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FOREIGN CONTRIBUTION (REGULATION) AMENDMENT BILL, 2026

The Union government has deferred discussions on the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026, following intense opposition and concerns regarding its impact on minority-led institutions.



About FCRA Amendment Bill 2026:

What It Is?

- The Bill seeks to amend the **Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA), 2010**, which governs how individuals, associations, and companies in India accept and utilize foreign donations. It introduces a stricter framework for managing assets and funds when an organization's registration is cancelled, surrendered, or expires.

Aim: The primary objective is to streamline the management of foreign assets and ensure that inflows do not adversely affect **national interest, public order, or national security**.

Key Provisions Proposed:

- **Creation of a Designated Authority:** The Bill empowers the Central government to appoint a **Designated Authority** to take over, supervise, and manage foreign contributions and assets if a registration is cancelled, surrendered, or ceases.
- **Expansion of Ceased Registration:** A registration certificate is deemed to have ceased if no renewal application is made, if renewal is denied, or if it is not obtained before the expiry date.
- **Provisional vs. Permanent Vesting:**
 - **Provisional:** Assets vest temporarily with the Authority during suspension or renewal delays; they are returned if registration is restored.
 - **Permanent:** Assets vest permanently if the person fails to renew registration within a prescribed period or if the entity becomes defunct.
- **Asset Disposal:** The Authority can transfer permanently vested assets to government departments or dispose of them via sale, with proceeds credited to the **Consolidated Fund of India**.

- **Religious Places of Worship:** For places of worship, the Authority can entrust management to a prescribed person, ensuring the **religious character** of the site is maintained.
- **Expanded Prohibitions:** The Bill expands the category of persons prohibited from accepting foreign aid to include any person (not just associations/companies) engaged in news production or broadcast.
- **Legal Protections and Penalties:**
 - **Appeals:** Aggrieved persons can appeal an order of the Authority to a **District Judge** within 90 days.
 - **Reduced Penalties:** The maximum imprisonment for contravening the Act is reduced from five years to **one year**.
 - **Prior Approval:** Central government approval is now required to initiate any investigation for offences under the Act.

CONTEMPT OF COURT

It is prime news ever since the Supreme Court reacted to the treatment of the judiciary in the Class eight textbook brought out by the NCERT. Also, the Supreme Court in February 2026 directed the UPSC to initiate **contempt proceedings** against states delaying DGP appointments under the *Prakash Singh* guidelines.

This reinforces that contempt is an active tool for enforcing judicial mandates, not merely punitive.

Key Details & Important Facts:

- **Constitutional Source (Court of Record):**
 - **Article 129:** Supreme Court to be a Court of Record with power to punish for contempt of itself.
 - **Article 215:** High Courts to be Courts of Record with power to punish for contempt of themselves.
- **Statutory Framework: Contempt of Courts Act, 1971** (Defines and limits powers).
- **Definitions [Section 2]:**
 - **Civil Contempt:** Wilful disobedience to judgment/decreed/order OR breach of undertaking given to court.
 - **Criminal Contempt:** Publication/scandalizing the court (lowers authority), prejudice/interference with judicial proceedings, or obstruction of justice.
- **Punishment [Section 12]:** Simple imprisonment up to **6 months**, fine up to **₹2,000**, or both. Apology may lead to discharge.

Key Takeaway: Freedom of speech does not permit “scandalizing” the court, especially by senior advocates (officers of the court).

Relevant Keywords for Prelims:

- **Case Laws:** *NCERT Row*, *Prashant Bhushan (2020)*, *Prakash Singh (Police reforms)*, *P.N. Duda (1988)*, *E.M. Sankaran Namboodripad (1970)*.
- **Legal Terms:** *Suo Motu* Cognizance (Court on its own motion), Scandalizing the Court, *Sub-Judice*.

Core Theme:

The core theme is the **delicate balance between protecting judicial authority and preserving fundamental rights**. While Articles 129/215 grant inherent powers to punish contempt to uphold the “majesty of law,” the 1971 Act (especially Sections 3-5) protects **fair criticism** and **accurate reporting**. The 2006 amendment introducing “truth as a defence” modernized the law, aligning it with Article 21, but courts strictly require this truth to be in public interest and not a mere “camouflage” to scandalize.

CABINET COMMITTEE ON SECURITY (CCS)

Prime Minister chaired the second special meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) to review India’s preparedness and mitigation strategies amid the escalating West Asia conflict.



About Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS):

What It Is?

- The Cabinet Committee on Security is the **topmost decision-making body** in India regarding matters of national security, defense expenditure, and foreign affairs. It is one of the specialized committees of the Union Cabinet that handles sensitive strategic issues requiring high-level governmental intervention.

Chaired By: The CCS is chaired by the **Prime Minister of India**.

Members:

The committee traditionally consists of the senior-most ministers of the Union Cabinet:

- Prime Minister (Chair)
- Minister of Defence
- Minister of Home Affairs
- Minister of External Affairs
- Minister of Finance

Aim: The primary aim of the CCS is to ensure **national security** by reviewing and approving major defense acquisitions, formulating strategies to counter internal and external threats, and managing diplomatic and economic responses to global crises that affect India.

Functions:

- **Crisis Management:** Reviewing and directing measures during international conflicts, such as the current **West Asia crisis**, to protect national interests.
- **Supply Chain Security:** Ensuring the stability of essential commodities like **LPG, LNG**, and fertilisers during global volatility.

- **Defense Procurement:** Assessing and approving high-value capital acquisitions for the Indian Armed Forces.
- **Economic Mitigation:** Discussing interventions across sectors like **agriculture, shipping, aviation, and MSMEs** to mitigate emerging global challenges.
- **Internal Security:** Formulating policies to handle domestic issues such as terrorism, insurgency, and law and order.
- **Public Communication:** Underlining the need for the timely flow of **authentic information** to prevent misinformation and rumour-mongering during crises.

Significance:

- It provides a centralized platform for the highest level of leadership to make rapid, coordinated decisions on sensitive security matters.
- By reviewing **fuel duty reductions** and supply diversification, the CCS plays a crucial role in maintaining the stability of domestic prices and essential supplies.

MATERNAL MORTALITY RATE IN INDIA

A recent study published in *The Lancet Obstetrics, Gynaecology, and Women's Health* (Global Burden of Diseases study) highlights India's struggle to meet the **Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3.1** target of reducing Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) to below **70 per 1 lakh live births** by 2030, despite significant historical progress.

Key Details & Important Facts:

- **India's MMR Trend:**
 - **1990:** 508 per lakh live births
 - **2023:** 116 per lakh live births
 - **Absolute Deaths:** Reduced from 1.19 lakh (1990) to 24,700 (2023)
- **Global Context:** India accounted for **one-tenth** of global maternal deaths in 2023 (global total: 2.4 lakh).
- **Current Status:** India falls in the **100–140 MMR** range of countries yet to meet the SDG target.
- **Regional Disparity (SRS Data 2021-23):**
 - **National:** 88
 - **Uttar Pradesh (pulling factor):** 141
 - **Assam (pulling factor):** 110
- **Major Causes:** Haemorrhage and hypertensive disorders account for over **40%** of maternal deaths – both largely preventable.
- **Data Contradiction:** UN Maternal Mortality Estimation Inter-Agency Group estimates India's MMR at **80** for 2023, while the Sample Registration System (SRS) places it at **88**.

Relevant Keywords

- **Organizations:** WHO (global health), Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS).
- **Locations:** Assam, Uttar Pradesh (states lagging), Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria, Pakistan (countries struggling alongside India).

Core Theme:

The core theme is the **uneven progress** in maternal health. While India has shown a remarkable long-term decline in MMR, the pace has slowed. The national average masks severe inter-state disparities, with large states like UP and Assam undermining national progress toward the 2030 SDG target.

JUNGLE CATS

A new study published in **Scientific Reports** provides the first countrywide population estimate and habitat suitability analysis for jungle cats (*Felis chaus*) in India. Using over 6,000 records compiled from tiger survey bycatches, radio-collar data, and secondary sources, the study estimates India's jungle cat population at **~3 lakh individuals** (range: 1.57–4.59 lakh) and highlights their dependence on **agro-pastoral landscapes outside protected areas**.



Key Details & Facts:

| Particulars | Details |
|------------------------------|--|
| Species | Jungle cat (<i>Felis chaus</i>) |
| IUCN Status | Least Concern (but populations shrinking) |
| WLPA Schedule | Schedule II (Indian Wildlife Protection Act, 1972) - hunting/trading illegal |
| Distribution | Widespread across Asia; large populations in India & Nepal |
| Habitat Preference | Avoids dense forests & heavily-modified landscapes; prefers agro-pastoral, grasslands, wetlands, semi-arid open ecosystems |
| Estimated Population (India) | ~3 lakh (1.57–4.59 lakh) |
| Top States | Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Odisha |
| Data Source | 26,000+ camera-trap locations (tiger survey bycatch), radio-collar data, previous studies |

Key Findings:

| Finding | Significance |
|--|--|
| Human pressure is the foremost influencing factor | Avoid densely populated areas; tolerate moderate disturbance |
| Preference for warm, semi-arid, seasonally dry regions | Predicted hotspots in eastern India (not drier west) |
| Agricultural landscapes are critical habitat | Provide rodent control services ("protect" crops) |
| Threats outside protected areas | Fragmented habitats, speeding vehicles, poaching, stray dogs (disease, kleptoparasitism), potential hybridisation with domestic cats |
| Large spatial coverage | First robust baseline for conservation planning |

Relevant Keywords for Prelims:

- **Species:** *Felis chaus*, small cats, jungle cat
- **Legal Status:** Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 – Schedule II; IUCN Red List – Least Concern
- **Institutions:** NCBS (National Centre for Biological Sciences), SACON (Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History), University of Wyoming, University of Illinois
- **Concepts:** Bycatch (in tiger surveys), agro-pastoral landscapes, open ecosystems, kleptoparasitism, habitat fragmentation, wildlife corridors
- **Threats:** Linear infrastructure, stray dogs, hybridisation

Core Theme:

1. **Understudied Species:** Despite being India's most widespread small cat, jungle cats have received little conservation attention compared to tigers and leopards. The "Least Concern" IUCN status creates a misconception that they are doing fine.
2. **Beyond Protected Areas:** Jungle cats thrive in **agro-pastoral and open habitats** outside protected areas. This finding challenges the conservation paradigm focused solely on sanctuaries and national parks.
3. **Ecosystem Services:** By controlling rodent populations in agricultural landscapes, jungle cats provide free pest control services, benefiting farmers – a classic example of **human-wildlife coexistence**.
4. **Emerging Threats:** These landscapes face rapid conversion to built-up areas, linear infrastructure (highways), stray dog populations (disease transmission & food competition), and poaching – requiring proactive land-use policies.

GLUCAGON-LIKE PEPTIDE-1 (GLP-1)

The Indian government has intensified surveillance and inspected 49 businesses following the flooding of the market with generic GLP-1 drugs and a significant drop in their prices.



About GLP-1 Drugs:

What It Is?

- **Glucagon-like peptide-1 (GLP-1)** receptor agonists are a class of medications that mimic a natural hormone produced in the intestines.
- In India, these medicines are strictly regulated and can only be prescribed by endocrinologists, internal medicine specialists, and cardiologists.

Developed By:

- These drugs were originally developed by global pharmaceutical companies (such as Novo Nordisk and Eli Lilly) to manage chronic metabolic conditions.
- Recently, **generic versions** produced by various manufacturers have flooded the market, leading to increased accessibility and crashing prices.

Aim:

- The primary objective of GLP-1 drugs is to treat **Type 2 diabetes** by stimulating insulin production.
- They are also specifically approved for the medical management of **obesity**.

Key Characteristics:

- **Hormone Mimicry:** They function by mimicking the GLP-1 hormone, which targets areas of the brain that regulate appetite and food intake.
- **Blood Sugar Regulation:** They stimulate the release of insulin from the pancreas in response to rising blood glucose levels.
- **Digestion Satiety:** These drugs slow down gastric emptying, making the patient feel full for a longer duration.
- **Diverse Formulations:** Available as both injectable and oral medications depending on the specific generic or brand version.

Misuse:

- **Unauthorised Sale:** Growing on-demand availability through retail pharmacies, online platforms, and wellness clinics without proper medical oversight.
- **Improper Prescriptions:** Instances of drugs being sold without valid prescriptions from the authorized specialist categories.

NORTHERN MOLUCCA SEA

A magnitude 7.6 earthquake struck Indonesia's Northern Molucca Sea, resulting in at least one death and damage to buildings across West Java and North Sulawesi.

Seismic Activity: Located in a complex tectonic zone, the area often experiences earthquakes, crustal warping, and is part of the Pacific Ring of Fire.

Geography: Situated between Sulawesi and Halmahera, it connects the Pacific Ocean to the Ceram and Banda Seas. The northern region has shallower depths (under 200m in some parts) compared to the deep southern basins.

Oceanography: The region is characterized by the Indonesian Throughflow, bringing warm Pacific water, and it features significant biodiversity with coral reefs and seagrass.

Recent Events: A 7.4 magnitude earthquake occurred on April 2, 2026, in the Northern Molucca Sea off the coast of Ternate, causing at least one fatality and triggering a temporary tsunami alert.

History: Part of the broader Maluku region known as the "Spice Islands," which were a key focus of 16th-century European exploration.



About Indonesia:

What It Is?

- Indonesia is the world’s largest archipelagic state, located in Southeast Asia between the Indian and Pacific Oceans. It is a sovereign nation composed of thousands of islands and is recognized as a tectonically complex region due to its position on the **Pacific Ring of Fire**.

Capital: Jakarta (located on the island of Java).

Bordering Nations:

Indonesia shares land borders with three countries:

- **Malaysia:** On the island of Borneo (Sabah and Sarawak).
- **Papua New Guinea:** On the island of New Guinea.
- **Timor-Leste:** On the island of Timor.

Key Geological Features:

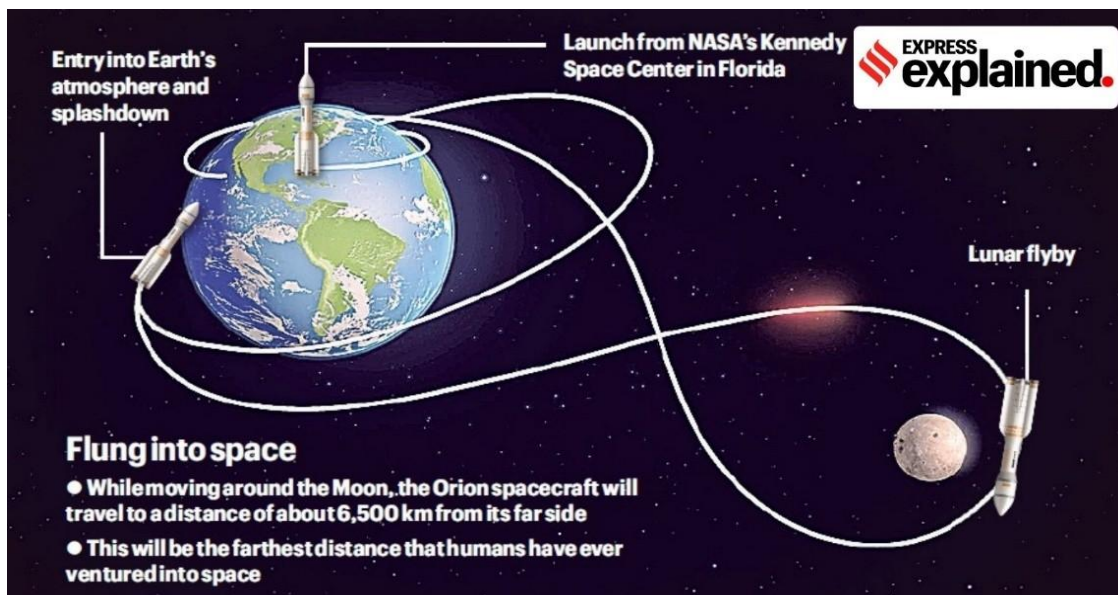
- **Pacific Ring of Fire:** Indonesia sits on this seismically active belt, which is characterized by a high concentration of volcanoes and frequent earthquake activity.
- **Volcanic Arc:** The nation hosts one of the highest densities of active volcanoes in the world, stretching from Sumatra through Java to the Lesser Sunda Islands.
- **Molucca Sea:** A highly active tectonic zone in the northern region where the recent magnitude 7.6 earthquake originated at a depth of 35 km.
- **Mountainous Interior:** Most large islands, such as **Sulawesi** and **Sumatra**, feature dense tropical rainforests and rugged mountain ranges formed by tectonic plate movements.
- **Continental Shelves:** The country sits between the Sunda Shelf and the Sahul Shelf, creating diverse deep-sea trenches and shallow coastal waters.

Significance:

- Due to its unique position at the meeting point of several tectonic plates, Indonesia is a critical site for studying earthquake dynamics and tsunami modeling.
- Its islands harbor some of the world’s highest levels of biodiversity and vast tropical forest reserves.

ARTEMIS II MISSION

NASA is set to launch the **Artemis II** mission on Wednesday, April 1, 2026, marking the first time humans will venture to the Moon's neighbourhood since the Apollo 17 mission in 1972.



About Artemis II Mission:

What It Is?

- Artemis II is the first crewed mission under NASA's Artemis program. It is a test-ride mission designed to fly a crew of four astronauts around the Moon and back to Earth without landing on the lunar surface.

Organisation Involved: National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).

Timeline & Current Status

- **Debut of Systems:** The SLS rocket and Orion spacecraft first debuted during the uncrewed Artemis I mission in 2022.
- **Artemis II Launch:** Scheduled for **Wednesday, April 1, 2026.**

Aim: The primary objective is to **test and validate** the Space Launch System (SLS) rocket and the Orion spacecraft's life-support systems with a crew on board. It serves as a foundational step for deeper space exploration and future lunar landings.

How It Works?

1. **Launch:** The mission uses the **SLS rocket**, the most powerful launch vehicle currently available to NASA.
2. **Earth Orbits:** The Orion spacecraft will complete **two rounds of the Earth** to gain necessary velocity and test systems before departing for the Moon.
3. **Lunar Transit:** It will take **three to four days** to reach the Moon's neighborhood, following a quicker, high-power trajectory similar to the Apollo missions.
4. **Lunar Flyby:** Orion will circle the Moon, reaching a distance of approximately **6,500 km from the far side** of the lunar surface.
5. **Return:** After the flyby, the spacecraft will embark on a return journey, concluding the **10-day mission** with a splashdown on Earth.

Key Features:

- **Crewed Debut:** This is the first time the SLS rocket and Orion spacecraft are being used to carry human astronauts.
- **Powerful Propulsion:** Unlike fuel-efficient uncrewed missions (like Chandrayaan-3) that take weeks, Artemis II uses a powerful SLS rocket to reach the Moon in just a few days.
- **Deep Space Trajectory:** The spacecraft will travel farther into space than any previous human mission, exceeding the 110 km altitude reached by Apollo missions on the far side of the Moon.

Significance:

- It represents the first human return to the lunar vicinity in over five decades.
- By reaching 6,500 km from the Moon's far side, the crew will venture **farther into space** than humans have ever gone before.

WTO MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

The World Trade Organization's 14th Ministerial Conference (MC14) concluded in Yaoundé, Cameroon, without a final agreement on major issues like the e-commerce moratorium.



About WTO MC14 Conference:

What it is?

- The Ministerial Conference is the **highest decision-making body** of the WTO, typically held every two years to negotiate global trade rules.

Host: Held at the Palais des Congrès in **Yaoundé, Cameroon**; this was only the second time a Ministerial Conference took place in Africa.

Aim: To modernize WTO operations, address **fisheries subsidies**, advance **WTO reform**, and decide on the future of digital trade customs duties (e-commerce moratorium).

Key Outcomes of the MC14 Conference:

- **Fisheries Subsidies:**
 - Ministers reached an agreement to persist with negotiations regarding fisheries subsidies.
 - The objective is to provide final recommendations by the **15th Ministerial Conference**.
 - These recommendations aim to achieve comprehensive disciplines on harmful subsidies as outlined in the **Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies**.

- **Small Economies and Development:**

- Specific decisions were adopted to improve the integration of small economies into the multilateral trading system.
- The focus is on ensuring these smaller nations can participate more effectively in global trade.

- **Sanitary and Phytosanitary and Technical Barriers to Trade Agreements:**

Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) measures are WTO-recognized regulations designed to protect human, animal, or plant life from risks arising from pests, diseases, toxins, or contaminants in food and agriculture.

These measures ensure food safety and prevent cross-border spread of diseases, while ideally adhering to scientific evidence, transparency, and non-discrimination in international trade.

Under the WTO SPS Agreement, members are encouraged to base their measures on international standards, guidelines, or recommendations:

- **Codex Alimentarius Commission (Codex):** Food safety.
- **World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH, formerly OIE):** Animal health.
- **International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC):** Plant health.

Scientific Justification: Measures must be based on risk assessment.

Avoid Protectionism: Measures should not be used as disguised restrictions to trade.

Equivalence: Countries should accept other countries' SPS measures as equivalent if they provide the same level of health protection

- The conference enhanced the implementation of **special and differential treatment** provisions.
- These measures are designed to help developing nations navigate sanitary, phytosanitary, and technical trade barriers.
- The goal is to make these provisions more precise, effective, and operational for member states.

- **Trade and Climate Agenda:**

- Member nations reaffirmed their high-level commitment to **fossil fuel subsidy reform**.
- A communiqué was adopted that outlines a menu of voluntary climate actions to guide future work at the intersection of trade and the environment.
- Progress was noted through the **Integrated Forum on Climate Change and Trade**, which is scheduled to launch a three-year work programme in June 2026.

- **Least Developed Countries Package:**
 - Significant progress was achieved on a dedicated package designed to support **Least Developed Countries**.
 - This package is considered a core component of the emerging outcomes that will be finalized in Geneva.
- **The Yaoundé Package Draft Declaration:**
 - Ministers developed a collection of draft texts known as the **Yaoundé Package**.
 - This package includes a draft **Ministerial Declaration on World Trade Organization Reform** and a work plan.
 - It also contains draft decisions on **Electronic Commerce** and the **Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights**.
 - Because members ran out of time in Cameroon, these texts will serve as the basis for finalizing agreements at the next **General Council** meeting in Geneva.

Success of Outcomes:

- **Modernized Work Methods:** Director-General Okonjo-Iweala noted a new WTO way of working that is more nimble and responsive.
- **Climate Integration:** Successfully moved the trade-climate interface forward through the Integrated Forum on Climate Change and Trade (IFCCT).
- **Institutional Continuity:** Preserved important draft texts (the Yaoundé Package) to prevent total collapse and provide a basis for future talks.
- **Inclusivity for Small States:** Formalized support mechanisms for smaller and developing economies to better navigate multilateral systems.

Failures of the Conference:

- **E-commerce Deadlock:** Failed to extend the moratorium on customs duties for digital transmissions due to a clash between the US (seeking a permanent extension) and Brazil.
- **TRIPS Moratorium Lapse:** No agreement was reached on the non-violation complaint moratorium under TRIPS, which is expected to expire at the end of March 2026.
- **Agriculture Impasse:** Negotiations remained mired in long-standing disputes over domestic support and market access between the US and Brazil.
- **Investment Facilitation:** India and South Africa successfully blocked the inclusion of the Investment Facilitation for Development (IFD) agreement, citing it as outside the WTO's mandate.
- **Dispute Settlement Reform:** Despite two days of thematic discussions, there was no convergence on restoring the WTO's appellate body or reform system.

Way Ahead:

- **Geneva Resumption:** Members must use the Yaoundé Package draft texts to finalize agreements at the next **General Council meeting**.
- **Addressing the Deadline:** Urgently resolve the e-commerce and TRIPS moratoriums before they officially expire and disrupt digital trade.
- **Inclusive Reform:** Shift toward the member-driven reform approach demanded by India and South Africa to ensure developing nations aren't sidelined.
- **Fisheries Recommendations:** Accelerate technical work in Geneva to ensure comprehensive recommendations are ready for **MC15**.
- **Bridging Major Gaps:** Direct high-level diplomatic engagement is needed between the US, Brazil, and India to find middle ground on agriculture and digital trade.

The MC14 conference demonstrated a renewed Yaoundé way of working but ultimately fell short of delivering legally binding results on critical digital and agricultural issues. While progress on climate and LDC support is encouraging, the looming expiration of trade moratoriums poses a significant risk to global stability. The WTO's future relevance now hinges on whether Geneva can bridge the deep geopolitical fractures exposed in Cameroon.

SPACE GOVERNANCE

Space governance is facing a critical failure as Earth's orbits become increasingly crowded and vulnerable to debris, with current regulations failing to keep pace with rapid commercial expansion.



About Space Governance:

What It Is?

- Space governance refers to the international and national frameworks of treaties, laws, and ethical norms designed to manage human activities in outer space. It encompasses the regulation of satellite launches, the mitigation of orbital debris, the management of radio frequencies, and the establishment of liability for space-related accidents.

Key Laws Governing Space:

- **Outer Space Treaty (1967):** The foundational pillar of international space law. **Article VI** makes states internationally responsible for national activities in space, including those by private entities, while **Article VII** establishes liability for damage caused by space objects.
- **Liability Convention (1972):** Elaborates on Article VII of the Outer Space Treaty, providing specific procedures for claiming compensation for damage caused by space objects.
- **National Licensing Regimes:** The primary modern mechanism used by countries to enforce orbital responsibility (such as requiring disposal plans) before a mission is approved for launch.

Importance of Governing Space:

1. **Preventing Collisions:** Effective governance ensures satellites are moved or de-orbited safely. Even debris smaller than a coin can destroy active satellites due to high orbital velocities.
2. **Mitigating Cumulative Harm:** Governance is needed to address long-term congestion rather than just individual accidents. Current laws fail to prevent irreversible harm from thousands of fragments generated by each collision.
3. **Ensuring Intergenerational Equity:** Stewardship ensures future generations can still access space. Principles from environmental law suggest our current use should not foreclose future access to orbital resources.
4. **Protecting Global Services:** Reliable governance secures the infrastructure for weather forecasting, GPS, and communication. These essential services are threatened by an ethically under-governed and fragile orbital environment.
5. **Establishing a Duty-of-Care:** Standardized rules create an ethical threshold for acceptable congestion. Without it, responsible operators absorb higher costs while others ignore risks for commercial gain.

Challenges Associated with Space Governance:

1. **Verification Gap:** There is no regular way to confirm if operators actually de-orbit satellites once missions end. Regulators often rely on what companies *say* they will do rather than what they can confirm in orbit.
2. **Debris Tracking Limitations:** Much of the debris capable of causing significant damage is impossible to track consistently. Authorities often can only identify the source of a fragment *after* damage has already occurred.
3. **Information Asymmetry:** Access to accurate data about object locations is uneven across countries. Information is often withheld for commercial reasons or kept secret for national security.
4. **Outdated Legal Assumptions:** Existing treaties were written when space was state-controlled and innovation was slow. They do not address the modern era of frequent private launches and massive satellite constellations.
5. **Permissive Regulatory Forum Shopping:** Regulators in different jurisdictions ask for varying levels of detail. This allows operators to register in permissive environments to bypass strict safety standards.

Way Ahead:

- **Standardize Licensing:** Implement uniform global licensing conditions to prevent operators from choosing the most permissive regulatory environments.
- **Mandatory Data Sharing:** Move beyond voluntary guidelines to legally mandated data sharing to improve global space situational awareness.
- **Enforceable Mitigation Thresholds:** Require launch operators to meet measurable and verifiable debris-mitigation and end-of-life disposal thresholds.

- **Integrate Environmental Principles:** Embed principles like precaution and proportionality into space policy to ensure uncertainty does not excuse inaction.
- **India's Leadership Role:** As India develops its national space legislation, it has a unique opportunity to embed orbital responsibility as a mandatory legal requirement for its expanding commercial sector.

Earth's orbital environment has shifted from a vast frontier to a fragile resource threatened by a significant gap in ethical and legal governance. Relying on voluntary compliance is no longer sustainable as debris risks multiply and commercial actors increase. For space to remain a viable resource, the international community must transition to enforceable, standardized, and verifiable stewardship.

GREAT INDIAN BUSTARD (GHORAD)

After a decade-long hiatus, a **Great Indian Bustard (Ghorad)** chick has been born in Gujarat's Kutch district through a pioneering inter-state conservation effort.

About Ghorad (Great Indian Bustard): What it is?

- The Great Indian Bustard (*Ardeotis nigriceps*), locally known as **Ghorad** in Gujarat and Maharashtra, is one of the heaviest flying birds in the world. It is considered the flagship species of India's grassland ecosystem and is often called the Guardian of the Grasslands.

IUCN Status: Critically Endangered.

Population: Estimated to be fewer than 150 individuals globally, with the majority residing in Rajasthan's Desert National Park.

Legal Protection: Listed in **Schedule I** of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, providing it the highest level of legal protection.

Habitat:

- **Primary Landscape:** Dry, open grasslands and scrublands with scattered bushes.
- **Geographic Range:** Historically found across the Indian subcontinent, it is now restricted to isolated pockets in **Rajasthan (Kutch/Thar), Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Andhra Pradesh.**
- **Nesting:** They are ground-nesting birds, making their eggs highly vulnerable to predators like stray dogs and foxes.

Key Characteristics:

- **Physical Stature:** Large, ostrich-like appearance with a black cap contrasting with a pale neck and brownish body.
- **Heavyweight Flyer:** Adult males can weigh up to **15 kg** and stand about one meter tall.
- **Breeding Behavior:** During the breeding season, males produce a deep resonant boom that can be heard from nearly a kilometer away to attract females.
- **Slow Breeders:** Females typically lay only **one egg per year**, which contributes to their extremely slow population recovery.
- **Omnivorous Diet:** They feed on a variety of insects (like grasshoppers and beetles), small rodents, reptiles, and seeds, making them natural pest controllers for nearby farms.



About Operation Egg Transfer:

What it is?

- Operation Egg Transfer is a high-tech foster-parenting conservation strategy. It involves replacing an unfertilized egg in a wild nest with a laboratory-fertilized egg to ensure a successful birth in regions where the natural male population has vanished.

Organization Involved: Forest Departments of **Gujarat** and **Rajasthan**.

Technical Partner: Wildlife Institute of India (WII).

Aim: The primary aim was to revive the GIB population in **Kutch, Gujarat**, where the lack of male bustards meant that local females were laying unfertilized eggs.

Key Features:

- **Cold Chain/Incubation Logistics:** The fertilized egg was transported over **19 hours** from Rajasthan to Kutch in a specialized **portable incubator** to maintain precise temperature and humidity.
- **Decoy Strategy:** The forest team carefully swapped an unfertilized egg in a wild nest in Abdasa with the fertilized one while the female was away.

SRY GENE SCREENING:

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) announced a seismic policy change mandating **SRY gene screening** for all female athletes in international elite sports.

- This decision effectively bans transgender women and many DSD (Differences in Sex Development) athletes from female categories.



About SRY Gene Screening:

What it is?

- SRY stands for '**Sex-determining Region Y**'. It is a specific segment of DNA usually found on the Y chromosome. This gene acts as a biological master switch that triggers the development of testes and the production of male levels of testosterone, leading to male physical development.

Developed By: The SRY gene was first discovered in **1990** by **Professor Andrew Sinclair**.

Aim:

- The primary objective is to protect the female category in elite sports.
- The IOC aims to ensure that athletes competing in the female category do not have the physiological advantages associated with male puberty and male chromosomal development, such as increased bone density and explosive muscle power.

How it Works?

1. **Sample Collection:** The athlete provides a simple **saliva sample** or a **cheek swab** at a certified diagnostic lab.
2. **DNA Analysis:** The lab analyzes the sample to detect the presence or absence of the SRY gene.
3. **Turnaround Time:** The process typically takes about **one week** for results to be issued.
4. **Verification:** The results are submitted to the relevant international sports body. If negative, the athlete is permanently cleared for the female category.

Key Features:

- **Once-in-a-Lifetime:** Since the SRY gene is fixed at birth, the test is generally required only once in an athlete's career.
- **Predictive Marker:** The IOC views the gene as a highly accurate indicator of whether an athlete has experienced or will experience male sex development.
- **Selective Application:** It applies only to **elite-level international athletes**(Olympics, World Championships) and not to grassroots or leisure sports.
- **Exceptions for Rare DSDs:** Athletes with specific conditions like **Complete Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome (CAIS)** – where the body cannot process testosterone – may still be eligible for the female category even if they are SRY-positive.
- **Voluntary but Mandatory for Entry:** Athletes can refuse the test, but refusal results in immediate disqualification from IOC-sanctioned events.

Significance:

- The IOC cites scientific data showing a **10% to 100% performance advantage** for male-developed athletes depending on the sport.
- This marks a major shift from self-identification models to biological/genetic models for gender classification in sports.
- The IOC advises early screening so athletes can make informed decisions about their training and investment in the female category.

SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT (SWM) RULES, 2026

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) has notified the Solid Waste Management (SWM) Rules, 2026, which will replace the existing 2016 framework starting April 1, 2026.



About Solid Waste Management (SWM) Rules, 2026:

What it is?

- The SWM Rules, 2026, are a comprehensive regulatory framework designed to modernize India's waste management system. They shift the focus from a collect-and-dump model to a **circular economy** approach that prioritizes resource recovery, recycling, and accountability for all waste generators.

Notifying Authority: Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC).

Legal Basis: Issued under the **Environment (Protection) Act, 1986**.

Predecessor: These rules supersede the **Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016**.

Aim: The primary objective is to achieve **Zero Waste to Landfill** by strengthening source segregation, enhancing the accountability of bulk generators, and leveraging digital governance to track waste lifecycles.

Key Features of the New Rules:

- **Mandatory Four-Stream Segregation:** Waste must be separated at the source into four categories:
 1. **Wet Waste:** (Organic/Food) to be composted or bio-methanated.
 2. **Dry Waste:** (Plastic, paper, metal) to be sent to Material Recovery Facilities (MRFs).
 3. **Sanitary Waste:** (Diapers, napkins) to be wrapped securely for separate handling.
 4. **Special Care Waste:** (Domestic hazardous items like paint, bulbs, medicines).
- **Extended Bulk Waste Generator Responsibility (EBWGR):** Entities generating more than 100 kg/day, consuming more than 40,000 liters of water/day, or having more than 20,000 sq.m. area must process organic waste on-site or obtain EBWGR certificates.
- **Digital Governance:** A **Centralised Online Portal** will track waste from generation to final disposal, including registrations, reporting, and audits.
- **Polluter Pays Principle:** Introduction of **Environmental Compensation** for non-compliance, such as operating without registration or submitting false data.
- **Refuse-Derived Fuel (RDF) Promotion:** Mandates industries (like cement plants) to increase RDF substitution from **5% to 15%** over six years.

Refuse Derived Fuel (RDF) is a high-calorific fuel produced by processing non-recyclable municipal solid waste—including plastics, paper, textiles, and wood—through shredding, drying, and sorting to remove incombustibles

- **Landfill & Legacy Waste:** Strict restrictions limit landfills to non-recyclable/inert waste only. It mandates time-bound **biomining and bioremediation** of existing legacy dumpsites.
- **Special Provisions for Hilly/Island Regions:** Local bodies can levy **user fees on tourists** and regulate inflow based on waste processing capacity.
- **Land Allocation:** Graded criteria for faster land allocation for waste processing units and mandatory buffer zones for large facilities.

Significance:

- Reduces methane emissions from landfills and prevents soil/water contamination through scientific remediation of legacy sites.
- Promotes a circular economy by turning waste into wealth (compost, energy, and recycled materials).

‘MLATRACK.COM’

Kerala has launched ‘MLATrack.com’, India’s first platform to track the legislative interventions of MLAs.



About Kerala’s ‘MLATrack.com’:

What it is?

- **MLATrack.com** is a **public digital database platform** that aggregates and presents data on the performance and legislative activities of Members of the Kerala Legislative Assembly (2021–2026).

Aim:

- To increase transparency and accountability in legislative functioning
- To enable citizens, researchers, and media to track MLA performance objectively

Key Features:

- **Comprehensive MLA Profiles:** Includes biodata, attendance records, constituency maps, and participation details,

A standard biodata usually covers three main areas:

- **Personal Particulars:** Name, date of birth, gender, marital status, religion, nationality, and permanent address.
- **Educational Background:** A chronological list of schools attended, degrees obtained, and academic achievements.
- **Work Experience:** A summary of previous job roles, companies, and key responsibilities.
- **Legislative Activity Tracking:** Tracks questions (68,000+), debates, motions, and interventions with date-wise details
- **Data Visualization & Accessibility:** Provides visual dashboards and hyperlinks to official Assembly responses for easy analysis

Significance:

- Enables citizens to evaluate elected representatives based on performance data
- Encourages evidence-based political analysis without subjective ranking or bias.

CENTRAL ARMED POLICE FORCES (GENERAL ADMINISTRATION) BILL, 2026

The Central Government introduced the Central Armed Police Forces (General Administration) Bill, 2026 in the Rajya Sabha.



About The Central Armed Police Forces (General Administration) Bill, 2026:

What it is?

- The Bill is a regulatory framework designed to govern the recruitment, promotion, and service conditions of Group 'A' General Duty Officers and other personnel within specified CAPFs.
- It seeks to provide legislative clarity to the historical practice of IPS officers leading these forces, ensuring that the unifying link between the Union and the States remains structurally intact.

Key Features of the Bill:

- **Scope of Application:** Applies to five primary CAPFs: **CRPF, BSF, CISF, ITBP, and SSB**. The government can add more forces via notification.
- **Rule-Making Power:** Empowers the Central Government to frame rules for recruitment, deputation, and service conditions, overriding any existing laws or court orders.
- **Mandatory IPS Deputation:** Explicitly earmarks high-level posts for IPS officers:
 - 50% of Inspector General (IG) posts.
 - **Minimum 67%** of Additional Director General (ADG) posts.
 - 100% of Special Director General (SDG) and Director General (DG) posts.
- **Protection of Benefits:** Saves and continues all existing financial benefits granted to Group 'A' officers prior to the Act.
- **Personnel Coverage:** Includes Group 'A' executive officers (Assistant Commandant and above), IPS officers on deputation, and Army officers on deputation or re-employment.

Need for Such Changes:

- **Inter-Agency Coordination:** IPS officers provide a bridge between the Union's armed forces and State police departments.

Example: Since senior operational posts in States are held by IPS officers (ADGs/SDGs), having them in CAPF leadership ensures seamless coordination during internal security crises.

- **Maintaining Force Character:** The Bill institutionalizes the unique character of CAPFs as forces that assist civil power.

Example: The Supreme Court noted in *Sanjay Prakash (2025)* that IPS presence is vital to maintain the functional ethos and administrative requirements of these forces.

- **National Integration:** Reflects Sardar Patel's vision of the IPS as a unifying link across the federal structure.

Example: IPS officers bring field experience from various States, giving them a broader strategic vision required to lead national border and industrial security forces.

- **Legislative Supremacy:** Clarifies that service policy falls under the domain of the Executive and Legislature, not the Judiciary.

Example: The Bill rectifies the judicial overreach where courts previously directed a reduction in IPS deputation quotas, which is essentially a policy matter.

- **Camaraderie and Training:** Mandatory stints at the Centre for IPS officers foster better relationships with cadre officers.

Example: As per the January 2026 MHA guidelines, mandatory two-year central stints for IPS IGs will help cement operational bonds with CAPF-cadre subordinates.

Challenges Associated:

- **Stagnation of Cadre Officers:** High-level IPS quotas limit the career progression of GAGDOs (Group A General Duty Officers).

Example: Direct-entry CAPF officers often wait decades for promotions, as the top tiers (ADG, SDG, DG) are now legally reserved for IPS officers.

- **Judicial Conflict:** The Bill appears to directly undo recent Supreme Court directions.

Example: It overrides the *Sanjay Prakash (2025)* ruling which instructed the government to progressively reduce IPS deputation at the IG level within two years.

- **Parachuting Perception:** There is perceived resentment among cadre officers who feel IPS officers lack specific force-specific expertise.

Example: Critics argue that an officer who has spent a career in district policing may not be immediately suited for specialized roles like border guarding (BSF) or industrial security (CISF).

- **Federal Friction:** While intended as a link, the dominance of IPS can sometimes lead to friction between Central command and State requirements.

Example: Dependence on a single service for top leadership can lead to service-specific biases in resource allocation and operational strategy.

- **Legal Challenges:** The notwithstanding clause may be challenged on the grounds of constitutional validity.

Example: Opponents may argue that overriding court orders regarding Organised Group A Service (OGAS) status violates the principle of judicial review.

Way Ahead:

- **Timely Cadre Reviews:** To mitigate resentment, the government must conduct regular cadre reviews to increase the total number of posts, ensuring growth for both IPS and cadre officers.
- **Balanced Deputation:** While maintaining IPS at the top, the government could explore increasing the share of cadre officers in specialized technical or training wings.
- **Specialized Induction:** IPS officers being deputed to CAPFs should undergo mandatory force-induction training to understand the specific operational nuances of the BSF, CRPF, etc.
- **Strengthening OGAS Rights:** Ensuring that the financial and administrative benefits of being an Organised Group A Service are fully realized by CAPF cadre officers.

Conclusion:

The CAPF (General Administration) Bill, 2026 is a decisive step toward stabilizing the leadership structure of India's internal security forces by codifying the role of the IPS. While it addresses the need for a unified command and federal coordination, the government must simultaneously address the promotion aspirations of the dedicated CAPF cadre.

HUMPBACK WHALE

A young humpback whale, nicknamed Timmy, has captured international attention after becoming stranded for a third time in the shallow Baltic waters off Germany's coast.



About Humpback Whale:

What it is?

- The humpback whale (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) is a species of baleen whale and one of the largest animals on Earth. It belongs to the rorqual family, a group that includes the blue whale and the fin whale. They are renowned for their complex songs and their tendency to perform spectacular aerial leaps (breaching).

Habitat

- **Global Distribution:** Found in all major oceans, from the edge of the ice packs to tropical islands.
- **Migration:** They have one of the longest migrations of any mammal, traveling up to **16,000 miles** annually between high-latitude feeding grounds (cold waters) and tropical breeding grounds (warm waters).
- **Non-Native Areas:** They are not native to the **Baltic Sea**, as the low salinity and lack of specific prey make it difficult for them to survive long-term.

Key Characteristics

- **Unique Appearance:** They have a distinctive body shape with long pectoral fins (up to one-third of their body length) and a knobby head covered in tubercles (hair follicles).
- **Size and Weight:** Adults typically range from **13-17 meters** (43-56 ft) in length and can weigh up to **40 metric tons**.
- **Feeding Method:** They are filter feeders that use baleen plates to trap small crustaceans (krill) and fish. They often use a unique bubble-net feeding technique to corral prey.
- **Tail Flukes:** The underside of a humpback's tail (fluke) has a pattern of white and black pigment that is as unique as a human fingerprint, allowing researchers to identify individual whales.
- **Acoustic Behavior:** Male humpbacks produce long, complex songs that can last up to 20 minutes and be heard for miles underwater; these songs evolve over time.

Significance:

- They play a vital role in ocean health by circulating nutrients through the water column and providing a massive carbon sink when they die and sink to the ocean floor.
- Their health and migratory patterns serve as critical indicators of climate change and ocean noise pollution levels.

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