KERALA STATE CIVIL SERVICE ACADEMY

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WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS

MAGAZINE

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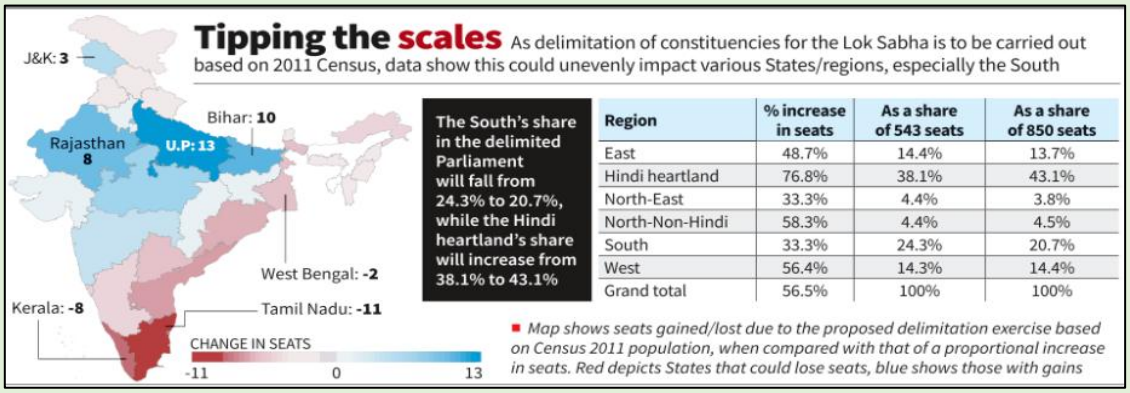
Monthly Current Affairs Magazine

THE CONSTITUTION (131ST AMENDMENT) BILL, 2026

The Union Government has proposed The Constitution (One Hundred and Thirty-First Amendment) Bill, 2026, which seeks to increase the Lok Sabha's strength from 543 to 850 members.



Region	% increase in seats	As a share of 543 seats	As a share of 850 seats
East	48.7%	14.4%	13.7%
Hindi heartland	76.8%	38.1%	43.1%
North-East	33.3%	4.4%	3.8%
North-Non-Hindi	58.3%	4.4%	4.5%
South	33.3%	24.3%	20.7%
West	56.4%	14.3%	14.4%
Grand total	56.5%	100%	100%

About The Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026:

What it is?

- It is a landmark legislative proposal designed to overhaul the composition of the Indian Parliament and the process of redrawing electoral boundaries. It specifically targets **Articles 81, 82, and 334A** of the Constitution to address long-standing demographic shifts and gender representation gaps.

Aim:

- To expand the **Lok Sabha** to reflect India's significant population growth since the 1971 Census.
- To enable immediate implementation of **1/3rd reservation for women** in the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies by decoupling it from the requirement of a post-2026 Census.
- To provide a modern legal framework for the **Delimitation Commission** to readjust seats based on the latest available demographic data.

Proposed Key Features:

- **Increase in House Strength:** Proposes that the Lok Sabha consist of not more than **815 members** from States and **35 members** from Union Territories, totaling **850 members**.
- **Amendment to Article 82:** Seeks to delete the third proviso that mandates delimitation only after the first Census conducted after 2026. This allows the government to use pre-2026 Census data to redraw constituencies immediately.
- **Expedited Women's Reservation:** Amends **Article 334A** to allow the 1/3rd reservation for women to take effect immediately after delimitation, bypassing the delay originally stipulated in the 106th Amendment Act of 2023.
- **Delimitation Commission 2026:**
  - Empowered to redraw constituencies and readjust seat allocations.
  - Chaired by a **Supreme Court Judge** (serving or retired).
  - Includes the **Chief Election Commissioner** and **State Election Commissioners as** ex-officio members.
  - Will involve 10 associate members (5 MPs and 5 MLAs) per state, though they will lack voting rights.
- **Seat Rotation:** Seats reserved for women will be **allotted by rotation** among different constituencies in a State or Union Territory.

- **Judicial Immunity:** Orders issued by the Delimitation Commission and published in the Gazette will have the force of law and **cannot be challenged in any court**.

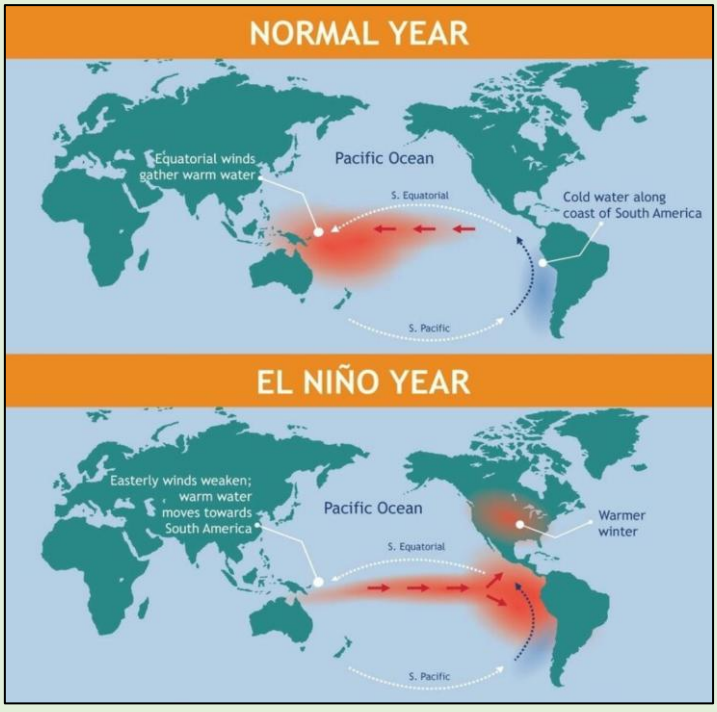
Significance:

- By increasing seats to 850, the Bill ensures that the ratio between the population and the number of representatives is more accurately reflected, potentially improving grassroots governance.
- It removes the constitutional bottleneck that would have delayed women's reservation until the 2030s, potentially transforming the political landscape in the very next general election.
- Redrawing constituencies based on current data addresses the demographic changes that have made the 1971-based seat allocation obsolete.

EL NIÑO & IT'S IMPACT

India's weather office has forecast a **below-average monsoon in 2026**, with an **El Niño expected to develop** and weigh on rainfall in the latter half of the June-September season

- In past El Niño years, India has seen below-average rainfall, at times triggering severe droughts, crop damage, and export curbs.



What is El Niño?

- **El Niño** is the warming of the **central and eastern Pacific Ocean** (sea surface temperatures rise above normal)
- Alters **atmospheric circulation** and weakens **monsoon winds** over the Indian subcontinent

How it Affects Indian Monsoon

- Strongly linked to **weaker monsoons** (reduced rainfall)
- However, India has still seen average or above-average rains in **at least 5 of 17 El Niño events** over past seven decades
- But in the **last six El Niño years**, India has received **below-average rains**

Historical Example (2009)

- Even a **weak El Niño** led to sharp drop in rainfall to **78.2% of long-period average** – lowest in 37 years
- Weather models suggest **2026 El Niño could be strong**

Why is Monsoon Important for India?

Rainfall Contribution

- Delivers nearly **70% of India's annual rainfall**

Agricultural Significance

- Agriculture accounts for about **18% of India's $4 trillion economy**
- Employs nearly **half of India's 1.5 billion people**

Impact of Below-Normal Rainfall

- Smaller harvests of: **rice, cotton, soybeans**
- Lower soil moisture affects **winter crops** (wheat, rapeseed)
- May prompt export restrictions (as in 2023 El Niño year)
- May force India to **increase imports of edible oils** (palm oil, soyoil)
- Reduces **hydropower output** (accounts for about 6% of power mix)

Impact on Inflation and Central Bank Policy

Food Inflation Link

- Food accounts for nearly **one-third of India's consumer price index (CPI)**
- RBI monitors food inflation closely when setting monetary policy

Recent Context (2024-2025)

- Rainfall was **above average** over past two years
- Helped ease food prices and broader inflation
- Gave RBI room to **cut lending rates**

2026 Risks

- Below-normal rainfall + rising commodity costs (due to Iran conflict) = **higher overall inflation**
- Could force RBI to **raise interest rates**
- Slower economic momentum + higher inflation = **further hit to foreign investment**
- Additional pressure on **rupee** (already among worst-performing Asian currencies in 2026)

- **El Niño & La Niña:** Part of ENSO cycle; affects global weather patterns
- **Indian Monsoon:** June-September; southwest monsoon; 70% of annual rainfall
- **Rainfall classification:** Normal (96-104% LPA); Below-normal (90-96%); Deficient (<90%)
- **RBI's inflation targeting:** 4% target with 2-6% tolerance band

- **Below-average monsoon forecast** – El Niño expected to develop in latter half of season
- **Iran conflict** – rising commodity costs compounding inflation risks
- **Rupee depreciation** – among worst-performing Asian currencies in 2026
- **Export curbs possible** – rice, wheat, sugar (as seen in 2023)

500TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FIRST BATTLE OF PANIPAT

April 21st marks the 500th anniversary of the First Battle of Panipat (April 21, 1526), a pivotal conflict where the outnumbered forces of Zahir-ud-din Muhammad Babur defeated the Lodi Sultanate.

About 500 Years of the First Battle of Panipat:
What it is?

- The First Battle of Panipat was a landmark military engagement that signaled the end of the **Delhi Sultanate** and the beginning of the **Mughal Empire** in India. It is celebrated as a classic example of a victory of technique over numbers, where a small, disciplined force overcame a massive, traditional army.

Happened In: The battle took place on **April 21, 1526**, on the plains of Panipat (present-day Haryana, India).
Kingdoms Involved:

- **The Timurid Forces:** Led by **Zahir-ud-din Muhammad Babur**, a fugitive prince from Ferghana (Central Asia) with approximately 12,000 men.
- **The Lodi Sultanate:** Led by **Ibrahim Lodi**, the last Sultan of Delhi, commanding a vast force estimated at nearly 100,000 men and hundreds of war elephants.

Background to the Battle:

- Babur did not invade India solely for religious conquest; he was a political opportunist invited by disgruntled Lodi nobles.
- **Daulat Khan Lodi** (Governor of Punjab) and **Alam Khan** (Ibrahim's uncle) sought Babur's help to overthrow Ibrahim Lodi's perceived tyranny. Babur, having lost his ancestral lands in Central Asia, viewed Hindustan as a site for a new, permanent kingdom.

Key Features of the Event:

- **Tulughma Tactics:** Babur utilized a flanking maneuver where his turning parties wheeled around the enemy to attack from the sides and rear, compressing the Lodi army into a helpless mass.
- **Rumi (Ottoman) Device:** Babur effectively used Ottoman-style field artillery and matchlocks in open battle on a decisive scale, demonstrating their superiority over traditional elephant-based warfare.
- **Field Artillery Innovation:** While gunpowder existed in India, Babur was the first to use **matchlocks (tufang)** and cannons in an open-field battle rather than just for sieges.
- **Infantry Accuracy:** Unlike Indian forces who fired from elephants, Babur's arquebusiers fought on foot behind mantlets (*turah*), providing higher accuracy and faster reload speeds.

Post-Event Developments:

- **Collapse of the Sultanate:** Ibrahim Lodi was killed on the battlefield, leading to the immediate fall of Delhi and Agra to Babur's forces.
- **Hostile Occupation:** Babur initially faced a deeply hostile population; even the Muslim elite viewed him as a barbarian outsider, leading to several local revolts.
- **Battle of Khanwa (1527):** Babur had to consolidate his victory by defeating a massive Rajput confederacy under **Rana Sanga**, which ironically included Ibrahim Lodi's brother and Muslim chieftains like Hasan Khan Mewati.
- **Consolidation:** Within just two years, Babur expanded his control up to Bihar, effectively stabilizing his new empire before his death in 1530.

Significance:

- **End of an Era:** The battle marked the definitive end of the Lodi dynasty and the 320-year-old Delhi Sultanate.
- **Military Revolution:** It proved that **discipline and tactical imagination** were superior to sheer numerical strength and war elephants.
- **Founding of the Mughals:** It established the Mughal lineage which would rule India for over 300 years, profoundly shaping Indian architecture, cuisine, and administration.

PRIME MINISTER INTERNSHIP SCHEME (PMIS):

The Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) has expanded the Prime Minister Internship Scheme (PMIS) to allow final-year graduate and postgraduate students to apply for paid internships.

About Prime Minister Internship Scheme (PMIS):

What it is?

- The PMIS is a flagship phygital initiative of the Government of India designed to provide structured, paid internship opportunities to the youth in India's top 500 companies.
- It acts as a bridge between formal education and the professional corporate world, offering hands-on experience across diverse sectors.

Launched In: The pilot phase of the scheme was launched in **October 2024**, following the announcement in the Union Budget 2024-25.

Nodal Ministry: Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA).

Aim:

- To develop critical workplace competencies like problem-solving, teamwork, and adaptability.
- To embed experiential learning into the academic journey as envisioned in the National Education Policy.
- To provide real-world exposure to business environments and corporate processes to ensure students are job-ready upon graduation.

Key Features:

- **Financial Assistance:** Interns receive a monthly stipend of **₹5,000** from the government and **₹500** from the company (totaling **₹5,500** or more; current pilot highlights indicate a minimum assistance of **₹9,000** per month in some contexts).
- **Age Criteria:** Open to youth between the ages of **18 and 25 years**.
- **Top Companies:** More than **300 companies** are currently participating in the pilot phase, posting roles on an ongoing basis.
- **Duration:** The scheme typically provides for a **12-month** internship period to ensure deep industry immersion.
- **Insurance Cover:** Interns are provided with insurance coverage under the Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana and Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana.

New Rules (2026 Expansion)

- **Expanded Eligibility:** Participation is no longer restricted to those who have already completed their degrees; **final-year undergraduate and postgraduate students** are now eligible.
- **Mandatory NOC:** Students must submit a **No Objection Certificate (NOC)** from their respective educational institutions.
- **Academic Assurance:** The NOC must explicitly state that the internship will **not interfere** with the student's academic requirements or attendance.
- **Authorized Signatories:** The NOC can be signed by the Head of Department (HoD), Dean, Principal, or Training & Placement Officer.
- **Pilot Phase Integration:** These changes are implemented starting with the third round of the pilot phase, accessible via the official portal.

DOLPHIN FRIENDS INITIATIVE

The forest department in Prayagraj has launched the Dolphin Friends volunteer network to strengthen conservation of the endangered Gangetic dolphin through community participation and regular river monitoring.

About Dolphin Friends Initiative:

- Dolphin Friends is a dedicated community-based volunteer network created to monitor the movement, breeding, and habitat conditions of the endangered Gangetic river

Aim:

- To protect and monitor the endangered Ganges river dolphin, especially during sensitive breeding seasons like the monsoon.
- To create awareness among local communities and build a participatory conservation model for long-term river ecosystem protection.

Key Features:

- **Community Participation:** Fishermen and boatmen are actively involved as key stakeholders due to their direct engagement with river ecosystems and dolphin habitats.
- **Seasonal Monitoring:** Special surveillance is intensified during the monsoon season, which is the breeding period for dolphins, ensuring better reproductive protection.
- **Scientific Support:** Research scholars and teachers are being included to strengthen ecological monitoring, documentation, and awareness campaigns.
- **Hotspot Surveillance:** Focused monitoring is being conducted in key dolphin habitats such as Phaphamau, Chhatnag, Meja, Prayagraj, Patna, and Fatehpur with regular reporting systems.

Significance:

- Rising dolphin numbers indicate improving water quality and healthier river ecosystems, making dolphins strong indicators of freshwater ecological health.
- The initiative strengthens conservation through a people + policy model by combining grassroots participation with institutional programmes like Project Dolphin.

DRUZHBA PIPELINE

The resumption of Russian oil flows through the Ukrainian section of the Druzhba pipeline, has led Hungary to lift its veto on a critical 90 billion euro EU loan for Kyiv.

About The Druzhba Pipeline:
What it is?

- The Druzhba (meaning Friendship) pipeline is one of the world's longest and largest crude oil pipeline networks. It serves as a vital energy artery connecting Russia to several countries in Central and Eastern Europe.

Established In: The system was constructed by the Soviet Union and began operations in **1964** to supply oil to the then-socialist bloc countries of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON).
Located Between: It originates in the **Almetyevsk** region of central Russia, where several pipelines carrying crude from Siberia, the Urals, and the Caspian Sea converge. It runs through Belarus and then splits into two major branches:

- **Northern Branch:** Continues through Poland to **Germany**.
- **Southern Branch:** Runs through Ukraine to **Hungary, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic**.

Aim of the Pipeline:

- To provide a reliable, high-capacity overland route for transporting Russian crude oil directly to European refineries, bypassing maritime routes.
- Historically designed to integrate the economies of Eastern Europe with the Soviet Union; today, it remains a critical infrastructure for landlocked refineries in Central Europe.

Key Features:

- **Massive Capacity:** The system has a capacity of **1.2 million to 1.4 million barrels per day**, with the potential to scale up to 2 million barrels.
- **Southern Leg Vulnerability:** The southern section, which passes through **Western Ukraine**, has become a flashpoint for conflict-related damage and political leverage.
- **Branching Network:** The network spans approximately **4,000 kilometers**, feeding major industrial hubs such as Germany's PCK Schwedt refinery.
- **Transit Geography:** Unlike many newer pipelines, Druzhba is unique because it relies on the cooperation of transit states like Ukraine and Belarus to reach the European Union.

Significance:

- The pipeline has become a politically charged piece of infrastructure, where disruptions can be used by transit or recipient states to block or unlock international aid and sanctions.
- Despite EU efforts to decouple from Russian energy, countries like **Hungary and Slovakia** remain heavily dependent on this specific pipeline for their domestic oil supply.

HAEMOPHILIA

The World Health Organization (WHO) advanced a new resolution to improve care equity for haemophilia, highlighting that India currently carries the world's second-largest burden with nearly 1.4 lakh estimated cases.

About Haemophilia:

- Haemophilia is a rare, inherited bleeding disorder characterized by the blood's inability to clot properly. This occurs because the blood lacks sufficient **clotting factors**—specialized proteins that work with platelets to stop bleeding after an injury.

There are two primary types:

- **Haemophilia A:** The most common type, caused by a deficiency in **Factor VIII**.
- **Haemophilia B:** Also known as Christmas Disease, caused by a deficiency in **Factor IX**.

Causes and Genetic Pattern:

- **X-Linked Recessive Inheritance:** The condition predominantly affects males because the genes for clotting factors are located on the X chromosome. Females, having two X chromosomes, are usually carriers but can occasionally experience mild symptoms.
- **Spontaneous Mutations:** Approximately **one-third of all cases** occur due to a spontaneous genetic mutation where there is no previous family history of the disorder.
- **Protein Deficiency:** The root cause is the low or absent levels of essential proteins (Factors VIII or IX) that act as the glue in the body's clotting mechanism.

Signs and Symptoms:
The severity of symptoms depends on the level of clotting factors present in the blood:

- **Prolonged Bleeding:** Bleeding that lasts much longer than normal after minor cuts, dental work, or surgery.
- **Easy Bruising:** Large, deep bruises resulting from minor bumps.
- **Haemarthrosis (Joint Bleeding):** Spontaneous internal bleeding into joints (knees, elbows, ankles), causing swelling, pain, and stiffness.
- **Life-Threatening Crises:** Severe cases can involve spontaneous **brain hemorrhages** or bleeding into vital organs, which can be fatal without immediate intervention.
- **Chronic Damage:** Repeated joint bleeds lead to progressive joint deformity and long-term disability.

Key Features

- **Diagnostic Tools:** Diagnosis involves physical exams and specific blood tests like **Complete Blood Count (CBC)**, **aPTT** (clotting time), and **factor activity assays**.
- **Severity Levels:** Classified as mild, moderate, or severe based on the percentage of clotting factor in the blood.
- **Prophylaxis:** A key management feature involving regular infusions of clotting factors to prevent bleeding before it starts, rather than just treating it after an injury.
- **Modern Therapies:** Advances include **non-factor therapies** (like emicizumab) and **gene therapy**, which aims to provide a long-term cure by enabling the body to produce its own clotting factors.

Significance:

- India's massive undiagnosed population (nearly 1 lakh people) represents a significant hidden health crisis that requires urgent registry and screening.
- Haemophilia is at the forefront of **gene therapy** research, serving as a model for how genetic engineering can potentially eliminate inherited diseases.

SUBARNAREKHA RIVER:

The Indian Army safely neutralised a high-risk World War II-era bomb weighing approximately 227 kg recovered from the Subarnarekha River in East Singhbhum.

About Subarnarekha River:

- The Subarnarekha is a major rain-fed river in eastern India, known as the lifeline of the tribal communities in the Chhota Nagpur region. Its name is derived from the Sanskrit words *Subarna* (gold) and *Rekha* (line/streak), referring to the tradition of finding gold particles in its sandy bed.

Origin: It originates near **Piska/Nagri**, close to Ranchi, the capital of Jharkhand.
States it Flows Through: The river traverses three Indian states: **Jharkhand, West Bengal, and Odisha**.
Mouth: After flowing for a total length of 395 km, it joins the **Bay of Bengal** near Talsari in Odisha.
Tributaries: The river is fed by several prominent tributaries, the most significant being the **Kharkai**, which meets the Subarnarekha at a confluence known as **Domuhani** in Jamshedpur.
Other tributaries include:

- Roro and Kanchi
- Harmu Nadi and Damra
- Karru and Chinguru
- Karakari, Gurma, and Garra
- Singaduba, Kodia, Dulunga, and Khaijori.

Key Geological Features:

- **Hundru Falls:** Created where the river falls from a height of **98 metres (322 ft)**. Constant erosion has carved spectacular rock formations at the base of the falls.

- **Drainage Basin:** The river covers a relatively small drainage area of **18,951 square kilometres**, yet it is a critical multi-state basin.
- **Mining Zones:** The river passes through regions rich in **copper and uranium ores**, which significantly influences the chemical composition of its sediment.
- **Flood Hazards:** The lower reaches, particularly in Odisha and West Bengal, are prone to flash floods. In 2007, the river reached a record flood level of **12.2 metres**.

Significance:

- Historically, gold was mined near its origin, and the riverbed continues to be a site for gold panning by local communities.
- It supports major industrial hubs, most notably the city of **Jamshedpur**, India's first planned industrial city.

WORLD EARTH DAY 2026

World Earth Day 2026 is being celebrated on April 22 with the global theme Our Power, Our Planet, emphasizing collective environmental responsibility and sustainable action.

About World Earth Day 2026**:**
What it is?

- World Earth Day is an annual global environmental event observed every year on **22 April** to raise awareness about environmental protection, climate action, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable development.
- It was first celebrated in **1970** in the United States and has now grown into one of the world's largest civic observances involving over 190 countries.

Aim:

- To encourage individuals, governments, and institutions to adopt sustainable practices for protecting ecosystems and natural resources.
- To strengthen global action against climate change, pollution, deforestation, and biodiversity loss through collective participation.

Theme (2026): Our Power, Our Planet
Key Features:

- A special lecture titled *Exploring Antarctica: A Journey to the White Continent* by distinguished ISRO professor Dr. Amitava Sen Gupta focuses on polar science, climate systems, and Antarctic research.
- Conducted to test students' understanding of biodiversity, climate science, and environmental sustainability while promoting scientific curiosity.
- Events like exhibitions, seminars, plantation drives, and science outreach programs are organized globally to strengthen environmental consciousness.

Significance:

- Earth Day acts as a major global platform to connect environmental protection with public participation, making sustainability a people-driven movement.
- It supports long-term climate resilience by encouraging scientific awareness, green innovation, and responsible environmental governance.

ADI SHANKARACHARYA

Prime Minister of India paid tribute to Adi Shankaracharya on his Jayanti, celebrating the 1,200th birth anniversary of the philosopher-saint.

About Adi Shankaracharya**:**

- Adi Shankaracharya (approx. 788–820 CE) was a philosopher, theologian, and saint who is credited with reviving Hinduism at a time when it was declining under superstition and ritualism.
- Born in **Kalady, Kerala**, he lived a short but miraculous life of only 32 years, during which he traveled the length and breadth of India to spread the message of the Vedas.

Early Days and Quest for Knowledge

- **Guru Search:** At the age of eight, driven by a desire for liberation, he left Kerala and walked 2,000 kilometers to the banks of the Narmada to find his Guru, **Govindapada**.
- **Prodigious Scholar:** Under his Guru's guidance, he mastered the Vedic scriptures by age twelve and completed all his major commentaries by the age of sixteen.

Philosophical Contribution:

- Advaita Vedanta **(Non-Dualism)**: Shankaracharya's core philosophy is summarized in the statement: ***Brahma Satyam Jagan Mithya, Jeevo Brahmaiva Na Para***(Brahman is the only Truth, the world is unreal, and there is no difference between the individual self and Brahman).
- **Concept of Oneness:** He taught that the *Atman* (soul) and *Brahman* (Universal Consciousness) are one and the same.
- **Maya:** He explained the world's perceived reality as *Maya* (illusion), which disappears once true knowledge (*Jnana*) is attained.
- **Harmony of Worship:** He introduced the Shanmata system, organizing the worship of six primary deities (Siva, Vishnu, Shakti, Ganesha, Muruka, and Surya) to unify diverse Hindu sects.

Literary and Organizational Works:
Shankaracharya was a prolific writer and a brilliant organizer who restructured the spiritual landscape of India.

- **Commentaries (*Bhashyas*):** He wrote fundamental commentaries on the **Prasthanatrayi**—the Brahma Sutras, the Bhagavad Gita, and 12 major Upanishads.
- **Devotional Poetry:** He composed over 72 hymns, including *Soundarya Lahari*, *Sivananda Lahari*, and the famous *Nirvana Shatakam*.
- **Treatises:** Authored 23 books on Advaita philosophy, such as *Viveka Chudamani*and *Atma Bodha*.
- **Establishment of the Four Amnaya Maths:** To preserve the Vedas, he established four primary monasteries in the four corners of India:

Direction	Place	Math Name	Veda
North	Badrinath	Jyotir Math	Atharva Veda
South	Sringeri	Sringeri Math	Yajur Veda
East	Puri	Govardhan Math	Rig Veda
West	Dwaraka	Sarada Math	Sama Veda

Significance:

- By establishing Maths in the extreme north, south, east, and west, he created a spiritual security grid that unified India culturally and geographically.
- He successfully debated and defeated various leaders of opposing sects, replacing ritualism with the intellectual path of *Jnana* (knowledge).
- He organized monks into the **Dasanami Sampradaya** (ten names), ensuring a structured order of wandering teachers to educate the masses.

INDIA-AFRICA FORUM SUMMIT (IAFS)

India is set to host the Fourth India-Africa Forum Summit (IAFS) 2026 in late May, marking the first such gathering in over a decade since 2015.

About The India–Africa Forum Summit (IAFS)**:**

What it is?

- The India–Africa Forum Summit (IAFS) is the official institutional platform for **African-Indian relations**. It serves as a high-level consultative mechanism between the Government of India and the member states of the African Union **(AU)** to promote South-South cooperation.

Established In:

- **First Summit:** April 4–8, 2008, in New Delhi, India.

Aim:

- To widen and deepen the ambit of mutual cooperation for the benefit of both regions.
- To support Africa in health, education, and human resource development through initiatives like the IIT Madras campus in Zanzibar.
- To move beyond traditional trade and Line of Credit models toward direct Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and industrial partnerships.

History of Summits

1. **2008 (New Delhi):** The inaugural meeting between India and 14 African countries chosen by the AU. It focused on rising oil and food prices.
2. **2011 (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia):** Held at the AU headquarters, this summit expanded the partnership's scope to include 15 African nations and focused on infrastructure development.
3. **2015 (New Delhi):** The largest-ever turnout, involving delegates from all 54 African nations. It was a major diplomatic outreach by the Modi government to solidify India's presence on the continent.

Functions of the IAFS:

- **Developmental Initiatives:** Implementation of projects in the agricultural sector, information and communication technology (ICT), and industry.
- **Diplomatic Expansion:** Providing a platform to take stock of India's growing diplomatic footprint; India has opened **16 new missions** in Africa since 2018, totaling 45 missions.
- **Security & Defense:** Discussing peace, security, and defense cooperation to ensure a stable maritime and continental environment.
- **Policy Harmonization:** Aligning positions on global issues like trade protectionism, good governance, and civil society promotion.
- **Resource Management:** Coordinating on the supply of critical items and ensuring stable supply chains even during regional conflicts.

Significance:

- The 2026 summit is critical as it occurs during a time of global supply chain disruptions caused by the U.S.-Israel-Iran conflict, highlighting Africa's role as a stable resource partner.
- It marks a transition from donor-recipient relations to partner-investor relations, with a push for Indian big business to step in with FDI.

UNITED NATIONS RESOLUTION 47

On April 21, 1948, the United Nations adopted Resolution 47, a document that fundamentally changed the trajectory of the Jammu and Kashmir conflict.

About Resolution 47 on Kashmir**:**

What it is?

- Resolution 47, formally titled The India-Pakistan Question, is a UN Security Council (UNSC) resolution that recommended a three-step process to restore peace and conduct a plebiscite in Jammu and Kashmir. It was passed under **Chapter VI** of the UN Charter, meaning its provisions were recommendations rather than legally binding directives.

Background:

- **The Invasion:** In October 1947, tribal raiders supported by Pakistan invaded J&K. Maharaja Hari Singh acceded to India to seek military help.
- **The Reference:** By January 1948, despite military gains, India feared a full-scale war. On the advice of Lord Mountbatten, Prime Minister Nehru approached the UN.
- **India's Expectation:** New Delhi's request was specific: ask Pakistan to stop assisting the invaders and deny them use of its territory. India believed its legal case (based on the Instrument of Accession) was foolproof.

Aim of the Resolution:

The primary aim was to stop the fighting and establish a democratic mechanism to decide the state's future. The resolution outlined a **three-step sequence**:

1. **Withdrawal by Pakistan:** Pakistan was to use its best endeavors to secure the withdrawal of tribesmen and Pakistani nationals.
2. **Withdrawal by India:** Once the Commission was satisfied that the invaders were withdrawing, India was to progressively reduce its forces to the minimum required for law and order.
3. **The Plebiscite:** A UN-nominated Plebiscite Administrator would then conduct a free and impartial referendum to decide whether J&K would accede to India or Pakistan.

Key Events:

- **The Rebranding:** In a significant symbolic blow to India, the UNSC changed the agenda from the Jammu and Kashmir question to the **India-Pakistan question**, effectively treating the two as equal parties in a territorial dispute.
- **Cold War Interests:** The US and UK, led by British delegate Philip Noël-Baker, appeared to favor Pakistan. Strategically, Pakistan was seen as a more useful ally against the Soviet Union.
- **Nehru's Betrayal:** Nehru felt the British had reneged on their promises. He famously remarked that the UN's handling of the issue had opened the eyes of India a bit regarding the realities of international diplomacy.

Implications and Legacy

- The plebiscite was never held because the first step—complete withdrawal of Pakistani forces—was never fulfilled. India maintained that the referendum could only happen once the soil was cleared of invaders.
- Critics argue that Nehru's decision to go to the UN internationalized a bilateral issue, giving third parties a permanent seat at the table.
- The Simla Agreement **(1972):** Following the 1971 war, India and Pakistan signed the Simla Agreement, agreeing to resolve all issues bilaterally, which India interprets as a move that superseded the UN resolutions.

SAMRIDDH GRAM INITIATIVE:

India's Samriddh Gram initiative has been nominated for the prestigious WSIS Prizes 2026 in the Enabling Environment category.

About Samriddh Gram Initiative:

What it is?

- Samriddh Gram is an integrated phygital service delivery model designed by the **Department of Telecommunications (DoT)**. It utilizes the high-speed broadband backbone of **BharatNet** to transform rural connectivity into a platform for essential social and economic services.

Launched In: The initiative was active in its pilot phase by 2024–25, with the first Samriddhi Kendra officially inaugurated by Union Minister in Umri Village, Madhya Pradesh, recently.

Aim:

- To bridge the rural-digital divide by providing one-stop community hubs for essential services.
- To demonstrate the socio-economic impact of integrated service delivery in health, education, and governance.

Key Features:

- **Samriddhi Kendras (SK):** One-stop physical centers (800–1000 sq. ft.) that serve as hubs for various digital and assisted services.
- **Healthcare (Telemedicine):** Facilitates teleconsultations through platforms like **e-Sanjeevani** and provides health kiosks for basic diagnostics.
- **Education & Skills:** Equipped with **AR/VR smart classrooms** and labs offering vocational courses from government platforms like Diksha and Swayam.
- **Smart Agriculture:** Deploys IoT sensors for soil monitoring, smart pump controls, and drone-based farming assistance.

- **E-Governance & Commerce:** Provides assisted access to government schemes and connects local entrepreneurs to digital commerce platforms like **ONDC**.
- **Public Safety:** Enhances village security through smart CCTV cameras and drone-based surveillance.
- **Broadband Expansion:** Promotes Fiber-to-the-Home (FTTH) connections and **PM-WANI** public Wi-Fi hotspots for last-mile connectivity.

About WSIS Prizes 2026:

What it is?

- The **World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) Prizes** are a global recognition platform that honors innovative projects leveraging Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to advance sustainable development.

Organizations: International Telecommunication Union (**ITU**).

Aim:

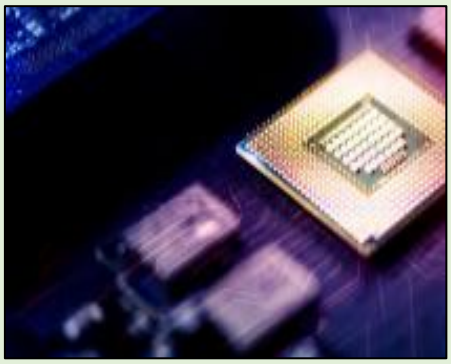
- To celebrate projects that effectively implement **WSIS Action Lines** and contribute to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- To foster global digital cooperation and share best practices in ICT-driven inclusive growth.

Key Features:

- **Multistakeholder Platform:** Brings together governments, academia, civil society, and the private sector to evaluate and collaborate on digital issues.
- **Action Line Categories:** Nominations are categorized into 18 Action Lines; India's Samriddh Gram is nominated under **AL C6: Enabling Environment**.
- **Public Voting Phase:** Winners are determined through a multistakeholder process that includes a public voting phase.

3D GLASS CHIP PACKAGING FACILITY

The Indian government has laid the foundation stone for the country's first 3D glass chip packaging facility in Bhubaneswar, Odisha, marking a strategic pivot toward cutting-edge semiconductor technology.



About 3D Glass Semiconductor Packaging:

What it is?

- It is an advanced form of **3D Heterogeneous Integration (3DHI)** that uses **glass substrates** instead of traditional organic or silicon materials to stack and connect multiple chip components vertically.
- This technology allows different types of chips—such as logic, memory, and sensors—to be combined into a single, highly efficient 3D module.

Developed By:

- **Lead Company:** 3D Glass Solutions (3DGS), a US-based firm.
- **Project Location:** Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India.

Aim:

- To place India at the cutting edge of global semiconductor technology by mastering advanced packaging.
- To provide a domestic supply of high-performance modules for AI, 5G, defense, and data centers.
- To bypass the physical limitations of **Moore's Law** by increasing computing power through vertical stacking rather than just shrinking transistors.

How it Works?

Traditional chips are laid out on a 2D plane. In 3D glass packaging:

1. **Vertical Stacking:** Multiple chiplets (smaller, functional pieces of a chip) are stacked on top of each other.
2. **Glass Substrate:** Glass replaces silicon or plastic as the base. Glass is used because it is more rigid, can handle higher temperatures without warping, and allows for extremely high-speed connections between stacked components.
3. **3D Integration:** Through-glass vias (tiny vertical holes) allow signals to travel vertically between layers, dramatically reducing the distance data has to travel compared to traditional 2D layouts.

Key Features:

- **High Precision:** Glass substrates allow for higher-density connections, which is critical for the most advanced semiconductor nodes.
- **Thermal Stability:** Glass effectively manages the heat generated by powerful AI processors, preventing performance throttling.

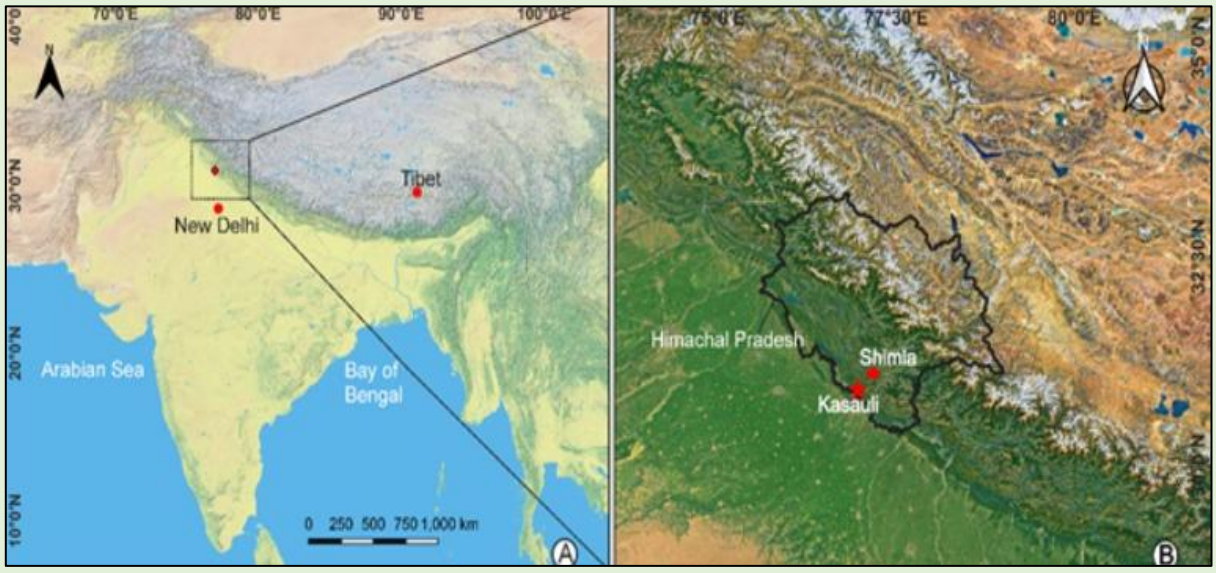
- **Heterogeneous Integration:** Enables the mixing of different technologies (e.g., combining a high-speed logic chip with a massive memory chip) in a single compact package.
- **Production Scale:** The Odisha plant is designed to produce **70,000 glass panels**and **50 million assembled units** annually.
- **Low Signal Loss:** The electrical properties of glass minimize energy waste, making devices more power-efficient.

Significance:

- **Beating Moore's Law:** As shrinking transistors becomes physically impossible, 3D stacking is the primary way the industry continues to increase computing power.
- **Global Tech Map:** This project is unique among India's 10 approved semiconductor plants because it involves **novel technology** that is still being mastered globally, rather than just established manufacturing processes.
- **Strategic Autonomy:** By producing 3DHI modules for defense and AI, India reduces its reliance on high-end imports for its most sensitive technological needs.

JAMUN CULTIVATION

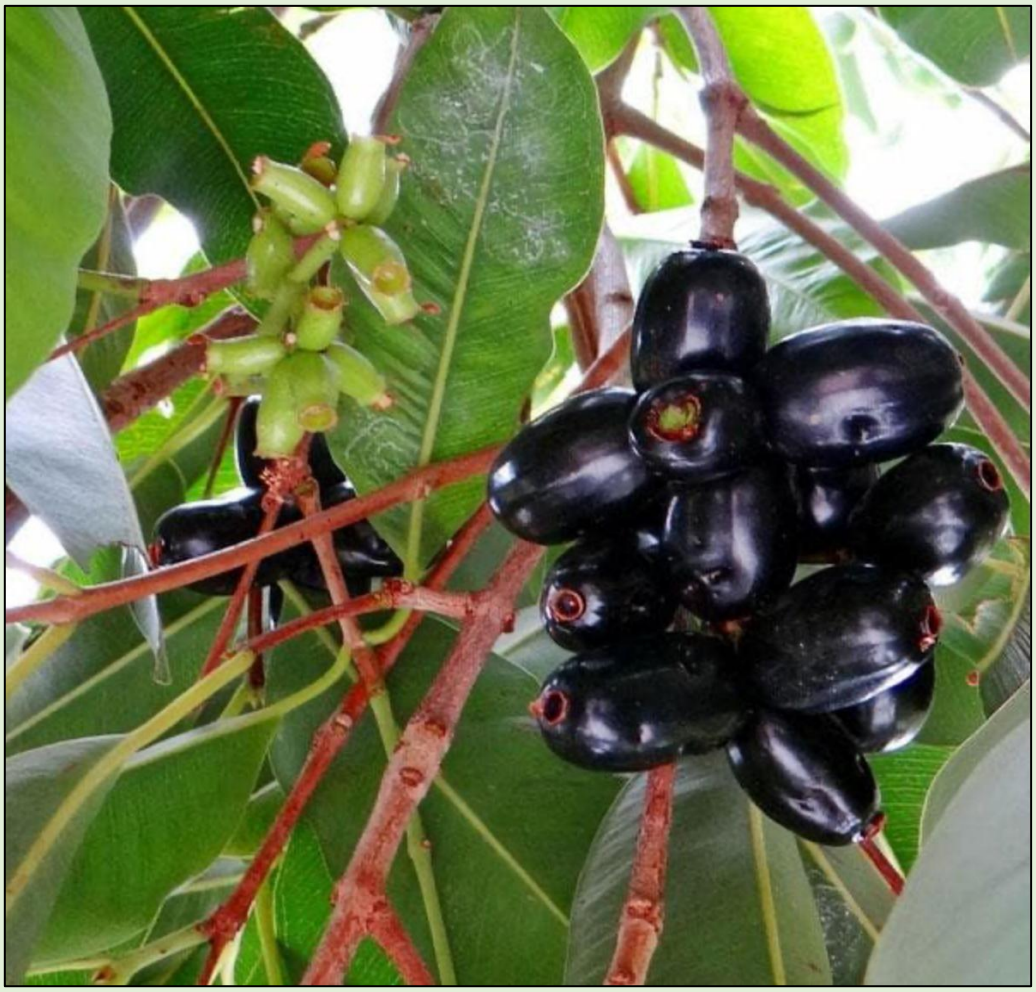
A pioneering study has established that the Jamun (Syzygium) genus originated approximately 80 million years ago in East Gondwana, with India serving as its primary evolutionary cradle.



About India Emerges as Cradle of Jamun Evolution:

What is Jamun?

- Jamun, scientifically known as ***Syzygium***, is a genus of flowering plants belonging to the myrtle family, Myrtaceae. It is an ecologically and economically significant plant group, valued for its nutritious fruit, medicinal properties, and timber.



Evolutionary Timeline and Formation

- **Ancient Origin:** New research dates the genus back to **~80 million years ago**(Late Cretaceous), originating in the **East Gondwanan** landmass.
- **Indian Diversification:** Contrary to older theories suggesting an Australian origin, fossil evidence indicates India was a major center for early diversification.
- **The Kasauli Breakthrough:** Researchers discovered 11 well-preserved fossil leaves, named ***Syzygium paleosalicifolium***, in the **Kasauli Formation** of Himachal Pradesh, dating back to the Early Miocene (~20 million years ago).
- **Historical Reassessment:** A critical re-examination of Paleogene and Neogene deposits confirms the genus has been continuously present in India since the **Early Eocene (~55 million years ago)**.

Key Features of the *Syzygium* (Jamun) Genus:

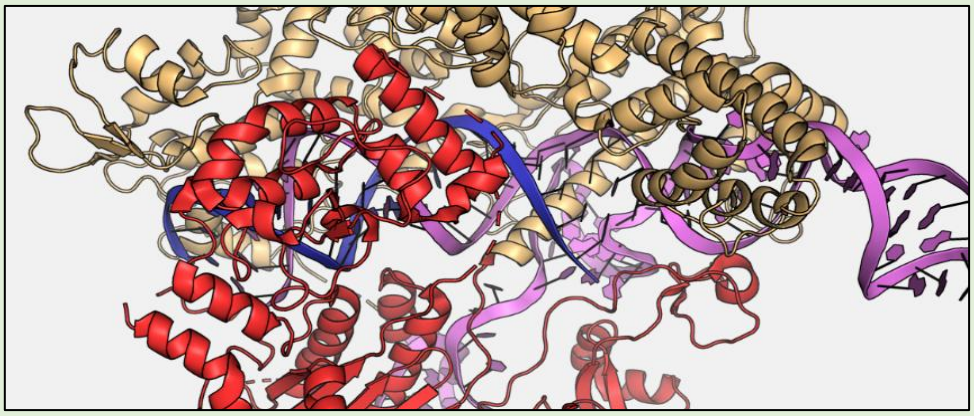
- **Leaf Morphology:** Characterized by specific shapes, sizes, and intricate venation patterns (the arrangement of veins).
- **Venation Architecture:** Scientists analyzed 22 distinct morphological characters, including the density and angle of secondary veins, which are unique to the genus.
- **Adaptability:** The evolutionary timeline indicates the genus survived massive climatic shifts, moving from the Paleogene to the Neogene periods (60 to 20 million years ago).
- **Taxonomic Diversity:** *Syzygium* is one of the most species-rich genera of flowering plants, showing a continuous and resilient presence in the Indian subcontinent for over 50 million years.

Significance of the Discovery:

- It corrects the misconception that Jamun originated in Australia, establishing India as the primary center of early diversification.
- By understanding how *Syzygium* evolved through past vegetation and climate changes, scientists can improve **predictions for future climate scenarios**.
- Recognizing India as an evolutionary cradle aids in ecological planning and the conservation of native plant species.

GENETICALLY MODIFIED (GM) MOSQUITOES

A landmark study conducted in Tanzania has confirmed that genetically modified (GM) mosquitoes can effectively block malaria parasites from real-world human infections.



About Genetically Modified (GM) Mosquitoes:

What they are?

- Genetically modified mosquitoes are insects whose DNA has been altered using precision engineering tools, such as **CRISPR-Cas9**, to achieve specific biological outcomes.

Aim:

- To break the cycle of malaria by ensuring mosquitoes can no longer carry or pass the *Plasmodium* parasite to humans.
- To provide a solution where traditional methods, like insecticides and anti-malarial drugs, are failing due to evolving resistance.

How they are Developed?

- **CRISPR-Cas9 Integration:** Scientists use the CRISPR molecular scissors to insert specific genes into the mosquito genome.
- **Gene Drive Mechanism:** A gene drive is engineered to ensure the modified gene is passed to nearly all offspring (over 90%), rather than the standard 50%.
- **Anti-Parasite Molecules:** In population modification, genes are added that trigger the production of **antimicrobial peptides** or antibodies in the mosquito's midgut to destroy parasites after a blood meal.
- **Sterility Genes:** In population suppression, genes like *doublesex* are targeted to make female offspring sterile, leading to a population collapse.

Key Features:

- **Biased Inheritance:** Gene drives bypass traditional Mendelian genetics, allowing a trait to spread rapidly through an entire wild population over a few generations.
- **Target Specificity:** The modifications are typically species-specific (e.g., targeting only *Anopheles gambiae*), theoretically leaving other non-target insects unharmed.
- **Midgut Activation:** The latest models are designed to activate anti-parasite molecules specifically when the mosquito takes a blood meal, maximizing effectiveness at the point of infection.
- **Phased Testing:** Researchers use split gene drives (where components are kept in separate mosquito lines) to test safety and efficacy before creating a fully self-propagating version.
- **Ecological Persistence:** Unlike chemical pesticides that wash away, a successful gene drive persists in the environment as long as the mosquito population exists.

Significance:

- The Tanzania study proved these mosquitoes work against wild malaria parasites found in local children, not just weakened laboratory strains.
- Developing this tech in Africa (Tanzania) ensures that endemic countries lead the scientific and regulatory oversight of the tools used in their own backyards.
- Once released, a self-propagating gene drive could potentially cover vast, hard-to-reach areas where traditional healthcare infrastructure is weak.

LANJIA SAORA COMMUNITY

The Lanjia Saora community is in the news for its resilient efforts to preserve its unique visual heritage, such as traditional metal earrings and tattoos, while adapting these customs to modern lifestyles.

About The Lanjia Saora Community:

Who They Are?

- The Lanjia Saoras are one of the oldest and most distinct tribes in India, belonging to the **Sauras** ethnic group. They are recognized by the Government of India as a **Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG)** due to their stagnant population, low literacy levels, and traditional agricultural practices.

Habitat:

- **Region:** They primarily inhabit the densely forested and hilly terrains of the **Rayagada and Gajapati districts** in southern Odisha.
- **Living Conditions:** They live in **mud-and-thatch homes** scattered across undulating, undulating landscapes, often isolated from mainstream urban centers.

History and Belief System:

- **Ancient Origins:** The Saoras find mention in Hindu epics like the *Ramayana*(associated with Shabari) and the *Mahabharata*, marking them as an ancient indigenous lineage.
- **Nature Intertwined:** Their history is rooted in a belief system deeply **intertwined with nature**. Rituals are performed to appease forest deities and ancestral spirits, which they believe govern their harvest and health.

Key Characteristics:

- **Visual Traditions:**
    - **Earrings:** Known for large, **thick circular metal earrings** fixed into stretched earlobes. While the older generation wears them permanently as markers of identity, the youth are transitioning to hooked versions for comfort.
    - **Tattoos:** Intricate geometric patterns or nature-inspired motifs were traditionally etched permanently for spiritual protection.
- **Livelihood:** They sustain themselves through **shifting cultivation** (Podu Chasa), foraging for forest produce, and small-scale farming.
- **Artistic Heritage (Idital):** They are famous for their **Saora paintings** (Idital), which are wall murals made using red ochre and rice paste. These paintings serve as a visual language to communicate with the spirit world.
- **Music and Dance:** Music is intrinsic to their daily life, used during every significant life event, from birth to the Guar (funeral) ritual.
- **Social Structure:** They maintain a highly egalitarian society with a strong sense of communal resource sharing and collective decision-making.

Significance:

- The Lanjia Saoras represent a vital link to India's **pre-Vedic indigenous history**and ancient visual languages.
- Their survival is proof of sustainable co-existence with the Eastern Ghats' ecosystem.
- Saora art has gained international recognition, influencing modern Indian textile design and contemporary tribal art.

KOMOREBI

Japanese word Komorebi has recently gone viral globally, trending across social media platforms for its poetic expression of sunlight filtering through tree leaves.

About Komorebi:
What It Is?

- **Komorebi** is a beautiful Japanese word that refers to the dappled sunlight that passes through the leaves and branches of trees. It is not merely a visual description, but also captures the emotional calm, serenity, and reflective mood associated with such a moment.

Origin:

The word originates from **Japanese language and culture**, where nature deeply shapes vocabulary and aesthetics.

It is derived from three Japanese elements:

- **Ko** → tree
- **More** → to leak / filter
- **Bi** → light

Together, it literally means **light leaking through trees.**

Features:

- **Nature-Centric Expression:** It reflects the close relationship between language and natural surroundings in Japanese culture.
- **Untranslatable Beauty:** There is no exact English equivalent, making it an example of a culturally rich untranslatable word.
- **Mindfulness Symbolism:** It is increasingly associated with slow living, calmness, aesthetic minimalism, and emotional healing.

Significance:

- **Cultural Significance:** It highlights how language can encode philosophy, perception, and environmental consciousness.

- **Contemporary Relevance:** In today's fast-paced digital life, it symbolizes the need to pause, observe, and reconnect with nature.

EXERCISE DUSTLIK

The Indian Army contingent has departed for Uzbekistan to participate in the 7th edition of Joint Military Exercise DUSTLIK, scheduled to be held at the Gurumsaray Field Training Area.

About Military Exercise Dustlik:

What it is?

- Exercise DUSTLIK is a premier annual bilateral military training exercise conducted between the Indian Armed Forces and the Uzbekistan Armed Forces. It serves as a platform for sharing operational experiences and refining combat tactics in diverse environments.

Host: Uzbekistan, specifically the **Gurumsaray Field Training Area** in Namangan.
Nations: India and Uzbekistan.
Cycle: The exercise is held annually, alternating between India and Uzbekistan. The 2025 edition was held in Pune, India.
Aim: The primary objective is to foster deep military cooperation and enhance the combined capability of both forces to execute joint operations in **semi-mountainous terrain**. It focuses on improving physical fitness, joint planning, and the synchronization of special arms skills.

Key Features:

- **Operational Drills:** The training includes land navigation, strike missions on enemy bases, and the seizure of enemy-held areas.
- **Command & Control Coordination:** It establishes a unified operational algorithm between the command-and-control structures of both nations to ensure seamless joint planning.
- **Tactical Exchange:** Both sides share their Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures (TTPs) and familiarize themselves with each other's operational procedures.
- **Validation Exercise:** The joint training culminates in a intensive **48-hour validation exercise** designed to test tactical drills for neutralizing Unlawful Armed Groups through joint special operations.
- **Inter-Service Participation:** Notably involves both the Army and the Air Force components from both countries to improve inter-service synergy.

Significance:

- Central Asia is part of India's extended neighborhood, and DUSTLIK is a vital pillar of India's strategic outreach to Uzbekistan, a key regional player.

- It strengthens the ability of both militaries to work together under a unified command, which is essential for potential future peacekeeping or joint security missions.

INDIA - SOUTH KOREA PARTNERSHIP

The April 2026 state visit of South Korean President to India marked a major boost in ties after eight years. Both countries adopted a Joint Strategic Vision (2026–30) aiming to double trade to $50 billion by 2030.

The partnership now focuses on technology, supply chains, and Indo-Pacific stability amid global disruptions.

Strategic & Political Foundations

- **Shared democratic vision & strategic alignment:** India and South Korea see each other as key partners—aligned through Act East Policy and New Southern Policy, with convergence in the Indo-Pacific via Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative.
- **Stronger institutional engagement:** Annual leader meetings, a new 2+2 dialogue, and expanded parliamentary exchanges deepen structured cooperation.

Economic & Trade Cooperation: The $50 Billion Target

- **CEPA 2.0 for balanced trade:** Upgrade of Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement to reduce trade imbalance and expand into digital trade, green economy, and supply chains.
- **New economic & security frameworks:** Industrial Cooperation Committee and Economic Security Dialogue to boost sectors like semiconductors, EV batteries, and ensure resilience in critical minerals and green hydrogen.
- **Digital & financial integration:** Linkage of Unified Payments Interface with Korea's system, plus fintech cooperation for cross-border financial services.

Defence & Technology: Co-Development and Innovation

- **Defence manufacturing boost:** Expansion of K9 Vajra collaboration (L&T–Hanwha) with more tech transfer, and exploration of new air defence and missile systems.
- **Innovation in defence:** Launch of Korea-India Defence Accelerator (KIND-X) to link startups, incubators, and investors.
- **Digital & semiconductor cooperation:** India-Korea Digital Bridge on AI and data, with investment push in semiconductors.

Shipbuilding & Maritime Partnership

Comprehensive Framework:

- A dedicated framework for partnership in shipbuilding, shipping, and maritime logistics was adopted.
- **Greenfield Shipyard:** HD Korea Shipbuilding (HD KSOE) signed a non-binding MoU for joint development of a large greenfield shipyard in Southern India.
- **Ports & Logistics:** MoU on Cooperation in the Ports sector, with ROK aiding in port infrastructure development.

Energy & Resource Security

Joint Statements:

- Separate Joint Statements on Cooperation in Sustainability and Energy Resource Security were issued.
- Steel Dialogue: Annual India-ROK Steel Dialogue launched, focusing on green steel-making. POSCO and JSW signed an MoU for a 6 MMT Integrated Steel Plant in Odisha.
- Critical Minerals: Cooperation to strengthen supply chains for strategic resources, critical minerals, and rare earths.

Cultural & People-to-People Ties

Ancient Connect:

- PM Modi invoked the legend of Queen **Heo Hwang-ok** (Princess Suriratna of Ayodhya) who married Korean King Kim Suro in 48 AD, highlighting two millennia of shared heritage.

Modern Cultural Wave:

- President Lee noted that "Bollywood movies and Indian cuisine have become part of everyday culture" in Korea, while K-pop and K-dramas are hugely popular in India.
- **Cultural Exchange Programme (2026-2030):** Signed to promote cooperation in film, animation, and gaming.
- **Friendship Year:** 2028-29 will be commemorated as the "Year of India-ROK Friendship".

The April 2026 summit between India and South Korea reset ties from a buyer-seller model to co-development and strategic trust. With goals like $50B trade, Unified Payments Interface integration, and defence collaboration, the real test lies in effective implementation to deliver economic and Indo-Pacific security gains.

SCARBOROUGH SHOAL

Satellite imagery from April 2026 reveals that China has deployed a floating barrier and multiple vessels to block the entrance of the Scarborough Shoal.

About Scarborough Shoal:

What it is?

- Scarborough Shoal (known as **Bajo de Masinloc** in the Philippines and **Huangyan Island** in China) is a triangular-shaped chain of reefs and rocks with a central lagoon. It is not an island but a high-tide feature that serves as a traditionally rich fishing ground and a strategic maritime landmark in the South China Sea.

Location: Situated in the eastern part of the South China Sea, approximately **120 nautical miles** (222 km) west of the Philippine island of Luzon and about 470 nautical miles from the coast of China.

Origin: It is a coral atoll formed on an underwater volcanic mount. Its strategic value lies in its proximity to the Philippine mainland and vital international shipping lanes.

Nations Involved:

- **Philippines:** Claims the shoal based on its proximity and its location within the Philippines' 200-nautical-mile **Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)** under UNCLOS.
- **China:** Claims the shoal as part of its historical territory under the controversial **Nine-Dash Line** (now often cited through historical rights).
- **Taiwan:** Also maintains a claim over the feature similar to China's.

Key Issues:

- **Effective Control vs. Legal Rights:** While a **2016 Permanent Court of Arbitration**ruling invalidated China's expansive claims and noted that the blockade violated international law, China has maintained de facto control since a 2012 standoff.
- **Militarization and Barriers:** China frequently uses Maritime Militia (fishing trawlers) and Coast Guard vessels to install floating barriers, preventing Filipino fishermen from accessing the lagoon.
- **Pretext for Occupation:** The recent establishment of a national nature reserve by China is viewed by Manila as a legal pretext for permanent occupation and potential construction of artificial structures.

Implications:

- The shoal is a flashpoint that could trigger the **U.S.-Philippines Mutual Defense Treaty** if a confrontation turns into an armed attack on Philippine vessels.
- The persistent blockade deprives local Filipino fishing communities of their traditional livelihoods, leading to economic distress in coastal provinces like Zambales.
- Diplomats fear China may escalate presence at the shoal while the U.S. is preoccupied with conflicts in the Middle East, testing the limits of the Manila-Washington alliance.

RELIEF SCHEME

The Government of India has expanded the geographical coverage of the RELIEF (Resilience & Logistics Intervention for Export Facilitation) scheme to include Egypt and Jordan.

About The RELIEF Scheme:

What it is?

- RELIEF is a time-bound, targeted intervention launched to mitigate the financial and logistical risks faced by Indian exporters due to geopolitical tensions in West Asia. It acts as a financial buffer against extraordinary war-risk surcharges, freight hikes, and insurance spikes that threaten the competitiveness of Indian goods.

Launched In: The scheme was officially launched on **March 19, 2026**, as part of the **Export Promotion Mission (EPM)**.

Nodal Agency: ECGC Limited (formerly Export Credit Guarantee Corporation of India).

Aim:

- To prevent order cancellations and safeguard employment in export-linked sectors during maritime crises.
- To provide surety and confidence to exporters, especially MSMEs, allowing them to continue shipments to high-risk zones.
- To stabilize the financial burden on exporters by covering the gap between normal and conflict-era logistics costs.

Key Features:

The scheme is structured into three complementary components with a total financial outlay of **₹497 Crore**:

- **Component I (Enhanced Cover for Insured Exporters):**
    - For existing ECGC policyholders, it provides up to **100% risk coverage** for war-related and political losses.
    - Premiums are frozen at **pre-disruption rates**, with the government absorbing the additional risk cost.
- **Component II (Facilitating New Coverage):**
    - Encourages new exporters to obtain ECGC cover for upcoming shipments with a **95% risk coverage** backstop.
    - Recently clarified to include those obtaining a fresh **ECGC Whole Turnover Policy** on or after March 16, 2026.
- **Component III (Reimbursement for Non-Insured MSMEs):**
    - Provides a **50% reimbursement** of extraordinary freight and insurance surcharges (e.g., War Risk Surcharge).
    - Capped at **₹50 Lakh per exporter** to ensure wide distribution of benefits.
- **Eligible Destinations:** Now covers UAE, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, Bahrain, Iraq, Iran, Israel, Yemen, Egypt, and Jordan.

Significance:

- It ensures that India's export momentum is not derailed by regional conflicts or the closure of critical chokepoints like the **Strait of Hormuz**.
- By reimbursing 50% of logistical surcharges, it protects the narrow profit margins of smaller businesses that are most vulnerable to shipping volatility.

COLORADO RIVER

Recent study by the University of Washington has explained why billions of litres of water from the Colorado River are disappearing before reaching major reservoirs like Lake Mead and Lake Powell.

About The Colorado River:

What it is?

- The Colorado River is a 1,450-mile-long (2,330 km) river known as the Lifeblood of the American Southwest. It is the principal freshwater artery for one of the most arid regions in North America, supplying water for municipal use, hydropower, and irrigation to 40 million people.

Located in:

- **Origin:** The river originates at the Continental Divide at **La Poudre Pass** in Rocky Mountain National Park, Colorado, at an elevation of 10,000 feet.
- **Location:** It occupies an area of approximately 250,000 square miles across seven U.S. states and two Mexican states.

States and Regions It Flows Through:

- **Upper Basin States:** Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming.
- **Lower Basin States:** Arizona, California, and Nevada.
- **International:** It flows into northwestern Mexico through the Sonoran Desert before reaching its mouth at the Gulf of California.

Tributaries:

- **Upper Basin:** The Green (its largest tributary), Gunnison, San Juan, Dolores, and Roaring Fork rivers.
- **Lower Basin:** The Gila, Little Colorado, Virgin, and Bill Williams rivers.

Key Features of the River

- **Grand Canyon:** The river is the primary architect of the **Grand Canyon**, having carved its path through millions of years of geological layers.
- **Horseshoe Bend:** A world-famous entrenched meander near Page, Arizona, where the river makes a 270-degree turn in a 1,000-foot-deep canyon.
- **Major Reservoirs:** Home to **Lake Mead** (formed by Hoover Dam) and **Lake Powell**(formed by Glen Canyon Dam), the two largest man-made reservoirs in the U.S..
- **The Law of the River:** A complex collection of compacts, federal laws, and treaties (notably the 1922 Colorado River Compact) that govern its water allocation.

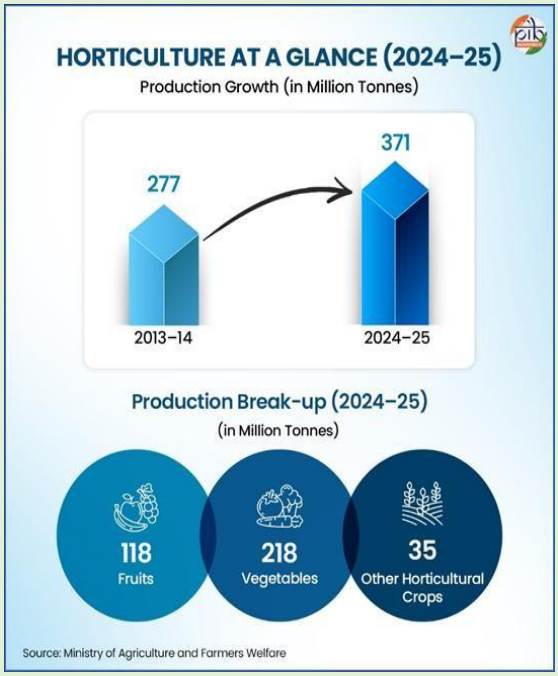
Why the Water is Vanishing?

Recent scientific breakthroughs have shifted the blame from simple evaporation to a complex ecological siphoning effect:

- **Aridification:** Rising temperatures are permanently reducing flows through a transition from drought to a state of chronic dryness.
- **Biological Pumps:** Warmer, drier springs cause mountain vegetation (from wildflowers to high-elevation forests) to wake up earlier and draw moisture directly from the melting snowpack before it can reach the river.
- **Clear Sky Effect:** Clearer skies and increased solar radiation enhance the thirst of plants, which use snowmelt as a primary food and cooling supply.
- **Vapour Pressure Deficit:** A warmer atmosphere pulls even more moisture from the soil and snow, leaving only 50% of anticipated runoff even when snowpack is at 100% of normal.

HIGH-VALUE CROP DIVERSIFICATION

The **Union Budget 2026-27** has introduced a crop-specific, regionally differentiated strategy to accelerate the diversification into **high-value crops** across India's coastal, North Eastern, and Himalayan regions.



About Accelerating India's High-Value Crop Diversification:

What are High-Value Crops?

- High-value crops (HVCs) primarily refer to horticultural produce such as fruits, vegetables, flowers, spices, medicinal, and aromatic plants. They are termed high value because they generate significantly higher net returns per unit of land compared to traditional staple crops like cereals (wheat/rice) and pulses.

Data and Statistics on High-Value Crops

- **Coconut Leadership:** India ranks **second globally** in coconut production (22.44% of world total), supporting the livelihoods of approximately **30 million people**.

- **Export Strength:** In 2024-25, cashew exports reached **USD 369.17 million**, while cocoa exports stood at **USD 295.58 million**.
- **Horticulture Output:** Total horticultural production grew to **370.74 million tonnes** in 2024-25, far outstripping previous decades.
- **Agarwood Dominance:** India hosts nearly **150 million agarwood trees**, with **90%**concentrated in the North Eastern states, particularly Tripura and Assam.

Horticulture as a Driver of Agricultural Growth

- **Economic Nucleus:** Horticulture accounts for approximately **37% of the Gross Value Output (GVO)** within the agricultural crops sub-sector.
- **Global Standing:** India is the **world's largest producer** of onions and shallots (22.42% of global share) and ranks second in vegetables, fruits, and potatoes.
- **Productivity Growth:** Over the last decade, the sector has grown at **4.45%**, the highest rate compared to traditional agriculture.
- **Nutritional Security:** Beyond income, HVCs provide essential vitamins and minerals, fuelling the agro-processing industry and improving national nutrition.
- **Employment Engine:** These crops are labour-intensive, creating significant local employment opportunities in rural and tribal areas.

Regionally Anchored Strategies:

- **Coastal Regions (Coconut, Cashew, Cocoa, Sandalwood):** Focused on replacing aging trees with high-yielding varieties and promoting Indian Cashew as a premium brand.
- **North Eastern Region (Agarwood):** Leveraging the Oud market with a potential **₹2,000 crore annual turnover** in Tripura through sustainable cultivation and CITES-aligned export quotas.
- **Himalayan/Hilly Regions (Walnuts, Almonds, Pine Nuts):** Promoting high-density cultivation of Chilgoza (Pine nuts) and walnuts to boost tribal incomes in J&K and Himachal Pradesh.
- **Intercropping Models:** Promoting cocoa as an intercrop in coconut and arecanut plantations to utilize 40-50% sunlight penetration and provide extra income.
- **Institutional Support:** Utilizing bodies like the **Coconut Development Board** and **Directorate of Cashewnut and Cocoa Development** to modernize nurseries and train women in value addition.

Challenges Associated with Diversification:

- **High Initial Investment:** Transitioning to high-value perennials like sandalwood or agarwood requires significant capital and a long gestation period.

- **Perishability:** Unlike cereals, horticultural crops have a **short shelf-life**, necessitating advanced cold-chain infrastructure to prevent post-harvest losses.
- **Climate Vulnerability:** High-value crops in hilly regions (like walnuts and almonds) are highly sensitive to shifting snowfall patterns and temperature spikes.
- **Fragmented Landholdings:** Nearly **10 million coconut farmers** operate on small plots, making it difficult to achieve economies of scale for processing.
- **Quality Standardization:** Meeting stringent international phytosanitary standards remains a hurdle for Indian HVCs to penetrate high-end markets in the EU and USA.

Way Ahead:

- **Infrastructure Integration:** Strengthening **Post-Harvest Management (PHM)**through the Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH) to reduce losses.
- **Brand Building:** Positioning Indian Sandalwood and Indian Cocoa as premium global brands by 2030 to command higher international prices.
- **Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs):** Facilitating more Coconut and Cashew FPOs to organize fragmented sectors and improve bargaining power.
- **Digital Mapping:** Expanding the use of **geospatial mapping** for agarwood and high-density nut orchards to monitor growth and yield accurately.
- **Rural Youth Participation:** Encouraging rural youth and startups to engage in value-added processing (e.g., virgin coconut oil or fermented cocoa) to create a Gaon to Global value chain.

India's shift toward high-value crop diversification represents a move from subsistence farming to a commercially viable, export-oriented agricultural economy. By leveraging regional agro-climatic strengths through the Union Budget 2026-27, India is laying the foundation for a **Viksit Bharat** where farmers are global entrepreneurs.

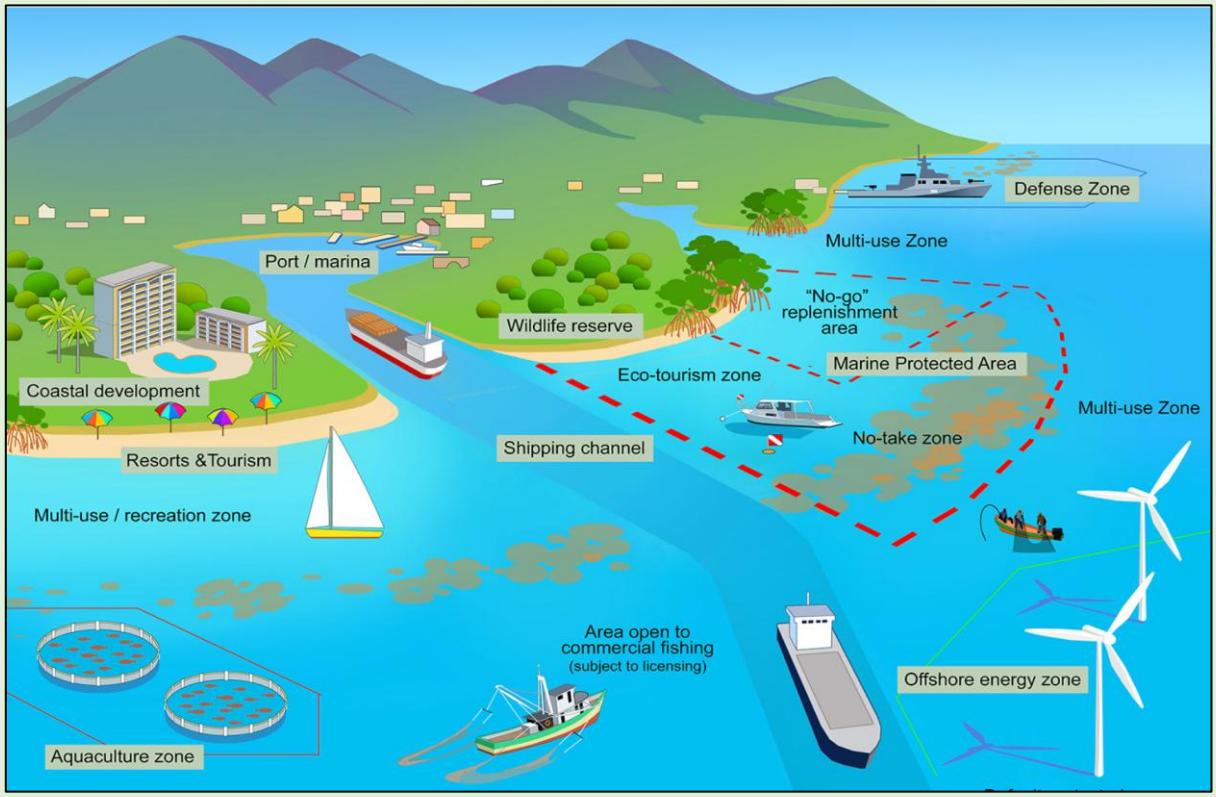
MARINE SPATIAL PLAN

- Odisha has become the **first state in India** to launch a **Marine Spatial Plan (MSP)** under the second phase of the India-Norway sustainable ocean management initiative
- The state government signed an **MoU with the National Centre for Coastal Research (NCCR)** under the Ministry of Earth Sciences for implementation
- First phase (2021-2022) was implemented in **Puducherry and Lakshadweep**

What is Marine Spatial Planning (MSP)?

UNESCO-IOC definition:

- A **public process** of analyzing and allocating the spatial and temporal distribution of human activities in marine areas to achieve **ecological, economic, and social objectives** specified through a political process.



Key Features

- **Data-driven planning tool** that maps marine areas and allocates zones for activities such as fishing, tourism, shipping, conservation, and energy projects
- Balances **economic growth with environmental protection**
- Promotes **sustainable use of marine resources**
- Supports development of **Blue Economy**

Why Odisha Needs MSP

- **Rich but sensitive coast:** ~574 km coastline with lagoons, mangroves, and estuaries supporting high biodiversity.
- **Rising development pressure:** Industry, tourism, and ports increasing resource conflicts—needs balanced growth.
- **High climate risk:** Frequent cyclones and sea-level rise demand adaptive coastal planning.

Implementation Details

- **Scientific mapping (NCCR):** Study coastal waters off Odisha—benthic mapping, salinity, temperature—and identify zones for tourism, fisheries, and seaweed/seagrass cultivation.
- **Policy & governance:** Data-driven policymaking to support multi-sector coastal development and stakeholders.

India-Norway Collaboration

- India–Norway **Integrated Ocean Initiative (2019)**: pilot phase (2021–22) in Puducherry & Lakshadweep with ~₹8–10 crore/year funding.
- Expansion phase (2026): Odisha as first full-scale state; backed by MoES with support interest from World Bank & UNEP.

Strategic Significance

Blue Economy Alignment

- Aligns with Centre's emphasis on **Blue Economy as one of ten core dimensions of growth** (New India by 2030 vision)
- Supports sustainable ocean resources utilisation for economic and social development

Static-Dynamic Linkage

Static (Geography / Economy Syllabus)

- **Blue Economy:** One of ten core dimensions of India's growth (New India 2030 vision)
- **Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ):** Regulated under Environment Protection Act, 1986
- **India's coastline:** 7,516 km (mainland: 5,422 km; island territories: 2,094 km)
- **Odisha coastline:** ~550 km (3rd longest among Indian states after Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh)

Dynamic (Current Affairs – April 2026)

- **First state to implement MSP** – Odisha leads in integrated ocean planning
- **Phase I (2021-22):** Puducherry, Lakshadweep (UTs)
- **Phase II (2026):** Odisha (first state)
- **International collaboration:** India-Norway (2019 MoU)
- **Climate resilience:** MSP as tool for adaptation in cyclone-prone region

KERALA STATE CIVIL SERVICE ACADEMY

Established under Centre for Continuing Education Kerala (CCEK)

NURTURING YOUNG MINDS TOWARDS TOMORROW'S CIVIL SERVICE

COURSES

Prelims Cum Mains Regular Batch

Course Fee: : ₹ 49,200 (₹ 40,000 + 18% GST ₹ 7,200 + Caution Deposit ₹ 2,000)

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For the Working Professionals & students who are doing their UG/PG

- Course Fee: Ongoing Degree/PG students: ₹ 41,300 (₹ 35,000 + 18% GST ₹ 6,300)
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Course Fee: ₹ 5,900 (₹ 5,000 + GST ₹ 900)

Talent Development Course

For High School Students

Course Fee: ₹ 4720 (₹ 4,000 + 18% GST ₹ 720)

REHEARSE
RESILIENCE
REKINDLE
REPHRASE

REHEARSE- Prelims Test Series

38 Test papers including 3 exclusive current affairs tests and 5 CSAT papers

RESILIENCE- Mains Test Series

17 Tests including compulsory papers

REKINDLE- PCM REPEATERS BATCH

Mentorship, Weekly Current Affairs classes, Bi Weekly CSAT classes, Prelims Test Series, Revision classes, Extensive Answer Writing class / Practices

REPHRASE- Mains Answer Writing Programme

This answer writing exercise will cover Essay, General Studies - I, General Studies - II, General Studies -III & General Studies -IV papers

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- Prelims & Mains test series with All Kerala rank list.
- Expert faculties.
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- Instalment facility for fee payment available to BPL category students.

Optional Subjects

Geography, History, Malayalam, Political Science & International Relations, Public Administration and Sociology

Course Fees : Rs. 11,800/– (Fees Rs 10,000/- + GST Rs.1,800/-).

KERALA STATE CIVIL SERVICE ACADEMY

Charachira, Kowdiar P.O. Thiruvananthapuram - 695003. Phone: 0471-2313065, 2311654,
Email: directorccek@gmail.com, info.ccek@gmail.com Web : https://kscsa.org

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For more details contact:

82810 98864

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: 8281098864 || KOLLAM: 8281098867 || KONNI: 8281098872 || CHENGANNUR: 8281098871 || KOTTAYAM : 8281098863 || ERNAKULAM: 8281098873 || IDUKKI : 8281098863 || THRISSUR: 8281098874 || PALAKKAD : 8281098869 || PONNANI : 8281098868 || KOZHIKODE : 8281098870 || WAYANAD : 9496810543 || KALLIASSERY: 8281098875 || KASARAGOD : 8281098876