for authors; ₹10 lakh for translators of winning translated works). In seven years, **five out of seven winners were translations**—from Malayalam, Urdu, Tamil, highlighting its strong support for regional languages.
- **Final Winner:** The last recipient was **Upamanyu Chatterjee** for *Lorenzo Searches for the Meaning of Life* in **2024**.
- **Community Reaction:** The literary world is stunned and disappointed. Authors describe the loss as “deeply disappointing” and a “great loss for Indian languages”. Pressure from critics regarding JCB's broader business practices—including actions taken using its machinery—may have influenced the foundation's decision.

### Zonal Councils

**In the News:** At the **25th Central Zonal Council meeting** in Varanasi on **June 24, 2025**, chaired by Union Home and Cooperation Minister Amit Shah, ministers and officials from Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh convened to bolster cooperative federalism and address regional and Centre-state challenges.

#### Key Points:

- **Origins & Legal Basis:** Conceived by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and instituted under the **States Reorganisation Act, 1956** to ease linguistic hostilities and strengthen Centre-state and inter-state cooperation.
- **Zonal Breakdown & Composition:** Five zonal councils exist: Northern, Central, Eastern, Western, Southern—each grouping multiple states and select Union Territories. **Chairperson:** Union Home Minister; **Vice-Chairperson:** rotating Chief Minister; **Members:** Chief Ministers, two nominated ministers per state, union territory representatives, and advisors.
- **Objectives:** Promote national integration, curb regionalism, and facilitate idea-sharing and project coordination across states.
- **Functions:** Serve as advisory forums to discuss issues ranging from economic planning, security, inter-state transport, linguistic minorities, boundary disputes, infrastructure, education, tourism, environment, to disaster preparedness.
- **Meetings & Effectiveness:** Since inception in 1957, there have been over 100 meetings. Between **2014–2025**, 28 zonal council and 33 standing-committee meetings held—doubling frequency compared to 2004–2014—and resolving around **1,287 issues**, with an 83% success-rate in implementing recommendations. Performance under PM Modi's government marked a shift from advisory to **action-oriented**, tackling subjects like fast-track courts, village banking, ERSS-112, child nutrition, and urban infrastructure.
- **Recent Central Meeting Highlights:** The June 24 Varanasi meet emphasized **cooperative federalism**, with discussions on development, law and order, environment, transport, and child welfare. It was also notable for being hosted outside a state capital for the first time.

### DAJA 2025: India's Largest-Ever Tribal Empowerment Movement

**In the News:** From **June 15 to July 15, 2025**, India launched the **Dharti Aaba Janbhagidari Abhiyan (DAJA)**—a nationwide, camp-based campaign aimed at empowering tribal communities. It reaches over **5.5 crore tribal citizens in more than 1 lakh villages and PVTG habitations**, across 31 states and UTs.

#### Key Points:

- **Campaign Launch & Scope:** Launched June 15, 2025, running until July 15, 2025. Covers over 1 lakh tribal villages, including particularly vulnerable tribal group (PVTG) habitations across 31 states and Union Territories.

- **Reach & Service Delivery:** More than 22,000 empowerment camps organized; engaged over 53 lakh tribal individuals. Facilitated welfare enrolments: ~1.38 lakh Aadhaar, ~1.68 lakh Ayushman Bharat cards, ~46,000 PM-Kisan registrations, ~22,000 PM-Ujjwala beneficiaries, and ~32,000 PM-Jan Dhan accounts.
- **Goals & Cultural Significance:** Aims for **full saturation** of central welfare schemes among tribal populations. Marks a tribute to tribal icon **Bhagwan Birsa Munda** ("Dharti Aaba") and celebrates tribal pride during **Janja Tiya Gaurav Varsh** (Nov 15, 2024–Nov 15, 2025).
- **Five Governance Pillars:** **Jahangiri** – Community-driven planning, **Saturation** – Universal coverage of eligible beneficiaries, **Cultural Inclusion** – Promotion of tribal arts, traditions, languages, **Convergence** – Cooperative inter-ministry & civil society coordination, **Last-Mile Delivery** – Bringing services directly to remote habitations.
- **Interactive & Cultural Engagement:** Uses real-time digital dashboards to track progress.
  - Camps feature tribal dance, handicrafts, cuisines—promoting cultural revival.
- **Implementation & State Participation:** Coordinated by the **Ministry of Tribal Affairs**, supported by state leaders. Example – **East Singhbhum (Jharkhand)** launched 275 camps covering 231 panchayats to register beneficiaries for 35+ central and state schemes.

### India's First Butterfly Sanctuary Inaugurated in Kerala's Aralam Forest

**In the News:** On **18 June 2025**, the **Kerala State Wildlife Board** officially renamed the **Aralam Wildlife Sanctuary** in Kannur as the **Aralam Butterfly Sanctuary**, making it **India's first protected forest dedicated entirely to butterflies**.

#### Key Points:

- **Sanctuary Designation:** The switch to "Aralam Butterfly Sanctuary" reflects its unique status, recognising more than **266 butterfly species** in its 55 km<sup>2</sup> tropical and semi-evergreen habitat—over 80% of Kerala's butterfly diversity.
- **Migration Phenomenon:** Every **December to February**, the sanctuary witnesses a remarkable butterfly migration, including species like the **Common Albatross** and **Danaine** butterflies, with surveys reporting **5,000–12,000 butterflies** passing a single point in just minutes.
- **25-Year Conservation Effort:** Since its establishment in **1984**, and through annual surveys led by the **Forest Department** and **Malabar Natural History Society**, Aralam has stood out as a critical area for butterfly conservation.
- **Ecotourism & Education:** The sanctuary features a **Butterfly Safari Trail** and guided walks, offering educational insights into butterfly behaviour, host plants, and conservation. It also supports broader biodiversity—housing **elephants, leopards, giant squirrels**, and diverse birdlife.
- **Conservation Funding & Focus:** Official butterfly sanctuary status brings greater **funding, regulatory protection**, and targeted attention to the fragile ecosystem.

### India's First Quantum Computing Valley to Launch in Amaravati by January 2026

**In the News:** Andhra Pradesh will inaugurate **India's first integrated Quantum Valley** in **Amaravati** on **1 January 2026**, aligning with the **National Quantum Mission (NQM)**. The 50-acre hub, backed by ₹4,000 crore investment, aims to foster innovation in **quantum computing, AI, semiconductor research**, and more—supported by partnerships with **IBM, TCS, L&T**, and leading academic institutions.

#### Key Points:

- **Launch Timeline & Location:** The hub, dubbed the **Quantum Valley Tech Park**, will officially open on **January 1, 2026** in Amaravati, spearheaded by CM **N. Chandrababu Naidu** and supported under the **₹6,000 crore National Quantum Mission**.
- **Infrastructure & Partnerships:** Spanning **50 acres**, the Valley will house **IBM's 156-qubit Quantum System Two**, built by L&T, and supported by TCS for quantum applications—promoting a full-stack technology ecosystem.
- **Academic & Industry Collaboration:** The project features collaborations with **IIT Madras**, the **University of Tokyo**, **Purdue**, and others, linking research labs, startups, and deep-tech enterprises within Amaravati's innovation corridor.
- **Curriculum Integration:** The Andhra Pradesh State Council for Higher Education (APSCHE) is integrating **quantum computing and AI curriculum** across universities, training over **500 faculty members** and launching minor programmes to prepare students for the emerging sector.
- **Economic & Sustainable Vision:** Designed to create **90,000–100,000 high-end jobs**, the Valley supports sectors like **healthcare, logistics, cybersecurity**, while advancing **renewable energy**, smart infrastructure, and **quantum-enabled public administration** innovations.

### TATA Group Becomes India's First \$30-Billion Brand: Brand Finance 2025

**In the News:** On **21 January 2025**, Brand Finance announced that the **TATA Group** achieved a brand valuation of **USD 31.6 billion**—marking the first time an Indian brand has surpassed the **USD 30 billion milestone**. This positioned TATA at **60th place** in the global Brand Finance Global 500 ranking, while maintaining a **AAA- brand strength rating**.

#### Key Points:

- **Milestone Valuation:** TATA Group's brand value rose **10%**, from USD 28.6 billion in 2024 to USD 31.6 billion in 2025—making it the **first Indian brand to break the USD 30 billion threshold**.
- **Global Ranking:** With this valuation, TATA secured the **60th spot** in the Brand Finance Global 500 and retained its **AAA- brand strength score**.
- **Consistent Leader:** This marks the **16th consecutive year** that TATA has been ranked as **India's most valuable brand**, reinforcing its enduring reputation.
- **Sectoral Growth:** TATA's performance reflects strong national momentum: other Indian brands like **LIC, HDFC, SBI, and ICICI** also gained recognition, though none crossed USD 30 billion.
- **Brand Value Definition:** Brand Finance defines **brand value** as the **net economic benefit** a trademark owner can realize by licensing the brand—highlighting TATA's intangible value.
- **International Benchmarking:** By becoming the first Indian brand above USD 30 billion, TATA joins global elite such as **Apple, Microsoft, and Google**, underscoring India's growing influence in the **global brand economy**.

### Bihar to Host Its First Nuclear Power Plant Under India's New SMR Mission

**In the News:** On **June 25, 2025**, Union Power Minister Manohar Lal Khattar announced that Bihar will soon establish its **first-ever nuclear power plant** under India's new Small Modular Reactor (SMR)-based Nuclear Energy Mission, making it one of the **first six states** selected.

#### Key Points:

- **SMR Announcement:** The plant will be based on **Small Modular Reactor (SMR)** technology—compact, cost-effective, safer, and flexible—suitable for states with growing power needs. **Bihar's Selection:** Following a formal request by the Bihar government, the Centre approved the SMR plant. Exact location and capacity are pending finalisation.
- **Mission Funding:** The Nuclear Energy Mission, announced in the **Union Budget 2025–26**, has a ₹20,000 crore allocation aimed at setting up at least one nuclear plant in every state.
- **Energy and Regional Impact:** Bihar has historically faced power deficits. The plant will help stabilize the local grid, support industrialisation, and improve energy access.
- **Complementary Infrastructure:** Alongside the SMR plant, the Centre approved a **1,000 MW battery storage** project in Bihar with viability-gap funding of ₹18 lakh per MW. PM Modi also laid the foundation for a **500 MWh BESS** in Siwan on June 20, 2025.
- **Short-Term Relief Measures:** The Centre will supply an additional **500 MW** of electricity to Bihar over the next six months to meet peak demand and bolster grid reliability.
- **Reform Recognition:** Khattar praised Bihar's power sector reforms—8 million smart meters installed and lower technical and commercial losses—citing them as progress toward modernisation.

### Establishment of CIP-South Asia Regional Centre in India

**In the News:** India's Union Cabinet approved setting up the CIP-South Asia Regional Centre (CSARC) of the International Potato Center (CIP) at Singna, Agra, Uttar Pradesh.

#### Key Points:

- **Cabinet Approval & Location:** Approved by the Cabinet under the Agriculture & Farmers Welfare Ministry; 10 ha of land allocated in Agra district. The centre will serve farmers from UP, Bihar, West Bengal, and neighbouring South Asian nations.
- **Purpose & Objectives:** Aims to boost food and nutrition security, increase farmer incomes, and generate rural jobs by enhancing potato and sweet potato productivity, post-harvest management, and value chains.
- **Funding & Infrastructure:** Total investment of ₹171 crore – ₹111 crore from India, ₹60 crore from CIP – with infrastructure supported by UP government land allocation.
- **Advantages for India & Region:** As the world's second-largest potato producer, India stands to benefit from enhanced seed quality, climate-resilient/disease-free varieties, reduced import dependence, better export potential, and access to CIP's global germplasm repository.



- **CIP Background & India Partnership:** Founded in 1971 in Lima (Peru), CIP focuses on potato, sweet potato and Andean tubers. Active in India since 1975 through collaboration with ICAR .
- **South Asia Regional Strategy:** CSARC is CIP's second major regional wing outside Peru (after China Asia Pacific in 2017), underlining a broader South Asian focus .
- **CIP's Work & Projects in India: Zero-tillage potato farming with straw mulching:** Piloted in Bihar, this method enhances soil health, conserves water, cuts CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, and is women-friendly by reducing labor intensity .
- **Centre of Excellence at UHSB, Bagalkot (Karnataka):** Equipped with breeding, in vitro labs, greenhouses, seed-production and processing facilities to promote heat-tolerant, high-yielding, nutri-rich varieties, mechanization, and value-chain linkages.
- **Sweetpotato Agri-food Systems Program:** Aiming to improve diets and incomes for 15 million resource-poor households in Asia and Africa through nutritious sweet potato cultivation .
- **India Country Leadership:** Dr Neeraj Sharma appointed CIP Country Manager for India (May 2025) demonstrating expansion of CIP presence and linkages .

### Rajnath Refuses to Sign SCO Draft Statement

**In the News:** Indian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh declined to sign the joint communique at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Defence Ministers' meeting in Qingdao, China, citing omission of references to the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack and a lack of explicit acknowledgment of terrorism .

#### Key Points:

- **Draft Rejection:** Singh refused to endorse the draft statement that failed to mention the Pahalgam terror attack — which killed 26 mostly Hindu pilgrims — but included mention of militant activity in Balochistan .
- **Demand for Terrorism Acknowledgment:** He emphasized that the SCO must explicitly address terrorism and hold both perpetrators and their sponsors accountable. India's position was that "peace and prosperity cannot co-exist with terrorism..." and condemned countries using cross-border terrorism as policy.
- **MEA & Jaishankar Context:** The Ministry of External Affairs clarified that consensus was blocked by "one particular country" (widely understood to be Pakistan) that objected to language on terrorism. EAM S. Jaishankar backed Singh, stating that terrorism references are central to the SCO's purpose.
- **Regional Diplomatic Signal:** By refusing to sign in a China-chaired meeting, India asserted its principled stand even in a forum dominated by China and Pakistan. It marks the first time since May's border clashes that senior defence ministers from India and Pakistan shared a stage without issuing a joint communiqué.
- **Operation Sindoor Highlighted:** In his speech, Singh cited India's retaliatory Operation Sindoor launched after Pahalgam, reinforcing his message that "terror epicentres are no longer safe."

### 10 Years of AMRUT: Transforming Urban India

**In the News:** On June 25, 2025, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) marked a decade since the launch of AMRUT, highlighting its achievements in revolutionizing urban infrastructure and improving living standards across Indian cities.

#### Key Points:

- **Mission Launch & Coverage:** AMRUT was initiated by PM Modi on June 25, 2015, targeting 500 (now 485) cities with a focus on water supply, sewerage, stormwater drainage, non-motorized transport, and green spaces.
- **Funding & Project Totals:** State Action Plans worth ₹77,640 crore were approved (₹35,990 crore from the Centre), with total project outlay reaching ₹2.99 lakh crore under AMRUT 2.0.
- **Infrastructure Achievements:** Across AMRUT and AMRUT 2.0, 14,828 projects sanctioned (₹2.73 lakh crore)— ₹1.12 lakh crore executed, 2.03 crore new tap connections; 1.5 crore sewer connections, 544 water bodies rejuvenated (9,511 acres); ~3,000 parks across 6,869 acres.
- **AMRUT 2.0 Enhancements:** Launched October 1, 2021, extended to all urban local bodies (ULBs), 3,568 water projects worth ₹1.14 lakh crore (181 lakh new tap connections; 10,647 MLD treatment capacity), 592 sewer/septage projects worth ₹67,608 crore (67.11 lakh new connections; 6,739 MLD STP), 1,487 SCADA-enabled water projects, 235 SCADA-enabled sewer projects.
- **Technology & Innovation:** Through the Technology Sub-Mission, 120 start-ups were piloted in 82 cities



- **Community Engagement & Capacity Building:** 'AMRUT Mitra' involved 10,000+ SHG women in 1,762 projects, 'Drink from Tap' approved 381 projects (₹23,490 crore) to directly supply safe water; Training for 90,000+ individuals (plumbers, officials, youth, etc.) .
- **State-Level Progress & Ongoing Initiatives:** Tamil Nadu has initiated ₹3,360 crore sewerage work across 14 corporations (3,000+ km pipelines; ~500k+ households) under AMRUT 2.0. Kochi's ₹17.5 crore overhead tank (1.5 lakh litres) aims to deliver piped water to ~25,000 families.

### Launch of Sagarmala Finance Corporation Ltd (SMFCL)

**In the News:** On June 26–27, 2025, India inaugurated its first maritime sector-focused Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC), Sagarmala Finance Corporation Ltd (SMFCL), through the Ministry of Ports, Shipping & Waterways, led by Minister Sarbananda Sonowal.

#### Key Points:

- **Entity Launch:** SMFCL, formerly Sagarmala Development Company Ltd, is now a Mini-Ratna Category I Central Public Sector Enterprise registered with the RBI on June 19, 2025.
- **Mandate & Purpose:** Created to bridge critical financing gaps in India's maritime ecosystem, offering tailored short-, medium-, and long-term credit to port authorities, shipping firms, MSMEs, startups, maritime educational institutions, and related stakeholders.
- **Sectoral Scope:** Supports strategic areas under the Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047—such as shipbuilding, cruise tourism, green energy, renewable energy projects, maritime R&D, digital ports, and PPP—aligning with the Sagarmala programme.
- **Capital Strength:** Equipped with ₹680 crore in Tier I capital and targeting ₹3,400 crore through borrowings and consortium partnerships.
- **Strategic Fit:** As the first maritime-specific NBFC, SMFCL addresses a long-standing industry demand and complements port-led development, blue economy growth, and maritime infrastructure goals.
- **Official Statements:** Minister Sonowal described it as "fulfilling a long-standing demand of the maritime industry" and emphasized its role in empowering ports, MSMEs, startups, and institutions.

### India's Longest Animal Overpass Corridor Unveiled on Delhi-Mumbai Expressway

**In the News:** Authorities inaugurated India's longest animal overpass corridor—a 12 km eco-sensitive wildlife passage—on the Delhi–Mumbai Expressway, slicing through the buffer zone of the Ranthambore Tiger Reserve, aimed at safeguarding wildlife movement and reducing roadkill.

#### Key Points:

- **Corridor Commissioning:** The 12 km stretch along the Delhi–Mumbai Expressway, cutting through Ranthambore Tiger Reserve's buffer zone, was unveiled in late June 2025 as India's first major expressway section explicitly designed for wildlife conservation.
- **Overpass & Underpass Infrastructure:** Five wildlife overpasses (~500 m each) enable animal crossings without intersecting traffic. One underpass (1.2 km long) is India's longest dedicated wildlife tunnel. All structures are aligned with natural terrain to facilitate seamless animal movement.
- **Habitat & Noise Mitigation:** Barriers include 4 m boundary walls and 2 m sound walls to keep animals off highway lanes and suppress traffic noise.
- **Green Cover & Ecological Features:** About 35,000 trees were planted along the corridor. The design complements wider expressway eco-measures, such as drip irrigation and rainwater harvesting every 500 m.
- **Stakeholder Collaboration:** Developed by NHAI, with ecological design guidance from the Wildlife Institute of India and the Ministry of Environment & Forests.
- **Wildlife Impact:** Corridor supports safe movement of tigers, leopards, bears, and other species, marking a key step in reducing human-wildlife conflict.

### India's Strategic Autonomy on Display at SCO 2025

**In the News** At the SCO 2025 Defence Ministers' meeting held in Qingdao, China (June 24–27, 2025), India showcased its **strategic autonomy** by **refusing to sign** the joint defence communique. The decision came after the draft omitted explicit reference to the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack in Kashmir, while including mention of events in Pakistan—a move New Delhi viewed as "pro-Pakistan" and reflecting "double standards" on terrorism.

### Key Points

- **Firm Anti-Terror Stance:** India declined to endorse the final document due to inadequate mention of the Pahalgam terror attack and reluctance to hold perpetrators accountable, citing the draft's failure to address cross-border terrorism robustly. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh called out “double standards” and underscored the need for no tolerance toward state-sheltered terror operations.
- **Principled Autonomy:** India's choice not to sign demonstrated its **strategic autonomy**—prioritizing national security imperatives over diplomatic conformity when core issues like terrorism are sidelined in multilateral settings.
- **Unified Messaging at SCO:** National Security Advisor Ajit Doval urged SCO members to abandon selective approaches to terrorism and to develop a **joint information operation** for counter-terror collaboration.
- **Diplomatic Engagement:** Beyond messaging, Defence Minister Singh held substantive bilateral talks: With China's Admiral Dong Jun—reviving military communication lines post-LAC tensions. With counterparts from Russia, Kazakhstan, Belarus—highlighting India's self-reliance ('Atmanirbhar Bharat') through gift diplomacy (e.g. Madhubani painting, Lord Nataraj idol).
- **Assertion of Sovereignty :** External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar reinforced India's stance, affirming the refusal was due to terrorism's omission and reflecting a principled, security-first foreign policy.

## INTERNATIONAL

### Iran moves to block Strait of Hormuz

**In the News:** On June 22, 2025, reports emerged that the Iranian parliament backed a measure to close the Strait of Hormuz in response to recent U.S. airstrikes targeting its nuclear facilities. The final decision now rests with Iran's Supreme National Security Council.

#### Key Points:

- **Parliamentary Approval:** Iran's Majlis (parliament) formally approved a resolution to block the Strait of Hormuz—a major global oil and gas choke-point—following U.S. bombings at its nuclear sites.
- **Decision by Security Body:** The resolution delegates the final call to the Supreme National Security Council, indicating it's not an immediate action but a strategic option being weighed.
- **Strategic Leverage:** Iran's move is widely seen as political posturing to pressure Western powers and deter further strikes, leveraging control of a passage through which around 20% of global oil and LNG flows.
- **Precedent of Warnings:** Tehran has repeatedly threatened to close the strait during past escalations, though it has never acted on these warnings. Analysts view the threats now as another layer of strategic escalation rather than immediate closure.
- **Global Market Implications:** Energy markets responded sharply: oil prices jumped over 4% following these developments, amid predictions of further volatility if the strait is closed. However, analysts caution that any closure would likely trigger swift military responses, limiting its duration.

#### Why it Matters

- **Global Energy Security:** The Strait of Hormuz handles about 18–20 million barrels of oil per day (~20% of global oil consumption) and sizable LNG volumes. Interruptions could trigger sharp price spikes and inflation.
- **Geopolitical Pressure Tactic:** Iran's stance serves as a strategic deterrent, showing willingness to escalate if its “vital interests” are threatened, with potential to checkpoint global economies.
- **Regional Security Flashpoint:** Given the history of tap-and-mine tactics and A2/AD strategies in the area, any move to block Hormuz would escalate regional military risk substantially.

### PM Modi's Visit to Croatia

**In the News:** On **June 18–19, 2025**, Prime Minister Narendra Modi made a historic first-ever visit to Croatia, marking the final leg of his three-nation tour (Cyprus, Canada, Croatia) following the G7 summit in Canada. His visit aimed to elevate bilateral ties with Croatia and deepen India's strategic outreach in Europe.

#### Key Points:

- **Historic First Visit:** Modi became the first Indian Prime Minister to officially visit Croatia since diplomatic ties began in 1992. He was warmly welcomed in Zagreb by PM Andrej Plenković at the airport.

- Indian diaspora members greeted him amid Vedic chants and cultural performances, underlining strong people-to-people bonds.
- **High-Level Engagements:** Modi held delegation-level talks with PM Plenković and met President Zoran Milanović. Discussions centered on enhancing cooperation in trade, defence, technology, agriculture, maritime connectivity, culture, and scientific exchange.
- **Major Agreements Signed:** Four key MoUs were inked covering: agricultural cooperation, science & technology partnership, cultural exchange, and establishment of a Hindi Chair at the University of Zagreb.
- **Strategic Gateway:** Croatia's ports (Rijeka, Split, Ploče) were highlighted as strategic nodes for the India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) and part of the EU's TEN-T infrastructure. The visit signals India's interest in connecting with Central and Eastern Europe.
- **Defence & Economic Cooperation:** Discussions included defence industrial collaboration, potential involvement in India's Sagarmala project, cooperation in pharmaceuticals, ICT, startups, and maritime sectors.
- **Cultural Diplomacy:** Modi presented a traditional Pattachitra painting from Odisha to President Milanović. In return, he received a facsimile of the first printed Sanskrit grammar by Croatian scholar Filip Vezdin—a testament to centuries-old shared cultural links.
- **Shared Values & Global Vision:** Both leaders emphasized resolving global conflicts through diplomacy—not battlefields—and expressed solidarity on counter-terrorism. Modi praised Croatia's support following the Pahalgam terror attack.

### Operation Midnight Hammer: Inside the U.S. Strike on Iran's Nuclear Facilities

**In the News:** On **June 21–22, 2025**, the United States executed **Operation Midnight Hammer**, a highly classified aerial strike targeting Iran's nuclear sites at **Fordow, Natanz, and Isfahan**, deploying B-2 stealth bombers and submarine-launched Tomahawk missiles.

#### Key Points:

- **Operation Overview:** Code-named *Operation Midnight Hammer*, the mission involved **seven B-2 Spirit stealth bombers** flying nonstop from Whiteman AFB, Missouri, across the Atlantic and Mediterranean, supported by decoy bombers and aerial refuelling. A U.S. submarine (likely USS Georgia) launched **around 30 Tomahawk cruise missiles** at Natanz and Isfahan simultaneously.
- **First-ever MOP Use:** B-2s carried **14 GBU-57A/B Massive Ordnance Penetrator (30,000-lb bunker-buster) bombs**—a first in combat.
- **Targets & Timing:** Struck the Fordow Uranium Enrichment Plant (deep inside a mountain), Natanz Nuclear Facility, and Isfahan Nuclear Technology Center. The strike occurred around **2:10–2:35 a.m. IRST** (June 22 local time).
- **Scale & Tactics:** Over **125 aircraft** participated, including decoy bombers and support jets. Mission featured deception: decoy bomber groups diverted enemies.
- **Initial U.S. Assessment:** Pentagon described “extremely severe damage”—Fordow possibly destroyed, Natanz obliterated, and Isfahan heavily damaged. President Trump praised the strike as a “bullseye” and “spectacular military success”. Defence Secretary Hegseth called it “bold & brilliant”; Chairman Caine—while confirming damage—stressed it’s “too soon” to declare nuclear capabilities neutralized.
- **Legal & Political Debate:** Launched without prior congressional approval—critics including Dem lawmakers (e.g., AOC, Jeffries) condemned it as unconstitutional; supporters cited War Powers Act notice post-return.
- **Iran's Reaction & Retaliation:** Iran condemned the attack as illegal under international law. Iranian leaders threatened sleeper-cell activation in the U.S. and launched retaliatory missile strikes (Operation “Glad Tidings of Victory”) targeting Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar on June 23—though missiles were intercepted.
- **Regional & Global Impact:** Israel supported the U.S. strikes; UN, EU, China, and Russia called for restraint and diplomacy. NATO prepared for escalation discussions; defence stocks rallied modestly, oil prices spiked temporarily, and cybersecurity firms saw increased interest.
- **Nuclear Future Considerations:** Analysts warn Iran may rebuild its facilities unless it abandons its nuclear drive. Some experts suggest the strike may reinforce deterrence; others warn it undermines non-proliferation regimes.

## Fossil Fuel Finance Report 2025

**In the News:** On **June 17, 2025**, the **Banking on Climate Chaos** coalition—including Rainforest Action Network, Sierra Club, Oil Change International, and others—published the **Fossil Fuel Finance Report 2025**, revealing that the world's top 65 banks dramatically increased financing for fossil fuels in 2024, reversing recent declines.

### Key Points:

- **Funding Surge:** Banks provided **\$869 bn** to coal, oil, and gas in 2024—a **23% jump** (~\$162–162.5 bn more than 2023), marking a reversal from prior reductions.
- **Scope of Financing:** Cumulative support since the 2015 Paris Agreement reaches **\$7.9 tn**, including loans, bonds, and acquisition financing.
- **Breakdown by Instrument:** **Loans:** ~\$467 bn (up from \$422 bn), **Bonds:** ~\$401 bn (up from \$284 bn), **Acquisitions:** ~\$82.9 bn (up from \$63.7 bn).
- **Leading Banks - U.S. Dominant:** **JPMorgan Chase** led with **\$53.5 bn** in financing—also top for expansion funding. Other top U.S. banks: **Bank of America, Citigroup, Wells Fargo**, collectively representing **21%** of global fossil-fuel funding.
- **European & Japanese Banks:** **Barclays** led Europe with **\$35.4 bn** (a **55%** increase). Japanese megabanks (Mizuho, MUFG, SMBC) contributed ~12% of total financing.
- **Geographic Insights & India:** U.S. banks financed **\$289 bn** in fossil fuels—about one-third of global total. India's SBI featured, totalling ~\$2.62 bn in financing and ranking 47th—despite net-zero aims and only two Indian banks having coal exclusion policies.
- **Policy Backtracking:** Nearly all major U.S. banks left the UN Net-Zero Banking Alliance; Wells Fargo revoked its net-zero by 2050 plan. Political shifts—especially U.S. rollback of Paris-related policies—are linked to the surge.

## GENIUS Act Bill

**In the News:** On **June 17, 2025**, the U.S. Senate passed the **GENIUS Act** (Guiding and Establishing National Innovation for U.S. Stablecoins Act) by a bipartisan vote of **68–30**, marking a historic step toward creating a federal regulatory framework for stablecoins—cryptocurrencies pegged to the U.S. dollar. The bill now moves to the House of Representatives before heading to the President.

### Key Points:

- **Regulatory Classification & Oversight:** Defines “**payment stablecoins**” as digital assets designed for payments, mandating *fixed redemption obligations* and maintaining stable value. Classifies issuers as **financial institutions** for AML purposes and places them under oversight from federal banking regulators—**OCC, Federal Reserve, FDIC**—with accommodations for state-level regulation for smaller issuers.
- **Reserve & Transparency Requirements:** Requires **1:1 backing** with liquid assets (e.g., US dollars, Treasury bills). Mandates **monthly disclosures** of reserve composition to ensure transparency.
- **Consumer & National-Security Protections:** Introduces **guardrails** like AML/KYC compliance, no **yield-bearing stablecoins**, and restrictions on big tech entering stablecoin issuance. Implements **foreign issuer restrictions**, permitting only those with “*comparable*” overseas standards, and requires Treasury approval.
- **Conflict-of-Interest Rule Adjustments:** Bans Congress members and Executive Branch officials from issuing stablecoins—but notably **excludes the President and Vice President**, allowing President Trump's family interests via World Liberty Financial to continue.
- **Political & Industry Context:** Enjoyed broad bipartisan support (68 senators: 50 Republicans, 18 Democrats), driven partly by strong **crypto industry lobbying**. Criticized by Senator Elizabeth Warren and others for **insufficient AML safeguards**, potential corruption loopholes, and **consumer and financial system risk**.
- **Next Steps in Congress:** Now sent to the **House**, which may advance its own **STABLE Act** or reconcile with GENIUS Act provisions. The **White House** has urged a no-amendment passage before the August recess.
- **Financial Innovation Prospects:** The bill grants legitimacy to stablecoins as “**payment systems**,” potentially expanding the U.S. stablecoin market to **\$2 trillion** over the next decade.

## Iran's Operation Bashayer Al-Fath

**In the News:** Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) launched **Operation Bashayer Al-Fath** (“Annunciation of Victory”), firing a barrage of precision-guided missiles aimed at the US Al-Udeid Air Base in Qatar—strategically significant as



US CENTCOM's forward HQ. The strikes came in direct retaliation for the US-led **Operation Midnight Hammer**, which bombed Iran's nuclear facilities.

#### Key Points:

- **Operation Details & Intent:** Executed by the IRGC, the operation was described as a strong defensive response; Iran emphasized the strikes were proportionate—“equal to the number of bombs the US used”. Targets included Al-Udeid and reportedly other US bases across Iraq, Kuwait, and Bahrain.
- **Military Execution & Outcome:** Qatar's air defences intercepted most of the missiles—shooting down 18 out of 19—with no reported damage or casualties. Turkish officials confirmed no impact on their troops deployed in the region
- **Iran's Justification:** Iran cited US bombings of its nuclear facilities (Fordo, Natanz, Isfahan) as breach of international law, framing the missile strikes as legitimate defensive retaliation. The IRGC warned Washington that further aggression could trigger the “collapse of US military presence in the region”.
- **Regional & Global Reactions:** **Qatar** condemned the attack as a “flagrant violation” of its sovereignty and reserved the right to respond under international law. **Gulf states** like Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, and **France** also expressed condemnation or called for de-escalation. The **UN** cautioned that such tit-for-tat actions risk pushing the region further into a “spiral of chaos”.
- **Strategic Implications:** This marks the most direct Iranian strike on US assets in the region, indicating an escalation that could upend regional security. The high interception success underscores both Qatar's air defense capabilities and the volatile balance in Gulf power dynamics.

#### Global Nuclear Emergency Preparedness Exercise ConvEx-3 (2025)

**In the News:** On **June 24–25, 2025**, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), in partnership with Romania's CNCAN, launched the **world's largest and most complex international nuclear emergency exercise**—ConvEx-3—simulating a severe accident at the Cernavodă Nuclear Power Plant.

#### Key Points:

- **Exercise Scope & Scale:** This ConvEx-3 (2025) was the largest to date, involving over **75 countries** and **10 international organizations**, with both in-person participants in Romania and remote involvement globally. The 36-hour full-scale exercise is held once every 3–5 years to test cross-border nuclear emergency preparedness.
- **Objectives & Protocols:** The exercise tested coordination under the **Early Notification** and **Assistance Conventions**, including simulated evacuation, iodine distribution, food/trade restrictions, public outreach, and medical response. It tested the role of the IAEA's **Incident & Emergency Centre**, testing platforms like **USIE** and **IRMIS**, while national emergency centres activated and exchanged data.
- **Context & Background:** Romania previously hosted ConvEx-3 in **2005**, marking a 20-year return to global emergency testing held at its lone nuclear site near the Black Sea. Earlier editions were conducted in UAE (2021), Hungary (2017), Morocco (2013), and Mexico (2008).
- **Novel Challenges in 2025:** Introduced **trans-boundary coordination**, harmonizing protective zone actions and communications across neighboring nations for the first time. Included a **nuclear security** dimension—testing responses to threats like sabotage, physical/security breaches, and cyber-attacks. Deployed a **social media crisis simulator** to assess real-time public information management. Post-exercise, a technical forum is planned to analyse lessons, best practices, and actionable strategies

#### India Makes Historic Entry into Top 100 in Global SDG Rankings

**In the News:** On **June 24, 2025**, the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network released its 2025 Sustainable Development Report, ranking **India 99th** globally on the SDG Index—marking its first-ever appearance in the top 100.

#### Key Points:

- **Record Improvement:** India's ranking has risen significantly: from **109th in 2024**, to **112th in 2023**, **121st in 2022**, and earlier positions in the 110s and 120s. The country scored **67/100** on the 2025 index.
- **Regional & Global Context:** Among South Asian countries, India now leads ahead of Bangladesh (114th) and Pakistan (140th), while Bhutan (74th) and Nepal (85th) continue ahead. Globally, Finland, Sweden, and Denmark top the index; East and South Asia show strongest regional progress.

- **Drivers of Progress:** Significant gains in **clean energy, healthcare, housing, poverty reduction, and infrastructure**. National schemes such as **PM Awas Yojana, Ujjwala, Jal Jeevan Mission, Swachh Bharat, and Ayushman Bharat** have contributed to improved SDG performance.
- **Persistent Challenges:** Only **17%** of global SDG targets are currently on track for 2030, with obstacles including conflict, environmental stress, and financing limitations. Globally stalled goals include obesity, press freedom, nitrogen management, biodiversity, and corruption—all areas requiring focused attention.
- **Strategic Implications:** Entering the top 100 signals India's growing leadership and legitimacy in multilateral sustainability forums. The ranking appears against the backdrop of the upcoming **4th International Conference on Financing for Development** in Seville, emphasizing global resource mobilisation and equity

### Global Peace Index 2025: A Deep Dive into Global Stability and Rising Tensions

**In the News:** The Institute for Economics & Peace's **Global Peace Index 2025** highlights a troubling decline in global peace, driven by 59 active conflicts—the highest since World War II. The economic cost of violence reached nearly **\$20 trillion** in 2024, equivalent to **11.6% of global GDP**.

#### Key Points:

- **Global Peace Landscape:** Peace deteriorated by 0.36% globally—highest annual drop since 2008. Rise in conflicts: 59 active conflicts, involving 78 countries; ~152,000 conflict-related deaths in 2024. Militarisation and ongoing conflicts worsened; safety and security saw marginal improvement.
- **Top & Bottom Rankings:** Most peaceful countries: Iceland (#1), Ireland, New Zealand, Austria, Switzerland, Portugal, Denmark, Slovenia, Finland, Singapore. Least peaceful countries: Russia (#163), Ukraine, Sudan, DRC, Yemen, Afghanistan, Syria, South Sudan, Israel, Mali.
- **Regional Trends:** Most peaceful region: Western & Central Europe. Least peaceful: Middle East & North Africa (MENA) with highest tension in Gaza, Israel-Iran, Sudan, Yemen. South Asia saw the largest regional decline due to unrest in Bangladesh and Pakistan. South America was the sole region to improve, led by Peru and Argentina.
- **Economic Cost of Violence:** Global violence cost neared **\$20 trillion PPP**, or **\$2,446** per person. Only nine countries improved; 87 deteriorated in peacefulness.
- **Positive Peace & Resilience:** Emphasis on "Positive Peace": quality of institutions and governance linked to sustained peace. Countries like Uzbekistan, Armenia, Ireland led improvements in governance and corruption indices.

### Global Tobacco Epidemic Report 2025

**In the News:** On **June 23, 2025**, WHO released its **10th Global Tobacco Epidemic Report**, authored with support from Bloomberg Philanthropies. It highlights both achievements and nascent threats, such as the rising influence of vapes and gaps in anti-tobacco regulation.

#### Key Points:

- **MPOWER Progress:** Over **6.1 billion** people are now protected by at least one MPOWER measure—WHO's tobacco control package including monitoring use, smoke-free laws, cessation support, warnings, advertising bans, and taxation. Graphic health warnings have seen the most widespread adoption: 110 countries (up from 9 in 2007), covering about **62%** of the global population. Meanwhile, only 25 countries require plain packaging.
- **Coverage and Implementation Gaps:** 155 countries have implemented at least one MPOWER measure at best-practice level, but **40 countries** still have none, and **36%** of the global population lives where such measures were last updated before 2022. WHO warns of inconsistent policing of these measures—especially for smokeless tobacco products.
- **E-Cigarettes & Vaping Concerns:** Aggressive marketing of vapes and novel nicotine products is undermining tobacco control efforts, especially among youth. Only 133 countries now regulate vapes; 62 countries have no regulations at all. WHO recommends extending graphic health warnings to all nicotine products and raising tobacco taxes to at least 75%, yet pricing has become more affordable in many regions.
- **Health & Economic Burden :** Tobacco caused over **7 million deaths** in 2023, including **1.77 million women**. In select low- and middle-income countries, tobacco-related mortality and morbidity accounted for **41,000 deaths** and a financial loss of **\$4.3 billion**—about 1% of their GDP.
- **Civil Society Guidance:** The NCD Alliance emphasizes taxation as a "triple-win" solution—reducing consumption, saving lives, and boosting government revenue—but flags reluctance in many countries. WHO urges renewed investment in mass-media campaigns and quit-support services, especially given rising industry interference

### Iran Suspends Cooperation With IAEA

**In the News:** Iran's parliament passed, and the Guardian Council ratified, a new law requiring an immediate **suspension of cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)**. The move comes after **U.S. and Israeli airstrikes** damaged Iranian nuclear sites, and reflects Iran's accusations that the IAEA leaked sensitive information aiding the strikes.

#### Key Points:

- **Parliamentary Approval:** Iran's Majlis **unanimously backed** the bill, which halts inspections, surveillance, and reporting to the IAEA unless the **Supreme National Security Council** grants approval.
- **Guardian Council Endorsement:** Iran's constitutional watchdog confirmed the law aligns with **Islamic principles and the constitution**, making the suspension official.
- **Reason for Suspension:** Iranian officials accuse the IAEA of **political bias**, failing to condemn the airstrikes on Iranian nuclear facilities, and even leaking intelligence to Israel—claims rejected by IAEA head Rafael Grossi.
- **Strategic & Legal Implications:** Analysts warn that halting cooperation could severely impede international **nuclear oversight**, weaken the **Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)** framework, and enable Iran to advance its **nuclear programme** unchecked.
- **International Reactions:** France, Germany, and other Western states have **urged Iran** to reverse course and resume cooperation, citing the suspension as a threat to **global security**.

### Zou Jiayi Appointed as New AIIB President, Succeeds Jin Lique

**In the News:** On June 24, 2025, during the AIIB's 10th Annual Governors' Meeting, Zou Jiayi was elected as the second President of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), becoming its first female leader. She will take office on January 16, 2026, succeeding founding President Jin Lique, whose decade-long tenure began in January 2016.

#### Key Points:

- **Single Nominee Election:** Zou was the only candidate nominated and elected by the Board of Governors to lead the institution for a five-year term.
- **Professional Background:** A former Vice Finance Minister of China and senior figure in the CCP's anti-corruption agency, Zou brings over three decades of experience in international financial policy, including roles linked to the World Bank, ADB, and New Development Bank.
- **Historic First Female President:** Her appointment marks the first time a woman has been elected to lead the AIIB.
- **Global Expansion Agenda:** She is expected to reinforce AIIB's global presence by aligning more closely with major international development institutions and expanding offices in Singapore, Hong Kong, London, and Abu Dhabi.
- **Institutional Context:** Under Jin Lique, AIIB grew from 57 to 110 members, approved over \$60 billion across ~322 **projects**, achieved AAA ratings, and emphasized climate finance and partnerships.
- **Strategic Moment:** Zou's ascent comes amid China's efforts to enhance its influence in international development finance and respond to geopolitical shifts in global economic leadership.

### NATO Conclude Historic Summit in The Hague

**In the News:** On 24–25 June 2025, NATO held its summit in The Hague, marking a historic meeting under Secretary-General Mark Rutte. Member states closed the summit by adopting a landmark commitment to increase defense and security related spending to 5% of GDP by 2035, the most ambitious financial pledge in the alliance's history.

#### Key Points:

- **New 5% Defense Spending Target:** NATO members agreed to allocate 3.5% of GDP to core defense and 1.5% for broader security costs—totalling 5%—with progress reviews slated for 2029.
- **Commitment to Article 5:** All 32 NATO nations reaffirmed their “ironclad” obligation to mutual defense under Article 5.
- **Support for Ukraine:** While Ukraine wasn't offered membership, leaders agreed to include aid and defense industry support for Ukraine in national defense calculations.
- **U.S. Influence & Trump Diplomacy:** U.S. President Trump, attending amid personal-focused diplomacy (e.g. calling him “Daddy”), secured the spending commitment and reaffirmed the U.S. role in Article 5.
- **Spain's Exception:** Spain resisted the 5% mandate, opting to maintain its defense budget around 2.1%, generating friction but not blocking consensus.
- **Focus on Iran & Middle East:** The summit followed U.S. strikes on Iranian nuclear facilities and addressed the fragile Israel-Iran ceasefire. Bilateral meetings, including Trump–Zelensky, underscored strategic alignments.



### OECD's Report on Drought Costs

**In the News:** In June 2025, the OECD released its **Global Drought Outlook: Trends, Impacts, and Policies to Adapt to a Drier World**, spotlighting the urgent economic, environmental, and social costs of drought — and projecting substantial increases in the coming decade.

#### Key Points:

- **Rising Frequency & Severity:** 40% of global land now experiences more frequent and intense droughts — a doubling since the early 1900s. In 2023, nearly half of the Earth faced at least one month of extreme drought.
- **Escalating Economic Costs:** Average drought events today are **2–6×** more expensive than in 2000, increasing annually by **3–7.5%**. By 2035, drought-related economic losses are projected to rise by **at least 35%** — possibly up to 110%. [a](#)
- **Sectoral Impacts:** In agriculture, crop yields can fall by **5–22%** during severe drought years. Droughts disrupt trade, energy, and industry — reducing hydropower output by >25% and disrupting river transport by 10–40%.
- **Environmental Consequences:** Since 1980, **37%** of global land lost significant soil moisture; **62%** of monitored aquifers show declining levels. Drought-driven biodiversity loss, desertification, lower river flows, and weakened ecosystem services.
- **Social Toll:** Droughts account for **34% of disaster-related deaths**, worsen poverty, and trigger displacement—especially in vulnerable regions like sub-Saharan Africa. **proactive**
- **Policy Needed:** An urgent need for coordinated national and international resilience strategies: water recycling/harvesting, drought-resistant crops, improved irrigation, sustainable land use. Every ₹1 invested in drought resilience yields ~₹10 in economic returns—and early action is vital.

### Rwanda and Congo Sign Peace Agreement

**In the News:** On **June 27, 2025**, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) signed a **U.S.-brokered peace agreement** in Washington aimed at ending decades of conflict—even though critics noted the absence of rebel groups like M23 from the deal.

#### Key Points:

- **Peace Agreement Signing:** Foreign ministers from Rwanda and the DRC signed the accord in the U.S. State Department's Treaty Room with U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio present. It commits both nations to cease hostilities, respect territorial integrity, and halt support to rebel groups.
- **Troop Withdrawal:** Rwanda is to withdraw its military forces from eastern DRC within **90 days**. The DRC will end military operations targeting the FDLR militia in parallel.
- **Security Coordination:** A joint security mechanism must be set up within **30 days**, with ongoing support for peace talks in Doha.
- **Economic Framework:** A regional economic integration and mineral development framework is scheduled to be launched within **90 days**, aiming to attract Western investment in critical minerals, including cobalt, lithium, and tantalum.
- **U.S. Mediation and Interests:** The agreement was mediated by the U.S., with active roles by President Trump and Secretary Rubio. It ties peace to U.S. access to DRC's mineral resources, raising both strategic and ethical debates.
- **Omitted Rebel Groups:** Key armed factions like M23 did not participate, casting doubts on the deal's comprehensiveness. Analysts and human rights advocates cited ongoing instability and insufficient mechanisms for accountability.

### UN80 Initiative

**In the News:** UN Secretary-General António Guterres launched the **UN80 Initiative**, a comprehensive reform agenda marking the UN's 80th anniversary, aimed at modernizing the UN system to improve efficiency, mandate integration, and structural responsiveness to global challenges.

#### Key Points:

- **Launch & Purpose:** Introduced in March 2025, the initiative seeks to equip the UN for the next decades by ensuring “value for money” while bolstering multilateralism amid financial pressures and rising geopolitical tensions.
- **Three Reform Workstreams: Efficiency & Optimization** – Streamlining internal functions, centralizing finance/payroll, relocating roles to lower-cost offices, and leveraging automation.
- **Mandate Implementation Review** – Auditing ~40,000 accumulated mandates (4,000+ just in the Secretariat) to identify overlaps, redundancies, and inactive agendas.
- **Structural & Programme Realignment** – Reassessing UN system structure (including peace/security, development, agencies) for coherence and delivery impact.



- **Governance & TimeLine:** The UN80 Task Force, chaired by Guy Ryder, leads the reform. Efficiency proposals due June 2025, mandate review by July, and broader reforms slated for late 2025/early 2026. Structural changes are intended to inform the 2026 UN budget proposals and be implemented through Budget cycles in 2026–27.
- **Budget Context:** UN funding dropped from ~\$69 bn to ~\$50 bn in recent years; efficiency cuts include 15–20% budget and staff reductions. Centralization of services (e.g., payroll from 10 to 3 centres) is a key cost-saving measure.
- **Driving Forces:** Reform driven by liquidity crisis (large unpaid dues), donor fatigue, geopolitical polarization, and the need for UN relevance in managing global threats: conflict, climate, displacement, tech. Implementation urged across all UN bodies—Secretariat, funds, agencies in Geneva, Nairobi, Vienna
- **Proactive Stakeholder Engagement:** The initiative welcomes member states' input; local peacebuilders advocate for decentralized decision-making and stronger local agency engagement.

### UN's Seville Development Conference (FFD4): Goals, Gaps, and Global Tensions

**In the News:** At the **4th UN Conference on Financing for Development (FFD4)** in Seville, Spain (June 29 – July 3, 2025), global leaders gathered to negotiate the “Seville Commitment”—a 38-page political declaration aimed at restructuring international aid, tax regimes, debt frameworks, and climate finance to close a persistent **US \$4 trillion** Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) financing gap.

#### Key Points:

- **Seville Commitment Adopted:** Leaders endorsed a political blueprint emphasizing debt swaps, disaster-linked debt pauses, global solidarity levies (pollution/wealth taxes), tax reforms, and enhanced climate finance mechanisms.
- **Global Participation & U.S. Absence:** Over 70 heads of state attended (e.g., Macron, Ramaphosa), but the U.S. withdrew due to disagreements over climate, sustainability, and gender references.
- **Addressing Debt Crisis:** Key proposals include debt-for-climate swaps, restructuring frameworks, and consideration of a **UN sovereign debt mechanism**, though details remain contested.
- **Tax Justice Agenda:** Hopes for global tax reforms, including combating illicit flows and solidarity levies, meet resistance from wealthier nations concerned about sovereignty and differentiated responsibility.
- **Private Finance Mobilization:** Emphasis on using public funds to “de-risk” private investments, scaling development financing through blended finance and state roles in shaping markets
- **Climate & Resilience Focus:** Strong consensus on mobilizing climate adaptation funds, integrating finance with SDGs and Paris goals, and engaging development banks.
- **Systemic Reform Push:** Calls to reform the international financial architecture (IMF/World Bank governance, credit ratings, debt registry) to empower Global South voice and resilience

## ECONOMY

### Gold Becomes World's Second-Largest Reserve Asset After U.S. Dollar

**In the News:** The **European Central Bank (ECB)** revealed that **gold has overtaken the euro** to become the world's **second-largest global reserve asset**—accounting for approximately **20%** of official foreign exchange reserves, compared to the euro's ~16%. The **US dollar** remains dominant at **46%**.

#### Key Points:

- **Reserve Asset Rankings (2024):** **US dollar:** ~46–47%, **Gold:** ~19–20% (up from ~16.5% in 2023), **Euro:** ~16%.
- **Gold Accumulation:** Central banks purchased **over 1,000 metric tonnes** in 2024—for the third consecutive year, more than double the 2010s average. Total holdings reached ~**36,000 tonnes**, nearing the **1965 record** of 38,000 tonnes.
- **Driving Forces:** **Geopolitical instability:** Ukraine war, sanctions, global uncertainty. **Economic concerns:** Inflation fears, weaker US dollar, tariff volatility.
- **Why Gold:** **Safe-haven asset:** hedge against currency weakness and inflation. **Liquidity and long-term store of value**, increasingly favoured by central banks.
- **Future Outlook:** **Central bank sentiment:** 76% expect gold's share to rise over next 5 years (up from 69% last year). **Potential Plateau:** Some jitter around price volatility and dollar dynamics, but long-term demand remains strong.
- **Major Holders:** **Top national reserves:** USA (~8,133 t), Germany (~3,351 t), Italy (~2,452 t), France (~2,437 t), Russia (~2,333 t), China (~2,279 t).

### JioBlackRock Broking Gets SEBI Nod to Launch Brokerage Operations

**In the News:** On June 27, 2025, Jio BlackRock Broking Pvt Ltd a wholly owned subsidiary of the 50:50 Jio Financial–BlackRock joint venture received final approval from SEBI to launch its stock broking and clearing operations in India.

#### Key Points:

- **SEBI Approval:** Jio BlackRock Broking Pvt Ltd obtained its Certificate of Registration on June 25, 2025, from SEBI, enabling it to offer full-fledged brokerage and clearing services.
- **JV Structure & Strategy:** The broking arm is under Jio BlackRock Investment Advisers, itself a 50:50 JV between Jio Financial Services and BlackRock Inc. It's part of a larger ambition to create an end-to-end investment ecosystem—covering advisory, mutual funds, brokerage, and clearing.
- **Tech-Driven Access:** The venture aims to democratize capital market access by delivering "affordable, transparent, and technology-driven execution capabilities" to retail investors. With mutual fund and advisory approvals already secured (June 2025 and May 2025), the broking license completes the ecosystem.
- **Market Reaction:** Following the approval, Jio Financial Services shares jumped 4–5%: hitting an intraday high of ₹329.30 and closing around ₹323–₹326. The rise reflects investor optimism on the firm's diversified financial services ambitions.
- **Leadership Vision:** Marc Pilgrem (MD & CEO, Jio BlackRock Investment Advisers) emphasized the integration of personalized advice and execution tools. Hitesh Sethia (MD & CEO, Jio Financial Services) called the development a key step in "democratizing investments in India".

## ENVIRONMENT

### Adani Group Pioneers India's Clean Energy Future with First Off-Grid Green Hydrogen Plant

**In the News:** The Adani Group, via **Adani New Industries Limited (ANIL)**, inaugurated India's first **off-grid 5 MW green hydrogen pilot plant** in **Kutch, Gujarat**. Completely solar-powered and integrated with Battery Energy Storage, it marks a major breakthrough in decentralized renewable hydrogen production.

#### Key Points:

- **Project Launch & Location:** Commissioned on June 23, 2025, in Kutch, making it India's first off-grid green hydrogen **facility**. Features a 5 MW electrolyser powered entirely by solar energy with Battery Energy Storage (BESS) to manage intermittency.
- **Innovative Technology:** Employs a fully automated, closed-loop electrolyser system that adjusts in real time to solar **generation**, ensuring high safety and efficiency. Operates completely off-grid, showcasing how renewable hydrogen production can be decentralized and independent of conventional power supplies.
- **Strategic Alignment:** Supports India's **National Green Hydrogen Mission**, seeking energy security, reduced imports, and decarbonisation of hard-to-abate sectors. Acts as a proof of concept ahead of the planned large-scale **Green Hydrogen Hub in Mundra**, targeting derivatives like ammonia, methanol, and sustainable aviation fuel.
- **Decarbonising Heavy Industries:** Green hydrogen emits only water vapor, offering a clean alternative for energy-intensive **industries** like fertilisers, refining, and heavy transport. The pilot signifies a strategic move away from fossil-based grey hydrogen, aligning with India's climate goals.
- **Integrated Ecosystem:** ANIL plans an integrated industrial hub in Mundra covering solar cell/module manufacturing, electrolyzers, and green-hydrogen derivatives. Leverages the **Gujarat Hybrid Renewable Energy Park** in Kutch, already hosting ~30 GW of wind and solar infrastructure.

### State of Climate in Asia 2024 Report

**In the News:** The World Meteorological Organization published the State of the Climate in Asia 2024 report, revealing that Asia warmed nearly **1.04 °C above** its 1991–2020 average—almost **double the global warming rate**. The report underscores Asia's rising climate risks—from heatwaves and sea-level rise to glacier loss and extreme weather events.

#### Key Points:

- **Record Warming & Heatwaves:** 2024 ranked as Asia's **warmest or second-warmest** year on record, heating at almost twice the global pace. India marked its **hottest year since 1901**, enduring its longest heatwave since 2010—over **44,000 heatstroke** cases and **450+ deaths**.

- **Ocean & Sea-Level Impacts:** Marine heatwaves surged over ~15 million km<sup>2</sup>, causing accelerated sea-level rise in the **Indian and Pacific Oceans**. India's coast is rising faster than the global average: **Arabian Sea ~3.9 mm/yr, Bay of Bengal ~4.0 mm/yr** (global average ~3.4 mm/yr).
- **Glacier Melt & Water Security Risks:** **23 of 24 monitored glaciers** in the Himalayas and Tian Shan are retreating, increasing glacial lake flood hazards and threatening downstream water supply.
- **Extreme Weather Events :** Asia was hit by 2024's **strongest cyclones and floods**: Tropical Cyclone Yagi, record-breaking floods in Central Asia, and heavy monsoon rains in India, causing landslides and fatalities (e.g., 350+ in Kerala) .

**Disaster Preparedness Improvements:** Some nations like **Nepal** showcased positive outcomes from enhanced early-warning systems—protecting over **130,000 people** during extreme events.

#### Asia Warming at Twice the Global Rate, Warns WMO in New Climate Report

**In the News:** The **World Meteorological Organization (WMO)** released its “State of the Climate in Asia 2024” report, warning that **Asia is warming nearly twice as fast as the global average**, driven by severe land and sea temperature increases.

##### Key Points:

- **Accelerated Land Warming:** Asia's land temperatures surged by **1.04 °C above the 1991–2020 baseline in 2024**, nearly **double** the global warming rate over the same period.
- **Intense Heatwave Impact:** India recorded its **warmest year since 1901**, with heatwaves causing over **44,000 heatstroke cases** and **450+ deaths**; Myanmar hit a record of **48.2 °C**.
- **Escalating Marine Heatwaves:** Millions of square kilometres faced **marine heatwaves**, driving record-high sea surface temperatures and accelerating **sea-level rise along Asia's coasts**.
- **Glacier Melting & Flood Risks:** **23 of 24 monitored glaciers** in the Himalayas and Tian Shan lost mass, raising **glacial lake flood risks** and threatening freshwater reserves.
- **Extreme Weather Events:** Asia faced cyclones (e.g., Cyclone Yagi), intense floods, and droughts. In Nepal, early-warning systems saved **130,000+ lives**, showcasing resilience.
- **Urgent Climate Services:** WMO highlighted that **meteorological and hydrological services** are now essential for **planning adaptation**, protecting lives and infrastructure.

#### India Hosts ICCON 2025 to Tackle Urgent Biodiversity Challenges

**In the News:** The **Indian Conservation Conference (ICCON) 2025** was held at the **Wildlife Institute of India** in Dehradun. Union Environment Minister **Bhupender Yadav** inaugurated the event and released the latest **Management Effectiveness Evaluation (MEE)** report for 438 national parks and sanctuaries, assessing the conservation quality over 2020–2025.

##### Key Points:

- **MEE Report Launch:** The updated **Management Effectiveness Evaluation**, following **IUCN guidelines**, showed a rise in India's average MEE score to **64.41%** (from 60.52%), indicating improved governance of protected areas between 2020–2025. A total of **84 parks** earned a “very good” rating, while only **18** rated “poor”, with **Ladakh** the lowest at **34.9%**..
- **Top & Low Performers:** Leading sites included **Eravikulam National Park (Kerala)** and **Dachigam National Park (J&K)**; by contrast, **Hemis National Park (Ladakh)** and **Ringba-Roba Wildlife Sanctuary (Arunachal Pradesh)** underperformed.
- **Youth & Science Focus:** Minister Yadav emphasised the need for **science-driven, youth-led conservation**, inaugurating new “Herbarium Gallery” and a **Tusker indoor gym** facility at WII to further research and education.
- **Conference Scope:** ICCON 2025 engaged **hundreds of participants**, including **scientists, students, forest officers, NGOs, and intern**.

#### Global Science-Policy Panel on Chemicals, Waste, and Pollution Established in Punta del Este

**In the News:** From **15–20 June 2025**, an intergovernmental meeting at **Punta del Este, Uruguay**, convened under **UNEP**, formally established the **Intergovernmental Science-Policy Panel on Chemicals, Waste, and Pollution (ISP-CWP)**—as the UN's third major science-policy body, alongside IPCC and IPBES.

##### Key Points:

- **Purpose & Mandate:** The panel is designed to deliver **independent, policy-relevant scientific assessments** on chemicals, waste, and pollution. It aims to **identify research gaps, conduct horizon scanning**, and promote **capacity-building** in developing nations.



- **Filling Governance Gaps:** It fills a critical void in global environmental governance, addressing the '**triple planetary crisis**' by focusing on pollution and hazardous waste—complementing climate and biodiversity efforts.
- **Panels & Procedures:** Established through **UNEA resolution (2022)** and finalized in Punta del Este via multiple rounds of OEWG negotiations, its founding documents, rules of procedure, and plenary structure were adopted.
- **Member Support:** The initiative drew strong international backing—including from **Belgium**—and was hailed by **UNEP Executive Director Inger Andersen** as a landmark for environmental multilateralism.
- **Critical Role in Policy:** The panel will help governments **translate scientific evidence into actionable policy**, anticipate emerging chemical threats, and strengthen **sound chemicals and waste management globally**.
- **Health and Environmental Stakes:** With chemical pollution contributing to disease and ecological degradation, the panel's assessments aim to mitigate risks to **human well-being, air, water, and soil quality**

### Salkhan Fossil Park Joins UNESCO's Tentative List of World Heritage Sites

**In the News:** Uttar Pradesh's Salkhan Fossil Park, also known as Sonbhadra Fossils Park, was officially added to UNESCO's Tentative List for World Heritage Sites under criterion (viii), marking a crucial step in preserving its 1.4-billion-year-old geological treasures.

#### Key Points:

- **UNESCO Tentative Status:** Inclusion on the Tentative List was formalized in early June 2025, with detailed information now available on UNESCO's official platform.
- **Geological Significance:** The park, spread across ~25 ha in the Kaimur Range near Robertsganj (Sonbhadra), preserves exceptionally well-preserved stromatolites and algae fossils dating back 1.4 billion years—key evidence of early life on Earth.
- **Scientific and Ecotourism Value:** Studies by Birbal Sahni Institute and UP's eco-tourism board confirm its value for early life research and potential as a global geotourism hotspot.
- **Conservation Efforts:** Situated inside Kaimoor Wildlife Sanctuary, managed by Uttar Pradesh Forest Department, the park benefits from multi-layered protection (Wildlife & Forest Acts, ESZ, conservation planning).
- **Nomination Roadmap:** A comprehensive nomination dossier is being finalized by the UP eco-tourism board with support from BHU & Birbal Sahni Institute. Submitted to the Government of India, it's expected to be reviewed by UNESCO within 1–2 years.
- **Local Impact:** Tentative inclusion is projected to boost regional eco-tourism, elevate global scientific recognition, and improve local infrastructure and livelihoods.

### Project Elephant: Census Phase-I Completed, New Wildlife Recovery Plans Launched

**In the News:** The 21st Steering Committee meeting of Project Elephant was held in Dehradun, chaired by Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav. Key outcomes included completion of Phase-I in the Northeastern elephant census, railway conflict mitigation initiatives, expanded DNA profiling, and inclusion of new species in recovery programs.

#### Key Points:

- **Phase-I Census in Northeast Completed:** Over 16,500 elephant dung samples were collected across Northeastern states to estimate elephant populations.
- **Railway Collision Mitigation:** Surveyed 3,452 km of high-risk railway track; identified 77 vulnerable areas for targeted interventions.
- **DNA Profiling of Captive Elephants:** Successfully completed 1,911 genetic profiles across 22 states to aid monitoring and health assessment.
- **Expanded Species Recovery Programs:** Steering Committee recommended including sloth bear and gharial under the national Species Recovery Programme.
- **Human-Elephant Conflict Strategy:** Emphasized community engagement, coordination with Railways, Power, NHAI, and mines, and use of traditional knowledge and community-led response teams.
- **Model Conservation Plans & Reports Released:** Released Elephant-Train Collision Mitigation report, a regional action plan study (Assam, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh), and draft ECP for Nilgiri — to be finalized by December 2025.
- **Focus on Field Staff & Community Training:** Stress on frontline staff welfare, awareness-building through SACON, IIFM, WII, state bodies; upcoming World Elephant Day initiatives and elephant tracking studies planned.



### Kerala Tops National Evaluation of Protected Areas for 2020–2025

**In the News:** On **June 28, 2025**, Kerala secured the top position (alongside Chandigarh) in the **Management Effectiveness Evaluation (MEE)** of national parks and wildlife sanctuaries across India for the 2020–25 period. The evaluation, conducted by MoEFCC at ICCON 2025, assessed 438 protected areas based on IUCN-WCPA criteria.

#### Key Points:

- **Top Rankings: Kerala UT/State Rank:** Highest among Indian states with a mean MEE score of **76.22%**, classified as 'Very Good'.
- **National Parks:** Kerala's Ernakulam NP shared the top spot with Jammu & Kashmir's Dachigam NP, both scoring **92.97%**. Other Kerala standouts: Mathikettan Shola NP (90.63%) and Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary (89.84%) ranked fifth and sixth respectively.
- **Statewide Performance:** Out of 21 protected areas in Kerala, **20 showed improved MEE scores** over the previous cycle. Only Mangala Vanam Bird Sanctuary in Kochi declined due to untreated sewage, noise, lack of management plan, and pollution.
- **Site-specific Challenges:** Idukki Wildlife Sanctuary: Strained by feral cattle and inadequate habitat monitoring. Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary: Persistent human-wildlife conflict due to encroachment, cattle presence; need for invasive species control, tribal relocation, and corridor integration. Anamudi Shola NP: Pressure from increased road traffic impacting the park.
- **National Progress:** The average MEE score across the country rose from 60.52% to **64.41%**, with **84 protected areas** rated 'Very Good' and most others in 'Good' category. *Ladakh* scored lowest at 34.9%, marked as 'Poor'.

## SPORTS

### India Launches Logo and Mascot 'Viraaj' for 2025 World Para Athletics Championships

**In the News:** On June 20, 2025, Union Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya unveiled the official logo and mascot for the 2025 World Para Athletics Championships, which will be held in New Delhi. This is the first time India is hosting this prestigious global para-sporting event.

#### Key Points:

- **Mascot Launch:** The mascot, named 'Viraaj', was introduced as a symbol of strength, courage, and inclusivity. Designed as a tiger with a prosthetic leg, it highlights the spirit and determination of para-athletes.
- **Logo Reveal:** The official logo integrates India's tricolor and the Ashoka Chakra, reflecting national pride and the spirit of international sportsmanship.
- **Historic Hosting:** The 2025 edition, scheduled from December 5 to 14 in New Delhi, marks India's debut as host. Over 1,300 athletes from more than 100 countries are expected to participate.
- **Accessible Infrastructure:** The government emphasized that all sports venues and accommodations will be fully barrier-free, showcasing India's commitment to inclusive sports infrastructure.
- **Cultural Representation:** Developed by the National Institute of Design (NID), the mascot and branding represent India's rich cultural identity while promoting diversity and empowerment through sports.
- **Nationwide Outreach:** Schools, colleges, and sports bodies will be engaged through a national awareness campaign to promote para-sports and increase public participation around 'Viraaj'.
- **Minister's Statement:** Union Minister Mandaviya stated, "*Viraaj is not just a mascot, but a message of hope, courage, and inclusion that India is proud to share with the world.*"

### Kirsty Coventry Becomes First Female and African President of the IOC

**In the News:** Zimbabwean Olympian **Kirsty Coventry** officially assumed the presidency of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), making history as both the **first woman** and **first African** to hold the position, succeeding Thomas Bach.

#### Key Points:

- **Historic Election & Tenure:** Elected unanimously in March 2025 during the 144th IOC Session in Greece. Began an eight-year mandate on June 23, becoming the 10th IOC President.
- **Sporting Legacy & Background:** Former swimmer with **seven Olympic medals**—two gold, three silver, two bronze. Most decorated Olympian from Africa and former Zimbabwean Sport Minister.

- **Leadership Vision & Goals:** Emphasizes **collaborative, inclusive decision-making** and championing athletes' voices. Plans to tackle issues like **gender equality**, **host city diversity**, and **athlete welfare**, while navigating geopolitical tensions ahead of LA 2028.
- **Operational Priorities:** Launched a **two-day workshop** in Lausanne to consult IOC members on critical issues like **sponsorships**, inclusion, and governance. Aims to strengthen IOC's financial standing and secure future commercial deals amid volatility in sponsorship.
- **Global Representation Milestone :** Opens a new chapter for IOC representation—ending 131 years of male European/North American presidency.

## SCIENCE & TECH

### Bharti Space to Invest ₹313 Cr in Eutelsat's Satellite

**In the News:** On **June 20, 2025**, **Bharti Space Ltd**, the satellite venture of Bharti Enterprises, announced its plan to invest **₹313 crore** (approximately **€31.4 million** or **\$36 million**) in French satellite operator **Eutelsat** as part of its wider **€1.35 billion** capital-raising strategy aimed at reducing debt and financing satellite constellation expansion.

#### Key Points:

- **Investment & Capital Structure:** Bharti Space is contributing **€31.4 M**, while Eutelsat's total raise comprises- **€716 M** via reserved capital increase (at **€4/share**), and **€634 M** through a rights issue.
- **Stake Changes & Shareholding:** Currently holds **24%** of Eutelsat; the fresh funding will reduce Bharti's stake to approximately **18.7%**. The French government will become the **largest shareholder** with **29.99%** post-investment.
- **Purpose of Funds:** Proceeds will be used to deleverage Eutelsat's balance sheet and support the rollout of **GEO and LEO satellite constellations**—including the IRIS<sup>2</sup> project.
- **Strategic Rationale:** Strengthens Bharti's position in global satellite communications alongside its stake in **OneWeb** (merged with Eutelsat in 2023). Supports India-focused broadband plans, complementing its partnership with SpaceX's Starlink.
- **Geopolitical & Défense Angle:** The French state and its Ministry of Armed Forces (DGA) are backing Eutelsat to reinforce Europe's strategic autonomy. Includes a **€1 billion, 10-year contract** with France's defence ministry via the "Nexus" programme for OneWeb LEO capacity.
- **Timeline & Approvals:** Proposed capital raise is expected to close by **end of 2025**, pending shareholder and regulatory approvals—an extraordinary meeting is likely in **Q3 2025**.

### MM-Negative Blood Group System

**In the News:** On **June 24, 2025**, the International Society of Blood Transfusion (ISBT) officially recognized a new blood group system called **EMM-negative**, colloquially known as **Gwada negative**, marking the **48th globally recognized blood group system**.

#### Key Points:

- **Definition & Naming:** Characterized by the **absence of the high-incidence EMM antigen** on red blood cells—present in over 90% of humans. Named "Gwada negative" after Guadeloupe, where the only known carrier—a woman—resides
- **Discovery Timeline:** First detected in **2011** during routine testing; unresolved until **2019**, when high-throughput DNA sequencing revealed a genetic mutation in **PIGG** gene. ISBT ratified it in **June 2025**, listing it as **ISBT042**.
- **Uniqueness & Clinical Impact:** Only one confirmed person globally; she can **only receive her own blood**, no compatible donors available. Absence of common antigen could trigger **severe hemolytic reactions** if transfused with standard blood
- **Genetic Basis:** Mutation in the **PIGG** gene impairs the GPI-anchor attachment of EMM antigen; frameshift deletions and stop codons identified. Part of the 901 series before its elevation to its own system.

### Dangeti Jahnvi Becomes First Indian to Complete NASA's Space Program

**In the News:** Dangeti Jahnvi from **Palakollu, Andhra Pradesh**, became the **first Indian** to complete NASA's prestigious **International Air and Space Program (IASP)**. She has been selected as an **Astronaut Candidate** for a scheduled **2029 space mission** by Titan Space Industries.

#### Key Points:

- **Training & Achievement:** Jahnvi successfully finished the intensive, five-day NASA IASP at Kennedy Space Centre—becoming the first Indian ever to do so. She is now an Astronaut Candidate in Titan Space’s **Class of 2025**, set to launch to the space station in **2029**
- **Background & Education:** Aged **21**, she hails from Palakollu, Andhra Pradesh, and holds a degree in **Electronics & Communication Engineering** from Lovely Professional University, Punjab Completed early education locally; parents (Padmasri and Srinivas) reside in Kuwait supporting her journey.
- **Space Mission & Role:** Chosen for the 2029 Titan Orbital Port Space Station mission, marking her role in the future of international commercial space travel. Training includes spacecraft systems, zero-gravity preparedness, and team-based scientific research during orbital missions.
- **STEM Advocacy & Analog Missions:** At just 21, trained as an analogue astronaut in Poland and participated in NASA-backed asteroid detection efforts through the International Astronomical Search Collaboration (IASC).

### Shubhanshu Shukla Pilots Axiom 4 on SpaceX Falcon 9 to ISS

**In the News:** On **June 25, 2025**, Indian Air Force Group Captain **Shubhanshu Shukla** launched aboard SpaceX Falcon 9 (Crew Dragon) as pilot of **Axiom Mission 4 (Ax-4)**—India’s first mission to the International Space Station (ISS) since 1984. The private mission, organized by Axiom Space and NASA, also included astronauts from Poland, Hungary, and the US.

#### Key Points:

- **Mission Launch & Crew:** Lifted off at 12:01 PM IST on June 25, 2025, from Kennedy Space Center aboard Falcon 9 . Crew commander: former NASA astronaut Peggy Whitson; mission specialists from Poland and Hungary.
- **Historic Significance:** Shubhanshu Shukla becomes the **first Indian to pilot a mission to the ISS** and the **second Indian overall** after Rakesh Sharma. Marks India’s return to manned spaceflight after 41 years.
- **Mission Objectives:** Crew will spend ~14 days aboard ISS, conducting over **60 experiments** across microgravity biology, health sciences, AI, materials science, seed germination, and human physiology. Includes seven India-led experiments coordinated by ISRO on topics like microbial adaptation, cognitive effects of screens, and algae research.
- **Technical Highlights & Collaboration:** The mission ferried the Dragon capsule **“Grace”**—the fifth Crew Dragon—to ISS . Represents successful partnerships between **Axiom Space, NASA, SpaceX**, and **ISRO**—supporting India’s Gaganyaan human spaceflight readiness.
- **India’s Response & Pride:** PM Narendra Modi expressed national pride, calling it a moment carried by “wishes of 1.4 billion Indians”. The Indian Air Force, NDA alumni, and international partners (e.g., France) hailed Shukla’s leadership as a milestone

## AWARDS

### Kerala Sahitya Akademi Announces 2024 Literary Award Winners

**In the News:** The Kerala Sahitya Akademi unveiled its 2024 literary awards in Thrissur, recognising outstanding contributions across diverse genres of Malayalam literature.

#### Key Points:

- **Best Novel:** G R Indu Gopan won for *Aano*.
- **Best Poetry Collection:** Anitha Thampi received the award for *Muringa Vazha Kariveppu*.
- **Best Short Story:** V Shinilal was recognised for *Garisappa Aruvi Athava Oru Jalayathra*.
- **C B Kumar Essay Award:** M Swaraj honoured for *Pookkalude Pusthakam*.
- **Akademi Fellowships:** Distinguished membership awarded to K V Ramakrishnan and Ezhacheri Ramachandran, each receiving ₹50,000, a two-sovereign gold medal, certificate, shawl, and plaque.
- **Lifetime Contribution Awards:** Four senior writers honoured -P K N Panicker, Payyanur Kunhiraman, M M Narayanan, T K Gangadharan, K E N, and Mallika Yunis—each receiving ₹30,000, certificate, shawl, and plaque.
- **Other Genre Winners:** **Drama:** *Piththalasalabham* by Sasidharan Naduvil **Biography/Autobiography:** *Njaan Enna Bhavam* by Dr K Rajasekharan Nair.
- **Travelogue:** *Aarohanam Himalayam* by K R Ajayan.
- **Children’s Literature:** *Ammamanamulla Kanivukal* by E N Sheeja, Translation: *Ente Rajyam Ente Shareeram* by Chinju Prakash,

- **Literary Criticism:** *Ramayanathinte Charithrasanchaarangal* by G Dileep,
- **Humour Writing:** *Keralaathe Maidaathmakatha* by Niranjan.
- **Award Prizes Overview:** ₹25,000 with a plaque and certificate for main categories; ₹50,000+medal for fellowships; ₹30,000 for lifetime achievers. No Vilasini Award presented this year.

