



**KERALA STATE CIVIL SERVICE ACADEMY**



Established under Centre for Continuing Education Kerala (CCEK)

# WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS

## MAGAZINE



June 06 to June 12, 2026

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Monthly Current Affairs Magazine

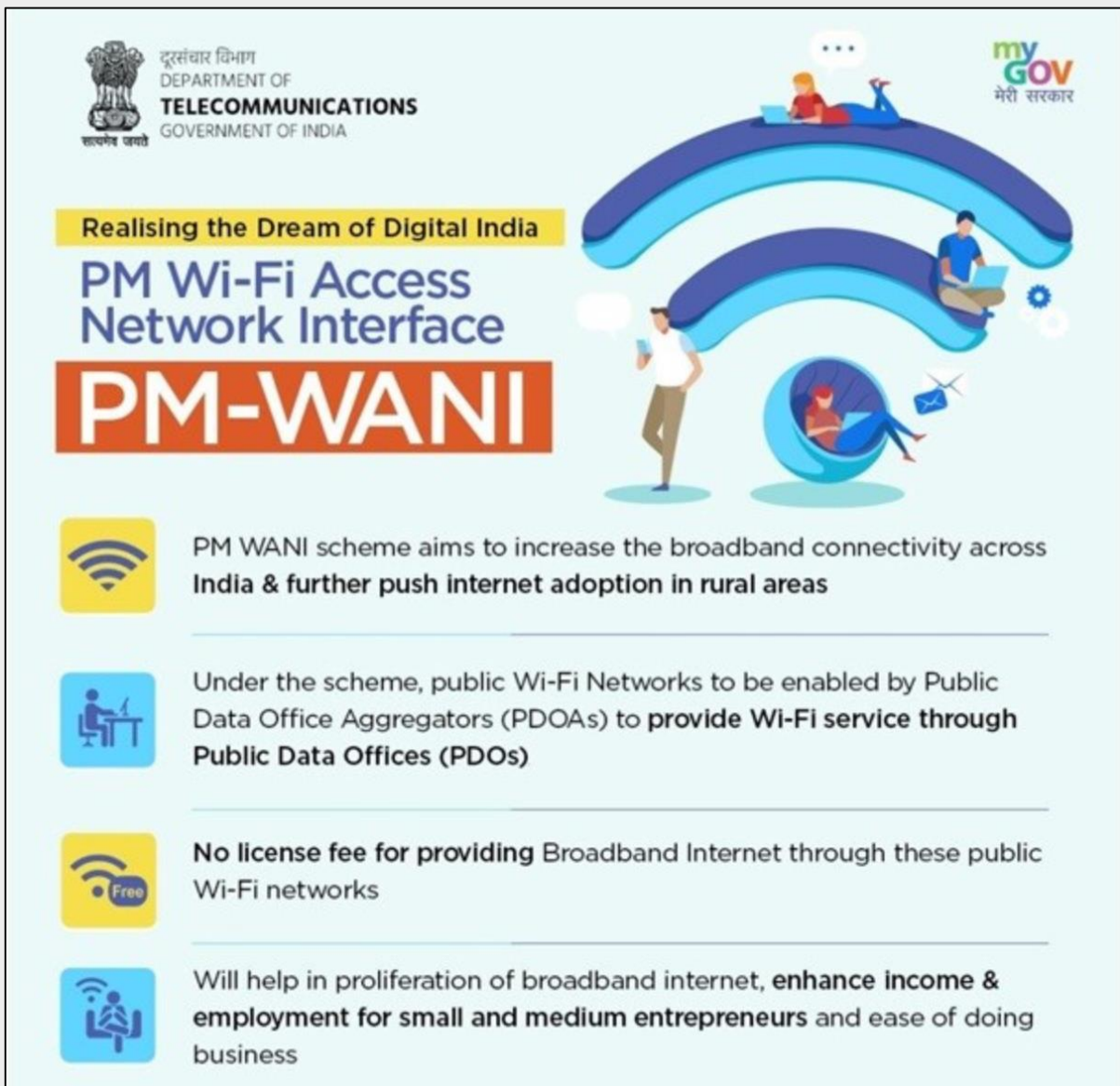
## PM WANI SCHEME

**Subject:** Science & Tech – Digital Infrastructure; Economy – Broadband Connectivity; PM-WANI; Public Wi-Fi; Digital Divide.

### Why in News?

- The **Department of Telecommunications (DoT)** introduced a series of user-friendly reforms under the **Prime Minister’s Wi-Fi Access Network Interface (PM-WANI)** framework.
- New measures include: **QR-based authentication** for laptops and secondary devices, **flexible short-duration Wi-Fi plans**, and **standardisation of hotspot names**.

### About PM-WANI



The infographic features the Government of India emblem and the Department of Telecommunications logo at the top left. It includes the 'myGov' logo at the top right. The central graphic shows a stylized Wi-Fi symbol with people using devices. Below this, the text reads: 'Realising the Dream of Digital India', 'PM Wi-Fi Access Network Interface', and 'PM-WANI' in large letters. Four key points are listed with icons: 1. A Wi-Fi icon: 'PM WANI scheme aims to increase the broadband connectivity across India & further push internet adoption in rural areas'. 2. A person at a computer icon: 'Under the scheme, public Wi-Fi Networks to be enabled by Public Data Office Aggregators (PDOAs) to provide Wi-Fi service through Public Data Offices (PDOs)'. 3. A Wi-Fi icon with 'Free': 'No license fee for providing Broadband Internet through these public Wi-Fi networks'. 4. A person at a computer icon: 'Will help in proliferation of broadband internet, enhance income & employment for small and medium entrepreneurs and ease of doing business'.

- Launched by the **Department of Telecommunications (DoT)** in **December 2020**.

### Objective

- Enhance proliferation of **public Wi-Fi hotspots** to create robust digital communications infrastructure, especially in **rural areas**.

## Goals

- Overcome the **digital divide** by increasing internet connectivity, especially in remote and rural regions.
- Empower individuals and businesses to participate in the digital economy through **affordable internet access**.
- Encourage **local entrepreneurs** by enabling shopkeepers and individuals to become **Public Data Office (PDO) operators**.

## PM-WANI Ecosystem Components

Component	Role
<b>Public Data Office (PDO)</b>	Establishes, maintains, and operates WANI-compliant Wi-Fi access points. <b>No license required</b> from DoT. Local shops/small establishments can earn extra income without license, registration, or fees.
<b>Public Data Office Aggregator (PDOA)</b>	Aggregator of PDOs; performs functions relating to <b>authorization and accounting</b> .
<b>App Provider</b>	Develops an App to register users and discover WANI-compliant Wi-Fi hotspots in the nearby area.
<b>Central Registry</b>	Maintains details of App Providers, PDOAs, and PDOs. Currently maintained by <b>Centre for Development of Telematics (C-DoT)</b> .

## New Upgrades

- **QR-based authentication** for laptops and secondary devices (simpler login without OTP).
- **Flexible short-duration Wi-Fi plans** (hourly, daily, etc.) – more affordable for occasional users.
- **Standardisation of PM-WANI hotspot names** – easier identification and enhanced reliability.

## Implementation Deadline

- All stakeholders to implement revised guidelines by **July 2026**.

## BONN CLIMATE CONFERENCE 2026

At the Bonn Climate Conference 2026 (SB64), health advocacy groups led by the Global Climate and Health Alliance (GCHA) urged developed countries to triple public adaptation finance to \$120 billion annually by 2035.



*Bonn Climate Conference 2026*

### About Bonn Climate Conference 2026:

#### What is It?

- The Bonn Climate Conference refers to the annual mid-year climate negotiations held under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).
- Officially known as the 64th Sessions of the Subsidiary Bodies (SB64), it serves as a technical and preparatory meeting ahead of the annual COP summit.
- The 2026 conference is being held in Bonn, Germany

#### Aim:

- To advance implementation of commitments made under the **Paris Agreement** and previous COP decisions.
- To facilitate negotiations on adaptation, mitigation, climate finance, loss and damage, and just transition.

#### Key Outcomes and Discussions

- **Adaptation Finance Push:** Health groups called for increasing public grant-based adaptation finance from the COP26 target of **\$40 billion** to **\$120 billion annually by 2035**.
- **Fossil Fuel Transition**
  - Developed countries were urged to publish national roadmaps for transitioning away from fossil fuels.
  - Discussions stressed alignment with the **1.5°C global warming pathway**.
- **Belém Adaptation Indicators:** Technical discussions began on operationalizing the 59 Belém Adaptation Indicators adopted at COP30.
- **Food Systems and Agriculture:** Deliberations continued under the Sharm el-Sheikh Joint Work on Agriculture and Food Security to improve climate resilience in agriculture.
- **Just Transition Mechanism:** Discussions focused on operationalizing the new Just Transition Mechanism agreed at COP30 to support capacity building and technical cooperation.

#### Significance:

- Acts as the principal technical negotiating platform between COP summits and helps convert political commitments into actionable frameworks.
- Supports vulnerable countries in building resilience against climate-induced disasters, health risks, and food insecurity.
- Facilitates negotiations on adaptation finance, loss and damage funding, and climate investment flows

## ALGOZA: TRADITIONAL FOLK INSTRUMENT – PADMA SHRI FOR RAJASTHAN MAESTRO TAGA RAM BHEEL

**Subject:** Art & Culture – Folk Music; Padma Shri 2026; Algoza Instrument; Rajasthan; Thar Desert; Taga Ram Bheel.



### Why in News?

- **Taga Ram Bheel**, a renowned folk artist from **Jaisalmer, Rajasthan**, was conferred the **Padma Shri** (Art category) in **May 2026**.
- He was honoured for preserving and promoting the traditional music of the **Thar Desert** through the rare folk instrument, the **Algoza**.

### About Taga Ram Bheel

**Village:** Moolsagar, Jaisalmer district, Rajasthan

**Age:** 62 years (as of 2026)

## Musical Journey

- Developed interest in Algoza during childhood; mastered by age **10**.
- Bought his first Algoza at age **11**.
- First public performance: **Jaisalmer Desert Festival (1981)**.
- First international performance: **France (1996)**.
- Performed in over **35 countries** (US, Russia, Japan, Singapore, several African and European nations).

## Unique Skills

- Also **crafts Algoza instruments** with his own hands – handmade instruments in demand worldwide.
- Continued working in **mining** for livelihood despite global recognition.

## Significance of his Padma Shri

- Recognised for keeping the traditional musical heritage of **Marudhara** (Thar Desert) alive on the global stage.
- Credited with giving a **new identity** to the rare art of Algoza playing.

## About Algoza

### Type

- Traditional pair of **woodwind instruments** (twin flutes).

### Geographical Association

- Widely associated with **Rajasthan, Punjab, Sindh**, and parts of western India and Pakistan.
- One of India's **oldest surviving folk wind instruments**.

### Name Meaning

- Derived from “two flutes” – played using **two wooden pipes simultaneously**.

### How it is Played

- One flute plays the **melody**.
- The other provides a **continuous drone** or rhythmic base.
- Together, they create a hypnotic, layered sound unique to desert folk music.

### Circular Breathing Technique

- Musicians must master **circular breathing** – demanding technique allowing continuous blowing without stopping for breath.
- Sound is generated by breathing into it rapidly; quick recapturing of breath on each beat creates a bouncing, swing rhythm.
- Creates the instrument's signature **uninterrupted flow** – making performances sound seamless and meditative.
- Artists describe Algoza playing as a true “**game of breath**”.

## WATER HYACINTH: FROM INVASIVE WEED TO WOMEN'S LIVELIHOODS – ASSAM'S CONSERVATION MODEL

### Why in News?

- A livelihood initiative supported by the **International Rhino Foundation (IRF)** has helped women in fringe areas of **Laokhowa-Burhachapori Wildlife Sanctuary (LBWLS)** in Assam turn **water hyacinth** into market-ready utility items.
- The project (started in 2023) is implemented by **Aaranyak** (biodiversity conservation group) in collaboration with **Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve** authorities and **Nagaon Wildlife Division**.
- The initiative aims to provide alternative livelihoods to prevent fringe communities from resorting to poaching or encroachment, thereby supporting wildlife conservation.

### About Water Hyacinth



**Scientific Name:** *Eichhornia crassipes*

**Origin:** Native to **South America** (Amazon basin)

**Type:** Free-floating perennial aquatic plant

## Reputation

- Considered one of the **world's most invasive aquatic weeds**.
- Fast-growing; can double its population in **two weeks**.

## Impact on Ecosystems

- Forms dense mats on water surfaces.
- Physically and chemically suffocates life beneath – reduces oxygen levels, blocks sunlight.
- Affects fish populations, native plants, and water quality.
- Clogs waterways, hampers navigation, and disrupts irrigation.

## Spread

- Introduced to India during **British colonial period** as an ornamental plant.
- Now found in freshwater bodies across tropical and subtropical regions.

## Laokhowa-Burhachapori Wildlife Sanctuary (LBWLS) – Context

**Location:** Central Assam (contiguous with Kaziranga National Park landscape)

**Area:** 114.19 sq km (approximately)

## Key Biodiversity

- Part of the Kaziranga-Karbi Anglong landscape.
- Important habitat for: **one-horned rhino, tiger, barking deer, fishing cat, leopard cat, civet, wild boar**.
- **225 species of birds, 39 species of fish, 14 species of reptiles, 9 species of amphibians**.

## History of Degradation

- Rhinos, tigers, and other animals were wiped out from Laokhowa in the **1980s**.
- Large swathes of jungle and government land were converted into **paddy fields and fisheries** by encroachers.
- Poaching was also a contributing factor.

## Reclamation (2023)

- Much of the Laokhowa part was reclaimed from encroachers in **two phases since February 2023**.
- One-horned rhinos returned to the area **after 40 years**.

## RAJYA SABHA ELECTIONS

The Election Commission of India closed the window for filing nominations, setting the stage for Rajya Sabha elections contested across **27 seats**.



### *Rajya Sabha Elections*

#### **About Rajya Sabha Elections:**

##### **What It Is?**

- The Rajya Sabha (the Upper House of India's Parliament) is a permanent legislative body whose members are elected for a six-year term. Unlike the Lok Sabha, the Rajya Sabha cannot be dissolved.
- To maintain administrative continuity, a rolling system is used where one-third of the total members automatically retire every second year, and their vacancies are filled through biennial elections.
- Members elected through regular biennial cycles serve a full six-year term, whereas members appointed through bye-elections serve only the remaining, unexpired term of the individual whose seat became vacant.

##### **Procedure of Election:**

- **Indirect Electorate:** Rajya Sabha MPs are elected indirectly rather than by direct public voting. They are elected by the Members of the Legislative Assemblies (MLAs) of the respective states. For Union Territories, representatives are elected by a designated Electoral College (currently, only Delhi and Puducherry elect members to the Rajya Sabha).
- **Voting System:** The elections utilize the system of proportional representation by means of a single transferable vote. Instead of choosing a single name, MLAs cast their votes by ranking the contesting candidates in order of preference.
- **The Winning Quota Formula:** To secure a seat, a candidate must cross a mathematically calculated minimum threshold of valid first-preference votes. The formula used to determine this quota is defined as:

$$\text{Required votes} = \left[ \frac{\text{Total valid votes}}{\text{Number of Rajya Sabha seats} + 1} \right] + 1$$

*The Winning Quota Formula*

- **Open Ballot System:** Voting is conducted via an open ballot. To prevent cross-voting, horse-trading, or invalidation, an MLA is required by election rules to show their marked ballot paper to their respective party's authorized agent before dropping it into the ballot box. Failing to display the ballot to the agent renders the vote invalid.
- **Uncontested Elections:** Actual physical polling takes place only if the number of candidates contesting exceeds the total number of vacant Rajya Sabha seats. If the number of nominated candidates matches the exact number of seats available, the candidates are declared elected unopposed.

### Functions and Significance of the Rajya Sabha:

- **Passing Non-Money Bills:** The Rajya Sabha plays a critical role in the Indian legislative pipeline by reviewing and passing non-money bills. A bill must be approved by the Upper House to become law.
- **Legislative Scrutiny and Debates:** When the ruling coalition holds a dominant presence in the Rajya Sabha, the passage of non-money bills becomes smooth. Conversely, if the Opposition holds a stronger position, it increases the likelihood of intense debates, building amendments, or sending proposed legislation to parliamentary committees for deeper scrutiny.
- **Alliance Management and Assembly Arithmetic:** Rajya Sabha elections serve as a test of assembly arithmetic and alliance management for political coalitions.
- **Bargaining Power of Regional Parties:** Because Rajya Sabha seats can be won by narrow margins and results can be altered by cross-voting, regional blocks gain significant bargaining power during tight legislative votes, altering the overall balance of parliamentary strength.

## UNITED NATIONS MILITARY GENDER ADVOCATE OF THE YEAR AWARD.

Prime Minister of India congratulated Major Abhilasha Barak on being conferred the prestigious United Nations Military Gender Advocate of the Year Award.



*The UN Military Gender Advocate of the Year Award*

### About the UN Military Gender Advocate of the Year Award: What It Is?

- The United Nations Military Gender Advocate of the Year Award is an international honor that recognizes the dedication and frontline efforts of an individual military peacekeeper in promoting and implementing the principles of **UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325)** on Women, Peace, and Security.

**Established In:** The annual award was created in **2016** by the Office of Military Affairs within the UN Department for Peace Operations (DPO).

**Aim:**

- The objective of the award is to incentivize and honor military personnel who successfully integrate gender dynamics and perspectives into field-level peacekeeping activities, ensuring that the unique protection, security, and humanitarian needs of local women and girls are met.

**Key Features of the Award:**

- **Rigorous Selection Pool:** Awardees are chosen from a highly competitive pool of candidates nominated directly by Force Commanders and Heads of Mission from all active UN peace operations worldwide.
- **Focus on Inclusivity:** The evaluation places heavy emphasis on practical field innovations, such as launching mixed-gender patrols, conducting local gender-responsiveness training, and building trusted networks with localized women’s groups.
- **Platform for Advocacy:** Winning the award provides the recipient with a global platform to share their field methodologies, helping mainstream gender-sensitive strategic planning across all UN military components.

**Indian Winners So Far**

Year	Awardee	Mission
2019	Major Suman Gawani	UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS)
2023	Major Radhika Sen	UN Stabilization Mission in DR Congo (MONUSCO)
2025/26	Major Abhilasha Barak	UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL)

**About Major Abhilasha Barak:**

**Who She Is and Her Assignment?**

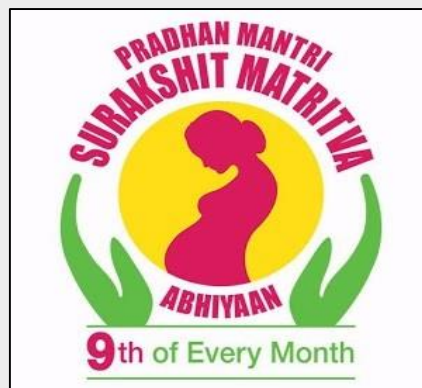
- Major Abhilasha Barak is a distinguished officer of the Indian Army currently deployed on an international tour of duty in the Middle East.
- She operates within the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), a highly volatile operational zone tasked with maintaining stability along the Blue Line between Lebanon and Israel.

### Her Work and Contributions:

- **Engagement Team Commander:** She serves as the operational commander for tactical engagement teams, leading ground-level community interactions to gather critical civilian security data.
- **Gender Focal Point:** In her capacity as a Gender Focal Point, Major Barak acts as the primary link between the UN military command and local Lebanese women's organizations. Her work focuses on addressing gender-based vulnerabilities, improving humanitarian resource distribution, and ensuring that community safety frameworks are inclusive and responsive to women and children.

### **PRADHAN MANTRI SURAKSHIT MATRITVA ABHIYAN (PMSMA)**

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare commenced nationwide celebrations to mark the 10th anniversary of the Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan (PMSMA) under the theme 10 Years of PMSMA – A Decade of Care.



*The Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan (PMSMA)*

### **About The Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan (PMSMA):**

#### **What It Is?**

- The Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan (PMSMA) is a national flagship health program designed to provide assured, comprehensive, and completely free antenatal care (ANC) universally to all pregnant women across India.
- Operating through a unique single-window healthcare delivery mechanism, the scheme serves as a critical pillar of the government's Continuum of Care approach under the Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health (RMNCH+A) strategy.

**Launched In:** The scheme was officially launched on **June 9, 2016**, by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

**Ministry Involved:** The program is designed, financed, and executed by the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (MoHFW), Government of India.

**Aim:** PMSMA seeks to reduce preventable maternal and infant deaths through **early identification and management of high-risk pregnancies**, ensuring every pregnant woman receives at least one specialist antenatal check-up in the second or third trimester.

## Key Features of the PMSMA Ecosystem:

**9th of the Month Rule:** On the **9th day of every month**, all designated government health facilities conduct special PMSMA sessions, ensuring predictable and universal access to antenatal care for pregnant women.

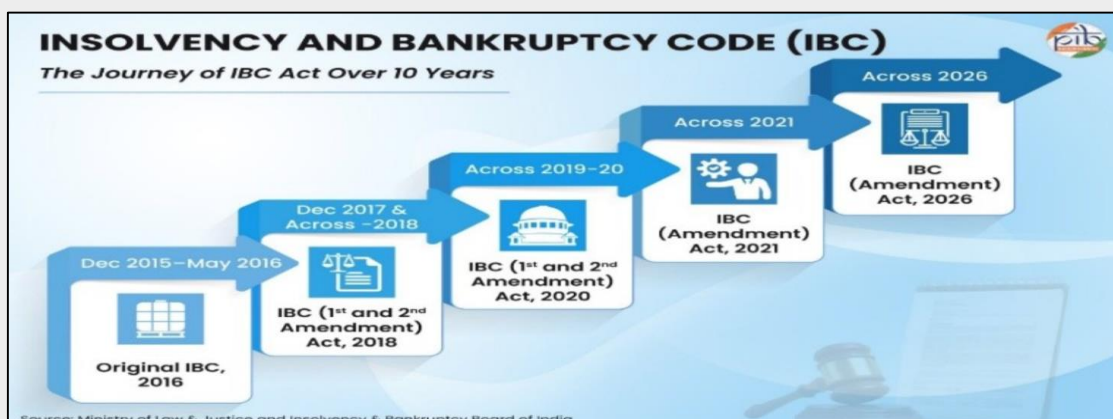
- **Single-Window Minimum Care Package:** Pregnant women receive a complete package of free services, including clinical check-ups, counseling, medicines, laboratory tests, and one ultrasound scan, under a single visit.
- **Public-Private Partnership (PPP) Volunteerism:** Private gynecologists, obstetricians, and radiologists voluntarily support government facilities, helping bridge specialist shortages and improve maternal healthcare coverage.
- **Green Sticker (Normal Pregnancy):** A **green sticker** is placed on the MCP card of women with no identified complications, indicating a normal pregnancy requiring routine monitoring.
- **Red Sticker (High-Risk Pregnancy):** A **red sticker** identifies women with high-risk pregnancies, alerting health workers to ensure closer supervision, timely referrals, and delivery preparedness.

## About e-PMSMA Features:

- **Name-Based Line Listing:** e-PMSMA digitally records and tracks each high-risk pregnancy through online portals and mobile applications, enabling real-time monitoring by healthcare providers.
- **Extended Care Sitzings:** Health facilities can organize up to **four PMSMA sessions per month**, ensuring that missed beneficiaries and high-risk cases receive timely care.
- **45-Day Healthy Outcome Window:** The monitoring system tracks both mother and newborn from pregnancy until **45 days after delivery**, ensuring comprehensive maternal and neonatal care.
- **Financially Assisted Transport Support:** Under **JSSK**, transport assistance is provided to pregnant women, especially in remote areas, reducing access barriers to institutional healthcare services.

## THE INSOLVENCY AND BANKRUPTCY CODE

The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), enacted in 2016, has completed a decade of operation, establishing itself as a transformative institutional shift for India's credit markets and corporate accountability.



## About The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) completes 10 years:

### What It Is?

- The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) is a single, consolidated legislative framework enacted in 2016 to replace India's older, fragmented, and slow insolvency laws.
- It provides a legally binding, creditor-driven, and time-bound mechanism to resolve insolvency and financial distress for corporate entities, partnership firms, and individuals.

### Key Features of the IBC:

- **Integrated Legal Consolidation:** Unifies multiple legacy insolvency laws into a single code to streamline processes for corporations, partnerships, and individuals.
- **Time-Bound Resolution Window:** Mandates a strict timeline for completing the Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (CIRP) to ensure asset values do not erode.
- **Creditor-in-Control Model:** Shifts operational control of a defaulting company away from the existing promoters to a creditor-led Committee of Creditors (CoC), fundamentally altering debtor-creditor dynamics.
- **Two-Tiered Adjudication Infrastructure:** Utilizes the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) to handle corporate insolvencies, while the Debt Recovery Tribunal (DRT) manages individuals and partnership firms.
- **Institutional Support Ecosystem:** Governed by the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI), utilizing licensed Insolvency Professionals (IPs) to run distressed assets alongside Information Utilities (IUs) that store verified financial data.
- **Clear Priority of Payouts (Waterfall Mechanism):** Establishes a transparent, structured ladder for distributing liquidation assets, ensuring secured creditors and workmen receive clear priority over equity shareholders.

### Current Success Metrics of the IBC:

- **Substantial Realization of Locked Capital:** The framework has successfully unlocked significant stuck capital, returning frozen funds back into the formal financial system.

**Example:** As of March 2026, 1,419 cases yielded final resolution plans, realizing over ₹4 lakh crore for creditors – representing 95% of their fair value and 167% of liquidation value.

- **Significant Reductions in Banking Non-Performing Assets (NPAs):** The code's strict rules have helped clean up bank balance sheets, driving non-performing loans down to healthier historical levels.

**Example:** The banking sector's gross NPA ratio dropped to a low of 2.1% in September 2025, a massive shift from the peak of nearly 11.8% logged in 2017.

- **Powerful Pre-Admission Settlement Deterrent:** The threat of losing control over an enterprise forces defaulting debtors to settle their debts before formal court proceedings begin.

**Example:** More than 30,000 cases were resolved at the pre-admission stage through withdrawals, settling an estimated ₹14 lakh crore outside court.

- **Post-Resolution Corporate Revival and Value Creation:** Restructured companies show significant operational turnaround and value growth under new management.

**Example:** Resolved firms saw an 89% jump in sales and a 131% rise in asset turnover, expanding the market value of listed resolved firms from ₹2.8 lakh crore to ₹9 lakh crore.

## Key Challenges Facing the IBC Ecosystem:

- **Persistent Delays and Blocked Timelines:** Despite a statutory emphasis on speed, heavy case volumes often clog up tribunal benches, extending resolutions past original targets.

**Example:** While pre-IBC delays spanned up to 8 years, current resolution timelines still average around 2 years, highlighting ongoing structural friction within NCLT benches.

- **Erosion of Value in Forced Liquidations:** When a business cannot be rescued, delays can cause its physical assets to degrade, hurting final recovery values.

**Example:** Out of 7,102 closed cases by March 2026, 3,003 entities ended in liquidation, highlighting cases where delays left assets to be sold piecemeal.

- **Varying Recovery Outcomes Across Industry Segments:** While the average post-IBC recovery rate has risen to over 30%, asset recovery success remains uneven.

**Example:** Even with overall improvements, the recovery rate for scheduled commercial banks fluctuated to 36.6% in 2024–25, down from higher initial resolution peaks.

- **Overreliance on Formal Systems for Defunct Entities:** Benches are frequently burdened with long-dead companies that have no active operations to save.

**Example:** Around 42% of cases that reached resolution plans were previously stuck with the legacy BIFR or were already defunct, slowing down the courts.

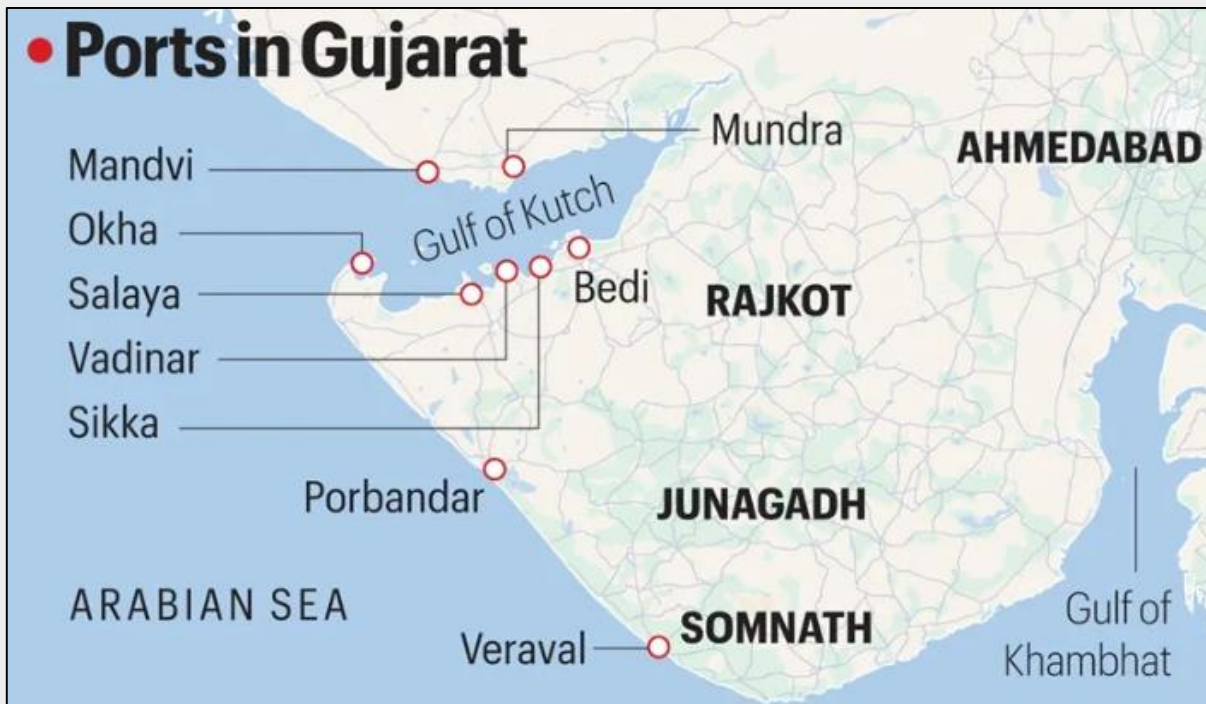
## Way Forward:

- **Expanding NCLT Bench Infrastructure:** Increase the number of specialized NCLT benches and fill judicial vacancies promptly to eliminate backlogs and meet the code's strict timelines.
- **Promoting Pre-Packaged Insolvency Frameworks:** Expand out-of-court pre-packaged insolvency options to all corporate categories, encouraging faster, consensual settlements that ease the burden on tribunals.
- **Upgrading Digital Tracking via Information Utilities:** Enhance data integration across Information Utilities to give lenders instant access to verified default data, cutting down verification times.
- **Standardizing Inter-Regulatory Mediation Systems:** Create a smooth coordination bridge between the IBBI, the Reserve Bank of India, and the enforcement directorates to resolve competing asset claims cleanly.
- **Specializing Training for Insolvency Professionals:** Provide advanced industry-specific management training to Insolvency Professionals, enabling them to better preserve complex enterprise value during restructuring.

Over the past ten years, the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code has completely reshaped corporate accountability and credit discipline across the Indian economy. By moving past slow legacy legal systems, it has successfully recovered over ₹4 lakh crore for creditors while breathing new life into financially distressed businesses. As India advances toward its long-term goals for economic growth, continuously refining the IBC through smart updates will be essential to sustain entrepreneurship, preserve productive capital, and anchor financial stability.

## SALAYA PORT

Due to the escalation of the Middle East conflict and the approach of the rough monsoon season, the Union Government temporarily designated Porbandar as an Immigration Check Post (ICP) for the non-notified ports of Salaya and Okha.



*The Salaya Port*

### About The Salaya Port:

#### What It Is?

- Salaya is a historic, traditional minor tidal port heavily celebrated as the primary hub for India's traditional dhow and mechanised sailing vessel (MSV) trade. It serves as a vital logistics base for small-scale, export-oriented merchant commerce connecting the Indian western seaboard with West Asia and East Africa.

#### Location:

- **Geographic Feature:** Situated inside the well-sheltered, natural contours of the Gulf of Kutch.
- **Administrative District:** Located in the **Devbhoomi Dwarka** district of Gujarat, India.

#### Key Features:

- **Protected Tidal Setting:** Natural creeks and mangroves shield vessels from strong waves and monsoon winds, making Salaya a safe tidal harbor.
- **Major Repair Hub:** Known for cost-effective ship painting, hull cleaning, scrapping, and dry-dock repair services on India's west coast.
- **Large Vessel Capacity:** Its broad shoreline can accommodate around 100–200 wooden dhows simultaneously, far exceeding nearby ports.
- **Seasonal Beaching Centre:** Serves as a key off-season anchorage where vessels undergo maintenance and seaworthiness inspections.

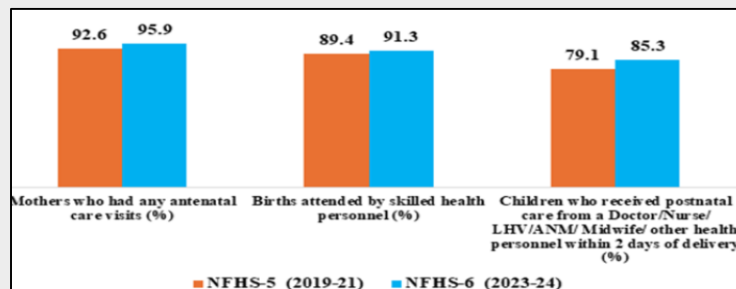
### Significance of Salaya Port:

- **Hub of India’s MSV Fleet:** Salaya hosts about 175 of Gujarat’s 275 mechanised sailing vessels, making it the state’s principal dhow port.
- **Supports Regional Exports:** Facilitates nearly 5 lakh tonnes of annual exports, including livestock, rice, sugar, onions, and soybean products.
- **Safe Refuge During Crises:** Provides a secure shelter for vessels during regional geopolitical tensions and disruptions in Gulf waters.
- **Preserves Maritime Livelihoods:** Supports traditional shipbuilding and repair activities, generating employment for local artisans and workers.

## GOVERNMENT RELEASED THE NATIONAL FAMILY HEALTH SURVEY–6 (NFHS-6)

**Context:** The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) has released the National Family Health Survey–6 (NFHS-6) report for the 2023–24 period.

- Conducted across 715 districts, the landmark survey highlights India’s accelerated progress in maternal-child health, child nutrition, and health insurance penetration.



NFHS-6

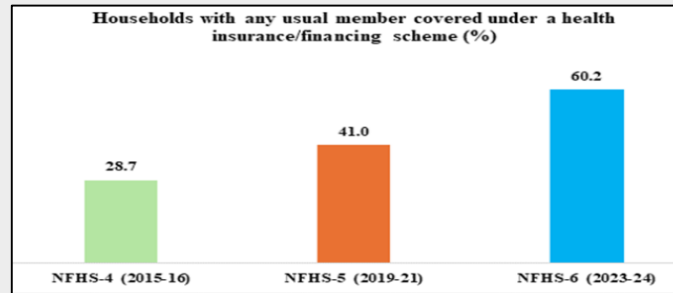
### What it is?

- The NFHS-6 is a comprehensive, multi-round nationwide survey designed to provide high-quality, district-level data on population dynamics, health, nutrition, and family welfare.
- Coordinated by the **International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS), Mumbai**, as the nodal agency, this iteration surveyed nearly 6.79 lakh households. It serves as India’s premier data-driven framework for evidence-based policymaking, and monitoring Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

### Key Findings in the NFHS-6 Report:

- **Surge in Institutional Deliveries:** Hospital births rose from 88.6% (NFHS-5) to 90.6%, advancing the nation closer to universal safe childbirth coverage.
- **Expanded Antenatal Care (ANC):** Overall ANC registration hit 95.9%. Notably, first-trimester care tracking rose from 70% to 76.2%, and women achieving at least four robust ANC checkups increased to 65.2%.
- **Stability in Replacement Fertility:** India’s Total Fertility Rate (TFR) remained steady and stable at 2.0, comfortably below the international replacement threshold of 2.1.
- **Substantial Drops in Malnutrition:** Long-term child stunting fell from 35.5% to 29.3%, while severe acute wasting decreased significantly from 7.7% to 5.2%.
- **Boost in Childhood Immunization:** The percentage of fully vaccinated children aged 12–23 months increased from 83.8% to 87.1%.

- **Exponential Jump in Rotavirus Coverage:** Driven by public health expansions, rotavirus vaccine coverage more than doubled, soaring from 36.4% to 85.4%.
- **Public Healthcare Dominance:** Over 95.6% of childhood immunizations were administered through public clinics and government hospitals, demonstrating deep public trust.
- **Aggressive Increase in Medical Protection:** Household health insurance and financial risk protection coverage grew from 41% to 60.2%, anchored by schemes like Ayushman Bharat (PM-JAY).
- **Closing the Female Digital Divide:** The proportion of Indian women who have ever used the internet grew from 33.3% to 64.3%.
- **Rise in C-Section Births:** Surgical Caesarean deliveries experienced an uncharacteristically sharp spike nationwide, jumping from 21.5% to 27.2%.



*NFHS-6 Report*

### Positives in the NFHS-6 Report:

- **Deepening Public Trust in State Healthcare Infrastructure:** A vast majority of citizens now look to the public sector as their primary provider for life-saving interventions, proving the success of regional state-backed medical clinics.

**Example:** An overwhelming 95.6% of children received most of their vaccinations directly through public health facilities as their preferred choice.

- **Marked Multi-Sectoral Success in Eradicating Long-Term Child Malnutrition:** Convergent inter-ministerial efforts have created a strong, visible downward trend in long-term childhood structural undernutrition.

**Example:** Structural long-term undernutrition saw excellent progress, as seen in the substantial 17% reduction in child stunting down to 29.3%.

- **Strengthened Financial Protection Against Catastrophic Out-of-Pocket Spending:** The rapid expansion of affordable medical care cards has created a stronger financial safety net for vulnerable, low-income families.

**Example:** The expansion of programs like Ayushman Bharat helped health insurance coverage scale up from 41.0% to 60.2% at the household level.

- **Rapid Onboarding of Women into the Digital and Banking Economy:** Targeted state welfare distributions have significantly improved women's economic independence, mobile connectivity, and self-directed personal banking.

**Example:** Active financial independence saw massive growth as women utilizing their own functional bank accounts increased to 89.0%.

- **Rapid Implementation Acceleration for New-Generation Specialized Vaccines:**Enhanced cold-chain logistics and real-time digital tracking applications have enabled the rapid rollout of vital pediatric vaccine doses.

**Example:** Targeted optimization under the Universal Immunization Programme helped rotavirus vaccine coverage more than double, soaring to 85.4%.

### **Challenges Identified in the NFHS-6 Report:**

- **Persistent Gaps in Early Infant and Young Child Feeding Practices:** Even though initial breastfeeding rates are high, over one-third of infants miss out on essential solid or semi-solid food transitions during their critical growth windows.

**Example:** Despite overall nutrition gains, 40.5% of children aged 6–8 months fail to receive vital solid or semi-solid foods alongside breastmilk.

- **A Stubborn Core of Unvaccinated or Partially Under-Vaccinated Children:**Even with widespread state coverage, institutional gaps leave more than 12% of infants missing out on full, multi-dose immunization schedules.

**Example:** While general numbers look positive, 12.9% of children aged 12–23 months still fall short of full immunization parameters.

- **The Rapid Spread of Unchecked Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs):**Lifestyle shifts and changing dietary habits are driving a sharp increase in chronic illnesses, creating a complex healthcare burden.

**Example:** The report explicitly flags rising non-communicable diseases and lifestyle-related risks as major emerging structural threats.

- **The Looming Dual Burden of Overweight and Obesity Conditions among Adults:** India faces an alarming public health contradiction where chronic adult overnutrition is expanding right alongside persistent pockets of childhood undernutrition.

**Example:** The survey highlights a worsening dual burden of undernutrition coexisting with a rising trend of overweight and obesity conditions among adults.

- **Lagging Progress in Specialized Maternal Micro-Nutrient Supplementation Continuity:**While initial checkups are strong, a significant portion of pregnant women do not maintain their daily nutritional intake over the full course of their pregnancies.

**Example:** Showing low long-term compliance, only 37.8% of pregnant mothers consistently consumed necessary iron folic acid supplements for the required 180 days.

### **Way Forward:**

- **Deploying AI-Driven Local Micro-Planning via U-WIN:** Fully utilize real-time data from the U-WIN digital dashboard to pinpoint sub-district immunization gaps, helping frontline health workers trace and vaccinate under-immunized children.
- **Aggressively Scaling Up Saksham Anganwadi and POSHAN 2.0:**Strengthen infant feeding counseling across rural centers, using local community networks to ensure that 100% of children aged 6–8 months smoothly transition to nutritious semi-solid foods.

- **Enforcing Comprehensive NCD Screening Protocols via Health & Wellness Centres:** Expand primary health clinics into active screening hubs that provide free, routine blood pressure and blood sugar checks to tackle the rise in lifestyle diseases early.
- **Launching Targeted Behavioral Change Campaigns for Long-Term Prenatal Care:** Use regional media and localized outreach to educate pregnant women on the importance of taking daily iron and folic acid supplements for the full 180-day term.
- **Integrating Universal Health Insurance Registries across Low-Income Blocks:** Automate the onboarding process for Ayushman Bharat PM-JAY at local clinics, ensuring that the remaining 39.8% of uninsured households gain immediate access to financial protection.

The National Family Health Survey – 6 highlights India’s accelerated progress in safe motherhood, full child immunization, and household health insurance expansion, validating the impact of its major flagship programs. However, emerging challenges – such as low long-term compliance with iron supplements during pregnancy, rising non-communicable diseases, and the growing dual burden of obesity – show that the healthcare system must look beyond basic access.

## SEA OF AZOV

The Sea of Azov has become a focal point of geopolitical tension following targeted Ukrainian drone strikes on cargo vessels in Taganrog Bay.



The Sea of Azov

### About The Sea of Azov:

#### What It Is?

- The Sea of Azov is a unique, semi-enclosed body of water that forms a northern extension of the Black Sea. Measuring approximately 340 kilometers long and 135 kilometers wide with a surface area of 37,600 square kilometers, it is globally recognized as the **shallowest sea on Earth**.

**Location and Border Nations:** Bordered by Ukraine and Russia.

- Connects to the Black Sea via the narrow and strategically vital **Kerch Strait**, which separates the Crimean Peninsula from the Russian mainland’s Taman Peninsula.

#### Key Features:

- **Extreme Shallowness:** The sea has a maximum depth of only 14 meters (about 46 feet). In the northeastern Taganrog Gulf, heavy accumulation of river silt drops the water depth to 1 meter or less.
- **Low Salinity Network:** Major rivers like the **Don and Kuban** pour massive volumes of fresh water into the basin. This constant discharge dilutes the sea, making it practically fresh water in the northeast. Conversely, the **Syvash**—a marshy network of shallow lagoons on the western boundary separated by the 113 km-long **Arabat Spit**—is highly saline due to rapid evaporation.

- **Temperate Continental Climate:** Winters bring severe frosts, frequent thick fogs, and stationary ice sheets along the northern coastlines from late December to early March, requiring icebreaker assistance for winter shipping navigation.
- **Thriving Marine Ecosystem:** Because the water is shallow, it warms evenly and undergoes excellent vertical mixing. Combined with high nutrient runoff from the rivers, the Sea of Azov is incredibly rich in marine life, hosting over 80 fish species, including sturgeon, perch, bream, and massive populations of sardines and anchovies.

### About Taganrog Bay:

#### What It Is?

- Taganrog Bay is a major body of water forming the northeastern arm of the Sea of Azov. Geologically, it acts as a massive, flooded estuary for the Don River, where fresh river water meets the marine environment.

#### Boundaries and Border Profile:

- **Geopolitical Separation:** The bay serves as a natural maritime boundary separating the northern Azov littoral region from the southern Kuban coastline in Russia.

**Mouth Indicators:** The western mouth of the bay, which opens directly into the main basin of the Sea of Azov.

#### Key Features:

- **Dimensions and Scale:** The bay extends approximately 140 kilometers in length and measures 31 kilometers wide at its mouth.
- **Extreme Shallowness:** It features a very shallow profile with a median depth of only about **5 meters**, making it highly sensitive to seasonal changes.
- **Dynamic Hydrology:** The bay receives freshwater discharge from four major rivers: the **Don River**, alongside the **Kalmius, Mius, and Yeya rivers**. The massive combined volume of water entering this gulf is the primary driver behind the current patterns across the entire Sea of Azov.

## MAULANA BARKATULLAH BHOPALI

The Executive Council of Bhopal's Barkatullah University has passed a proposal to rename the institution Vagdevi Bhojpal University.

### About Maulana Barkatullah Bhopali:

#### Who He Was?

- Maulana Barkatullah Bhopali (July 7, 1854 – September 1927) was a legendary anti-colonial revolutionary, scholar, and fiery journalist who served as the **Prime Minister of India's first Government in Exile**, established in 1915.
- He spent the entirety of his adult life operating from international soil, building global anti-imperial networks to secure India's complete independence from British rule.



### Early Life and Ideological Evolution:

- **Birth and Education:** Born in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, he was a highly meritorious student who mastered multiple languages. He moved to Bombay and later to London for advanced studies.
- **The Spark of Radicalization:** While teaching Arabic and Persian in Liverpool, England, he crossed paths with active Indian revolutionaries. His regular anti-British articles and fiery public speeches quickly made him a prime target for British intelligence, forcing him to flee to the United States in 1899.
- **The Vision of Core Unity:** Barkatullah was a staunch believer in absolute Hindu-Muslim solidarity. In his personal letters to fellow freedom fighter Maulana Hasrat Mohani, he highlighted that the brutal famines and economic starvation orchestrated by the British crushed both Hindus and Muslims equally, concluding that India could never achieve true sovereignty unless all religious communities fought shoulder to shoulder against the divide-and-rule strategy.

### Major Contributions to the Indian Freedom Movement:

Barkatullah's anti-colonial operations spanned a complex, global network of alliances:

#### Pioneering the Kabul Government-in-Exile (1915):

- On **1 December 1915**, Barkatullah co-founded the **Provisional Government of India** in Kabul, the first Indian government established outside British control to seek international support for independence.
- **Raja Mahendra Pratap** served as President, **Maulana Barkatullah** as Prime Minister, and **Maulana Ubaidullah Sindhi** as Home Minister, symbolizing a united nationalist front.

#### Role in the Ghadar Party:

- Barkatullah emerged as a key leader of the **Ghadar Party** (1913), which advocated armed revolution and rejected constitutional methods for ending British rule.
- The party aimed to trigger a large-scale revolt within the **British Indian Army** and inspire a nationwide uprising against colonial rule.

#### The German Axis Plan during World War I:

- During World War I, he worked closely with Germany, viewing Britain's enemies as potential allies in India's liberation struggle.
- He visited **Indian POW camps** in Europe, urging captured soldiers to join a revolutionary force and fight against British imperialism.

#### Meeting with Vladimir Lenin (1919):

- In 1919, Barkatullah met Vladimir Lenin in Moscow to seek support for India's anti-colonial movement.

#### Last Days and Demise:

- Despite declining health and constant British surveillance, Barkatullah remained actively involved in revolutionary activities abroad.
- He died in September 1927 in San Francisco while attending a Ghadar Party gathering and was buried in California.

#### Core Achievements:

- **Prime Minister of India's Government-in-Exile:** As Prime Minister of the Kabul Government, he led diplomatic efforts to secure international recognition for an independent India.
- **Globalizing the Freedom Struggle:** Barkatullah transformed India's anti-colonial movement into an international campaign through activism across Asia, Europe, and North America.
- **Laying Foundations for Future Revolutionary Efforts:** These efforts later influenced and inspired Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose's activities and the formation of the Indian National Army (INA).

## ■ CYCLONE DANA/ROLE OF COASTAL MANGROVES

The landfall of Cyclone Dana near Bhitarkanika on Odisha's coast has highlighted the powerful protective role of coastal mangroves over expensive, engineered infrastructure.



*The power of mangroves over seawalls*

**About The power of mangroves over seawalls:**

**What is Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA)?**

- Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA) is a nature-centric climate strategy that uses biodiversity and ecosystem services to help communities adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change. Unlike traditional engineered “grey” infrastructure, EbA harnesses natural habitats like mangroves, seagrass meadows, and coral reefs to act as dynamic, self-sustaining buffers.

**Key Data and Statistics on India's Coastal Adaptation:**

- **Vulnerable Demographics:** India manages an ecologically fragile 11,000-kilometre coastline that is home to approximately 250 million people whose lives and homes are directly threatened by climate hazards.
- **Skewed Adaptation Spending:** Over the last decade, Indian coastal states spent a massive ₹2,641 crore on hard engineered protection measures like seawalls and groynes.
- **Declining Green Budgets:** Reflecting a stark preference for visible infrastructure, the National Coastal Mission's public budget fell sharply from ₹195 crore in 2022-23 to just ₹50 crore in 2024-25.
- **Proven Grassroots Success:** Demonstrating scale, over 18,000 women in the Sundarbans successfully restored 4,600 hectares of mangroves, effectively blunting the destruction of cyclones Amphan and Yaas.

**Key Features of Mangroves as Climate Shields:**

- **High-Density Wave Attenuation:** The intricate, tangled aerial root networks of mangrove forests structurally break the energy of incoming waves, reducing the destructive force of storm surges.
- **Dynamic Sediment Accretion:** Mangroves naturally trap organic sediment within their root bases, helping the coastline adapt to rising sea levels by physically building up the soil elevation over time.

- **Robust Ecological Shielding:** Research identifies India as a global “hotspot” for coastal EbA, proving that **mangroves protect more people per hectare than almost any other country.**
- **Exceptional Carbon Sequestration:** Mangrove systems function as superior blue carbon sinks, locking away atmospheric carbon dioxide at rates manifold higher than terrestrial tropical rainforests.
- **Operational Longevity and Cost-Efficiency:** Unlike rigid concrete blocks that degrade and require constant repair, mangrove ecosystems are self-repairing and grow stronger over time if left undisturbed.

### Challenges Associated with India’s Coastal Adaptation Policy:

- **Risk Displacement by Engineered Measures:** Hard concrete infrastructure often shifts wave energy rather than absorbing it, accelerating erosion and damage in adjacent, unarmored coastal zones.
- **Severe Institutional and Policy Terminology Ambiguity:** The policy space is cluttered with overlapping labels like Nature-based Solutions (NbS), Eco-DRR, and EbCA, creating widespread confusion over what officially qualifies as an adaptation action.
- **Concealment Within Broader Sectoral Schemes:** Many adaptation initiatives are buried inside generic forestry or development plans, meaning their climate benefits are rarely assessed or recorded separately.
- **Fragmented Administrative Mandates:** Coastal management suffers from split institutional duties and weak monitoring frameworks, which favors highly visible infrastructure over nature-centric projects.
- **Framing Disconnect in National Programs:** Flagship programs like MISHTI (which targets 540 sq. km of mangrove restoration) are primarily framed as conservation programs rather than core climate adaptation strategies.

### Way Forward:

- **Enacting a Clear National Coastal EbA Taxonomy:** Formulate precise legal definitions and classification systems to identify, monitor, and fund ecosystem-based adaptation independently of standard forestry projects.
- **Integrating Nature-Based Targets into Coastal Planning:** Move from isolated, ad-hoc restoration projects to a coherent national strategy that embeds mangrove and seagrass cultivation into state disaster management laws.
- **Restructuring Budgets to Favor Green Capital Over Grey:** Shift public infrastructure funding away from high-maintenance seawalls to restore the financial capacity of the National Coastal Mission.
- **Institutionalizing Community-Led Hybrid Protection Models:** Scale up the Sundarbans model by financially backing self-help groups and women’s cooperatives to lead local restoration, ensuring clear economic co-benefits.
- **Aligning Local Metrics with the Global Goal on Adaptation:** Build rigorous, data-driven monitoring networks to track the protective performance of ecosystems, ensuring India’s green shield is properly counted in international climate finance.

India’s heavy reliance on rigid, concrete seawalls provides temporary relief but ultimately shifts and worsens long-term erosion risks along its fragile coastline. The proven success of mangrove systems during intense cyclones demonstrates that investing in natural capital is both economically sound and socially equitable.

## INDIA'S 100TH RAMSAR SITE.

Prime Minister of India lauded the designation of the Jai Prakash Narayan Bird Sanctuary (Surha Tal) in Ballia, Uttar Pradesh, as India's **100th Ramsar site**.



*India's 100th Ramsar Site: Jai Prakash Narayan Bird Sanctuary*

### About India's 100th Ramsar Site: Jai Prakash Narayan Bird Sanctuary

#### What It Is?

- The Jai Prakash Narayan Bird Sanctuary is a protected natural wetland ecosystem centered around a massive, rain-fed perennial oxbow lake locally known as **Surha Tal**. The sanctuary is an ecological hotspot renowned for its exceptional avifaunal biodiversity, serving as a critical habitat for indigenous fish and an international refueling station for long-distance migratory birds.

**Location:** The sanctuary is located in the **Ballia district of eastern Uttar Pradesh**, situated within the fertile alluvial plains of the Indo-Gangetic basin.

#### History:

- **Oxbow Genesis:** Geologically, the lake was formed centuries ago when the dynamic Ganges River naturally shifted its course, leaving behind a deep, horseshoe-shaped crescent basin.
- **Protected Status:** Recognizing its ecological importance, the area was officially declared a wildlife sanctuary by the Government of Uttar Pradesh in **1991**. It was initially named Surha Tal Bird Sanctuary and later renamed in honor of the legendary Indian independence activist and political leader Jai Prakash Narayan.
- **The Global Century:** It gained international recognition after meeting strict scientific criteria to be declared India's 100th wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention.

#### Key Features of the Sanctuary:

- **Surha Tal Wetland:** Built around **Surha Tal**, a large perennial oxbow lake that supports rich aquatic and bird biodiversity.
- **Bird Migration Hub:** Serves as a vital wintering and stopover site for numerous migratory birds along the Central Asian Flyway.
- **Rich Biodiversity:** Supports diverse fish species, wetland vegetation, reptiles, and a large population of resident and migratory birds.
- **Oxbow Lake Origin:** Formed when the **Ganges River** changed its course, leaving behind a horseshoe-shaped wetland.
- **Protected Area Status:** Declared a wildlife sanctuary in **1991** and later renamed after **Jai Prakash Narayan**.
- **Ramsar Recognition:** Became **India's 100th Ramsar Site** in June 2026, gaining international wetland status.

## About Ramsar Sites:

### What It Is?

- A Ramsar site is a wetland area explicitly designated as a zone of global ecological significance under the framework of the Ramsar Convention. Once a site is included, the host nation commits to protecting it from destructive commercial exploitation, pollution, and structural damage.

### Established In:

The treaty was adopted on February 2, 1971, in the Iranian city of Ramsar, located on the shores of the Caspian Sea.

It came into official international force in 1975. India became a contracting party to the convention on February 1, 1982.

### Aim:

- The objective of the framework is to stem the progressive global encroachment on and loss of wetlands. It promotes the wise use of all wetlands through local, national, and international cooperation to help achieve sustainable development worldwide.

### Key Features of the Ramsar Framework:

- **Strict Eligibility Criteria:** A wetland must satisfy at least one of nine international criteria, such as supporting large waterbird populations or threatened ecosystems.
- **Wise Use Principle:** Promotes sustainable activities like eco-tourism, traditional fishing, and organic farming without harming wetland ecology.
- **Montreux Record:** Maintains a special list of Ramsar sites facing ecological threats, enabling focused conservation and international support.
- **Global Cooperation Framework:** Encourages collaboration on transboundary wetlands, shared river basins, and migratory bird conservation.

## OILSEEDS KISAAN MITRA

The Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare highlighted the nationwide impact of 'Oilseeds Kisaan Mitra', India's first WhatsApp-based AI advisory service for oilseed cultivation, as farmers enter the crucial kharif sowing season.



*Oilseeds Kisaan Mitra*

## About Oilseeds Kisaan Mitra:

### What It Is?

- Oilseeds Kisaan Mitra is a 24×7, multilingual, AI-powered digital advisory chatbot accessible directly through WhatsApp.
- It serves as an instant, free-of-cost scientific consulting gateway that connects traditional farmers with decades of collective agricultural research without requiring them to download external mobile applications or use complex internet browsers.

**Developed By:** The digital platform was developed by the ICAR-Indian Institute of Oilseeds Research (ICAR-IIOR), Hyderabad.

### How to Access and How It Works?

The platform simplifies high-tech agricultural extension into three basic user steps:

- **Step 1:** The farmer saves the official dedicated contact number **+91 4024598180** as 'Oilseeds Kisaan Mitra' on their smartphone.
- **Step 2:** The user opens WhatsApp and types, speaks, or sends a crop-related query in their native regional language.
- **Step 3:** The underlying AI engine instantly parses the localized text, matches it against a verified scientific repository, and beams back clear, research-validated advice.

### Key Features of the Platform:

- **Comprehensive Oilseed Coverage:** Provides precise, location-specific advice across all major domestic oilseed groups—including **groundnut, mustard, sesame, sunflower, soybean, and niger**.
- **Full Multilingual Integration:** Features a natural language processing architecture that understands and responds instantly in **all official Indian regional languages** (including Hindi, Kannada, Gujarati, Telugu, and Malayalam).
- **End-to-End Crop Cycle Guidance:** Covers the entire life cycle of farming operations:
  - High-yield regional seed variety selection and official seed availability.
  - Agronomic soil preparation and sowing practices.
  - Real-time pest, weed, and disease control diagnostics.
  - Precision irrigation scheduling and tailored fertilizer application.
  - Post-harvest processing, drying, and storage techniques.
- **Multi-Institute Collaborative Brain:** The database is not isolated; it integrates the combined scientific research of several premier research bodies:
  - ICAR-National Soybean Research Institute, Indore (NSRI)
  - ICAR-Indian Institute of Groundnut Research, Junagadh (IIGR)
  - ICAR-Indian Institute of Rapeseed and Mustard Research, Bharatpur (IIRMR)
  - Project Coordinating Unit for Sesame & Niger.

## CARBON CREDITS

The United Nations carbon market officially issued its first-ever carbon credits under Article 6.4 of the Paris Agreement for a clean-cooking project in Myanmar.



*The First Carbon Credits*

### About The First Carbon Credits Under the Paris Agreement:

#### What is a Carbon Credit?

- A carbon credit is a tradeable certificate or permit that represents the verified reduction, avoidance, or removal of one metric tonne of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) or its equivalent greenhouse gas (CO<sub>2</sub>) from the atmosphere.
- Under Article 6.4 of the Paris Agreement, these credits are designed as high-integrity assets supervised by a dedicated UN body to funnel international finance toward genuine, sustainable climate solutions.

#### Nations and Entities Involved:

- **Host Nation:** Myanmar, specifically targeting communities in its central Dry Zone (including the conflict-heavy Sagaing Region).
- **Partner Nation:** The Republic of Korea (South Korea).
- **Governing Authority:** The **Article 6.4 Supervisory Body** of the UN Paris Agreement Crediting Mechanism.

#### How the Project Works?

- **Deployment on the Ground:** Clean-cooking stoves replace traditional wood-fired stoves, reducing fuel consumption and improving household energy efficiency.
- **Emissions & Biomass Tracking:** Lower firewood use cuts indoor air pollution and deforestation, with the resulting emission reductions quantified as carbon savings.
- **Credit Verification and Adjustment:** The UN verifies avoided emissions using updated scientific baselines and issues fewer credits to ensure environmental integrity.
- **The Cross-Border Transfer:** A portion of credits is transferred to South Korea for ETS compliance, while the remainder supports Myanmar's NDC goals.

### Key Features and Strict Design Safeguards:

- **Transition from the Legacy CDM:**The project is among the first to transition from the Kyoto Protocol's CDM to the Paris Agreement's Article 6.4 mechanism.
- **Conservative Accounting Baseline:**Updated methodologies use stricter emission calculations, significantly reducing the number of credits issued compared to older systems.
- **System for Redress and Appeals:**A mandatory 14-day appeal window allows governments, communities, and stakeholders to challenge credit issuance decisions.
- **Dual Climate and Social Co-Benefits:**The project reduces emissions while improving public health, women's welfare, and local environmental sustainability.

### Governance & Credibility Controversy:

- Critics question the project's legitimacy because Myanmar's environment ministry operates under military junta control and sanctions concerns.
- Conflict and insecurity prevented on-site verification, forcing reliance on remote assessments that critics consider unreliable.

At the UN climate change negotiations in Bonn, Germany, India called for addressing the shrinking pool of international climate finance and the widening adaptation funding gap.



*India Calls for Dialogue On Climate Finance*

### About India Calls for Dialogue On Climate Finance:

#### What It Is?

- Climate finance refers to local, national, or transnational financing – drawn from public, private, and alternative sources of capital – that seeks to support mitigation and adaptation actions that will address climate change.

### Key Data and Statistics on Global Climate Finance

- **The Widening Adaptation Gap:** The United Nations estimates that the adaptation finance gap for developing nations is 10 to 18 times greater than current international public financial flows.
- **Declining Funding Realities:** Despite growing climate impacts, actual financial transfers from developed economies have faced a measurable decline, shrinking the pool of available concessional funds.
- **The Scale of Developing Needs:** By 2030, developing nations cumulatively require between **\$5 trillion to \$6 trillion** to implement their domestic climate action plans and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).
- **The Projected Baseline Targets:** The New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) targets discussed for the post-2025 era seek a baseline commitment of at least **\$300 billion annually by 2035**, a figure developing blocs criticize as inadequate.

## The Urgent Need for Strong Climate Finance:

- **Upholding the Principle of Historical Climate Justice:** Developed nations have built their economies through high industrial emissions, creating a moral and legal duty to fund green transitions globally.
- **Shielding Developing Nations from Extreme Debt Traps:** Strong public grants prevent poorer countries from being forced to take high-interest commercial loans to repair infrastructure damaged by extreme weather.
- **Accelerating Scalable Energy Transitions:** Developing economies cannot phase out traditional coal power and expand clean energy networks without significant upfront capital infusions.
- **Protecting Global Supply Chains from Environmental Shocks:** Providing dedicated resources for adaptation insulates critical agricultural and manufacturing hubs from severe climate disruptions.

## Initiatives Taken So Far:

- **The Paris Agreement Framework:** Formalized **Article 9.1**, making it legally mandatory for developed countries to provide financial resources to assist developing nations with mitigation and adaptation.
- **Bonn SB64 Negotiation Track:** Negotiators from over 150 nations assembled at the 64th session of the Subsidiary Bodies to convert high-level pledges into binding legal texts.
- **The Global Climate Action Agenda:** Launched by the Brazilian COP30 Presidency to move international climate goals directly into real-world economies over a five-year window.
- **Bilateral Blocs Alignment:** India actively unified its position with major developing coalitions, including the G77 and China, Like-Minded Developing Countries (LMDCs), and the BASIC bloc (Brazil, South Africa, India, China).

## Key Challenges to Global Climate Finance:

- **Severe Resistance from Developed Nations on Agenda Prominence:** Wealthy economies consistently block efforts to create permanent, dedicated negotiation spaces focused purely on their financial obligations.

**Example:** India had to explicitly demand that the Article 9.1 work programme receive its own dedicated agenda space to stop it from being sidelined by wealthy nations.

- **The Imposition of Protectionist Unilateral Green Trade Barriers:** Developed trade blocs are utilizing domestic environmental rules to penalize industrial exports arriving from developing countries.

**Example:** The European Union's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) acts as a unilateral border levy that harms the trade revenues of developing economies.

- **Attempts to Force Parallel and Unagreed Mandates onto the Global South:** Wealthy nations frequently try to rewrite treaties by adding strict emission targets without providing the necessary funding.
- **The politicization of Regional Supply Chains Amid Geopolitical Volatility:** Ongoing international conflicts frequently divert attention and financial resources away from long-term climate adaptation funds.

**Example:** The ongoing West Asian crisis and disruptions along the Strait of Hormuz have shifted Western priorities toward immediate energy security rather than climate aid.

- **Pushing Unrealistic Fossil Fuel Phaseouts Outside Official UN Channels:** Smaller groups of wealthy countries often create external treaties that ignore the developmental realities of emerging nations.

**Example:** Pushes for a fossil fuel treaty at the Santa Marta Conference in Colombia attempted to create binding phaseout rules completely outside the inclusive UNFCCC framework.

### Way Forward:

- **Securing Dedicated Agenda Space for Article 9.1 Execution:** Developing countries must remain unified to ensure developed nations' financial transfer mandates are given primary placement at all future UNFCCC sessions.
- **Standardizing the Belém Adaptation Indicators Legally:** Finalize the 59 indicators under the Global Goal on Adaptation to create clear, measurable baselines for funding local adaptation projects.
- **Filing Formal Challenges Against Unilateral Carbon Border Taxes:** Use Article 3.5 of the Convention to challenge protectionist green trade levies, ensuring carbon border taxes do not penalize developing economies.
- **Simplifying Access Criteria for Institutional Green Funds:** Overhaul the administrative requirements of the Green Climate Fund (GCF) to simplify the application process for vulnerable nations.
- **Enforcing Strict Delivery Metrics Within the Post-2025 NCQG Framework:** Ensure the post-2025 global climate finance goal moves away from vague pledges toward transparent, grant-equivalent public capital transfers.

The 2026 Bonn climate conference highlights the urgent need to bridge the gap between high-level environmental promises and actual financial delivery. By firmly aligning with the G77 and BASIC blocs against unilateral trade barriers and unbacked mandates, India has reinforced the core principle of climate equity.

## 2026 FIFA WORLD CUP

The 23rd edition of the FIFA World Cup—the 2026 tournament—officially kicked off on June 11, 2026, marking the start of a historic 39-day international men's soccer championship.



*The FIFA World Cup 2026*

### About The FIFA World Cup 2026:

#### What It Is?

- The FIFA World Cup is a quadrennial international men's football championship contested by the senior national teams of the member associations of FIFA. The 2026 tournament marks the **23rd edition** of the global tournament and represents the largest structural expansion in the history of international football.

### Host Nations:

The 2026 tournament is jointly hosted by **three nations** across sixteen multi-national host cities:

- **United States:** 11 host cities (previously hosted in 1994).
- **Mexico:** 3 host cities (making Mexico the first country to host or co-host a World Cup three times, following 1970 and 1986).
- **Canada:** 2 host cities (marking Canada's debut as a World Cup host nation).

### Key Facts on the 2026 Edition:

- **Historic 48-Team Expansion:** The tournament field has expanded from 32 teams to 48 teams for the first time.
- **The Group and Knockout Format:** Teams are divided into 12 groups of four. The top two teams from each group, along with the eight best third-placed teams, advance to a newly introduced Round of 32 single-elimination knockout stage.
- **Expanded Match Volume:** The total number of tournament matches has jumped from 64 to 104 matches. Teams reaching the final four will now play eight matches instead of seven.
- **Debut Formations:** Four countries are making their historic World Cup debuts in this edition: Cape Verde, Curaçao, Jordan, and Uzbekistan.
- **Defending Champion:** Argentina enters the competition as the defending champion, having clinched its third title in 2022.
- **Mouth-Covering Red Card Protocol:** To stop players from hiding insulting or confrontational language from lip-readers, any player who covers his mouth with his hand, arm, or shirt while confronting an opponent face-to-face will be issued an immediate red card.

**Maximum Winners So Far:** Brazil (5), Germany (4), Italy (4), and Argentina (3).

### How Teams Qualify for the 2026 FIFA World Cup?

- The 2026 World Cup features 48 teams (up from 32).
- Hosts automatically qualify: Canada, Mexico, and the United States.
- The remaining 45 teams qualify through continental tournaments organized by FIFA's six confederations.

### Official mascots :



**AXOLOTL**

## AXOLOTL: MEXICO CITY'S UNOFFICIAL MASCOT

Ahead of the 2026 FIFA World Cup, the axolotl has emerged as Mexico City's unofficial mascot. However, conservationists have raised concerns that the popularity of the **critically endangered** amphibian has not translated into meaningful efforts to protect its rapidly disappearing habitat.




### ABOUT AXOLOTL

-  **Common name:** Axolotl
-  **Scientific name:** *Ambystoma mexicanum*
-  **Group:** Amphibian (salamander).
-  **Endemic to:** Mexico, particularly the canals of **Xochimilco** in Mexico City.
-  **Name derived from:** The Nahuatl word meaning "water monster".




### UNIQUE FEATURES

-  Exhibits **neoteny**, retaining larval characteristics throughout its life.
-  Remains **aquatic** throughout its life cycle.
-  **Breathes through:**
  - External gills, and
  - Oxygen absorption through its skin.
-  **Extraordinary regenerative ability:**
  - Can regrow limbs,
  - Parts of the spinal cord,
  - Heart tissue,
  - Portions of the brain.

### CONSERVATION STATUS



**IUCN Red List:**  
**Critically Endangered.**



Wild populations have witnessed a drastic decline.



The axolotl is not just a symbol of Mexican heritage and biodiversity, but also a reminder of the urgent need to protect its unique habitat.



About Axolotl

- Common name: **Axolotl**
- Scientific name: *Ambystoma mexicanum*
- Group: Amphibian (salamander).
- Endemic to: **Mexico**, particularly the canals of **Xochimilco** in Mexico City.
- Name derived from: The **Nahuatl** word meaning "water monster".

Unique Features

- Exhibits **neoteny**, retaining larval characteristics throughout its life.
- Remains aquatic throughout its life cycle.
- Breathes through External gills and oxygen absorption through its skin.
- Extraordinary regenerative ability can regrow limbs, Parts of the spinal cord, Heart tissue, and Portions of the brain.

Conservation Status

- **IUCN Red List:** Critically Endangered.
- Wild populations have witnessed a drastic decline.

## MINIMUM UNIVERSAL DISABILITY PENSION FLOOR RATE (MUDPFR)

Why does India's disability pension system remain inadequate despite a rights-based legal framework?

1. **Large Beneficiary Base:** Census 2011 recorded 2.68 crore PwDs; current estimates place the number at around 4.5-6 crore due to population growth and changing disease profiles.
2. **Constitutional Recognition:** Supreme Court has recognized the right to live with dignity as a fundamental right.
3. **Legal Protection:** Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 provides statutory protection and mandates social security support.
4. **Fragmented Pension System:** Disability benefits vary significantly across States.
5. **Low Pension Amounts:** Most States provide pensions ranging between ₹300 and ₹500 per month.
6. **Limited Coverage:** Indira Gandhi National Disability Pension Scheme covers only a small fraction of eligible beneficiaries.
7. **Domicile-Based Inequality:** Pension support often depends on place of residence rather than disability status.



How does India's spending on disability welfare compare internationally?

1. **Low Public Spending:** India spends only about 0.02% of GDP on disability welfare, including pensions.
2. **South Africa Comparison:** Allocates approximately 0.12-0.15% of GDP.
3. **Brazil Comparison:** Allocates around 0.45-0.50% of GDP.
4. **OECD Countries:** Average spending around 2.2% of GDP.
5. **Australia Comparison:** Allocates approximately 0.35-0.40% of GDP.
6. **Resource Gap:** India's spending remains multiple times lower than comparable welfare systems.

### What are the economic and social costs of inadequate disability support?

1. **GDP Loss:** World Bank and UNDP estimates indicate low- and middle-income countries lose 3-7% of GDP from exclusion of PwDs.
2. **Educational Exclusion:** Limited support reduces access to education.
3. **Employment Barriers:** Inadequate social security weakens labour force participation.
4. **Household Vulnerability:** Disability income support improves household stability.
5. **Consumption Multiplier:** Studies indicate multipliers ranging between 1.4 and 1.6.
  1. Disability pensions have a consumption multiplier of 1.4-1.6, meaning every ₹100 transferred to beneficiaries can generate approximately ₹140-₹160 in economic activity through increased spending on food, healthcare, transport and local services.
6. **Economic Returns:** Pro Bono Economics (2025) found socio-economic returns from disability pensions exceed costs by nearly 48%.
7. **Investment Perspective:** Disability pensions function as economic investments rather than welfare expenditures alone.

### Why is a Minimum Universal Disability Pension Floor Rate (MUDPFR) being proposed?

1. **Constitutional Obligation:** Supports Article 41 directing public assistance in cases of disability.
2. **Implementation of RPwD Act:** Operationalises Section 24 guaranteeing social security measures.
3. **Universal Minimum Guarantee:** Ensures a baseline pension irrespective of State of residence.
4. **Rights-Based Welfare:** Shifts support from charity-based approaches to citizenship-based entitlements.
5. **Portability:** Ensures continuity of benefits across States.
6. **Equity:** Reduces interstate disparities in pension access and quantum.

### Proposed Design

1. **National Floor Rate:** Central government guarantees a minimum pension.
2. **State Top-Ups:** States remain free to provide higher benefits.
3. **Uniform Eligibility:** Common eligibility standards across India.
4. **Portability:** Benefits remain accessible across State boundaries.

## Is a universal disability pension financially feasible?

1. **₹8,000 Monthly Pension Scenario:** Cost estimated at approximately ₹38,400 crore annually.
2. **GDP Share:** Around 0.08% of GDP.
3. **10 Lakh Beneficiaries Scenario:** Cost around ₹65 lakh crore? (Article indicates cost projections for larger coverage; emphasis remains below 0.2% GDP even under expanded coverage assumptions.)
4. **₹15,000 Monthly Pension Scenario:** Public expenditure would still remain below 0.2% of GDP.
5. **Comparative Fiscal Context:**
  1. Food Subsidy: ₹2.05 lakh crore.
  2. Rural Development: ₹1.80 lakh crore.
  3. Tax Concessions and Revenue Foregone: ₹1.72 lakh crore.
  4. Infrastructure: ₹11.11 lakh crore.

## How can India move from fragmented welfare to integrated disability support?

1. **Institutional Fragmentation:** Pension administration is divided between the Ministry of Rural Development and the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities.
2. **Administrative Delays:** Multiple authorities create duplication and accountability gaps.
3. **International Practice:** Several countries operate through unified disability-support institutions.

## Proposed Institutional Reforms

1. **National Disability Pension Authority:** Oversees eligibility, portability and grievance redress.
2. **National Registry:** Creates integrated beneficiary database.
3. **Digital Integration:** Links welfare databases through interoperable platforms.
4. **Performance Monitoring:** Enables State-wise accountability and benchmarking.
5. **Single Governance Framework:** One standard, one system, one nation.

## What lessons can India learn from international experience?

### South Africa

1. **National Disability Grant:** Uniform eligibility and nationwide coverage.
2. **Centralized Standards:** Ensures portability and consistency.

## Brazil

1. **BPC Programme:** Guarantees a national minimum income for persons with disabilities.

## Australia

1. **Nationwide Disability Pension:** Central administration with State coordination.
2. **Employment Incentives:** Combines social security with labour participation.

## New Zealand

1. **Universal Framework:** Nationwide disability support system.

## Other Developing Countries

1. **Kenya, Rwanda, Thailand and Indonesia:** National disability income support mechanisms demonstrate feasibility even in developing economies.

## Why should disability pensions be linked with employment and economic participation?

1. **Inclusive Growth:** Moves beneficiaries from survival support to productive participation.
2. **MUDPFER Advantage:** Creates financial security necessary for skill development and employment.
3. **Employer Incentives:** Encourages hiring of persons with disabilities.
  1. **Singapore:** Integrates disability support with skills training and workforce participation programmes.
  2. **South Korea:** Combines income support with vocational rehabilitation and employment assistance.
  3. **South Africa:** Provides a nationwide Disability Grant ensuring minimum income security for PwDs.
  4. **Brazil:** Guarantees income support through the *Benefício de Prestação Continuada (BPC)* programme.
  5. **Nigeria:** Offers tax incentives to employers hiring persons with disabilities, encouraging workplace inclusion.
  6. **United Kingdom (Access to Work):** Provides financial assistance for workplace accommodations and support services.
  7. **Australia (Wage Subsidies):** Offers wage subsidies to employers to improve employment opportunities for persons with disabilities.
4. **Existing Indian Base:** PM-DAKSH, NAPS and State-level incentives provide foundations for expansion.

How does a universal disability pension strengthen constitutional morality?

1. **Equality:** Reduces domicile-based discrimination.
2. **Dignity:** Recognises persons with disabilities as rights-bearing citizens.
3. **Citizenship:** Moves welfare from discretionary charity to guaranteed entitlement.
4. **Article 14:** Advances equality before law.
5. **Article 21:** Supports dignified living.
6. **Social Justice:** Aligns welfare architecture with constitutional commitments.
7. **Federal Balance:** Preserves State flexibility while guaranteeing minimum national standards.

A Minimum Universal Disability Pension Floor Rate (MUDPFR) would mark a shift from fragmented welfare to rights-based social protection by ensuring that disability support is determined by citizenship and need rather than geography. As India aspires to become a developed nation, guaranteeing a minimum income floor for Persons with Disabilities is not merely a welfare measure but a constitutional imperative that advances equality, dignity, inclusion and human capital development.

### KALAPANI, LIPULEKH, AND LIMPIYADHURA BOUNDARY DISPUTES

Nepal's newly elected Prime Minister, Balendra Shah Balen, has fundamentally shifted the diplomatic discourse by calling for a rational, objective approach to resolving the long-standing Kalapani, Lipulekh, and Limpiyadhura boundary disputes with India.



*The India-Nepal Boundary Issue*

#### About The India-Nepal Boundary Issue:

##### What It Is?

- The border dispute primarily centers on a 372-square-kilometer strategic tri-junction area comprising Kalapani, Lipulekh, and Limpiyadhura located at the northwestern tip of Nepal and the northern border of Uttarakhand, India.
- The region holds immense strategic and military value because it overlooks the Lipulekh Pass, a vital trade route and a primary corridor for the religious Kailash Mansarovar Yatra to Tibet.

##### Historical Background: The Root of the Dispute:

- **The Treaty of Sugauli (1816):** Signed between the Kingdom of Nepal and the British East India Company after the Anglo-Nepalese War, the treaty established the **River Kali** as the definitive western boundary of Nepal.
- **The Source Cartography Conflict:** The treaty did not include scientifically surveyed coordinate maps or define the exact geographic source of the River Kali.

- **Competing Interpretations:**
  - **Nepal's Position:** Kathmandu argues that the river originates from the westernmost stream at Limpiyadhura, meaning Kalapani and Lipulekh fall within its territory. To cement this, Nepal previously printed this extended map on its currency notes.
  - **India's Position:** New Delhi maintains that the river begins at a ridge line near Kalapani, matching maps drawn by British India after 1847. India has managed and held administrative control over this status quo zone since its independence in 1947 due to vital security interests.
- **Recent Flare-Up:** Tensions spiked when Nepal formally objected to the resumption of India-China trade via the **Lipulekh Pass** and India's construction of a road link for the **Kailash Mansarovar Yatra**. India rejected Kathmandu's objections as an unjustified artificial enlargement of territory.

### The Shifting Political Tone in Kathmandu:

- **Rise of Gen-Z and Youth-Led Governance:** The rise of the RSP and leaders like Balendra Shah reflects growing youth demand for transparent, performance-oriented governance focused on jobs, development, and anti-corruption reforms.
- **Bypassing the Special Relationship Protocol:** Nepal's new leadership prefers a rules-based diplomatic approach, treating India as an equal sovereign partner rather than relying on traditional political and cultural privileges.
- **A Pragmatic Stance on Encroachment:** Prime Minister Shah has emphasized objective assessment of border issues, suggesting that disputes should be resolved through facts, dialogue, and mutual trust rather than nationalist rhetoric.
- **Active Third-Party Inquiries:** Nepal has proposed examining historical records from China and the UK for greater clarity, though China continues to support a bilateral India-Nepal resolution process.

### Key Challenges in India-Nepal Relations:

- **Contradictory Historical Archives:** Relying purely on British-era maps often creates confusion, as the East India Company and later British India administrations updated their cartographic surveys with different technologies over time.
- **Deep Security Stakes in the Status Quo:** India has serious strategic security interests in maintaining its positions in the tri-junction area, making it highly unlikely to alter its defensive lines along the China border.
- **Domestic Political Exploitation of Nationalism:** Traditional political parties in Nepal frequently exploit anti-India border sentiment during domestic crises to score local political points.
- **Risk of Endless Expert-Level Delays:** Leaving complex boundary issues trapped in endless expert-level committees can allow minor disputes to grow into lasting diplomatic irritants.

### Way Forward:

- **Utilizing the Unique Open-Border Tradition:** Both nations should draw inspiration from their open-border system, which stretches over 1,700 kilometers and worked perfectly before the 1962 conflict.
- **Leveraging Strong Institutional Army-to-Army Ties:** Use the deep, mutually trusting institutional relationship between the Indian and Nepalese Armies to quietly negotiate and support a practical border solution.

- Prioritizing Multi-Modal Economic and Energy Pacts: Keep cross-border grids, digital commerce networks, and transport links at the center of bilateral talks, ensuring boundary disputes do not stall regional growth.
- Moving Toward Creative Joint Border Management: Explore innovative models like shared environmental preservation zones or joint border administration corridors to handle disputed zones without altering sovereign claims.
- Engaging via Direct, High-Level Political Leadership: Leaders from both countries must step past rigid bureaucratic habits, using direct communication channels to resolve tough policy challenges transparently.

The emergence of a new, youth-led administration in Kathmandu offers a unique opportunity to build a modern, enlightened partnership between India and Nepal. By moving away from hyper-nationalist posturing and looking at border management through an objective lens, both nations can protect their core security interests without harming their deep cultural and economic ties.

## TRAINING OF TRAINERS (TOT) PROGRAM

The Ministry of Panchayati Raj successfully conducted a three-day national Training of Trainers (ToT) program in New Delhi.

- The program focused on legal provisions for women's security, marking a major step forward for the Ministry's newly launched 'Nirbhay Raho' initiative.



*Nirbhay Raho Initiative*

### About Nirbhay Raho Initiative: What It Is?

- The '**Nirbhay Raho**' Initiative is a national gender-responsive governance and grassroots capacity-building program. It is structurally funded and implemented through the Union Government's non-lapsable **Nirbhaya Fund**, transforming local self-governments into active protective anchors for women.

**Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India.

### Aim:

- The primary aim of the initiative is to eliminate grassroots gender-based discrimination and violence by building inclusive, responsive, and women-friendly Panchayats.
- It seeks to equip local rural leaders with deep legal literacy, survivor-centered focus, and first-responder capabilities to guarantee safety and access to justice across rural India.

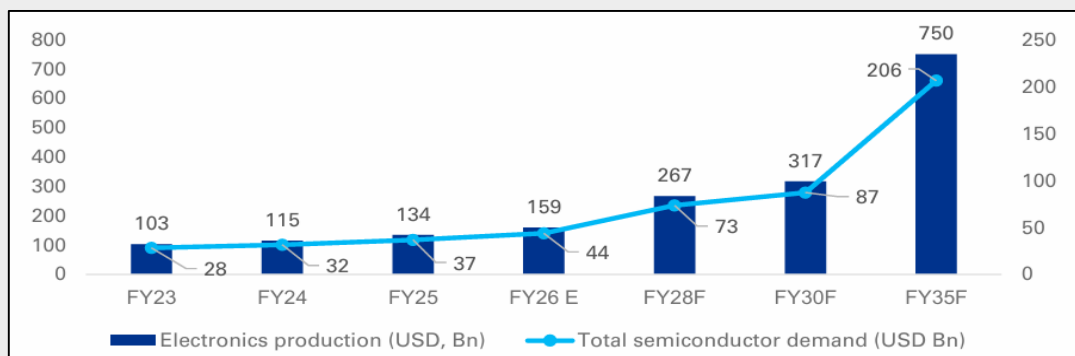
## Key Features:

The initiative is built around a comprehensive three-pronged framework designed to address infrastructure, leadership, and cultural mindsets:

1. **Nirbhay Netri (Empowering Female Leadership):** Focuses entirely on the intensive training, capacity building, and legal awareness of 14.5 lakh Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) to help them confidently handle local security challenges.
  2. **Nirbhay Chetna (Sensitizing Male Peers):** Aimed at sensitizing 17.5 lakh Male Elected Representatives across India, breaking down patriarchal biases, and involving male leaders in local gender-equality and safety campaigns.
  3. **Nirbhay Drishti (Surveillance Infrastructure):** Enhances technology-enabled safety infrastructure by funding the installation of CCTV security cameras at strategic rural locations within Gram Panchayats.
- **Massive Scale of Action:** Targets a combined national footprint of **over 32 lakh elected Panchayat representatives**, making it one of the largest rural outreach programs for public safety.
  - **Comprehensive Curricular Training:** Combines core legal training on domestic violence, child marriage, cyber safety, victim compensation, and local referral reporting networks.
  - **Cascading Model of Scaling:** Uses a dynamic Training of Trainers (ToT) approach, where master trainers use practice-oriented simulations, moot courts, and role-plays to pass knowledge down to state, district, and block levels.

## FUTURE OF INDIA'S SEMICONDUCTOR INDUSTRY.

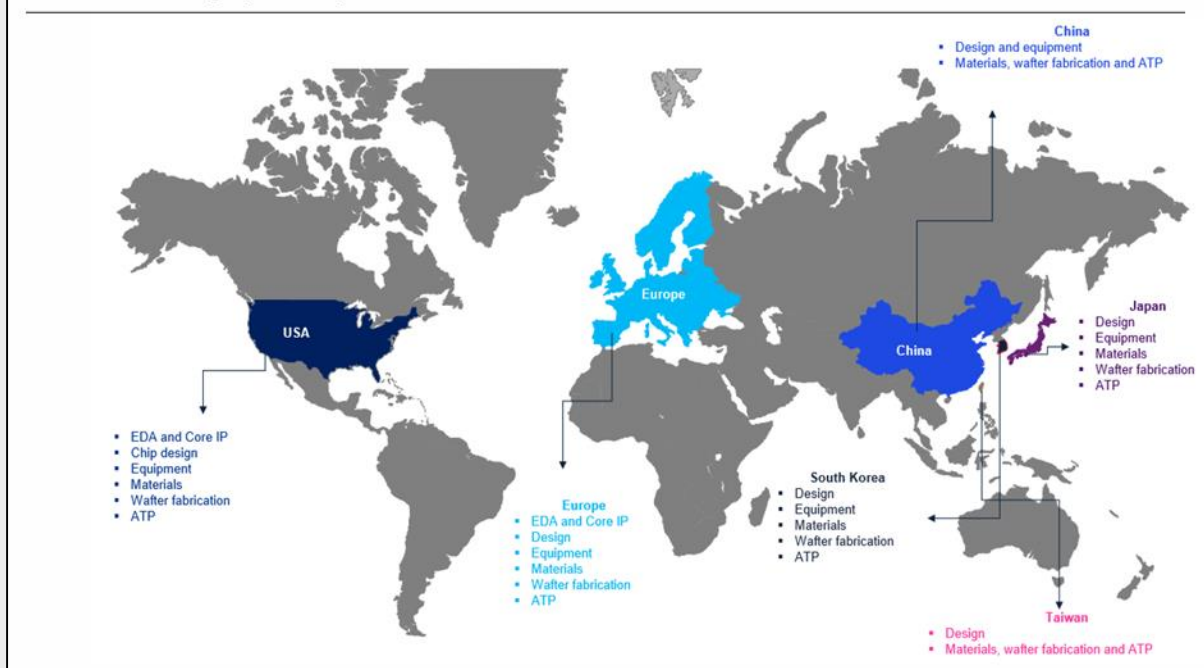
NITI Aayog's Frontier Tech Hub has officially released India's first comprehensive 10-year roadmap titled Future of India's Semiconductor Industry.



*The NITI Aayog Releases Future Of India's Semiconductor Industry Roadmap*

### What it is?

- The **Future of India's Semiconductor Industry** report is a forward-looking operational architecture engineered to build a **USD 120-150 billion domestic semiconductor value chain by 2035**. Rather than chasing the unsustainable global wafer race from behind, the roadmap moves beyond an imitative catch-up model.
- It advocates for a distinct **More-than-Moore strategy** focused on securing deep manufacturing dominance in mature logic nodes, advanced Outsourced Semiconductor Assembly and Test (OSAT) packaging, and specialized wide-bandgap compound materials.

**Exhibit 12: Geographical spread of semiconductor value chain\***


### Key Findings in the Report:

- **Extreme Strategic Vulnerability:** India currently faces a critical exposure window, relying on imports to fulfill 90–95% of its total domestic semiconductor consumption.
- **Accelerating Demand Trajectory:** Driven by rapid expansions in electronics manufacturing, electric vehicles (EVs), and data centers, India’s internal chip market is projected to reach USD 200 billion by 2035.
- **Massive Financial Exchange Outflow:** India’s heavy reliance on foreign components has severely strained external reserves, resulting in a cumulative import cost of nearly USD 150 billion between FY17 and FY25.
- **Escalating Annual Import Costs:** If current trends persist, India’s annual semiconductor import bill is on a trajectory to expand to USD 240 billion by 2035.
- **Formidable Human Capital Base:** India already possesses a powerful foundational design footprint, housing 20% of the entire global semiconductor design workforce.
- **Huge Growth Capital Investment Target:** To anchor world-class fabs, design infrastructure, and advanced packaging ecosystems, India requires an estimated growth capital investment of USD 135–180 billion over the next decade.
- **The Global Market Cap Horizon:** By successfully expanding its local innovation and production output, India aims to capture 10–13% of the total global semiconductor market share by 2035.
- **The Evolution to Ecosystem Deepening:** Backed by India Semiconductor Mission (ISM) 2.0, the nation is shifting its policy lens from foundational capacity creation to deep capability scaling across design IPs, R&D, and advanced integration.

### Opportunities for the Semiconductor Industry in India:

- **Leveraging a Vast Pre-Existing Pool of Local Design Talent:** India can easily pivot from pure backend chip-servicing to creating native, exportable intellectual property by utilizing its massive engineering base.

**Example:** The roadmap outlines a clear opportunity to tap India’s design workforce – who make up one-fifth of the global total – to create more than 100 breakthrough advanced semiconductor design IPs by 2035.

- **Capturing the Accelerated Global Supply Chain Realignment:** Geopolitical tensions and the China-plus-one strategy offer India a historic window to position itself as a trusted global value chain alternative.

**Example:** Deepening technological partnerships with the US, Japan, and the EU allows India to integrate its local factories directly into Western technology blocs.

- **Explosive Offtake Potential from the Local Automotive and Electric Vehicle Sectors:** The rapid transition toward software-defined mobility creates immediate, high-volume domestic demand for specialized vehicle electronics.

**Example:** The massive domestic automotive shift creates an ideal local market for domestic compound semiconductor fabs to manufacture SiC and GaN power devices.

- **Leapfrogging the Foundry Race via Next-Generation Advanced Packaging:** Advanced packaging allows India to bypass expensive sub-2nm node printing while achieving massive system-level performance gains.

**Example:** The report targets positioning India as a top-three global destination for advanced OSAT capacity, focusing on chiplets and 3D stacking.

- **Securing Technological Sovereignty Across Critical Strategic Sectors:** Building local chip fabs helps eliminate severe black-box security hardware risks embedded within imported defense machinery.

### Challenges Identified in the Roadmap:

- **Prohibitive Front-End Capital Expenditure Barriers:** Setting up standard semiconductor fabrication plants requires massive upfront capital investments that yield slow financial returns.

**Example:** Constructing a modern analog fab costs over USD 5 billion, while a leading-edge 3nm wafer facility spikes past USD 15 billion, requiring heavy state-backed risk sharing.

- **Extremely Long Gestation and Revenue Monetization Cycles:** The long timeline required to build factories and optimize manufacturing yields acts as a major barrier for private venture capital.

**Example:** Standard commercial fab units require four to five years to commence production, followed by multiple quarters for yield validation before reaching the market.

- **Severe Scarcity of Specialized Hardware and R&D Skills:** While India has excellent software capabilities, it faces a critical deficit in the specialized engineering skills needed for real cleanroom fabrication.

- **Massive Resource Demands Driving Up Local Operating Costs:** Operating a semiconductor fab requires an uninterrupted, clean public utility supply that strains local infrastructure.

**Example:** Fabs require thousands of gallons of parts-per-billion ultra-pure water alongside highly energy-intensive electricity lines, accounting for 0.3% of global power use.

- **Entrenched Global Monopolies Restricting Market Acceptance:** International equipment manufacturers maintain deeply entrenched trust networks with existing East Asian foundries, making it hard for new destinations to break in.

### Road Way for India's Semiconductor Industry:

- **Activating the National Semiconductor Capital Framework:** The central government should commit USD 45-60 billion as anchor public capital over the next ten years to provide credit guarantees and equity support for high-capex greenfield fabs.
- **Establishing Specialized National Semiconductor Zones (NSZs):** Construct dedicated manufacturing hubs equipped with six-nines utility reliability and on-site small modular nuclear reactors to satisfy the intense power and ultra-pure water needs of active fabs.
- **Deploying the AI-Enabled Semiconductor Engineering Mission:** Launch targeted national programs that combine agentic AI tools with Electronic Design Automation (EDA) software workflows to compress chip design lifecycles and democratize chip architecture skills.
- **Enforcing Strict Public Procurement Sourcing Mandates:** Create an assured domestic market by mandating phased domestic chip adoption across state-directed railways, public telecom infrastructure, defense programs, and municipal energy grids.
- **Forming a Dedicated National Fab Academy for Skill Standardization:** Build an apex training academy staffed by global industry veterans to quickly generate a standardized pipeline of cleanroom operators, material engineers, and advanced packaging technicians.

NITI Aayog's 2035 semiconductor roadmap marks a vital shift from basic capacity creation to deep capability building across India's electronics ecosystem. By focusing on advanced packaging, mature logic nodes, and robust talent development, the strategy expertly plays to India's unique engineering strengths while avoiding unsustainable capital pitfalls.

## INDIA-OMAN COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT (CEPA)

*The India-Oman Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) came into force on June 1, 2026. The agreement provides duty-free access to 99.38% of India's exports by value, up from just 1.53% under the earlier MFN regime, making it one of India's most comprehensive trade agreements with a Gulf partner.*

### How Does the CEPA Expand India's Market Access in Oman?

1. **Duty-Free Access:** Provides tariff-free access on 98.08% of tariff lines covering 99.38% of India's export value.
2. **Previous Regime:** Only 1.53% of Indian exports to Oman enjoyed duty-free treatment under the Most Favoured Nation (MFN) framework.
3. **Competitiveness:** Enhances price competitiveness of Indian products across multiple sectors.
4. **Trade Growth:** Bilateral trade expected to increase from **\$9.84 billion (FY2023-24)** to **\$11.8 billion (FY2025-26)**.
5. **Economic Complementarity:** Reflects growing integration between India's manufacturing strengths and Oman's import requirements.

**INDIA OMAN**  
Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) inked

A New Chapter in  
Bilateral Economic Cooperation

Unprecedented tariff concessions for India from Oman

India-Oman CEPA delivers **zero-duty access** on **98.08%** of Oman's tariff lines, covering **99.38%** of Indian exports

**97.96%** of zero duty concessions from day one of deal coming into force

Indian exports to have greater access in Omani markets

### Why Is the CEPA Significant for India's Diversification Strategy?

1. **Trade Diversification:** Supports India's objective of reducing excessive dependence on limited export markets.
2. **Regional Integration:** Strengthens India's economic presence in the Gulf region.
3. **Recent Trade Agreements:** Builds upon agreements with:
  1. United Arab Emirates (UAE)
  2. Australia
  3. European Free Trade Association (EFTA)
  4. United Kingdom (under negotiation)
  5. New Zealand (under negotiation)
  6. European Union (under negotiation)
1. **Strategic Importance:** Deepens engagement in a region critical for energy security, trade flows, and connectivity.

### Which Export Sectors Stand to Gain the Most?

#### Textile and Apparel Sector

1. **Market Share:** India accounts for 43% of Oman's apparel imports.
2. **Knitted Apparel:** India holds 31% of Oman's knitted apparel imports.
3. **Tariff Elimination:** Removal of Oman's 5% tariff improves competitiveness.
4. **China Competition:** Enhances India's position against China, the dominant supplier.

### Chemicals Sector

1. **Market Presence:** India supplies nearly 39% of Oman's chemical imports.
2. **Tariff-Free Access:** Strengthens India's leadership position in the market.
3. **Export Expansion:** Creates opportunities for higher value-added chemical exports.

### Engineering Goods Sector

1. **Automotive Market:** Oman imports over \$3.3 billion worth of automobiles annually.
2. **Current Share:** India's market share is approximately 5%.
3. **Expansion Opportunity:** Preferential access can significantly improve penetration.
4. **Infrastructure Demand:** Supports exports linked to Oman's construction and industrial sectors.

### Pharmaceuticals Sector

1. **Market Share:** India accounts for around 10% of Oman's pharmaceutical imports.
2. **Regulatory Facilitation:** Products approved by major international regulators receive faster approvals.
3. **Compliance Benefits:** Reduces regulatory costs and market-entry barriers.
4. **Healthcare Demand:** Expands opportunities for Indian pharmaceutical manufacturers.

### Food Processing and Agriculture

1. **Processed Foods:** Expands opportunities for Indian processed food exports.
2. **Sensitive Sectors:** Dairy, cereals, edible oils, and certain agricultural products remain protected.
3. **Tariff Concessions:** Exclusions ensure protection of domestic producers.

### How Does the CEPA Improve Trade Facilitation and Customs Procedures?

1. **Electronic Certification:** Mutual acceptance of certificates issued by India's Export Inspection Council (EIC).
2. **Paperless Trade:** Reduces documentation burden.
3. **Organic Product Recognition:** Accepts India's National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP) standards.
4. **SPS Cooperation:** Strengthens coordination on **sanitary and phytosanitary measures**.
5. **TBT Cooperation:** Improves transparency regarding **technical barriers to trade**.
6. **Customs Modernization:** Enhances regulatory cooperation and customs clearance efficiency.
7. **Perishable Goods:** Facilitates faster movement of time-sensitive exports.
8. **Cost Reduction:** Lowers transaction costs and logistics delays.

### How Does the Agreement Strengthen India's Services Exports?

1. **Services Trade Value:** Bilateral services trade exceeded \$1 billion in 2024.
2. **Trade Surplus:** India recorded a services trade surplus of nearly \$447 million.
3. **Underperformance:** India's share in Oman's global services imports remains only around 5%.
4. **Professional Services:** Expands opportunities in:
  1. Accounting
  2. Engineering
  3. Information Technology
  4. Healthcare
  5. Education
  6. Consulting

### Professional Mobility

1. **Intra-Corporate Transfers:** Facilitates movement of professionals within companies.
2. **Specialists and Professionals:** Improves market access for Indian skilled workers.
3. **Service Sector Integration:** Strengthens cross-border business operations.

### Healthcare and AYUSH

1. **Traditional Medicine:** Creates opportunities for AYUSH and wellness-related services.
2. **Medical Cooperation:** Expands healthcare service exports.

### Why Is Oman's Strategic Location Central to the CEPA's Success?

1. **Geographic Position:** Located at the crossroads of the Gulf, Indian Ocean, and East Africa.
2. **Key Ports:** Hosts major ports at:
  1. Sohar
  2. Duqm
  3. Salalah
3. **Logistics Hub:** Emerging as an important global logistics and industrial center.
4. **Gateway Function:** Provides access to Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) markets.
5. **East Africa Linkages:** Facilitates trade with East African economies.
6. **Supply Chain Integration:** Strengthens India's participation in regional value chains.

### How Can Indian States and Industrial Clusters Benefit?

1. **Textiles:** Textile hubs in Tamil Nadu expected to gain.
2. **Jewellery:** Jewellery manufacturing clusters in Gujarat benefit.
3. **Engineering:** Engineering exporters in Maharashtra and Punjab gain market access.
4. **Pharmaceuticals:** Pharmaceutical producers in Telangana receive new opportunities.
5. **Seafood:** Seafood exporters in Andhra Pradesh and Kerala benefit from reduced barriers.
6. **Regional Growth:** Broadens export participation beyond traditional exporting regions.

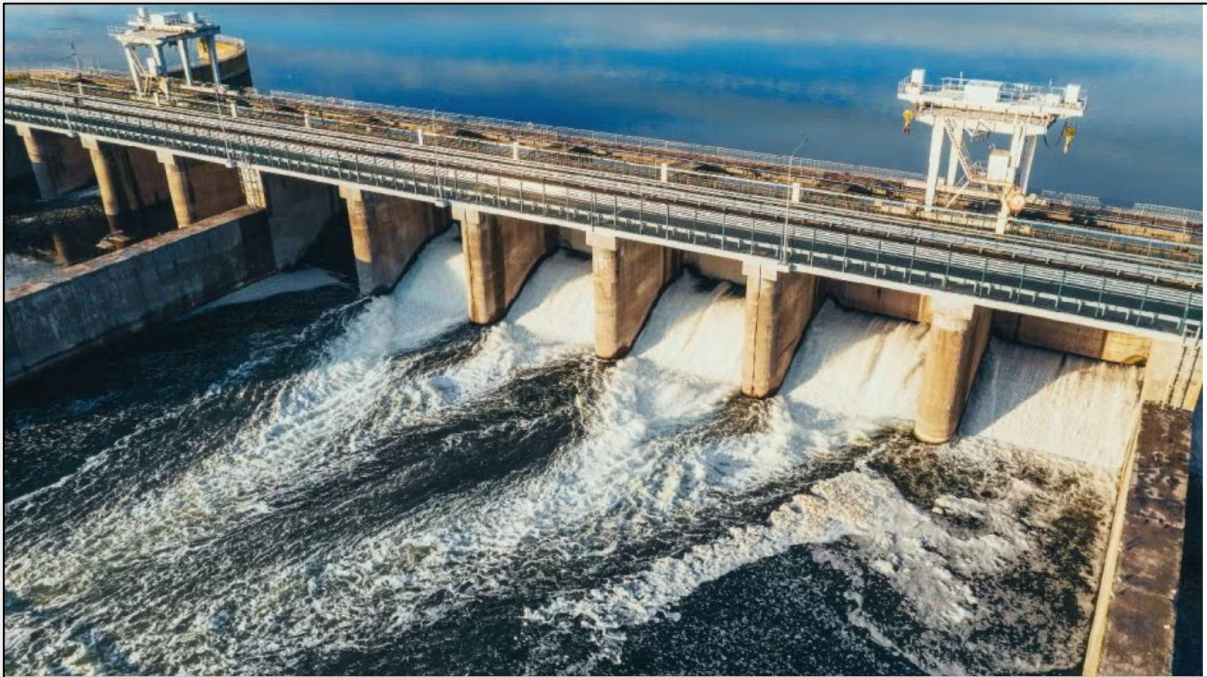
### Does the CEPA Represent a Shift in India's Trade Policy Approach?

1. **Beyond Tariffs:** Expands trade policy from goods trade to services, investment, and regulatory cooperation.
2. **Economic Integration:** Promotes deeper institutional cooperation.
3. **Investment Facilitation:** Improves investor confidence and business predictability.
4. **Comprehensive Framework:** Reflects India's transition toward modern, next-generation trade agreements.
5. **GCC Engagement:** Creates a foundation for wider economic integration with Gulf economies.

The India-Oman CEPA represents a significant evolution in India's economic engagement with the Gulf region. By combining tariff liberalisation with services access, investment facilitation, customs cooperation, and professional mobility, the agreement transforms Oman from a bilateral trading partner into a strategic gateway connecting India to GCC and East African markets. Its success will depend on effective utilisation by Indian exporters, deeper supply chain integration, and sustained competitiveness across key sectors.

## WANGCHHU HYDROELECTRIC PROJECT: INDIA–BHUTAN RENEWABLE ENERGY PARTNERSHIP

Hindustan Construction Company (HCC) recently secured a contract worth ₹127 crore from Wangchhu Hydroelectric Power Ltd. (WHPL) for construction works related to the **Wangchhu Hydroelectric Project** in Bhutan. The contract includes diversion tunnels, hydromechanical gates, and cofferdam works.



### About the Wangchhu Hydroelectric Project

- A 570 MW run-of-river hydropower project being developed in Chukha District, Bhutan on the Wangchhu River.
- The Wangchhu (Raidak in India) is a tributary of the Brahmaputra River system.
- Estimated project cost: ₹6,000 crore.
- Expected annual generation: 2,478.93 GWh.
- Will operate as a peaking run-of-river plant, helping Bhutan manage seasonal variations in hydropower generation.

### Ownership & Implementation

- Developed by Wangchhu Hydroelectric Power Limited (WHPL).
- Joint venture between:
  - Druk Green Power Corporation (DGPC), Bhutan – 51%
  - Adani Power Limited (APL), India – 49%
- Implemented under the **BOOT (Build, Own, Operate, Transfer)** model.

### Strategic Significance

- First project under the **2025 MoU** between DGPC and the Adani Group for developing **5,000 MW of hydropower capacity in Bhutan**.
- Strengthens **India–Bhutan energy cooperation** and regional clean-energy integration.
- Supports Bhutan's hydropower-led economy and renewable energy ambitions.

## Why in News?

**Angkor Thom**, one of Cambodia's most significant cultural heritage sites, has been highlighted in recent reports promoting the "**Living Heritage Trail of Angkor**", which seeks to showcase lesser-known historical and cultural treasures beyond the famous Angkor Wat complex.

## What is Angkor Thom?

- **Angkor Thom** ("Great City") was the last and most enduring capital of the **Khmer Empire**.
- Located near **Angkor Wat** in present-day Cambodia.
- Established in the late 12th century by Jayavarman VII, one of the greatest Khmer rulers.
- Served as the political, religious, and administrative centre of the empire.

## Key Features

### 1. Bayon Temple

- Located at the centre of Angkor Thom.
- Famous for its massive stone towers adorned with smiling faces.
- Represents the pinnacle of Khmer architectural and artistic achievement.

### 2. City Layout

- Enclosed by an approximately **8-km-long laterite wall**.
- Surrounded by a moat.
- Planned as a fortified urban centre with monumental gateways.

### 3. Major Structures

- Bayon Temple
- Baphuon Temple
- Terrace of the Elephants
- Terrace of the Leper King
- Royal Palace Complex

## Angkor Archaeological Park

- Angkor Thom forms part of the **Angkor Archaeological Park**.
- Designated a Angkor Archaeological Park UNESCO World Heritage Site in **1992**.
- Represents one of the largest pre-industrial urban complexes in the world.

## Significance

- Symbolizes the zenith of Khmer political power.
- Reflects a blend of **Hindu and Buddhist influences**.
- Demonstrates advanced urban planning, hydraulic engineering, and temple architecture.

## GI-TAGGED TEZPUR LITCHI

The Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) successfully facilitated the first ever international export consignment of **GI-tagged Tezpur Litchi** from Assam to Dubai.



*The GI-Tagged Tezpur Litchi*

### About The GI-Tagged Tezpur Litchi:

#### What It Is?

- Tezpur Litchi is a premium, globally sought-after horticultural crop protected under India's Geographical Indication (GI) registry. It is widely celebrated as one of the finest variations of the *Litchi chinensis* species, commanding high value due to its exceptional fruit quality metrics, dense pulp profile, and rich nutritional value.

**Region Found In:** The fruit is grown natively in and around **Tezpur within the Sonitpur district of Assam, India.**

#### Key Features and Cultivation Conditions:

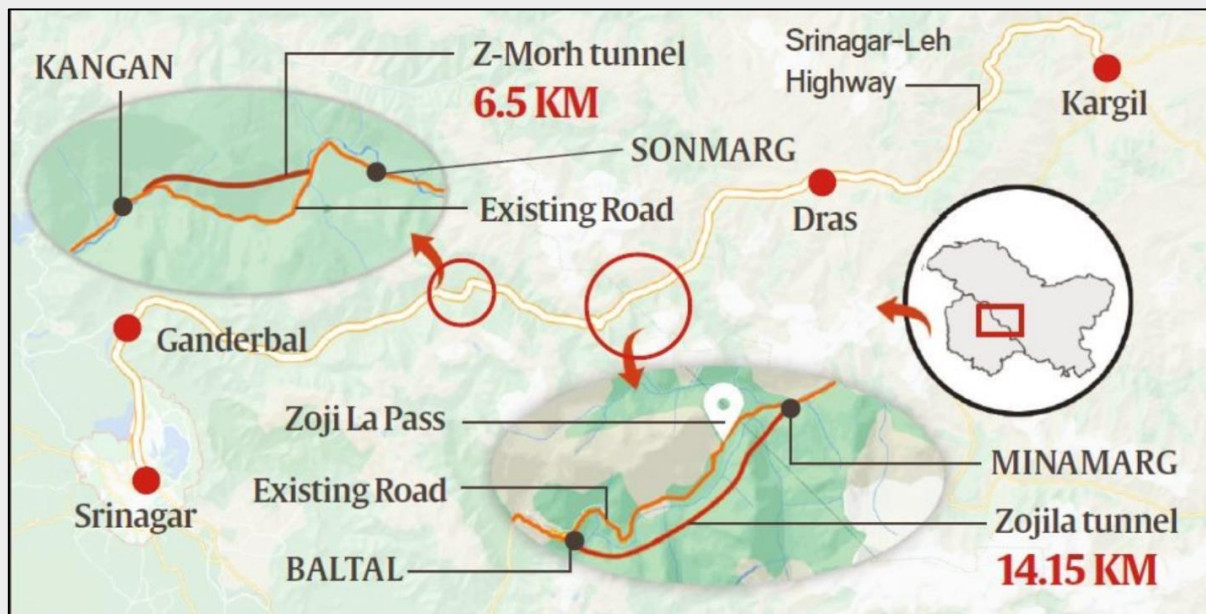
- **Prominent Regional Varieties:** The crop includes several notable locally adapted cultivars, including Bombaya, Bilati, Elaichi, Piyaji, and Sahi. Each possesses slight variations in ripening timelines and rind thickness, but all share the signature regional flavor profile.
- **Distinct Physical and Sensory Profiles:** Features an extraordinarily vibrant, bright-red appearance with a rough, textured rind. The interior flesh is translucent, soft, and exceptionally sweet, characterized by a pleasant, distinctive aroma and an excellent pulp-to-seed ratio.
- **Climatic and Soil Moats:** The crop thrives in the unique environmental conditions of Sonitpur:
  - **Soil Type:** Deep, well-drained, fertile alluvial or loamy soils enriched by systemic organic deposits from the Brahmaputra River basin.
  - **Weather Matrix:** Requires a humid subtropical climate. It demands moisture-rich, frost-free winters to trigger successful floral buds, followed by warm, humid summers with optimal rainfall distribution to fill out the fruit pulp without splitting the outer skin.

#### Significance:

- Export market access enabled farmers to earn about 10% higher prices than domestic markets, improving income stability and encouraging quality production.
- The Dubai shipment demonstrates that North East India's agricultural products can meet international quality standards, opening new opportunities in global markets.

## ZOJILA TUNNEL

Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways witnessed the historic final breakthrough blast of the **Zojila Tunnel** at Meenamarg in Kargil.



### About The Zojila Tunnel: What It Is?

- The Zojila Tunnel is an under-construction, horseshoe-shaped, two-lane road tunnel that stands as India's highest and longest road tunnel, as well as Asia's longest bi-directional, single-tube bypass. Located under the treacherous Zoji La Pass on National Highway 1 (NH-1), the tunnel is engineered to operate reliably for at least 100 years.

**Location:** Connects Sonamarg (Baltal) in Jammu and Kashmir with Minamarg (Drass/Kargil) in Ladakh.

- Situated at a record altitude of **11,578 feet (above 3,000 meters)** above sea level within the young and seismically active Himalayan range.

**Constructed By:** National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL).

**Aim:** The primary aim of the tunnel is to eliminate winter isolation for the Ladakh region. Historically, heavy snowfall, avalanches, and landslides shut down the Zojila Pass for up to six months each year, cutting off Ladakh completely.

### Key Features of the Engineering Marvel:

- **Physical Dimensions:** The main bi-directional tube is **13.15 kilometers long**, 9.5 meters wide, and 7.57 meters high. It forms part of a wider 33-km connectivity corridor that integrates approach roads and twin-tube tunnels.

- **The New Austrian Tunnelling Method (NATM):** Due to the unpredictable, loose, and uncondensed nature of the young Himalayan geology, engineers utilized NATM. This involves sequential, calculated blasting, immediate structural reinforcement with shotcrete and rock bolting, and continuous electronic geotechnical monitoring.
- **Massive Travel Time Reduction:** Once open to the public, the grueling and dangerous journey across the Zojila Pass stretch will drop from **3.5 hours to just 15 to 20 minutes**, while reducing the physical travel distance from 40 km to 13 km.
- **Advanced Smart Safety Systems:** The interior architecture is being outfitted with fully automated ventilation systems, emergency pedestrian cross-passages, automated fire detection loops, continuous CCTV monitoring, and dedicated maintenance walkways.
- **Local Employment Generator:** The project has logged over 11.25 million man-hours with zero casualties. The workforce includes more than 1,200 personnel, roughly **80% of whom are local residents** from the region.
- **Target Completion Date:** With 85% of the macro project now complete, internal lining and electrical system integration will take place ahead of the final public commissioning targeted for **February 2028**.

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