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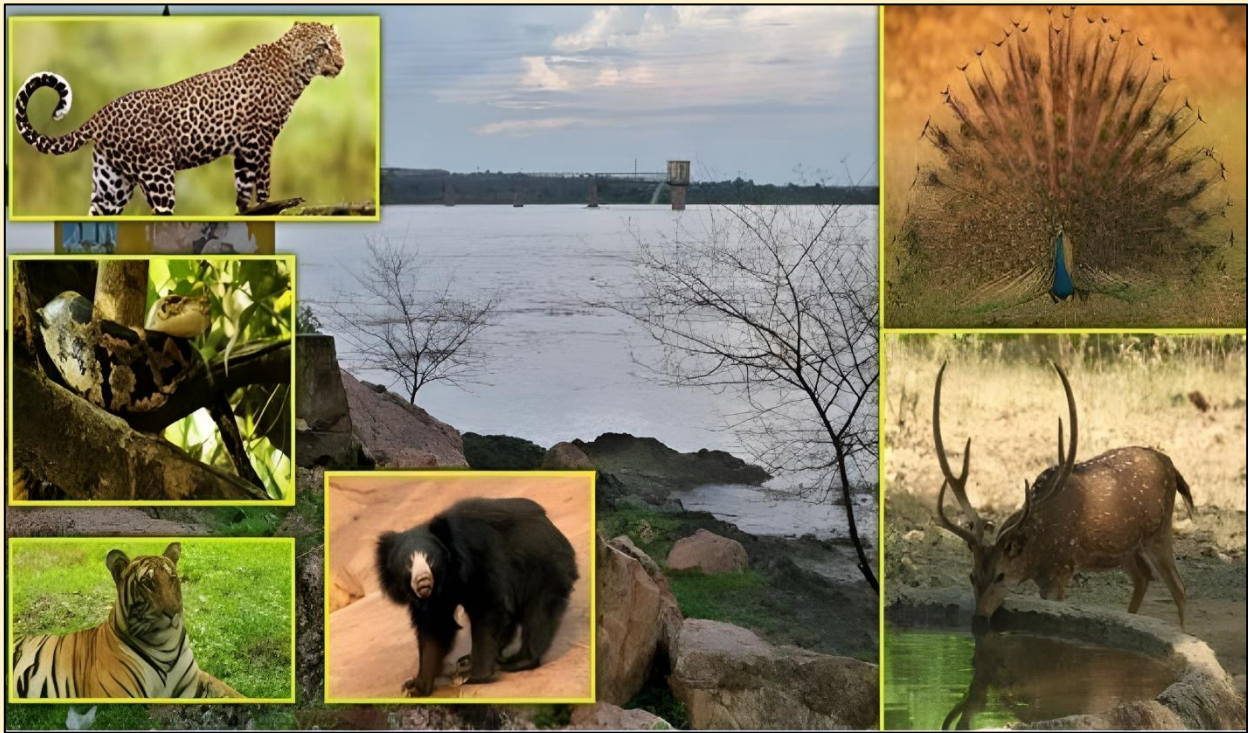
WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS

MAGAZINE

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CHAPRALA WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

A rare striated grassbird was recorded in Chaprala Wildlife Sanctuary in Gadchiroli district, marking a major range extension for the species in Maharashtra.

About Chaprala Wildlife Sanctuary:
- **Location:** It is located in the Gadchiroli district of Maharashtra.

- **Establishment:** Chaprala Wildlife Sanctuary was officially notified as a wildlife sanctuary in February 1986.

- **Area:** It covers an area of approximately 134.78 sq.km (52.05 square miles).

- **Boundaries:** The Markhanda and Pedigundam hills flank the sanctuary from northeast and south, and the Pranhita River flows along its western boundary.

- **Rivers:** It is located on the bank of the confluence of the Wardha and Wainganga rivers. During the monsoons, river water swells and enters the sanctuary.

- **Tanks:** Additionally, several water bodies, including the Murgikunta, Raikonta, and Komatkunta tanks, further contribute to the sanctuary's biodiversity.

- **Vegetation:** It is dominated by southern tropical dry deciduous forests interspersed with grasslands.

- **Flora:** The dominant tree species include teak, Arjun, salai, mahua, bel, dhawada, tendu, sissoo, and semal.
- **Fauna:** It is inhabited by Tiger, Leopard, Wild boar, Sloth bear, Wild dogs, Langurs, Blackbuck, Spotted Deer, Sambar, Jackal, Mongoose, etc. The sanctuary also supports a diverse aquatic fauna, including fish, prawns, and turtles.

NATIONAL CENTRE FOR POLAR AND OCEAN RESEARCH (NCPOR)

NCPOR has become the anchor of India's polar and oceanic exploration, said Hon'ble Governor of Goa, while speaking at the Antarctica Day celebrations at Goa.

About National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR):

- **Nature:** It is India's premier R&D institute for polar and ocean sciences, spearheading the Indian Antarctic, Arctic, and Southern Ocean research programs.
- **Establishment:** It was founded on 25 May 1998 as the National Centre for Antarctic and Ocean Research (NCAOR), and it was renamed NCPOR later.
- **Nodal Ministry:** It works under the Ministry of Earth Sciences, Government of India
- **Headquarters:** Its headquarters is located in Vasco da Gama, Goa.
- **Composition:** The governing Body comprises of 13 members and the Chairman (ex-officio) of governing body is Secretary, Ministry of Earth Sciences.
- **Mandate:** It facilitates scientific research activities in Antarctica, Arctic and in Indian Ocean sector of Southern Ocean. It also helps in management of Indian Antarctic Research Bases "Maitri" and "Bharati", and Indian Arctic base "Himadri".
- **Associated with strategic projects:** It also works on strategically vital projects like Mapping of Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), Continental shelf surveys, and the Deep Ocean Mission.
- **Data Management and global collaboration:** It conducts climate modelling, and is setting up the first Polar and Ocean Museum. It also participates in international polar science networks, Arctic policy dialogues, and climate monitoring programs.

NATIONALLY DETERMINED CONTRIBUTIONS (NDCS)

India is preparing its new Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement for the 2035 horizon. The article proposes a seven-point energy transition strategy to peak emissions by 2035 and strengthen India's decarbonisation credibility.

India's NDC Targets (2016)

Reduce emissions intensity by 33-35% from 2005 levels by 2030.

Achieve 40% non-fossil fuel power capacity by 2030

Create 2.5-3 billion tonnes CO2 sink via forest cover.

Boost climate resilience in agriculture, water & health

Main Arguments

- **Higher Emissions Intensity Reduction:** India should target a **65% reduction in emissions intensity by 2035**, signalling a credible path to peaking emissions around 2035 and reinforcing global trust in India's decarbonisation pathway.
- **Expanded Non-Fossil Capacity:** Raise the **non-fossil capacity share to 80**% by 2035, lifting total generation capacity to **1,600 GW**, with solar and wind contributing **1,200 GW** and storage scaling to ~**170 GW**.
- **Phasing Down Unabated Coal:** No new **unabated coal plants** should be commissioned after 2030; coal capacity should peak at **293 GW** before declining, with eventual retention dependent on affordable **carbon capture and storage (CCS)**.
- **Accelerated Electrification:** Deepen electrification across transport, targeting **100% electric traction in railways**, **50% electric city buses**, and full transition of electric three-wheelers within a few years.
- **Operationalising Carbon Markets:** The **Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS)**starting 2026 must expand coverage to power and medium-scale industries, tightening emission intensity norms in line with net-zero goals.
- **Electricity Pricing Reforms:** High renewable penetration needs **dynamic pricing**, exchange-based power procurement, and **time-of-day tariffs** to manage variability and enhance grid efficiency.
- **Mobilising Finance:** India must attract **$62 billion annually** until 2035 for renewables and grid expansion, with **80% domestic mobilisation** and **20% foreign capital**, supported by stronger MDB financing.

Challenges / Criticisms

- **Financing Constraints:** Large upfront investment needs may strain domestic savings and private capital flows without predictable policy stability.
- **Technological Uncertainty:** Cost-effective CCS, battery storage and large-scale grid integration remain uncertain and require accelerated innovation.
- **Coal-Dependent States:** Jharkhand, Odisha and Chhattisgarh face employment risks, requiring **transition planning**, retraining and diversification.
- **Behavioural Resistance:** Electricity pricing reforms, especially **time-of-day tariffs**, may face public pushback due to lack of awareness.
- **Institutional Fragmentation:** Climate governance remains dispersed, with the need for stronger inter-ministerial coordination.
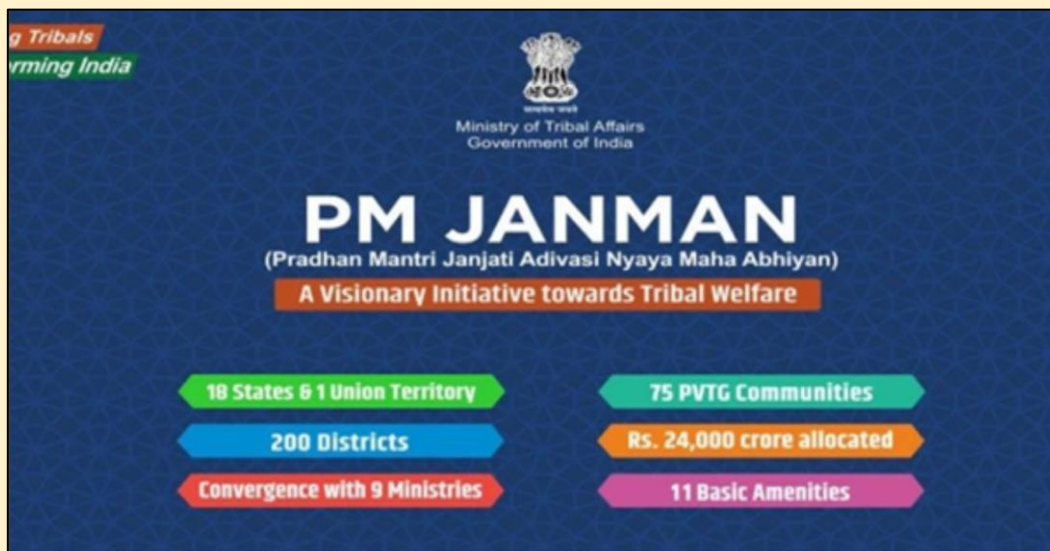
Way Forward
- **Revive PM's Council on Climate Change:** Act as the apex body to approve national plans, coordinate inter-governmental action and conduct periodic review.
- **State-Level Transition Plans:** Prepare **just transition frameworks** for coal-producing states, linking reskilling, MSME diversification and green industries.
- **Green Industrial Policy:** Promote domestic manufacturing of **solar modules, wind turbines, batteries and electrolyzers** to reduce import dependence.
- **Grid Modernisation:** Invest in **smart grids, battery storage, pumped hydro**, and inter-state transmission corridors to handle 50% variable renewables.
- **Global Climate Diplomacy:** Link India's enhanced NDCs with **finance guarantees**, concessional capital pools, and MDB reforms to de-risk private investment.

India's next decade will determine its long-term climate trajectory. A credible, finance-backed seven-point strategy—anchored in higher ambition, technological shifts, coal phase-down, and institutional cohesion—can place India firmly on the path toward a resilient, low-carbon, Viksit Bharat by 2070.

PM JANMAN SCHEME

Members of the Bonda community in Odisha's Malkangiri are set to transition from fragile thatched huts to permanent pucca houses under the PM-JANMAN Scheme.

About PM-JANMAN Scheme:
- **Nomenclature:** PM-JANMAN stands for Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan.
- **Launch:** PM JANMAN was launched on 15th November 2023, a day also celebrated as Janjatiya Gaurav Divas.
- **Objective:** It aims to enhance the socio-economic conditions of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) by providing comprehensive development interventions and by recognizing their unique contribution to national and global development.
- **Beneficiaries:** The scheme targets 75 PVTG communities across 18 states and 1 Union Territory (Andaman & Nicobar Islands) as its beneficiaries.
- **Budgetary Outlay:** The total budgetary outlay for the scheme is Rs 24,104 crore, with the central share being Rs 15,336 crore and the state share being Rs 8,768 crore.
- **Coverage Period:** The scheme extends from 2023-24 to 2025-26.

- **Focus areas:** The scheme is aimed at providing PVTG households and habitations with:
  - basic facilities such as safe housing, clean drinking water and sanitation,
  - improved access to education, health and nutrition,
  - road and telecom connectivity, and sustainable livelihood opportunities.
  - In addition, saturation will also be ensured for schemes like Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY), Sickle Cell Disease Elimination, TB Elimination, 100% immunisation, PM Poshan, PM Jan Dhan Yojana, etc
- **Implementation:** The scheme (comprising Central Sector and Centrally Sponsored Schemes) will be implemented by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, in collaboration with the State governments and the PVTG communities.
- **Other provisions:** The plan also includes the establishment of Van Dhan Vikas Kendras for trading in forest produce, off-grid solar power systems for 1 lakh households, and solar street lights.

'DARJEELING MANDARIN ORANGE'

Recently, the 'Darjeeling Mandarin Orange' has officially been granted the Geographical Indication (GI) tag.

About Darjeeling Mandarin Orange:
Scientific name: It is botanically known as Citrus reticulata Blanco
Nature: The Mandarin Orange is a major cash crop of the Darjeeling Hills and it is widely recognised for its rich aroma and flavour.
Growing areas: It is grown in the hills of Darjeeling in West Bengal.
Other names: It is commonly known as "suntala" is the pride of Darjeeling hills due to its delightful aroma and flavour.
Significance: It is the third product from the region, after Darjeeling Tea and Dalley Khursani chilli, to get the tag.
Required Climatic Conditions for its growth:
    It is cultivated at elevations ranging from 600 to 1500 meters above sea level,
    They grow successfully in all frost free tropical and sub-tropical regions upto 1,500 m. above mean sea level.
    Annual rainfall should be 100-120 cm.
    Temperature should range from 10–35°C is suitable for cultivation of the crop.
    The preferred soil is medium or light loamy soils.

CHAOLUNG SUKAPHA

Union Minister of Ports, Shipping & Waterways (MoPSW) led a vibrant celebration of Assam Day at his official residence, paying rich tributes to Chaolung Sukapha.

About Chaolung Sukapha:
- **Founder of Ahom kingdom:** He was a visionary 13th-century ruler who founded the Ahom kingdom that ruled Assam for six centuries.
- **Other names:** He is widely referred to as the architect of "Bor Asom" or "greater Assam".
- **Establishment of first principality:** It was in Charaideo that Sukapha established his first small principality, sowing the seeds of further expansion of the Ahom kingdom.
- **Administration:** He divided the kingdom into territorial units called khels or phoids, each under an officer responsible for supplying a fixed number of paiks.

Swargadeo Chaolung Sukapha
KING OF AHOM (ASSAM) SUKAPHA (AD. 1228 TO 1268)
The founder of Ahom Kingdom, Architect of Assam.

- **Military system:** Paiks are the able-bodied male population who owed labour and military service to the state. Every adult male between sixteen and fifty was registered as a paik and served the king for part of the year in agriculture, construction, or war. In return, he was allotted land for personal cultivation.
- **Emphasis on guerrilla tactics:** He emphasized guerrilla tactics suited to the terrain of rivers, jungles, and hills.
- **Association with tribal communities:** Sukapha developed very amiable relationships with the tribal communities living in Assam — especially the Sutias, the Morans and the Kacharis.
- **Relevance:** Sukapha's significance, especially in today's Assam lies in his successful efforts towards assimilation of different communities and tribes. He adopted a policy of conciliation and assimilation rather than annihilation.

DENOTIFIED TRIBES

After three years of research, the Anthropological Survey of India (AnSI) and Tribal Research Institutes (TRIs) have for the first time systematically categorized 268 denotified, semi-nomadic, and nomadic tribes across India.

Out of these, 179 communities are now recommended for inclusion in the Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), and Other Backward Classes (OBC) lists.
This historic effort aims to rectify long-standing classification gaps and ensure these communities receive rightful benefits.

DENOTIFIED TRIBES - MEANING

- **DE notified Tribes** (DNTs), also known as *Vimukta Jati*, are the tribes that were originally listed as "Criminal Tribes" and "addicted to the systematic commission of non-bailable offences."

- Once a tribe became "notified" as criminal, all its members were required to register with the local magistrate, failing which they would be charged with a "crime" under the Indian Penal Code.

Denotified tribes were once labeled as "criminal" under the Criminal Tribes Act of 1924, which was repealed in 1949.

However, since then, various commissions—including the Kaka Kalelkar Commission (1955), the Mandal Commission (1980), the Renke Commission (2008), and the Idate Commission (2017)—have attempted but failed to fully classify these communities.
The Idate Commission's 2017 report identified 1,200 denotified, semi-nomadic, and nomadic tribes and highlighted 267 unclassified communities.

This led the Indian government to form a Special Committee under the NITI Aayog in 2019, which assigned AnSI and TRIs the task of ethnographic classification.
Key Findings of the Study

268 communities classified: For the first time, these tribes have been systematically documented.
179 communities recommended for SC/ST/OBC inclusion: This inclusion aims to provide reservation benefits.

63 communities found untraceable: These groups may have merged with other communities, changed names, or migrated.

Political and legal implications: The classification has sparked debates on reservations and special status.

IMPACT ON RESERVATION AND WELFARE POLICIES

With this classification, denotified tribes could access government welfare schemes reserved for SCs, STs, and OBCs, including education and employment opportunities. However, this move has also raised political concerns.

There are two competing views within the Development and Welfare Board for Denotified, Nomadic, and Semi-Nomadic Communities:

Support for Inclusion in SC/ST/OBC Lists
Ensures access to education, jobs, and social welfare schemes.
Provides legal recognition and identity to these communities.
Demand for a Separate Reservation Category

Advocates argue that denotified tribes should have their own classification, similar to SCs and STs, rather than being merged into existing categories.

Some fear that merging them into SC/ST/OBC groups might dilute reservation benefits for other communities.
Challenges and Concerns

Political Controversies: Activists in states like Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, and Gujarat are questioning the basis of classification, fearing it may impact existing reservation structures.

Delays in Implementation: Despite multiple commissions advocating for classification, government action has been slow, delaying welfare benefits.
Historical Misclassification: Earlier census data mistakenly categorized some tribes as castes, creating confusion over their identity and legal status.

Way Forward

The AnSI and TRIs have submitted their final report to the Special Committee under the NITI Aayog. Currently, the committee is reviewing recommendations before preparing a final report for the government.

If the recommendations are accepted:

State governments will have an easier pathway to include these tribes in reservation lists.New welfare policies could be introduced to address socio-economic inequalities faced by these communities.The debate on creating a separate category for denotified tribes may gain momentum.

The classification of denotified, semi-nomadic, and nomadic tribes is a crucial step toward rectifying historical injustices and ensuring their access to government welfare schemes.

However, the implementation process remains complex, with political and legal challenges ahead.

The government's final decision on this matter will shape the socio-political landscape of reservation policies in India.

NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR FINANCIAL INCLUSION (NSFI) 2025–30

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has released the **National Strategy for Financial Inclusion (NSFI) 2025–30**, outlining a **five-year plan (Panch-Jyoti) to deepen and widen financial inclusion in India.**

About
- The strategy, approved by the Sub-Committee of the **Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC),** sets out five strategic objectives supported by a comprehensive **Panch-Jyoti framework** and **47** actionable steps.
- As per the **World Bank**, **financial inclusion means** that individuals and businesses have access to useful and affordable financial products and services that meet their needs — **transactions, payments, savings, credit and insurance** — delivered in a responsible and sustainable way.

Strategic Pillars of the Panch-Jyoti
- **Enhancing Financial Services:** Provide equitable, responsible, and affordable financial services for households and micro-enterprises.
- **Gender-Sensitive Inclusion:** Implement women-centric strategies and support vulnerable and underserved groups.
- **Linking Livelihoods and Finance:** Integrate skill development and livelihood programmes with formal financial services.
- **Financial Education:** Use financial literacy to promote responsible financial behaviour and discipline.
- **Consumer Protection:** Strengthen customer protection and grievance redressal mechanisms for better reliability and accessibility.

Challenges to Financial Inclusion
- **Digital Divide:** Many rural populations lack access to smartphones or the internet, restricting access to digital financial services.

- **Low Financial Literacy:** Lack of awareness about formal financial products and schemes hampers their adoption.
  - Overall national financial literacy stands at only **62.6%.** (According to 2023 data).
- **Trust Deficit:** Fear of fraud, complex procedures, and prior bad experiences discourage first-time users from participating in formal finance.
  - **Cybercrime reports increased 24.4%** between 2021–22 (NCRB data), indicating rising digital fraud.
- **Infrastructure Deficit:** Inadequate banking infrastructure (ATMs, branches) in remote areas reduces outreach.
- **Gender Disparity:** Although bank account ownership among women has improved, actual usage remains low due to social and cultural constraints.
- **Inadequate Credit Flow to MSMEs:** Despite schemes, formal credit to small and medium enterprises remains limited due to collateral and documentation requirements.

Government initiatives for financial inclusion

- **Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY):** It was launched in 2015, to support small and micro enterprises with loans up to ₹10 lakh.
  - In the Union Budget **2024-25,** the loan limit was increased to ₹20 lakh.

- In 2021, the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** launched a Financial Inclusion Index (FI-Index) to track the process of ensuring access to financial services, timely and adequate credit for vulnerable groups such as weaker sections and low-income groups at an affordable cost.

- **Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY):** Launched in 2015, PMSBY is an accident insurance scheme covering death and disability. It is a **one-year renewable policy** aimed at increasing insurance penetration.

  - The scheme provides coverage to individuals aged **18-70** with a savings or post office account.

- **Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY):** Launched in 2015, PMJJBY is a government-backed life insurance scheme.
  - The scheme provides one-year renewable life insurance covering death from any cause.

- **Atal Pension Yojana (APY):** It was launched in **2015** and provides social security to unorganised sector workers.
  - APY is regulated by the **Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA).** It functions under the National Pension System (NPS) framework.
- **Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY):** Launched in 2014, PMJDY aimed to bring the unbanked into the formal financial system by expanding access to savings accounts, credit, remittance, insurance, and pensions.

Way Ahead
- Training, incentives, and accountability of banking correspondents should be strengthened to improve last-mile service delivery.
- AI and data analytics should be leveraged to identify gaps, track financial behaviour, and enable better-targeted policies.
- FinTech companies, digital banks, and other private players should be encouraged to innovate and extend services to underserved populations.

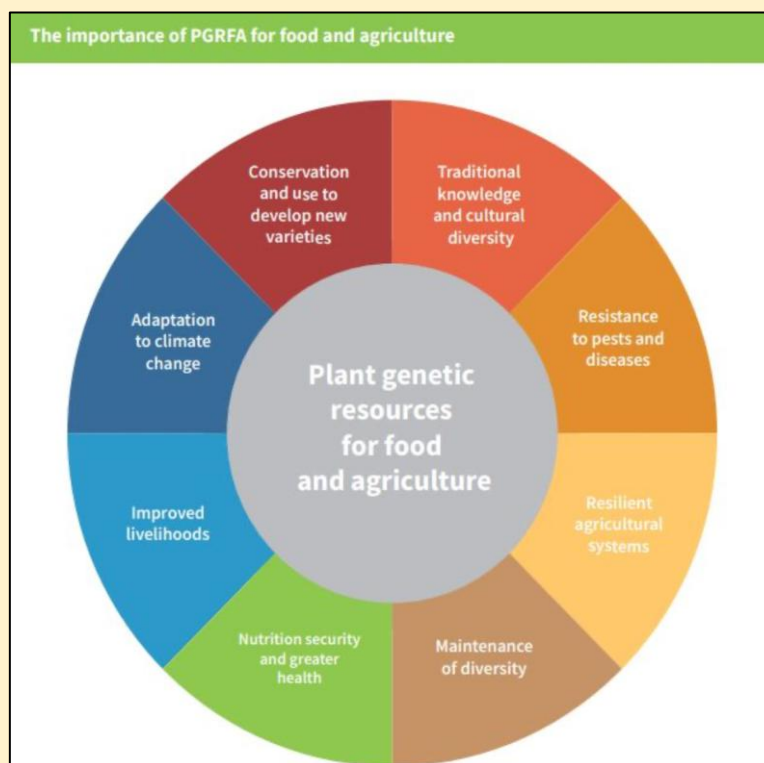## INTERNATIONAL TREATY ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

Indian farmers and experts are urging the government to reject proposed expansions to the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture.

About International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture

It was adopted by the Thirty-First Session of the Conference of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations on 3 November 2001.

Entering into force in June 2004, it is the only legally binding international agreement that specifically deals with the conservation and sustainable management of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (PGRFA).

The countries which participate in the treaty exchange and share genetic material and information for most of the world's most important food crops.

Objectives:

Conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA.

Fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of their use, in harmony with the Convention on Biological Diversity, for sustainable agriculture and food security.
The treaty ensures that farmers and plant breeders access, easily, the raw genetic material needed to develop new crop varieties, including those with higher yields and those that are resilient to climate change.
The International Treaty makes it possible to share plant genetic resources across borders through a unique Multilateral System of Access and Benefit-sharing (MLS).

MLS applies to 64 major crops and forages over which recipients cannot claim Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) or any other rights.

The exchange of material from the MLS is operationalised through the standard material transfer agreement (SMTA), a legal document that governs the terms under which genetic material is shared.

Those who access genetic materials through the Multilateral System agree to share any benefits from their use.

Fair sharing of benefits from use can be achieved through information exchange, access to and transfer of technology, capacity building, and sharing of the financial and other benefits of marketing.

This treaty established and operates a special initiative operated for the benefit of developing countries–the Benefit-sharing Fund (BSF).

BSF supports agricultural projects for farmers, public institutions and others in developing countries to conserve and use PGRFA to improve food crop production, fight plant pests, and adapt to the effects of climate change.

Key outcomes of latest summit :

Key outcomes of the GB11 and other recent meetings include:

Deferred Decisions on Key Issues: Decisions on crucial and contentious issues, such as the expansion of the Multilateral System (MLS) to include all crops and a revised Standard Material Transfer Agreement (SMTA) with provisions for digital sequence information (DSI) benefit-sharing, were postponed to the next meeting.

Lack of Consensus on DSI/MLS: A working group failed to reach a consensus on several proposals, reflecting a continuing divide between the Global North and South over access and benefit-sharing, particularly regarding DSI.

Implementation of Farmers' Rights: The Governing Body encouraged parties to support the role of smallholder and family farmers, women farmers, and indigenous communities in PGRFA conservation and to promote policies that protect traditional knowledge.

Conservation and Sustainable Use: The Commission requested the Secretariat to continue supporting strategies for implementing the articles of the Treaty related to conservation and sustainable use and to monitor identified gaps and challenges.

Funding and Capacity Building: Members were encouraged to provide financial resources for capacity-development activities, including reporting capacities, and to support the work of genebanks globally.

Second Global Symposium on Farmers' Rights: A second global symposium on Farmers' Rights was held in Manila, Philippines, in September 2025 to share experiences and discuss future work in this area.

ESSENTIAL SERVICES MAINTENANCE ACT (ESMA)

Recently, government doctors in Haryana extended their strike indefinitely despite the state invoking ESMA to ban such protests for six months.

About Essential Services Maintenance Act (ESMA):
  - **Enactment:** It is an act of the Indian Parliament enacted in 1968 to assure the supply of certain services that, if impeded, would harm people's daily lives.
  - **Objective:** It is enforced to prohibit striking employees from refusing to work in certain essential services. Employees cannot cite bandhs or a curfew as an excuse not to report to work.
  - **Constitutional Basis:** ESMA is a law made by the Parliament under List No. 33 of the Concurrent List in the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution. This allows both the central government and state governments to enact their own versions of the Act.
  - **Implementation:** The Act's execution largely depends on the discretion of the government (central or state). Before enforcing ESMA, the government must alert the employees through media or newspaper notifications.

- ○ **Duration:** An order under ESMA is typically in force for six months, but the government can extend it, if necessary, in the public interest.
- ○ **Customised ESMA of each state:** Each state has its own ESMA, with provisions that differ slightly from the federal statute. As a result, if the nature of the strike disturbs only one or more states, the states can initiate it. The Act also allows states to choose the essential services on which to enforce ESMA.
- ○ **Central government imposing ESMA:** In a nationwide interruption, particularly involving railways, the central government may activate the ESMA.
- ○ **Applicability:** The government can declare a range of services as "essential" such as:
  - Transportation (railways, airways, public road transport)
  - Public health (hospitals, sanitation, water supply)
  - Energy (electricity generation and distribution, petroleum, coal)
  - Communication (postal, telegraph, telephone services)
  - Defence-related establishments and production
  - Banking services

- ● **Penal actions that can be taken to impose it:**
  - ○ Persons who commence the strike as well as those who instigate it are liable to disciplinary action, which may include dismissal.

  - ○ As the strike becomes illegal after ESMA is invoked, legal action can also be taken against these employees.

  - ○ Any police officer is empowered to arrest the striking person without a warrant.

  - ○ Persons participating in or instigating the strike are punishable with imprisonment, which may extend to one year, or with fine, or with both.

SULTANPUR NATIONAL PARK

Sultanpur National Park is once again echoing with the sounds of migratory birds, with their numbers rising significantly as temperatures drop.
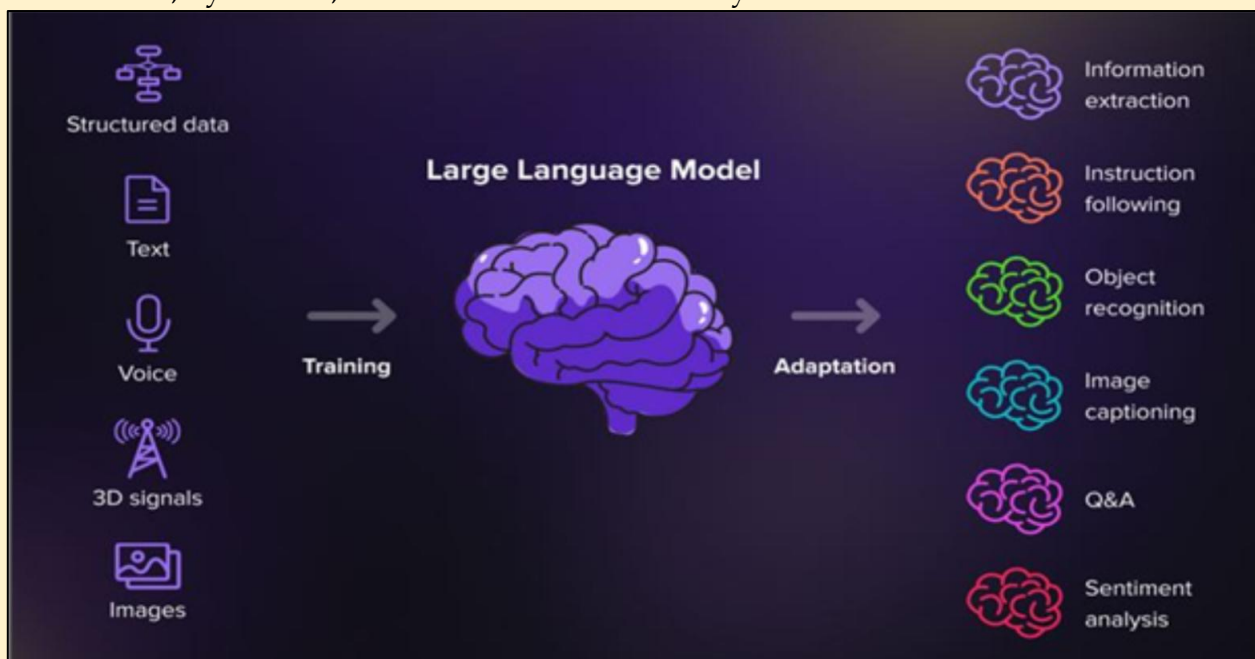
About Sultanpur National Park:

- **Location:** Sultanpur National Park, formerly known as Sultanpur Bird Sanctuary, is located in the Gurgaon district in Haryana, 46 km from Delhi.
- **Area:** Spanning 1.42 sq.km., it consists primarily of marshy lakes and floodplains. It includes a core area of 1.21 sq. km containing the main Sultanpur Lake/Jheel.
- **Establishment:** It was declared a Bird Sanctuary in 1972. And, it was upgraded to a National Park in 1991.
- **Lake inside the National Park:** The Sultanpur Jheel is a seasonal freshwater wetland with fluctuating water levels throughout the year. This shallow lake is mostly fed by waters from River Yamuna's Gurgaon canal and the overflowing waters of the neighbouring agricultural lands.
- **National attention:** It gained national attention in the late 1960s due to the conservation efforts of ornithologists Peter Michel Jackson and Dr. Salim Ali, who frequently visited the site for birding.
- **Significance:** It was recognised as a Ramsar site in 2021. It has also been identified as an Important Bird Area by BirdLife International.
- **Flora:** The vegetation of this park is tropical and dry deciduous, and the flora includes grasses, dhok, khair, tendu, ber, jamun, banyan tree, neem, berberis, Acacia nilotica, and Acacia tortilis.
- **Fauna:** Over 320 bird species have been recorded at Sultanpur, making it a vital wintering ground. Other faunal species, such as Nilgai, Sambar, Golden jackals, wild dog, striped hyenas, Indian porcupine, mongoose, etc., are also found here.
- **Part of Central Asian Migratory Flyway:** It forms a part of the 'Central Asian Migratory Flyway' and thousands of migratory birds from the countries of Russia, Turkey, Afghanistan, and Europe visit the park during the winter months.
- **Important species:** Winter migrants include Greater Flamingos, Northern Pintails, Eurasian Wigeons, Common Teals, and Bar-headed Geese. Resident Birds include Indian Peafowl, Red-wattled Lapwings, Cattle Egrets, and White-throated Kingfishers. And, threatened species include Sarus Crane, Black-necked Stork, and Indian Courser.

LARGE LANGUAGE MODELS

A government working paper released recently suggested that AI large language models like ChatGPT should, by default, have access to content freely available online.

About Large Language Models (LLMs):
- **Definition:** An LLM is a type of artificial intelligence (AI) program that can recognize and generate text, among other tasks. In simpler terms, an LLM is a computer program that has been fed enough examples to be able to recognize and interpret human language or other types of complex data.
- **Nomenclature:** LLMs are trained on huge sets of data, hence the name "large." Since LLMs are now becoming multimodal (working with media types beyond text), they are now also called "foundation models."
- **Based on machine learning:** LLMs are based on Machine Learning (ML) specifically, a type of neural network called a transformer model, which excels at handling sequences of words and capturing patterns in text.
- **Training via tuning:** LLMs use a type of machine learning called deep learning in order to understand how characters, words, and sentences function together. They are fine-tuned or prompt-tuned to the particular task that the programmer wants them to do.
- **Curated data set:** Many LLMs are trained on data that has been gathered from the Internet — thousands or millions of gigabytes' worth of text. But the quality of the samples impacts how well LLMs will learn natural language, so LLM's programmers may use a more curated data set.

- **Applications:**
  - LLMs can perform various language tasks, such as answering questions, summarizing text, translating between languages, and writing content.
  - Businesses use LLM-based applications to help improve employee productivity and efficiency, provide personalized recommendations to customers, and accelerate ideation, innovation, and product development.
  - LLMs serve as the foundational powerhouses behind some of today's most used text-focused generative AI (GenAI) tools, such as ChatGPT, Claude, Microsoft Copilot, Gemini, and Meta AI.

Challenges faced: Though they are groundbreaking, LLMs face challenges that may include computational requirements, ethical concerns, and limitations in understanding context.

NATIONAL MISSION ON EDIBLE OILS

According to a NITI Aayog report, India ranks first globally in the production of various oilseeds, primarily due to steps taken after National Mission on Edible Oils.

NATIONAL MISSION ON EDIBLE OILS – OILSEEDS (NMEO-OILSEEDS)

- Mission will be implemented over **a seven-year period**, from **2024-25 to 2030-31**
- Total financial outlay of ₹ **10,103 crore**
- It aims to increase primary oilseed production from **39 million tonnes** (2022-23) to **69.7 million tonnes** by 2030-31
- It will introduce **SATHI Portal** enabling States to coordinate with stakeholders for timely availability of quality seeds
- It seeks to expand oilseed cultivation by an additional **40 lakh hectares**

About National Mission on Edible Oils-Oil Palm:
- **Objective:** It aims to expand oil palm cultivation and increasing domestic crude palm oil output.
- **Approval:** It was approved in 2021, as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme, with the aim to enhance the edible oilseeds production and oils availability in the country by area expansion and increasing Crude Palm Oil (CPO) production.
- **Focus:** It focuses on increasing production of seedlings by establishment of seed garden, and nurseries of oil palm in order to assure domestic availability of seedlings as per target fixed under NMEO-OP.
- **Targets:** It targets to bring 6.5 lakh hectares under oil palm cultivation by 2025–26 and increase crude palm oil production to 28 lakh tonnes by 2029–30.
- **Implementation:** The Department of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare (DA&FW) serves as the nodal central authority.

Focus: It focuses on increasing production of key primary oilseed crops such as Rapeseed-Mustard, Groundnut, Soybean, Sunflower, Sesamum, Safflower, Niger, Linseed and Castor. It also focuses on increasing collection and extraction efficiency from secondary sources like coconut, rice bran as well as Tree-Borne Oilseeds (TBOs).

Implementation: It will be implemented in all States/UTs with the funding pattern of 60:40 in case of general States, Delhi & Puducherry and 90:10 in case of North-Eastern States and hill States, and 100% funding for UTs and Central Agencies.

BORDER ROADS ORGANISATION

Defence Minister recently inaugurated 125 border infrastructure projects, marking the highest number of inaugurations by Border Roads Organisation in a single day.

About Border Roads Organisation (BRO):

Nature: It is a road construction executive force in India that provides support to the Indian Armed Forces.

Establishment: It was formed on 7 May 1960 to secure India's borders and develop infrastructure in remote areas of the north and northeastern states of the country.

Mandate: It develops and maintains road networks in India's border areas and friendly neighbouring countries. This includes infrastructure operations in 19 states and three union territories (including Andaman and Nicobar Islands) and neighbouring countries such as Afghanistan, Bhutan, Myanmar, Tajikistan, and Sri Lanka.

Nodal ministry: It was entirely brought under the Ministry of Defence in 2015 to enhance border connectivity and operational efficiency (though it previously received funds from the Ministry of Road Transport & Highways).

Motto: Its motto is 'Shramena Sarvam Sadhyam (everything is achievable through hard work).'

Specialisation: It specialises in constructing and maintaining Roads, Bridges, Tunnels, Airfields and Marine Works across some of the world's most challenging terrains.

Role during national emergencies: It has an operational role during national emergencies, when it provides direct support to the Army in the maintenance of roads in the forward zones. It also provides the workforce for the rehabilitation of certain forward airfields of the Indian Air Force during operations.

Inclusion in Order of Battle: It is included in the Order of Battle of the Armed Forces, ensuring their support at any time.

Leadership: The Government of India has set up the Border Roads Development Board (BRDB) with the Prime Minister as Chairman of the Board and the Defence Minister as Deputy Chairman.

Cadre: Officers and personnel from the General Reserve Engineer Force (GREF) form the parent cadre of the BRO. It is also staffed by officers and troops drawn from the Indian Army's Corps of Engineers on extra-regimental employment (on deputation).

UMEED PORTAL

Government of India recently said that it will not impose any penalties for next three months against those who have not registered waqf properties on the UMEED Portal.

About UMEED Portal:

Full form: UMEED stands for 'Unified Waqf Management, Empowerment, Efficiency, and Development.'

Mandate: It acts as the centralized digital platform for real-time uploading, verification, and monitoring of Waqf properties.

Nodal Ministry: It comes under Ministry of Minority Affairs, Government of India.

Legal Support: It was formed under the Unified Waqf Management, Empowerment, Efficiency and Development Act, 1995.

Management: Under this initiative, the registrations of properties are facilitated by respective State Waqf Boards.

● **Key Features of the portal:**

Time-Bound Registration: All Waqf properties must be registered within 6 months of launch.

Geotagging and Digitization: Properties must include precise measurements and geolocation data during registration.

Dispute Resolution: Unregistered properties after deadline will be declared disputed and sent to Waqf Tribunal.

User Support Services: Provides legal awareness tools and clarifies rights under amended law.

Women-Centric Provision: Properties under women's names cannot be designated as Waqf, but women, children, and EWS will remain eligible beneficiaries.

● **Major objectives of the portal:**

○ To ensure transparent and time-bound registration of Waqf properties.

○ To empower beneficiaries with digital access to rights, obligations, and legal safeguards.

○ To resolve long-standing property disputes and enhance accountability.

○ To facilitate policy-level insights through real-time data and geotagged mapping.

"HORI HABBA" FESTIVAL

The Karnataka High Court recently allowed the festival of "Hori Habba" but directed strict compliance of conditions laid by the Supreme Court in the Jallikattu matter.

About Hori Habba Festival:
Location: It is primarily practiced in the rural areas of Karnataka, especially in the Shivamogga, Haveri, Davangere, and Uttara Kannada districts.
Nature: It is an ancient bull-taming game native to Haveri district, and played on the lines of Jallikattu in Tamil Nadu and Kambala in Dakshina Kannada district.
Celebration time: It is held during the harvest season, typically after the Diwali festival and extending up to Sankranti.
Other names: It is also known as Hatti Habba or Kobbari Hori Competition.
Rituals: Trained and decorated draught cattle and bulls are made to run through large crowds. Participants attempt to subdue the animals and snatch prizes, such as dried coconuts (copra), cash, or other gift items, that are tied to their necks or horns.
Cultural Significance: It symbolizes the cultural bond between humans and bulls in the local community, showcasing courage and unity.
Symbol of Status: In rural areas of Shivamogga and Haveri, the social status of an individual is often determined by the quality of the bulls they rear for the event, not by material possessions like cars.
Spectator Event: The event attracts massive crowds, sometimes up to 50,000 people.
Regulation: Following a 2017 Supreme Court ban, the festival's continuation has been contingent upon compliance with strict government conditions and High Court rulings.

India-China Relations

China's 15th Five-Year Plan signals renewed economic outreach and developmental ambition, projecting opportunities for India–China cooperation even amid strategic tensions. As both nations pursue modernisation, the article highlights complementarities but also necessitates a careful assessment of challenges and calibrated engagement.

Main Arguments
Developmental Convergence: China's high-quality growth agenda under its 15th Five-Year Plan aligns with India's Viksit Bharat 2047 vision, creating shared incentives for cooperation in technology, industry, and global governance.
Trade Interdependence: Bilateral trade touched **$138.46 billion in 2024**, with 11% growth in 2025, establishing China as one of India's largest trading partners and creating platforms like the **Canton Fair** for export diversification.

Industrial Complementarity: China's strength in electronics, renewables and manufacturing complements India's capabilities in IT, pharma and digital innovation, offering potential for supply-chain synergy during global technological transitions.

People-to-People Revival: Resumption of Kailash–Mansarovar pilgrimages, restoration of tourist visas, and direct flights enhance cultural linkage, building societal goodwill crucial for long-term stability.

Multilateral Cooperation Imperative: India and China, as major economies within **BRICS, SCO, G20**, hold shared stakes in climate action, South–South cooperation, and shaping a more equitable multipolar order.

Challenges / Constraints

Border Tensions & Trust Deficit: The post-2020 Line of Actual Control (LAC) standoff has significantly eroded strategic trust, limiting the space for expansive cooperation despite economic complementarities.

Ballooning Trade Imbalance: India's exports remain narrow and China-centric supply chains deepen a **trade deficit exceeding $85 billion**, posing vulnerability risks to critical sectors.

Technology & Security Concerns: Chinese investments in telecom, digital infrastructure and apps have triggered national security concerns leading to bans, restrictions, and scrutiny of FDI inflows.

Geopolitical Rivalry in Indo-Pacific: China's assertive posturing in the Indian Ocean, growing footprint in South Asia, and closer ties with Pakistan complicate India's strategic calculus.

Asymmetry in Power & Influence: China's GDP (~$20 trillion) and manufacturing scale create structural asymmetries that limit India's bargaining leverage unless balanced by partnerships elsewhere.

Way Forward

- **Dual-Track Diplomacy**: Adopt a "**guardrails approach**" similar to the U.S.–China model — manage security disputes while keeping economic and cultural channels open.

- **Strategic Export Diversification**: Replicate **Vietnam's targeted export strategies** to expand India's footprint in electronics, pharma, agro-products and services in Chinese markets.

- **Resilient Supply Chains**: Build "China-plus-one" frameworks with Japan, South Korea and ASEAN to reduce overdependence without disengaging economically from China.

- **Revitalised Boundary Negotiations**: Institutionalise more frequent WMCC and SR-level talks; emulate the **India–Bangladesh model** of incremental confidence-building to stabilise border dynamics.

- **Sector-Specific Cooperation**: Pursue cooperation only in low-risk domains—healthcare, climate adaptation, green technologies—while ring-fencing sensitive sectors like digital infrastructure and telecom.

- **People-Centric Connectivity**: Strengthen educational, tourism and cultural exchanges, learning from EU–China people-to-people dialogue formats that build societal resilience.

India–China ties require a mature blend of engagement and vigilance. While economic complementarities offer shared gains, unresolved strategic frictions demand calibrated, interest-driven cooperation. A stable "dragon–elephant tango" will depend on restoring trust while safeguarding national priorities.

"EXERCISE HARIMAU SHAKTI -2025"

The Fifth edition of Joint Military exercise "Exercise Harimau Shakti -2025" commenced today in Mahajan Field Firing Range, Rajasthan.

About Exercise Harimau Shakti:
- ○ Countries involved: It is a joint military exercise conducted between India and Malaysia.
- ○ **Objective:** The aim of the exercise is to jointly rehearse conduct of Sub Conventional Operations under Chapter VII of United Nations Mandate.
- ○ **Origin:** Started in 2012, it reinforces India's Act East Policy and commitment to global peacekeeping frameworks.
- ○ **Significance:** The exercise will foster strong bilateral relations between the two nations.
- ○ **Indian representation:** The Indian contingent is being represented mainly by troops from the DOGRA Regiment.
- ○ **Other Military Exercises between India and Malaysia:** These are Samudra Laksamana (bilateral maritime exercise), and Udara Shakti (bilateral air force exercise).
- **Key Highlights of Exercise Harimau Shakti 2025:**
  - ○ In this exercise both sides will rehearse drills to secure helipads and undertake casualty evacuation during counter-terrorist operations.
  - ○ Both sides will practice tactical actions such as cordon, search and destroy missions, heliborne operations, etc.
  - ○ Both sides will exchange views and practices of joint drills on a wide spectrum of combat skills that will facilitate the participants to mutually learn from each other.
  - ○ Sharing of best practices will further enhance the level of defence cooperation between Indian Army and Royal Malaysian Army.
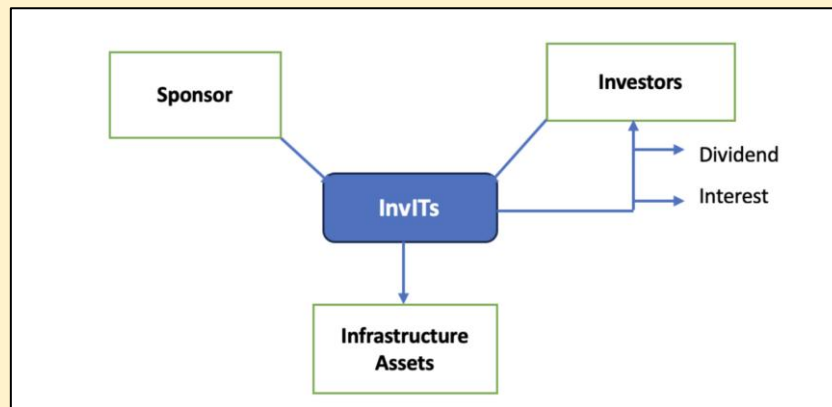
INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT TRUST (INVIT)

Recently, NHAI received SEBI's in-principle approval of registration to Raajmarg Infra Investment Trust as an Infrastructure Investment Trust (InvIT).

About Infrastructure Investment Trust (InvIT):

Nature: It is Collective Investment Scheme similar to a mutual fund, which enables direct investment of money from individual and institutional investors in infrastructure projects.

Objective: It aims to provide retail investors with access to investment opportunities in infrastructure projects, which were previously only available to large institutional investors.

Regulation: InvITs are regulated by the SEBI (Infrastructure Investment Trusts) Regulations, 2014.

Similar to mutual funds: InvITs are instruments that work like mutual funds. They are designed to pool small sums of money from a number of investors to invest in assets that give cash flow over a period of time. Part of this cash flow would be distributed as dividends back to investors.

Minimum investment: The minimum investment amount in an InvIT Initial Public Offering (IPO) is Rs 10 lakh, therefore, InvITs are suitable for high net-worth individuals, institutional and non-institutional investors.

Tradable on stock exchanges: InvITs raise capital through IPOs and are then tradable on stock exchanges. Examples of listed InvITs include the IRB InvIT Fund and India Grid Trust.

Parties involved: An InvIT has 4 parties namely; Trustee, Sponsor(s) and Investment Manager and Project Manager.

> INVITs are created by sponsors, who are typically infrastructure companies or private equity firms.
>
> The sponsor sets up the INVITs and transfers ownership of the underlying infrastructure assets to the trust.
>
> The trust then issues units to investors, which represent an ownership stake in the trust and thus the underlying assets.
>
> While the trustee (certified by Sebi) has the responsibility of inspecting the performance of an InvIT, sponsor(s) are promoters of the company that set up the InvIT.

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