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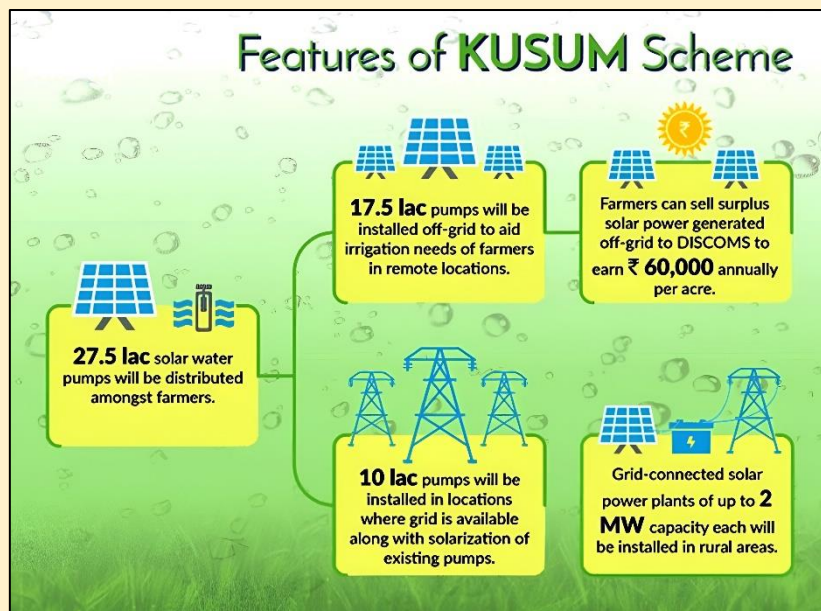
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PM-KUSUM

The Union government is looking to showcase the PM-KUSUM (Pradhan Mantri Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthan Mahabhiyan) programme to several African countries and island nations, Union Minister for Renewable Energy (MNRE) said.

- The PM-KUSUM was launched by the MNRE in 2019, in order to endow installation of off-grid solar pumps in rural areas and reduce dependence on grid, in grid-connected areas.
- Objective: It aims to enable farmers to set up solar power generation capacity on their arid lands and to sell it to the grid. It also seeks to increase the income of farmers by allowing them to sell surplus solar power to the grid.
- Components of the scheme:
 - 10,000 MW of decentralized ground-mounted grid-connected renewable power plants.
 - Installation of 20 lakh solar-powered agriculture pumps.
 - Converting 15 lakh agriculture pumps, already connected to the grid, into solar.



- Significance:
 - It incentivises the farmers to sell surplus solar energy to the states, which in turn will augment their income.
 - If farmers are able to sell surplus power, they will be incentivised to save power and, in turn, it will mean the reasonable and efficient use of groundwater.
 - The scheme is expected to create job opportunities in the installation, maintenance, and operation of solar power projects.
- Challenges:
 - The cost of setting up solar power projects can be high, and some farmers may not have access to the necessary financing.
 - Due to power subsidies, the recurring cost of electricity is so low that farmers keep on pumping water and the water table is going down.
 - Integrating decentralized solar power projects into the grid may pose technical challenges and stability issues, which need to be addressed.

CONTEMPT OF COURT

A Supreme Court lawyer has written to Attorney-General seeking consent to initiate criminal contempt proceedings against advocate who allegedly flung papers at Chief Justice of India (CJI) B.R. Gavai during court proceedings.

About Contempt of Court:

- Objective: Contempt of court seeks to protect judicial institutions from motivated attacks and unwarranted criticism, and as a legal mechanism to punish those who lower its authority.
- Legal backing:
 - When the Constitution was adopted, contempt of court was made one of the restrictions on freedom of speech and expression under Article 19 (2) of the Constitution of India.
 - Separately, Article 129 of the Constitution conferred on the Supreme Court the power to punish contempt of itself. Article 215 conferred a corresponding power on the High Courts.
 - The Contempt of Courts Act, 1971, gives statutory backing to the idea.



- Punishment:
 - A person found guilty of contempt of court can be sentenced to simple imprisonment for up to six months or fined up to Rs. 2,000 or both.
 - In the case of criminal contempt, the Supreme Court or the High Court may take action on its motion or a motion made by the Advocate-General or any other person, with the consent in writing of the Advocate-General.

Types of Contempt of Court:

- Civil Contempt: Section 2(b) of Contempt of Court Act 1971 defines civil contempt as wilful disobedience to any judgment, decree, direction, order, writ or other process of a court or wilful breach of an undertaking given to a court.
- Criminal Contempt: Section 2(c) of the Contempt of Court Act 1971 defines criminal contempt as the publication (whether by words, spoken or written, or by signs, or by visible representations, or otherwise) of any matter or the doing of any other act whatsoever which:
 - scandalises or tends to scandalise, or lowers or tends to lower the authority of, any court; or prejudices, or interferes or tends to interfere with the due course of any judicial proceeding; or interferes or tends to interfere with, or obstructs or tends to obstruct, the administration of justice in any other manner.

NOBEL PRIZE FOR PHYSICS

The Nobel Prize for Physics this year will be awarded to three scientists to tease greater insight into the workings of the quantum world.

Quantum magnified

Nobel for quantum behaviour scaled up



JOHN CLARKE | MICHEL H. DEVORET | JOHN M. MARTINIS

- The laureates proved that entire electrical circuits can obey quantum mechanical laws
- They used Josephson junctions to observe tunnelling and energy quantisation in superconducting circuits



- Their findings underpin superconducting qubits, quantum sensors, and precision measurement technologies

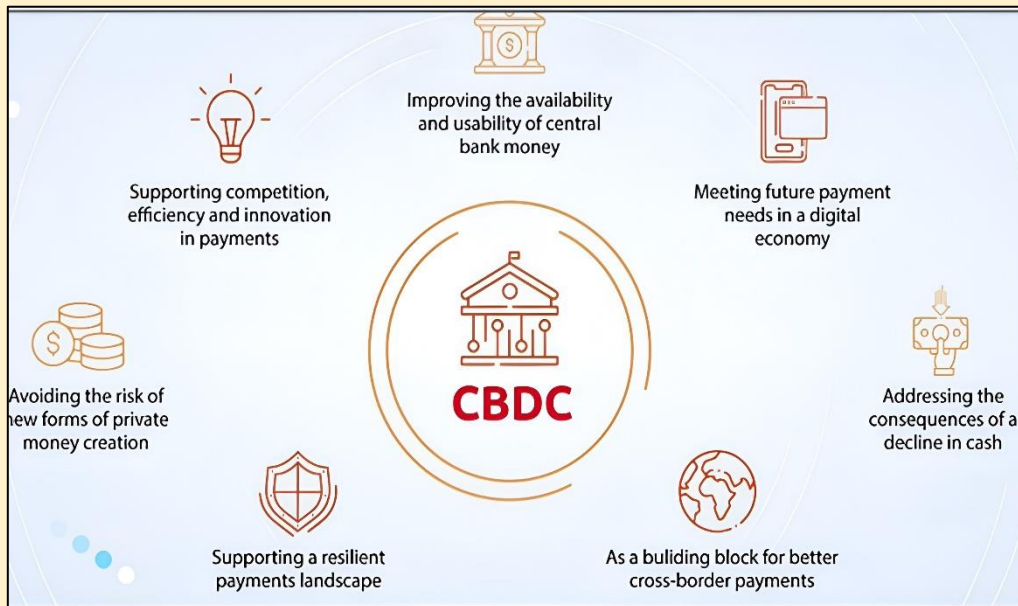
SOURCE: NOBEL PRIZE OUTREACH

- **Awardees:** The Nobel Prize 2025 in Physics has been awarded to John Clarke from the University of California, Berkeley, Michel H. Devoret of Yale University and the University of California, Santa Barbara, and John M. Martinis of the University of California, Santa Barbara.
- **Awarded for:** They have been recognized for their pioneering work on the macroscopic quantum phenomena in electrical circuits, specifically the demonstration of quantum tunneling and energy quantization on a macroscopic scale.
- **Significance:** This groundbreaking research has significantly advanced our understanding of quantum mechanics in engineered systems and opened new avenues for quantum technology applications.
- **About the experiment:**
 - Much like early insight into quantum mechanics paved the way for transistors and silicon chips in the 1950s, the three scientists devised an electrical circuit with two superconductors, components that can conduct a current without any electrical resistance.
 - They separated these with a thin layer of material – called a Josephson junction – that did not conduct any current at all.
 - In this experiment, they showed that they could control and investigate a phenomenon in which all the charged particles in the superconductor behave in unison, as if they are a single ‘particle’ that fills the entire circuit.
 - Following this, they were able to demonstrate that such a particle could be made to behave simulating the flow of electricity even without voltage, a prerequisite for the flow of current.

CENTRAL BANK DIGITAL CURRENCY

- RBI is waiting for other countries to launch digital currency and is in no hurry to roll out Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) nationwide for retail, said Deputy Governor.

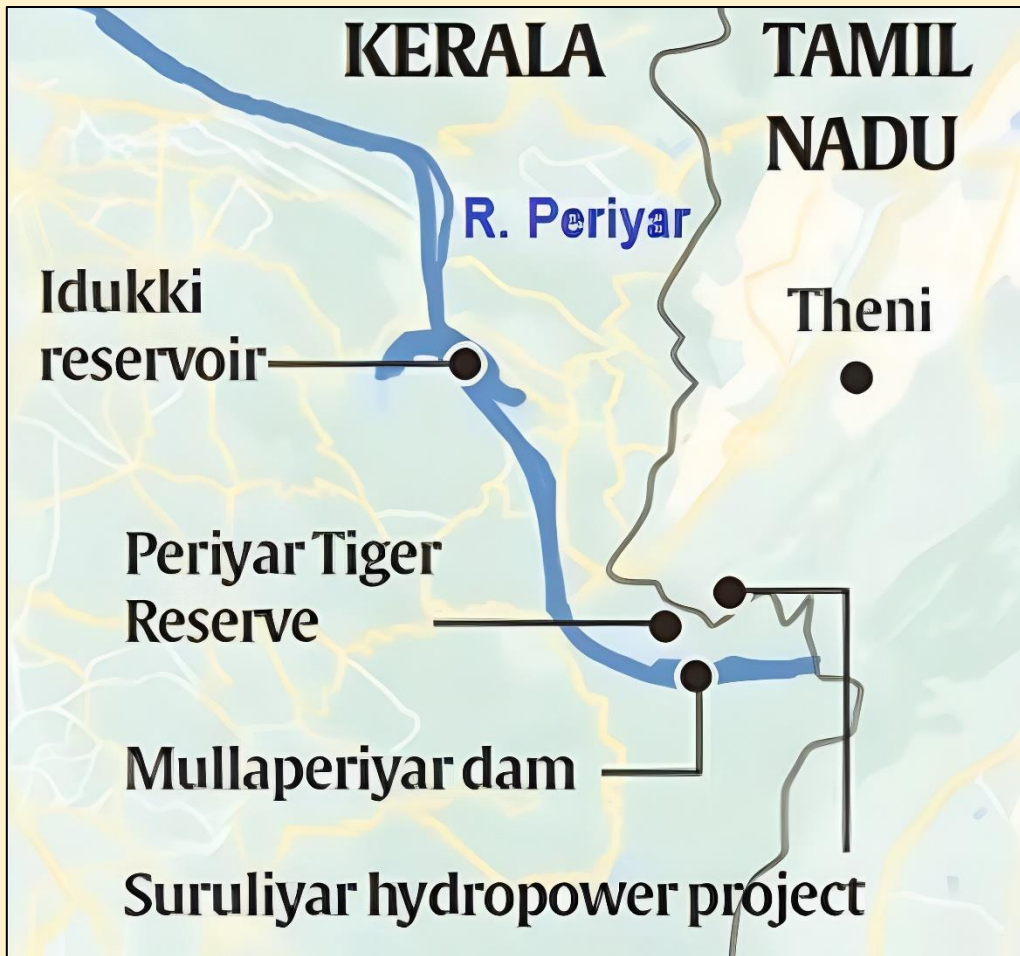
About Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC):



- A CBDC is a legal tender issued by a central bank in digital form.
- Authorised by Central Bank: Unlike private cryptocurrencies, CBDCs are backed by the central bank, ensuring stability and trust.
- Objective: The main objective is to mitigate the risks and trim costs in handling physical currency, costs of phasing out soiled notes, transportation, insurance and logistics.
- Use of wallets: The digital fiat currency or CBDC can be transacted using wallets backed by blockchain.
- Difference with virtual currencies: Though the concept of CBDCs was directly inspired by Bitcoin, it is different from decentralised virtual currencies and crypto assets, which are not issued by the state and lack the 'legal tender' status.
- First country to launch: Bahamas was the first economy to launch its nationwide CBDC namely Sand Dollar in 2020.
- Major advantages:
 - CBDCs leverage digital security measures, potentially reducing the risk of counterfeiting and theft compared to physical cash.
 - Digital transactions can be settled instantly and efficiently, facilitating faster and more cost-effective payments.
 - Programmable features could be introduced to enable targeted disbursement of government benefits or encourage specific financial behaviours, promoting financial inclusion.
- Challenges associated:
 - Robust security measures are crucial to protect the e-rupee system from cyberattacks.
 - Balancing user privacy with the need for anti-money laundering and countering financing of terrorism measures is a critical aspect.
 - The RBI made CBDC non-remunerative and non-interest-bearing to mitigate potential risks of bank disintermediation.

PERIYAR TIGER RESERVE

A 32-year-old forest watcher in the Periyar Tiger Reserve was found dead in the Ponnambalamedu forest area in Pathanamthitta district of Kerala.

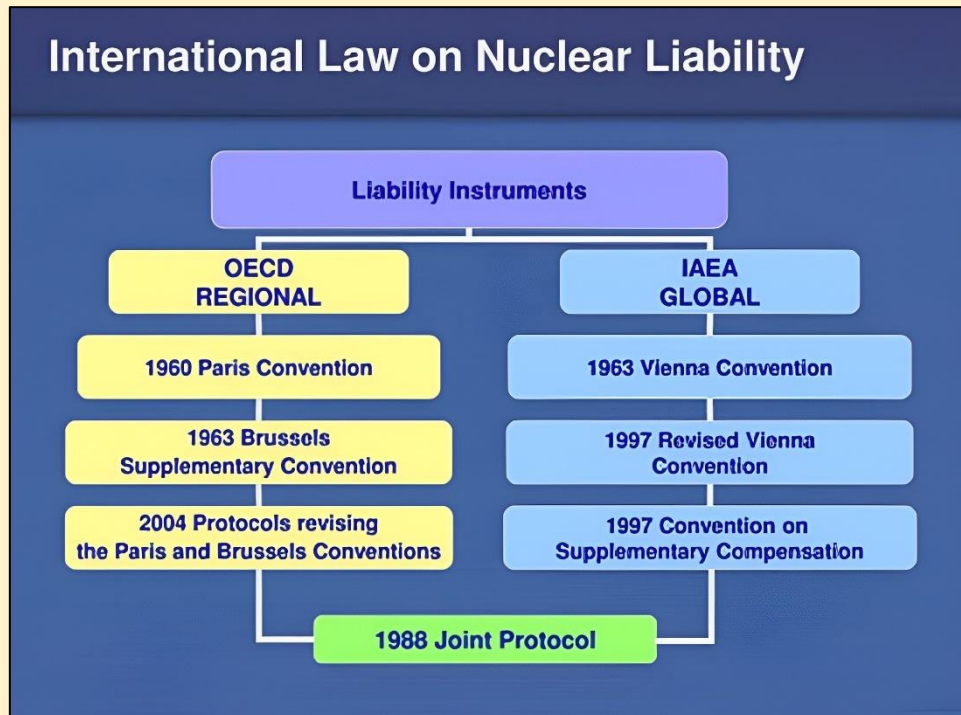


- **Nomenclature:** It is named after the Periyar River, which originates within the reserve.
- **Location:** It is situated in the Idukki and Pathanamthitta districts of Kerala. It is set high at Cardamom Hills and Pandalam Hills of the Western Ghats, adjacent to the border with Tamil Nadu.
- **Formation:** It was established as a wildlife sanctuary in 1950 and later declared a Tiger Reserve in 1978.
- **Terrain:** The terrain is hilly and undulating with a maximum altitude of 2016 m. The highest peak is Kottamala (2016 m).
- **Vegetation:** It comprises tropical evergreen forests, semi- evergreen forests, moist deciduous forests, transitional fringe evergreen forests, grasslands, and eucalyptus plantations.
- **Drainage:** Major rivers flowing through the reserve are the Periyar and Mullayar.
- **Dams:** Mullaperiyar Dam is located within the PTR.
- **Flora and fauna:** Important flora includes teak, mangoes, rosewood, jamun, jacarandas, terminalias, tamarind, royal ponciana, bamboo, etc. Fauna includes Elephants, Wild Pigs, Sambar, Gaur, Mouse Deer, Barking Deer, Indian Wild Dog, and Tiger.
- **Unique species:** It hosts medicinal plants like *Syzygium periyarensis*, *Habenaria periyarensis* (an orchid), and *Mucuna pruriense thekkadiensis*.
- **Tribes:** It is home to six tribal communities including the Mannans, Paliyans, Malayarayans, Mala Pandarams, Uralis, and Ulladans, who live within the reserve.

CIVIL LIABILITY FOR NUCLEAR DAMAGE ACT (CLNDA), 2010:

- Finance Minister said that government intends to amend Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act as deliberations within the government continue on bringing in new legislation to allow the private sector to operate nuclear plants in India.

About Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act (CLNDA), 2010:



- Nature:** It is India's nuclear liability law ensuring compensation for victims and defining responsibility for nuclear accidents.
- In sync with CSC:** It aligns with the Convention on Supplementary Compensation (CSC, 1997), adopted post-Chernobyl to set global minimum compensation standards. India ratified CSC in 2016.
- Follows global conventions:** It follows the nuclear liability principles of the Vienna Convention 1963, Paris Convention 1960, and Brussels Supplementary Convention 1963.
- Puts a cap on operator liability:** The Act imposes strict, no-fault liability on operators, caps operator liability at Rs 1,500 crore.
- Provision for intervention of government:** If damage claims exceed Rs 1,500 crore, the CLNDA expects the government to intervene. The government's liability is capped at the rupee equivalent of 300 million Special Drawing Rights (SDRs), roughly Rs 2,100 to Rs 2,300 crore.
- Nuclear Damage Claims Commission:** The Act also establishes a Nuclear Damage Claims Commission to ensure fair compensation and resolve conflicts.
- Supplier Liability:** India's CLNDA is unique as it introduces supplier liability under Section 17(b), enabling operators to seek recourse against suppliers; unlike global frameworks like the CSC, which place liability solely on the operator.
- Broadens supplier responsibility:** Unlike CSC, which allows recourse only for contractual breaches or intentional acts, CLNDA broadens supplier accountability to cases where a nuclear incident results from a supplier's or their employee's act, including the supply of defective equipment, materials, or sub-standard services.

PASSIVE EUTHANASIA

- Recently, the U.K.'s House of Commons passed the Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill, reigniting a global conversation about euthanasia.



- Definition: Passive euthanasia refers to the intentional withholding or withdrawal of medical treatments or life-sustaining interventions, allowing a person to die naturally from their underlying condition.
- Mechanisms: This can include stopping treatments like ventilators, feeding tubes, or medications that keep the patient alive.
- Implementation: Decisions for passive euthanasia are typically made based on the patient's wishes, advance directives, or through family members and healthcare proxies when the patient cannot make decisions themselves.
- Legality in India: A five-judge bench of the Supreme Court in *Common Cause vs Union of India* (2018) recognised a person's right to die with dignity under Art. 21. It said that a terminally ill person can opt for passive euthanasia and execute a living will to refuse medical treatment.
- Draft guidelines on passive euthanasia: The guidelines for withdrawing or withholding medical treatment in terminally ill patients are based on four key conditions:
 - The individual has been declared brainstem dead.
 - There is a medical assessment that the patient's condition is advanced and unlikely to improve with aggressive treatment.
 - The patient or their surrogate has provided informed refusal to continue life support after understanding the prognosis.
 - The procedure follows the directives set by the Supreme Court.
- Legality in other parts of the world: Euthanasia is legal in several countries such as Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, and Spain.
- Difference with Active euthanasia: Active euthanasia refers to the physician deliberate act, usually the administration of lethal drugs, to end an incurably or terminally ill patient's life. In India, active euthanasia is a crime.

SECURITIES TRANSACTION TAX

- The Supreme Court of India decided to examine a plea challenging the constitutional validity of the Securities Transaction Tax (STT), a direct tax levied on securities transactions through a listed stock exchange, as imposed under the Finance Act, 2004.

About Securities Transaction Tax (STT):

- Nature: It is a direct tax charged on the purchase and sale of securities listed on the recognized stock exchanges in India.
- Introduction: Finance Act 2004 introduced Securities Transaction Tax (STT), as a clean and efficient way of collecting taxes from financial market transactions. It is levied and collected by the central government of India.



- Regulation: STT is governed by Securities Transaction Tax Act (STT Act), and STT Act has specifically listed various taxable securities transactions, i.e., transactions on which STT is leviable.
- Taxable securities: These include equities, derivatives, or equity-oriented mutual funds investment units (excluding commodities and currency).
- Contract notes: The charges and rate of STT are reflected on the contract notes which a broker provides to its clients for every execution of trades.
- Excluded for certain transactions: The rate of taxation is different for different types of securities. STT is not applicable to off-market transactions or to commodity or currency transactions.
- Liability: The liability of applying the STT is on the broker when the client undertakes transactions in the stock market. The collected amount is then paid to the government.

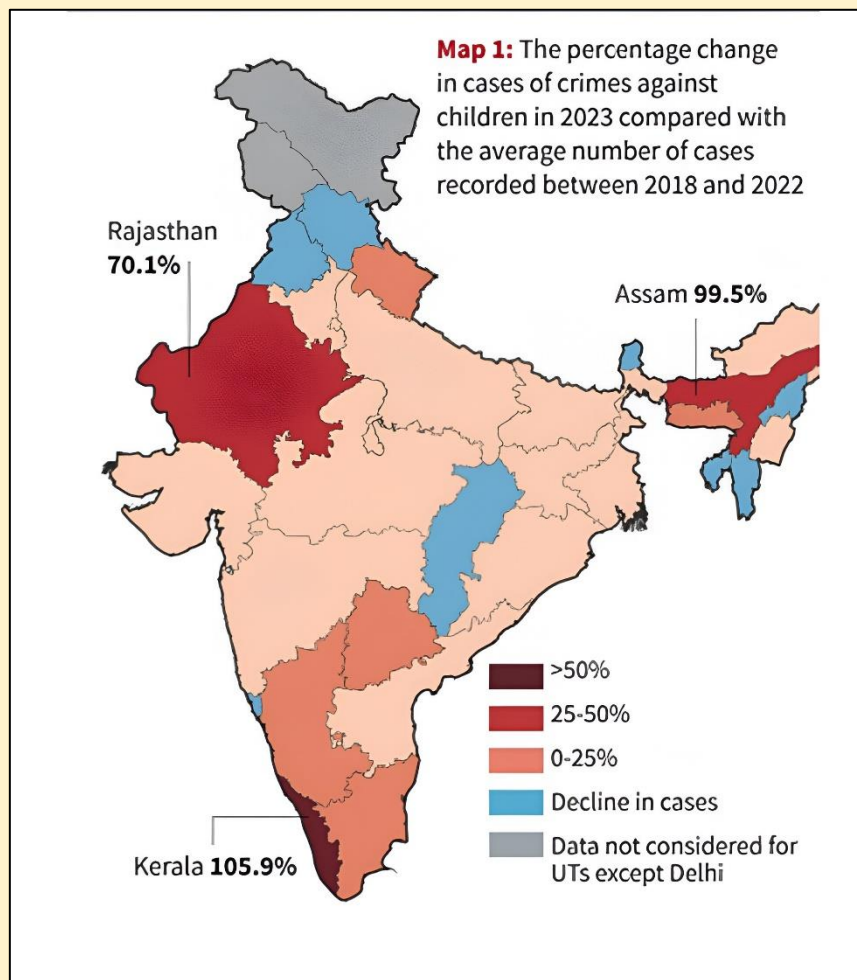
SURGE IN CRIME AGAINST CHILDREN

The latest *National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)* data highlights a disturbing trend — a sharp surge in crimes against children in 2023, especially in the states of **Assam, Rajasthan, and Kerala**. While the overall number of cases across India increased by about **25%**, these three states alone witnessed an unprecedented spike — **Assam (99.5%)**, **Kerala (105.9%)**, and **Rajasthan (70.1%)**.

This data underscores both the growing vulnerability of children and the evolving dynamics of law enforcement, awareness, and reporting mechanisms in India. However, experts caution that a rise in numbers may also reflect **improved reporting and legal enforcement**, rather than merely an increase in actual crimes.

The Data and Its Key Highlights

- **National Trend:**
Across India, recorded crimes against children rose by nearly **25%** in 2023 compared to the 2018–2022 average.
- **State-wise Surges:**
 - **Assam:** From around 5,100 cases (2018–2022 average) to over **10,000** in 2023 — a **99%** increase.
 - **Kerala:** From 2,800 to **5,900** cases — a **106%** increase.
 - **Rajasthan:** From 6,200 to **10,500** cases — a **70%** rise.
- **Types of Crimes:**
The increase spans across categories — **child sexual offences (POCSO Act)**, **kidnapping/abduction**, and **child marriage violations**.



Major Factors Behind the Surge

- **(a) Improved Reporting & Awareness**
 - The increase may partly reflect **better reporting mechanisms**, public awareness campaigns, and child protection helplines such as **1098**.
 - In Kerala and Assam, digital police portals and child-friendly reporting cells have improved case documentation.
- **(b) Crackdown on Child Marriage (Assam)**
 - The Assam government initiated a **statewide crackdown on child marriage** in 2023, invoking the *Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006*.
 - Thousands of arrests and FIRs inflated overall child-related crime figures.
 - *Chart 2* shows PCMA cases forming over **51% of total child-related crimes** in Assam – indicating a legal enforcement surge rather than a rise in actual incidents.
- **(c) Expansion of Legal Provisions (Kerala & Rajasthan)**
 - Many offences previously booked under IPC are now recorded under **POCSO Act (2012)**, broadening the definition of sexual offences.
 - *Chart 5* shows Kerala registering over **4,000 POCSO cases** in 2023, nearly double from 2020.
- **(d) Judicial and Administrative Focus**
 - The creation of *Special POCSO Courts* and *fast-track mechanisms* has encouraged more victims and families to come forward.
 - However, conviction rates remain low, indicating gaps between reporting and justice delivery.

The Broader Picture

- **Rising Vulnerability:**
Increased digital exposure, child labour, trafficking, and early marriages continue to put children at risk.
- **Data Interpretation Challenges:**
A rise in numbers does not always equate to rising crime incidence; it may signify **improved registration and sensitisation** among police and citizens.
- **Disparities Across States:**
States like **Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, and Maharashtra**, despite higher populations, recorded smaller percentage increases – suggesting better baseline reporting or policy consistency.

Governance and Policy Dimensions

- **Legislative Framework:**
 - *POCSO Act, 2012* – criminalises all sexual offences against minors.
 - *Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015* – ensures child rehabilitation.
 - *Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006* – penalises child marriage facilitators.
- **Institutional Gaps:**
 - Lack of coordination between police, child welfare committees, and judiciary.
 - Inconsistent data collection and underreporting in rural regions.
 - Inadequate victim rehabilitation and psychological support.

Way Forward:

- Strengthen **child protection units** and community vigilance systems.
- Train police and teachers to identify abuse early.
- Promote digital awareness campaigns on child rights.
- Integrate **NCRB data** with real-time monitoring under the **National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR)**.
- Ensure fast-track trials with victim-friendly approaches.

The surge in child-related crime statistics in Assam, Kerala, and Rajasthan reflects a **complex mix of heightened vigilance, stronger laws, and persistent social challenges**. While improved reporting is a positive trend, the data also signals the need for sustained policy attention toward **child safety, law enforcement efficiency, and preventive education**. Protecting children must remain central to India's vision of inclusive social justice and human security.

UPSC Mains Practice Question

"The recent surge in crimes against children in India may signify better reporting rather than worsening safety." Critically analyse this statement in the context of NCRB 2023 data. (250 words, 15 marks)

INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY

Iran's top diplomat said that cooperation with the IAEA, the UN nuclear watchdog was no longer relevant following the reimposition of international sanctions on it.



- **Nature:** IAEA is an intergovernmental organisation that seeks to promote the peaceful use of nuclear energy and to inhibit its use for any military purpose, including nuclear weapons.
- **Establishment:** It was established in 1957 as the world's "Atoms for Peace" organisation within the UN, and governed by its own founding treaty, viz. the Statute of the IAEA.
- **Main functions:** The IAEA works to ensure that nuclear technology is used solely for peaceful purposes. It applies comprehensive nuclear safeguards, including: Monitoring, On-site inspections, Information analysis, and Other techniques to verify peaceful use.
- **Relations with UN:** It reports to both the UNGA and the UNSC and is headquartered at the UN Office at Vienna, Austria.
- **Distinction:** In 2005, it was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for its work for a safe and peaceful world.
- **Membership:** The IAEA has 180 member states, India being one of the founding members of it.
- **Institutional structure:** The General Conference, composed of all member states, meets annually to approve budgets and set general policy directions.
- **Headquarters:** Its headquarters is located in Vienna, Austria.

WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME

- Millions of people in Somalia face worsening hunger as major cuts to donor aid leave the World Food Programme with a critical funding shortfall, the UN agency warned.



- Establishment: It is the world's largest humanitarian agency and was established in 1961.
- Associated with UN: It is a branch of the United Nations that deals with hunger eradication and promotes food security in the world.
- SDG 2: The organization's work is guided by Sustainable Development Goal 2, which aims to end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture by 2030.
- Extent: It operates in more than 120 countries, provides food assistance during emergencies and works with communities to enhance nutrition and generate resilience.
- Funding: The WFP has no independent source of funds, it is funded entirely by voluntary donations. Its principal donors are governments, but the organization also receives donations from the private sector and individuals.
- Nobel prize: The WFP has been awarded with the Nobel Prize for Peace 2020 for its efforts to combat hunger, bettering conditions for peace in conflict-affected areas and preventing the use of hunger as a weapon of war and conflict.
- Reports by WFP: The report released by the WFP is the Global Report on Food Crisis which describes the scale of acute hunger in the world.
- Headquarters: Its headquarter is located in Rome, Italy.

PRIME MINISTER DHAN-DHAANYA KRISHI YOJANA (PMDDKY)

The Government of India has launched the Prime Minister Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana (PMDDKY) to develop 100 Aspirational Agriculture Districts across 29 states and Union Territories. The scheme aims to enhance agricultural productivity and address regional disparities.

Uttar Pradesh leads with 12 districts selected, followed by Maharashtra with nine and Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan with eight each. The initiative involves 100 Central Nodal Officers for monitoring and operational guidelines for effective implementation.



Selection Criteria of Aspirational Agriculture Districts

The districts were chosen based on three key factors – low agricultural productivity, moderate crop intensity, and below-average credit access.

The number of districts per state is proportional to the net cropped area and operational holdings. This ensures balanced regional development and targeted agricultural growth.

Objectives of PM Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana

PMDDKY focuses on five main goals – improving agricultural productivity, promoting crop diversification, adopting sustainable farming practices, enhancing post-harvest storage at local levels, and upgrading irrigation facilities. It also aims to facilitate both long-term and short-term agricultural credit for farmers.

Implementation and Convergence Strategy

The scheme does not have a separate budget but will be implemented by converging 36 schemes from 11 different departments.

The Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare will contribute up to 19 of these schemes. Each district will prepare a detailed agriculture development plan. The estimated investment under this scheme is ₹24,000 crore annually.

Geographical Spread and Districts Selected

Uttar Pradesh has the highest number of districts selected, including Mahoba, Sonbhadra, and Prayagraj. Maharashtra's districts include Palghar and Yavatmal. Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan have eight districts each.

Bihar, which is preparing for elections, has seven districts on the list. Other states like Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Odisha, and Tamil Nadu have four districts each. Smaller states and Union Territories have one or two districts selected.

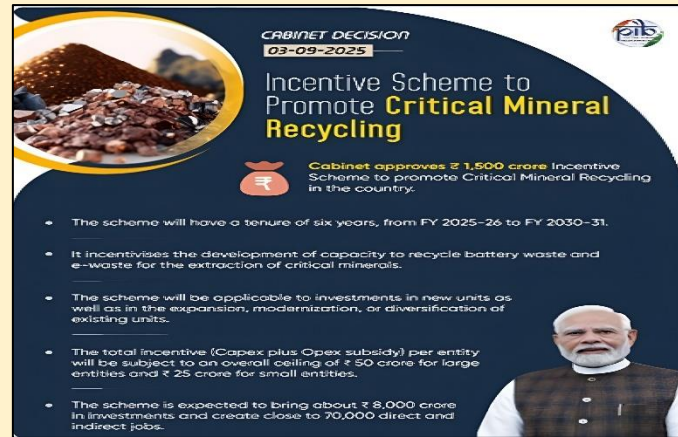
Monitoring and Administration

The Department of Personnel and Training appointed 100 Central Nodal Officers, mostly joint secretaries, to oversee scheme progress. These officers will monitor implementation and ensure convergence of schemes at the district level. Regular reporting and evaluation mechanisms are part of the operational guidelines.

CRITICAL MINERAL RECYCLING SCHEME

The Government of India has introduced a ₹1,500 crore incentive scheme to boost critical mineral recycling. This move aims to reduce the country's dependence on imports and build self-reliance in the critical minerals sector.

The scheme is part of the National Critical Mineral Mission and was approved by the Union Cabinet in September 2025. It focuses on developing recycling capacity from secondary sources such as e-waste and spent lithium-ion batteries.



Scheme Objectives and Scope

The scheme targets the extraction and production of critical minerals from recycled materials. It promotes recycling of e-waste, spent lithium-ion batteries, and other scrap. Both large and small recyclers, including start-ups, are eligible.

Support extends to new units, capacity expansion, modernisation, and diversification of existing units. The scheme excludes incentives for black mass production alone, focusing on actual mineral extraction processes.

Guidelines and Application Process

Detailed guidelines have been issued after consultations with industry and stakeholders. These outline incentive allocation, application, evaluation, disbursement, and performance monitoring. Applications opened on 2 October 2025 and will close by 1 April 2026. The Ministry of Mines hosts the guidelines and application portal online. The scheme ensures transparency and institutional oversight to maintain efficiency.

Incentive Structure and Caps

Incentives cover capital expenditure (Capex) and operational expenditure (Opex) subsidies. Large entities can receive up to ₹50 crore in total, with a maximum Opex subsidy of ₹10 crore. Small entities have a total ceiling of ₹25 crore and an Opex cap of ₹5 crore. This structure aims to encourage wider participation and equitable distribution of benefits.

Expected Outcomes and Impact

The scheme aims to develop 270 kilo tonnes of annual recycling capacity. This is projected to yield 40 kilo tonnes of critical minerals yearly.

It is expected to attract investments worth around ₹8,000 crore. The initiative will create approximately 70,000 direct and indirect jobs. This will strengthen India's strategic mineral supply chain and support sustainable industrial growth.

Significance for National Mineral Security

India's dependence on imports for critical minerals poses economic and security risks. Recycling reduces reliance on foreign sources and mitigates supply disruptions. It promotes circular economy principles by recovering valuable materials from waste. The scheme aligns with global trends towards sustainable resource management and technological innovation.

INTERNATIONAL ABHIDHAMMA DAY

The International Buddhist Confederation (IBC) and Gautam Buddha University hosted the celebration of International Abhidhamma Day on 6-7 October 2025. The event took place at Gautam Buddha University, Greater Noida, with support from the Ministry of Culture, and other Buddhist institutions.

It focused on the theme The Relevance of Abhidhamma in About Buddhist Thought – Text, Tradition and Contemporary Perspectives. This conference attracted scholars from India and several Asian countries. It explored the philosophical and practical dimensions of Abhidhamma and its significance in modern times.



Significance of International Abhidhamma Day

Abhidhamma Day marks the Buddha's teaching of the Abhidhamma to the gods in Tavatimsa Heaven and later to his disciple Sariputta. It is observed on the full moon of Śharada Pūrṇimā.

This day honours the deep doctrinal and ethical teachings contained in the Abhidhamma Pitaka, a major Buddhist scripture. The event marks the enduring spiritual and intellectual legacy of the Buddha's insights.

Conference Themes and Discussions

The conference featured over 35 scholarly papers covering philosophy, ethics, and psychology of Abhidhamma. Presentations compared Abhidhamma concepts with modern scientific fields such as psychology, artificial intelligence, and cognitive studies.

Experts debated how ancient Buddhist thought can inform contemporary mental health and well-being. The interdisciplinary approach enriched understanding of Abhidhamma's relevance.

Keynote and Addresses

Dr Uma Shankar Vyas, a distinguished scholar in Pali and Sanskrit, traced the evolution of Abhidhamma and called it special enlightenment. Prof Rana Pratap Singh emphasised Buddha's teachings as vital for personal and social progress.

The Chief Guest, 3rd Khenchen Rinpoche of Drikung Kagyu lineage, stressed Abhidhamma's practical use in overcoming ignorance and emotional afflictions. IBC Director General Shri Abhijit Halder brought into light its role in promoting holistic health.

Exhibitions and Cultural Programmes

The event included a unique exhibition of over 2,500 Buddhist stamps from 90 countries, curated by Vinod Kumar. Two thematic exhibitions showcased Buddha Dhamma on Body and Mind and artifacts related to Piprahwa relics, symbolising Buddhism's rich heritage.

Two films were screened, focusing on the spread of Buddha Dhamma in Asia and the life of Kushok Bakula Rinpoche, a revered monk. These cultural elements complemented the academic discussions.

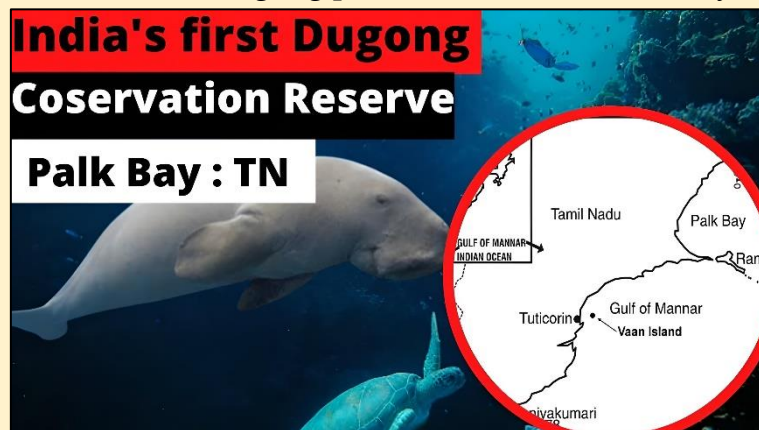
Recognition of Pali as a Classical Language

The Government of India's declaration of Pali as a Classical Language puts stress on its importance. Pali is the canonical language of Theravada Buddhism and the Abhidhamma texts. This recognition helps preserve and promote Buddhist literature and philosophy worldwide. It also supports scholarly research and cultural exchange related to Buddhist studies.

INDIA'S DUGONG CONSERVATION RESERVE GETS INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION

India's Dugong Conservation Reserve in Palk Bay has received formal recognition from the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). The motion was adopted at the IUCN World Conservation Congress 2025 held in Abu Dhabi.

This marks global endorsement of India's marine conservation efforts. The resolution received overwhelming support from governments, NGOs, and research bodies worldwide. Tamil Nadu's initiative is now seen as a model for dugong protection and marine ecosystem restoration.



Establishment and Location

The Dugong Conservation Reserve was established by the Tamil Nadu government on 21 September 2022. It covers 448.34 square kilometres in northern Palk Bay.

The area includes over 12,250 hectares of seagrass meadows. These meadows are critical feeding grounds for dugongs (*Dugong dugon*), a species classified as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List. The reserve is vital not only for dugongs but also for many other marine species dependent on seagrass habitats.

Significance of Seagrass Meadows

Seagrass meadows play important ecological role. They provide food and shelter to dugongs and support diverse marine life. They also help maintain water quality and protect shorelines from erosion.

The degradation of these meadows threatens the survival of dugongs and the overall health of marine ecosystems. Conservation of seagrass is therefore essential for sustaining biodiversity in Palk Bay and beyond.

Threats to Dugongs and Habitat

The motion brought into light several threats to dugongs and their habitat. These include habitat destruction, destructive fishing practices, and climate change impacts such as rising sea temperatures and extreme weather events.

These factors reduce seagrass coverage and disturb dugong populations. Immediate action is necessary to curb these threats and safeguard the marine environment.

Innovative Conservation Efforts

The reserve has introduced innovative restoration techniques. Bamboo and coconut rope frames are used to rehabilitate damaged seagrass meadows.

This approach combines scientific knowledge with local community involvement. Such community-led conservation efforts enhance the sustainability of marine resource management. The success of these methods has drawn international praise and offers a replicable model for other regions.

Global Collaboration and Future Directions

The IUCN resolution encourages collaboration between India, Tamil Nadu, and international partners. It calls for strengthening monitoring systems, building fisheries management capacity, and sharing conservation knowledge.

The goal is to replicate the Indian model in other parts of the Indian Ocean and globally. This cooperation aims to protect dugong populations worldwide and promote sustainable marine ecosystems.

PALLIKARANAI MARSHLAND

The Southern Bench of the National Green Tribunal (NGT) has recently ordered a suspension of all construction activities within one kilometre of the Pallikaranai Marshland. This directive aims to protect the ecologically sensitive wetland until a detailed scientific study defines its precise zone of influence.

The order responds to reports of landfilling and construction inside the Perumbakkam wetland, which is hydrologically connected to the larger Pallikaranai Marsh system.



Chennai gets new ecopark at Pallikaranai marshland

Background and Context

Pallikaranai Marsh, declared a Ramsar Site in 2022, is one of the last remaining natural wetlands in Chennai. It plays important role in flood control and maintaining local biodiversity. Recent unregulated construction near the marsh poses risks to its ecological balance and the safety of surrounding communities.

Legal Intervention by National Green Tribunal

The NGT bench, led by Justice Pushpa Sathyanarayana and expert member Prashant Gargava, acted suo motu after media reports brought into light illegal activities near the marsh. The tribunal noted that Survey No. 286 in Perumbakkam village lies just 246 metres from the marsh boundary. The bench stressed that any unauthorised work here could disrupt water inflows and increase flood risks.

Role of Tamil Nadu State Wetland Authority

The Tamil Nadu State Wetland Authority (TNSWA) has provisionally identified a one-kilometre buffer zone around the marsh using topographical and hydrological models.

This zone marks the marsh's ecological influence area. The Integrated Management Plan (IMP), which will formalise this zone, is under revision and expected to provide clear guidelines for future activities.

Directions for Coordination and Compliance

The NGT has directed TNSWA, the Water Resources Department, and CMDA to expedite the completion of the IMP. Until the plan is finalised and the buffer zone officially notified, no new permissions or approvals for projects affecting the marsh or its hydrological systems shall be granted. This move aims to preserve the marsh's ecological functions and protect local communities from flood hazards.

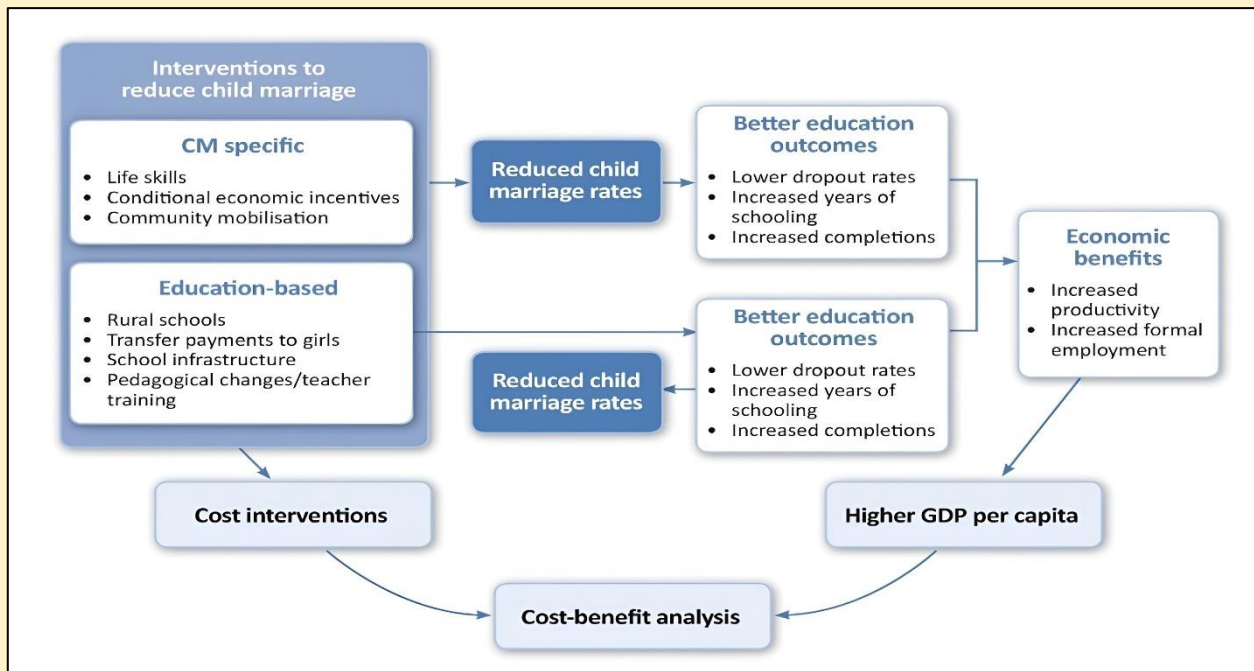
REDUCTION IN CHILD MARRIAGE ACROSS INDIA

Recent data reveals reduction in child marriage across India. A new report by Just Rights for Children marks a 69% decline among girls and 72% among boys. This progress results from coordinated efforts by the government, state authorities, and civil society. The report was revealed at a UN General Assembly side event in New York, marking a hopeful shift towards a child marriage-free India.

Current Status of Child Marriage in India

Child marriage rates have dropped dramatically in recent years. Assam leads with an 84% decline in girl child marriages. Maharashtra and Bihar follow with 70% declines each. Rajasthan and Karnataka show 66% and 55% decreases respectively.

Arrests and FIRs have been key deterrents. The government's Bal Vivah Mukht Bharat Campaign has achieved near-universal awareness. Most people now know the laws against child marriage and feel comfortable reporting violations.



Role of Government and Civil Society

The decline is credited to joint action by the Government of India, state governments, and NGOs. Over 250 organisations under the Just Rights for Children network have played a vital role. Campaigns through schools, panchayats, and community workers have increased awareness. Frontline workers like ASHA, anganwadi workers, and PRI members helped collect data and support interventions. Legal enforcement has improved with more arrests and FIRs filed against offenders.

Education and Barriers for Girls

Education is a critical factor in reducing child marriage. In 31% of surveyed villages, all girls aged 6-18 attend school. However, disparities exist. Bihar shows only 9% full attendance while Maharashtra reaches 51%.

Major barriers include poverty (88%), lack of infrastructure (47%), safety concerns (42%), and transportation issues (24%). These factors limit girls' access to education and increase vulnerability to early marriage.

Reasons Behind Child Marriage

Poverty remains the primary cause, cited by 91% of respondents. Families often marry off girls to reduce economic burden or ensure safety. Traditions and social norms also play role.

Nearly half of respondents believe marriage protects minor girls from harm. Changing these deep-rooted beliefs is essential alongside economic and educational improvements.

Methodology of the Study

The report is based on data from 757 villages across five states, chosen to represent India's diverse social and cultural contexts. The study used Multistage Stratified Random Sampling. Data was collected through frontline workers and community members. This approach ensured reliable, ground-level vital information about child marriage trends and challenges.

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