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# **WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS MAGAZINE**



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Monthly Current Affairs Magazine

# THE RIGHT TO PROTEST IN INDIA

Delhi Police cracked down on a major demonstration by the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) as thousands of protesters attempted to march toward the Parliament complex.



*The Right to Protest in India*

## About The Right to Protest in India:

### What It Is?

- The Right to Protest in India is a recognized democratic mechanism that allows citizens to assemble, express grievances, and challenge state policies. It is not an absolute right, but rather a constitutional freedom balanced against public order, safety, and the rights of the broader public.

### Origin and Historical Context:

- The tradition of popular, non-violent marches (Satyagraha) served as a primary strategy during India's struggle for independence.
- Post-independence, the framers of the Constitution embedded this right within the democratic framework to ensure that citizens retained a peaceful means to express dissent outside of periodic elections.

### Constitutional Provisions:

- **Article 19(1)(a):** Guarantees the fundamental freedom of speech and expression.
- **Article 19(1)(b):** Guarantees the fundamental right to assemble peaceably and without arms.
- **Article 19(2) & 19(3) [Reasonable Restrictions]:** Authorizes the government to impose legal limits on protests in the interest of the sovereignty and integrity of India, state security, friendly relations with foreign states, public order, decency, morality, or to prevent contempt of court and incitement to offenses.

**Key Supreme Court Judgments:**

- **Himat Lal K. Shah v. Commissioner of Police (1973):** The Court ruled that freedom of assembly is essential to democracy. It drew a clear constitutional line between reasonable state regulation (like managing traffic) and arbitrary exclusion (outright bans).
- **Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan v. Union of India (2018):** Addressing repeated prohibitions around Parliament House, the SC mandated balanced guidelines. It established designated protest sites, set buffer zones around high-security buildings like Parliament and the Supreme Court, and banned weapons or lathis at demonstration sites.
- **Amit Sahni v. Commissioner of Police (2020) [Shaheen Bagh Case]:** The SC ruled that protests cannot occupy public roads indefinitely or cause major inconvenience to the general public. Demonstrations must be restricted solely to designated areas.

**Key Legal and Operational Features:**

- **Mandatory Police Permission:** Organizers must obtain prior administrative and police clearance to hold demonstrations, allowing authorities to manage crowd size, traffic flow, and security.
- **Designated Demonstration Sites:** To protect public mobility, local administrations restrict high-density protests to designated grounds, such as Jantar Mantar and Ramlila Maidan in New Delhi, or Azad Maidan in Mumbai.
- **Prohibitory Orders:** Local authorities use statutory tools—such as **Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS)** to restrict unauthorized assemblies when there is an immediate threat to public order.

## PREVENTION OF INSULTS TO NATIONAL HONOUR (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2026

Union Home Minister Amit Shah is set to introduce The Prevention of Insults to National Honour (Amendment) Bill, 2026 in the Rajya Sabha.



*The Prevention of Insults to National Honour (Amendment) Bill*

**About The Prevention of Insults to National Honour (Amendment) Bill, 2026:****What It Is?**

- The proposed legislation is an amendment to the parent **Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971**, which criminalizes disrespect toward national symbols such as the National Flag, the Constitution, and the National Anthem. The 2026 Bill explicitly expands the scope of the 1971 Act to include the National Song (Vande Mataram).

**Aim:** The central objective of the Bill is to plug a long-standing statutory gap in the 1971 Act, which lacked specific penal provisions to protect the national song.

- By adding legal protections, the government aims to fulfill the vision articulated by Constituent Assembly President Dr. Rajendra Prasad on January 24, 1950, that Vande Mataram “shall be honoured equally with Jana Gana Mana and shall have equal status with it.”

### Key Features of the Bill:

- **Substitution of Section 3:** Replaces Section 3 of the 1971 Act to place the National Song and National Anthem under the exact same protective legal umbrella.
- **Criminalization of Interference:** Explicitly makes it a criminal offense for anyone who intentionally:
  1. **Prevents** the singing of the National Anthem or the National Song, or
  2. **Causes disturbance** to any assembly or gathering engaged in such singing.
- **Penalties:** Establishes strict criminal sanctions for violators, including **imprisonment for a term extending up to three years**, a monetary fine, or both.
- **Historical Reference:** The Bill explicitly cites Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's 1875 composition (later published in Anandamath in 1882) and its historical role in inspiring generations during India's freedom struggle.

### Significance:

- Grants **Vande Mataram** explicit legal protection, placing it on par with the **National Anthem** under the Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act.
- Rekindles debate over balancing **national honour** with **Article 19 freedoms**, as critics question whether legal compulsion undermines voluntary patriotism.

## RICE FIELDS BECOME METHANE HOTSPOTS IN INDIA

A new Nature Food study found that India's irrigated paddy fields are among the world's largest methane hotspots, emitting about 3.9 million tonnes of methane annually.



## About India's Rice Fields as Global Methane Hotspots: What It Is?

- A global assessment published in **Nature Food** examined greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from rice cultivation worldwide. It found that methane emissions from flooded paddy fields, coupled with declining soil carbon storage, have made India's irrigated rice fields among the world's leading methane emission hotspots.

### Key Findings:

- **Sharp Rise in Emissions:** Global GHG emissions from paddy fields nearly doubled since the 1960s, reaching about 1.1 billion tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>-equivalent annually (2011–2020).
- **India Among Methane Hotspots:** India's irrigated paddy fields emit around 3.9 million tonnes of methane annually, exceeding Germany's total yearly methane emissions.
- **Declining Soil Carbon Sink:** Paddy soils have shifted from being carbon sinks to carbon sources, with over one-third of global paddy fields now losing soil organic carbon.
- **Higher Future Emissions:** Rice-related emissions are projected to increase by about 26% during 2031–2050, driven by climate change and intensive agricultural practices.

### Implications:

- **Climate Change Mitigation:** Strengthens the need for climate-smart practices such as Alternate Wetting and Drying (AWD), Direct Seeded Rice (DSR), System of Rice Intensification (SRI), and crop diversification.
- **Food Security vs. Sustainability:** Highlights the challenge of balancing India's food security with commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote sustainable agriculture.

## FAST-TRACK COURTS (FTCS)

Prime Minister of India announced the establishment of **fast-track courts (FTCs)** to deliver swift and stringent justice for offenses related to examination paper leaks.



*Fast-Track Courts (FTCs)*

## About Fast-Track Courts (FTCs): What They Are?

- Fast-track courts are special temporary judicial benches established to expedite the trial of specific, high-priority offenses, complex corporate frauds, or cases involving vulnerable demographics. They aim to reduce backlog and accelerate the judicial process by holding daily hearings and adhering to strict timelines.

### Constitutional Framework:

- **Article 14 Guarantees:** Special courts must satisfy **Article 14** (Equality before the Law).

### Governing Statutory Frameworks & Guidelines:

- **14th Finance Commission (2015–2020):** Recommended setting up 1,800 FTCs to address heinous crimes (like murder and kidnapping) and property disputes pending over five years.
- **Nirbhaya Fund Centrally Sponsored Scheme (2019):** Established Fast-Track Special Courts (FTSCs) dedicated exclusively to trial cases under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act and rape cases.
- **Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024:** Serves as the statutory backdrop for the newly proposed fast-track courts targeting organized paper leaks and examination fraud.
- **Bharatiya Nagrik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS):** Recommends completing trials within two years (and sexual offense trials within two months).

### Key Functions:

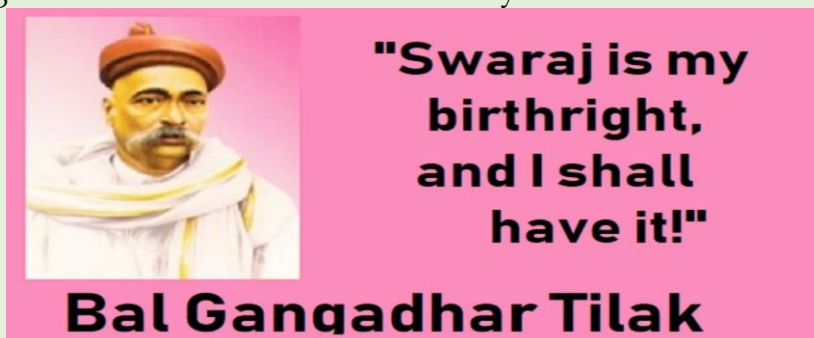
- **Target Disposal Rates:** FTSCs operate with a target disposal rate of 165 cases per judge annually (or ~41–42 cases per quarter).
- **High Efficiency Ratio:** FTSCs dispose of an average of 9.5 cases per month—nearly three times higher than regular trial courts (3.3 cases per month).
- **Substantial Resolution Output:** The disposal rate for operational FTSCs stands at approximately 96%.
- **Day-to-Day Trial Operations:** Function on daily hearing schedules to bypass standard procedural adjournments.

### Implication:

- Fast-track courts provide speedy trials for sexual violence, vulnerable groups, and paper leak cases by reducing delays in the justice system.
- Despite high disposal rates, over 2.4 lakh cases remain pending. Long-term reforms require better infrastructure, more judges, stronger forensic support, and improved investigations.

## LOKMANYA BAL GANGADHAR TILAK

Union Home Minister and Defence Minister paid national tributes to the iconic freedom fighter Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak on his birth anniversary.



### About Bal Gangadhar Tilak:

#### Who He Was?

- Bal Gangadhar Tilak was an Indian nationalist, educator, journalist, and social reformer. Revered as the **Father of the Indian Unrest** by British colonial authorities and the **Father of India's Revolution** by Jawaharlal Nehru, he was a key leader of the extremist/nationalist faction within the Indian National Congress prior to the Gandhian era.

**Early Life & Social Reforms:**

- **Birth:** Born on **July 23, 1856**, in Ratnagiri, Maharashtra, to a middle-class family.
- **Educational Reforms:** Believing that modern, nationalistic education was vital for political awakening, he co-founded the **Deccan Education Society** in 1884 to establish schools like Fergusson College in Pune.
- **Social Stance:** Advocated passionate social reforms while prioritizing political liberation. He vehemently opposed untouchability, famously declaring: I would not recognise even God if he said that untouchability was ordained by him.

**Contributions to the Freedom Movement:**

- **Champion of Swaraj and Swadeshi:** Tilak transformed the freedom struggle into a mass movement and coined the slogan, Swaraj is my birthright, and I shall have it! He led the Extremist (Lal-Bal-Pal) movement against Moderate politics after the Partition of Bengal (1905).
- **Sedition Trials and Mandalay Exile:**
  - **1897:** Convicted of sedition for writings in **Kesari**, emerging as a national leader.
  - **1908–1914:** Sentenced to **six years in Mandalay Prison (Burma)**, where he authored important scholarly works.
- **Home Rule League and Lucknow Pact:** Founded the Indian Home Rule League (1916) at Pune to demand self-government. He also helped unite Moderates and Extremists and played a key role in the Lucknow Pact (1916) between the Congress and the Muslim League.

**Literary Works & Journalism:**

- **Journalistic Organs:** Founded two influential newspapers to educate the masses and critique British misrule:
  - **Kesari:** A Marathi daily newspaper through which he preached nationalist doctrines.
  - **Mahratta:** An English weekly newspaper.
- **Major Books:**
  - **Gita Rahasya (1915):** Written during his imprisonment in Mandalay, it is a commentary on the Bhagavad Gita emphasizing Karma Yoga (the philosophy of selfless action).
  - **The Arctic Home in the Vedas (1903):** Proposed a novel origin theory regarding the ancestral home of the Aryans.

**Key Organizations Associated With Tilak:**

- **Deccan Education Society (1884):** Co-founded to promote nationalist education in Maharashtra.
- **Indian National Congress (INC):** Joined in 1889; led its Nationalist/Extremist wing.
- **Indian Home Rule League (1916):** Established to demand self-rule across Maharashtra, Karnataka, Central Provinces, and Berar.
- **Sarvajanik Ganeshotsav & Shivaji Jayanti:** Re-organized community festivals into public cultural gatherings to build national unity and circumvent British bans on political assemblies.

**Last Days and Legacy:**

- **Passing:** Passed away on **August 1, 1920**, in Bombay (now Mumbai) at the age of 64.
- **Historical Transition:** His death coincided with the launch of Mahatma Gandhi's Non-Cooperation Movement on the exact same day, marking the transition from the Tilak Era to the Gandhian Era of India's freedom struggle.

# COMMONWEALTH GAMES 2026

The 2026 Commonwealth Games (officially the XXIII Commonwealth Games, commonly known as Glasgow 2026) run from July 23 to August 2, 2026.



*The 2026 Commonwealth Games*

## About The 2026 Commonwealth Games:

### What It Is?

- The Commonwealth Games is an international, quadrennial multi-sport event featuring top athletes from the 74 member nations and territories of the Commonwealth of Nations. It provides a major global platform for sportsmanship, international camaraderie, and elite athletic performance.

**Host:** Glasgow, Scotland.

**History in Scotland:** Marks the **fourth time** Scotland has hosted the Games (following Edinburgh 1970 and 1986, and Glasgow 2014).

**Compact Footprint:** Hosted across **four major existing venues** within an eight-mile corridor:

- OVO Hydro / Scottish Event Campus (SEC) (Netball, 3×3 Basketball, Boxing, Judo, Bowls, Weightlifting, and Ceremonies)
- Scotstoun Stadium (Athletics and Para-Athletics)
- Tollcross International Swimming Centre (Swimming and Para-Swimming)
- Commonwealth Arena & Sir Chris Hoy Velodrome (Artistic Gymnastics and Track / Para-Track Cycling)

## Host Selection History & Emergency Handover:

- **Initial Award & Victoria Cancellation:** The Australian state of Victoria was selected to host in April 2022. However, in July 2023, the state government abruptly cancelled its hosting agreement citing projected cost escalations (reaching A\$6-7 billion).
- **Glasgow's Rescue Plan:** In 2024, Commonwealth Games Scotland proposed a scaled-back, low-cost concept using pre-existing infrastructure. Financed largely by a **A\$200 million compensation payout from Victoria** and CGF backing, the Scottish Government officially agreed to take over hosting rights without requiring local tax-payer funds.

### Key Features of Glasgow 2026:

- **Streamlined 10-Sport Programme:** Features 10 able-bodied sports (Athletics, Swimming, Weightlifting, Boxing, Judo, Artistic Gymnastics, Track Cycling, 3×3 Basketball, Netball, and Bowls).
- **Record Integrated Para-Sports:** Includes 47 medal events across six integrated para-sports (Para-Athletics, Para-Swimming, Para-Powerlifting, Para-Track Cycling, 3×3 Wheelchair Basketball, and Para-Bowls) – the largest Para-sport integration in Commonwealth Games history.
- **No Athletes' Village:** Operates without a costly, dedicated village; athletes are accommodated in local university student housing and commercial hotels across Glasgow.
- **Historical Transitions:** The first Commonwealth Games celebrated under King Charles III as Head of the Commonwealth and under CGF President Donald Rukare.

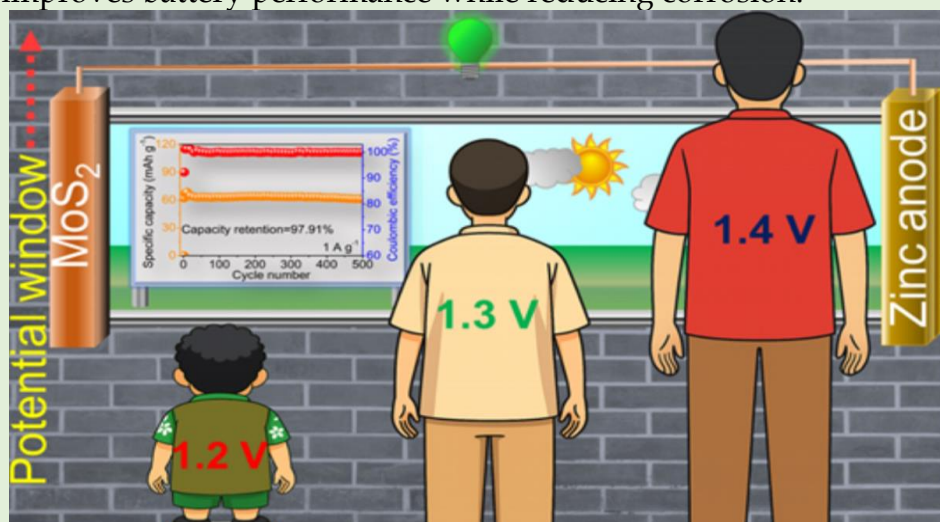
### Significance:

- Demonstrates a cost-effective, venue-reuse approach, offering a sustainable blueprint for future Commonwealth Games.
- Serves as a key preparation event for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics, helping athletes gain international competitive experience.

## ZINC-AIR BATTERIES

Scientists have developed a low-cost technology that could make rechargeable zinc-air batteries more efficient, safer and cheaper, offering a potential boost to green energy storage and electric mobility.

The breakthrough, achieved by a team led by Dr S. Devaraj at SASTRA Deemed University with support from the Department of Science and Technology (DST), centres on a new nanofluid electrolyte that improves battery performance while reducing corrosion.



Researchers said the electrolyte remains stable for more than three months and can improve the efficiency of the battery's air cathode while protecting the zinc anode from corrosion. The technology has been granted an Indian patent and is ready for commercial use.

Instead of using expensive corrosion inhibitors, the team added small amounts of silica and zinc oxide nanoparticles to the battery electrolyte. This reduced hydrogen gas formation, limited zinc corrosion and improved oxygen reactions inside the battery, addressing multiple performance issues with a single, low-cost solution.

Rechargeable zinc-air batteries are considered a promising alternative to lithium-ion batteries because they are cheaper, have high energy density and use water-based chemistry. However, their commercial use has been limited by corrosion and the need for costly platinum- and ruthenium-based catalysts.

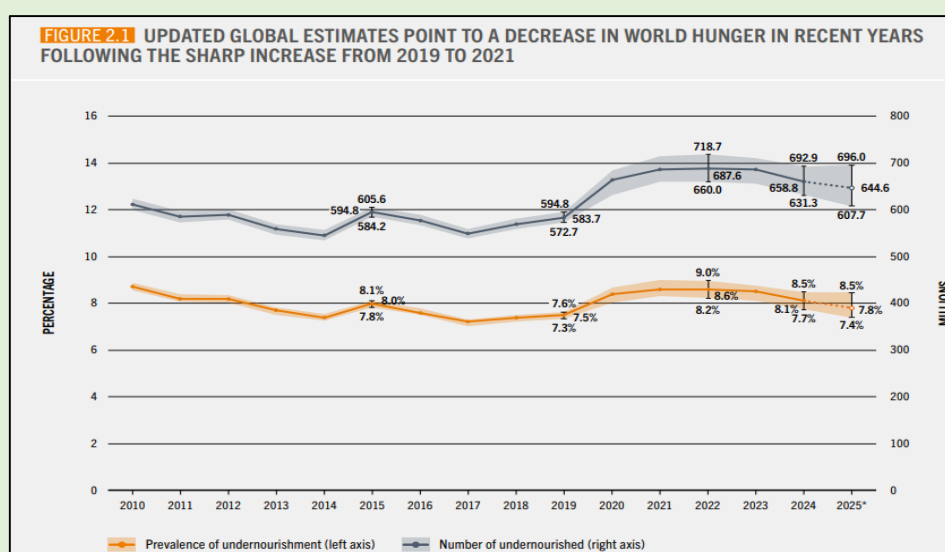
The researchers also developed a catalyst based on copper-doped manganese dioxide that outperformed commercial platinum- and ruthenium-based catalysts in laboratory tests.

In addition, the team converted discarded household water-filter carbon and used surgical face masks into high-performance carbon materials that can be used in batteries and supercapacitors, offering a sustainable way to recycle waste into clean energy technologies.

According to the researchers, the technologies could support large-scale energy storage, electric vehicles and other clean energy applications, while the waste-derived materials and nanofluid electrolyte could also be adapted for other battery systems.

## STATE OF FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION IN THE WORLD (SOFI) 2026 REPORT

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) along with IFAD, UNICEF, WFP, and WHO officially released The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI) 2026 report.



*State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI) 2026 Report*

**About** The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI) 2026 Report:

**What it is?**

- The SOFI report is the UN system's annual flagship assessment that tracks global, regional, and national progress toward ending hunger (SDG Target 2.1) and eliminating all forms of malnutrition (SDG Target 2.2).
- Theme-focused on Understanding and addressing the high cost of a healthy diet, the 2026 edition evaluates the cost drivers of Healthy Diet Baskets (HDB), tracks progress across global maternal and child nutrition targets.

### Key Findings in the Report:

- **Africa Overtakes Asia as Hunger Epicenter:** For the first time, Africa hosts the largest population facing hunger at **309 million people (20.0% rate)**, surpassing Asia's **292 million people (6.0% rate)**.
- **Unaffordability of Healthy Diets:** An estimated **2.69 billion people (32.7% globally)** were unable to afford a healthy diet in 2025. In Africa, this figure rises to a staggering **66.6%**.
- **Nutrient-Dense Cost Disparities:** Animal-source foods, fruits, and vegetables account for **nearly 70% of the total cost** of a healthy diet, whereas starchy staples contribute only one-sixth of the total cost despite providing half the calories.
- **Poor Minimum Dietary Diversity:** Only **30.8% of children aged 6–23 months** and **62.7% of women aged 15–49 years** achieved minimum dietary diversity globally.
- **Off Track for 2030 Zero Hunger Target:** Projections show that **510 to 520 million people** will still face chronic hunger in 2030, with **56% of them residing in Africa**.
- **Worsening Women's Health & Adult Obesity:** Anaemia among women aged 15–49 worsened to **30.7%**, while global adult obesity steadily climbed from **12.1% (2012)** to **16.2% (2024)**.
- **Urban vs. Rural Food Insecurity Gap:** Food insecurity remained consistently higher in rural areas (**29.7%**) compared to peri-urban (**25.4%**) and urban areas (**22.3%**).

### India and Report Findings:

- **Significant Driver of Regional Progress:** Southern Asia's substantial decline in undernourishment (from **13.9%** in 2021 down to **9.3%** in 2025) and food insecurity was largely propelled by improvements in India.
- **Lower-Middle-Income Group Dynamics:** India plays a decisive role in the global affordability metrics; excluding India from the lower-middle-income group converts the regional trend of people unable to afford a healthy diet from a decrease to an increase.
- **On Track for Child Nutrition Goals:** Aligned with broader Asian trends, India contributes to Southern Asia remaining on track to meet the 2030 global targets for **child stunting reduction** and **halting child overweight**.
- **Persistent Maternal Anaemia Challenges:** Similar to global trends where anaemia is worsening, India faces significant hurdles in meeting the 50% reduction target for anaemia among women of reproductive age.
- **Subnational Diet Cost Sensitivity:** Case studies in the report emphasize that price fluctuations in non-staples like vegetables and fruits disproportionately drive up the daily cost of a healthy diet across South Asian markets.

### Key Challenges Associated with Food Security and Hunger:

- **Geopolitical & Energy Shocks:** The 2026 West Asian conflict has disrupted oil, gas, and fertilizer supply chains, driving up agricultural input costs and threatening global food inflation.
- **High Post-Farmgate Supply Chain Costs:** Post-farmgate logistics, transport, and processing account for **70% to 75% of consumer food costs**, creating severe price markups on perishable fruits and vegetables.
- **Distorted Agricultural Subsidies:** Roughly **70% of global government agricultural support** is tied predominantly to staple grains, sugar, and livestock, systematically neglecting nutrient-dense fruits, vegetables, and legumes.
- **Climate Extremes & Infrastructure Deficits:** Climate variability combined with weak cold-chain storage and poor rural road networks lead to high post-harvest losses and seasonal food price spikes.

- **Funding & Aid Reductions:** Cuts in Official Development Assistance (ODA) and humanitarian funding strain emergency food assistance programs in crisis-affected regions.

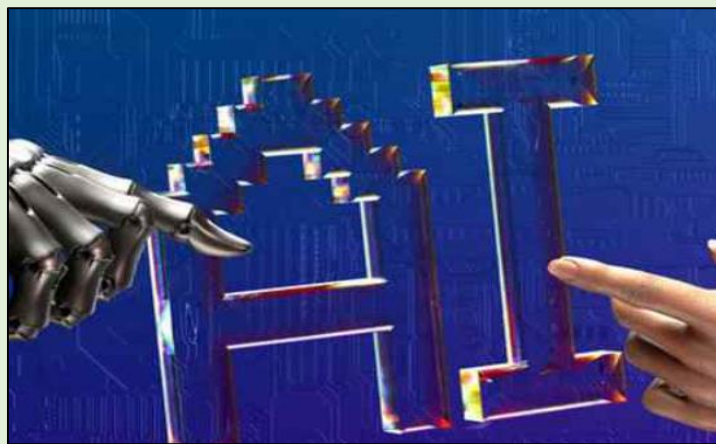
#### Recommendations:

- **Repurposing Agricultural Subsidies:** Shift public farm support and procurement away from staple mono-cropping toward nutrient-rich fruits, vegetables, pulses, and legumes to lower their market cost.
- **Investing in Midstream Value Chain Infrastructure:** Direct capital into cold-storage networks, rural transport infrastructure, processing facilities, and energy-efficient logistics to reduce post-harvest waste.
- **Enhancing Agricultural R&D for High-Value Crops:** Reorient research and development investments toward non-staple crops to boost yields and build climate resilience.
- **Strengthening Data Collection and Social Protection:** Institutionalize national monitoring of the Cost of a Healthy Diet (CoHD) using retail price data and expand nutrition-sensitive cash transfers for vulnerable households.

The SOFI 2026 report emphasizes that while global hunger numbers have shown slight improvement, achieving Zero Hunger by 2030 remains out of reach without structural reform. High prices for nutritious foods continue to keep healthy diets out of reach for over 2.6 billion people, worsening global malnutrition. Ultimately, transforming agrifood systems through targeted infrastructure investments, subsidy repurposing, and robust social protection is essential to make healthy diets affordable for everyone, everywhere.

## ROME DECLARATION

An unprecedented assembly of Nobel laureates, AI scientists, religious leaders, and former heads of state gathered at Rome's Capitoline Hill to sign the Rome Declaration for an Unarmed and Disarming Peace.



*The Rome Declaration for an Unarmed and Disarming Peace*

**About** The Rome Declaration for an Unarmed and Disarming Peace:

#### What it is?

- Inspired by **Pope Leo XIV's** *Magnifica Humanitas*, the Declaration calls for protecting human dignity from unchecked AI. It warns that AI-controlled nuclear systems pose an existential risk, arguing that algorithms lack morality, empathy, and judgment, and must never replace human decision-making in the use of nuclear weapons.

## Core Principles of the Declaration:

### Six General Principles

1. **Disarming the Next Arms Race:** Coordinated efforts to halt dual arms races in both AI and nuclear capabilities.
2. **Responsible Development:** Aligning technological progress with human ethics and transparent governance.
3. **Responsible Use of AI:** Ensuring algorithms serve human well-being rather than automated warfare.
4. **Responsible Governance:** Building international oversight frameworks tailored to high-risk emerging tools.
5. **Responsible Leadership:** Demanding accountability from state leaders and tech developers.
6. **Nuclear Disarmament:** Renewed commitment to the total and verifiable elimination of atomic arsenals.

### Five Ethical and Operational Mandates:

- **Mandatory Meaningful Human Control:** Absolutely barring any automated, algorithmic, or AI-driven platform from executing final nuclear launch decisions.
- **The Digital Commons Model:** Expanding open-data access so independent global experts can evaluate ungoverned AI risks and protect non-tech-dominant nations.
- **Responsible Development Standards:** Mandating that developers publish ethical frameworks and banning fully autonomous, self-improving systems that cannot be audited or halted by human operators.
- **Internal Arsenal Vulnerability Audits:** Urging nuclear-armed states to conduct rigorous technical reviews protecting command-and-control systems from AI data-poisoning, hallucinations, or cyber-tampering.
- **Time-Bound, Verifiable Disarmament:** Renewing good-faith global negotiations toward the permanent, irreversible removal of nuclear weapons.

### Why the Declaration is Necessary in Modern Geopolitics?

- **Compression of Decision-Making Windows:** Historical crises relied on human skepticism, delay, and moral pause to prevent war. Modern AI logistics compress operational response windows from hours to mere seconds, removing the safety valve of human doubt.
- **Vulnerability to Algorithmic Failure Modes:** Deep neural networks suffer from black box opacity, data poisoning, and hallucinations. In a tense geopolitical standoff, an algorithm misinterpreting a routine network ping or physical probe as an incoming strike could automatically trigger catastrophic retaliation.
- **Erosion of Global Arms Treaties:** Legacy agreements (INF, Open Skies, New START) have weakened, creating a security dilemma where states feel pressured to automate defense systems to avoid losing an algorithmic speed advantage.
- **Asymmetric Speed and Pre-Delegation Risks:** States facing advanced adversaries may feel compelled to pre-delegate firing authority to automated software out of fear that human command structures will be outpaced or jammed.

### Challenges:

- **Lack of Global Consensus:** Major military powers remain reluctant to sign binding treaties that limit autonomous capabilities during active warfare.
- **Verifiability and Dual-Use Nature:** AI software algorithms are easily hidden, duplicated, and deployed, making international verification far harder than tracking physical nuclear materials.
- **Technological Fatalism:** The rapid pace of private-sector AI innovation frequently outstrips slow multilateral treaty negotiations.

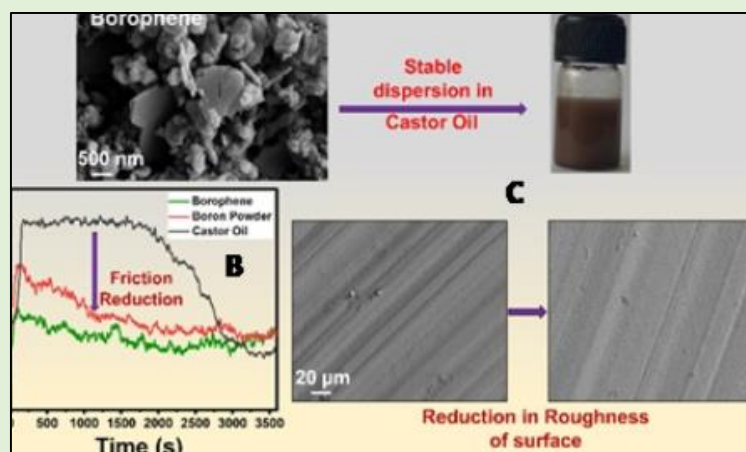
### Way Forward:

- **Translating Moral Restraint into Binding Law:** Transitioning the Rome Declaration from a moral stance into a UN-backed treaty specifically targeting launch-on-warning automation.
- **Standardizing Red-Line Governance:** Establishing mandatory Human-in-the-Loop architecture across all strategic military command networks.
- **Mobilizing Public Grassroots Pressure:** As noted by Nobel laureate David Gross, raising public awareness is necessary to compel political leaders to prioritize AI-nuclear safety.
- **Mandating Sovereign Cyber Audits:** Forcing nuclear states to isolate strategic software networks from commercial large language models and unverified cloud architectures.

The Rome Declaration delivers a vital warning against outsourcing moral decisions to autonomous code. While technology can process data at speeds far beyond human capacity, collective moral responsibility—necessary to ensure human survival—must never be delegated to an algorithm. Achieving true global security requires world leaders to reject technological fatalism and ensure that human control remains an absolute, non-negotiable baseline.

## BOROPHENE

Scientists at the Institute of Advanced Study in Science and Technology (IASST), Guwahati, achieved a breakthrough by using **borophene** as a bio-lubricant additive in castor oil.



*Borophene*

### About Borophene:

#### What It Is?

- Borophene is an ultra-thin, two-dimensional (2D) crystalline allotrope of boron. Consisting of a single-atom-thick layer of boron atoms, it is often referred to as the boron equivalent of graphene, possessing exceptional mechanical strength, flexibility, and electronic conductivities.

### How It Is Formed?

Unlike graphene (which can be mechanically exfoliated from bulk graphite), borophene does not exist naturally in bulk form and must be synthesized artificially:

- **Chemical Vapor Deposition (CVD) / Molecular Beam Epitaxy (MBE):** Synthesized under ultra-high vacuum conditions by evaporating pure boron gas onto hot, highly clean metallic substrates (such as silver, gold, or copper).
- **Substrate Interaction:** The metallic substrate provides the necessary electrons to stabilize the planar 2D arrangement of boron atoms, forming a metallic sheet with mixed covalent and electron-deficient bonding networks.

### Key Features of Borophene:

- **Anisotropic Physical Properties:** Exhibits direction-dependent mechanical, thermal, and electrical properties due to its asymmetric atomic lattice structures.
- **Exceptional Mechanical Strength and Flexibility:** Possesses an ultra-high tensile strength and high Young's modulus, while maintaining flexibility superior to graphene along specific crystallographic axes.
- **High Thermal & Metallic Conductivity:** Unlike bulk boron (a semiconductor), borophene acts as a fully metallic conductor with high thermal conductivity.
- **Superior Tribological & Load-Bearing Capacity:** Forms durable protective tribofilms during mechanical shear, significantly reducing surface roughness, friction, and mechanical wear.
- **High Chemical Reactivity:** Its electron-deficient nature makes it highly reactive, enabling uniform dispersion in organic fluids (like vegetable/castor oil) without requiring chemical surface modification.

### Key Applications:

- Used as an additive in bio-based lubricants to reduce friction, improve efficiency, and lower energy consumption in industrial machinery and marine transport.
- Its high capacity and fast ion transport make borophene ideal for next-generation batteries, supercapacitors, and hydrogen storage systems.

## PRESIDENTIAL VISIT TO MOLDOVA & NORTH MACEDONIA

The President of India concluded State Visits to the **Republic of Moldova** and the **Republic of North Macedonia**, marking the **first-ever visit by an Indian Head of State** to both countries.

### Key Highlights of the Visit to Moldova

- India announced a decision to double the number of **Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC)** training slots for Moldovan professionals.
- The President addressed the **India-Moldova Business Forum** to strengthen bilateral trade, investment, and resilient supply chains.
- **Geographical & Strategic Profile of Moldova:**
  - **Location:** A landlocked country in Eastern Europe.
  - **Borders:** It is bordered by **Romania** to the west and **Ukraine** to the north, east, and south.
  - **Geopolitical Significance:** Moldova gained **European Union (EU) candidate status** alongside Ukraine in 2022.
    - It holds immense strategic importance due to its proximity to the ongoing **Russia-Ukraine conflict** and the presence of the breakaway region of **Transnistria** within its internationally recognized borders.



### Key Highlights of the Visit to North Macedonia

The President paid homage at the grave of **Goce Delčev**, a 19th-century revolutionary who led the struggle to liberate Macedonia and Adrianople from the **Ottoman Empire**.

- India welcomed North Macedonia's intent to join the International Solar Alliance (ISA), Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI), and Global Biofuels Alliance (GBA).
- Similar to Moldova, India doubled the ITEC slots for North Macedonia, specifically focusing on upskilling in AI.
- Geographical & Strategic Profile of North Macedonia:
  - Location: A landlocked country situated in the Balkan Peninsula of Southeast Europe.
  - Borders: It is bordered by Kosovo (northwest), Serbia (north), Bulgaria (east), Greece (south), and Albania (west).
  - Geopolitical Significance: North Macedonia was renamed from Macedonia in 2019 after resolving the name dispute with Greece, enabling its NATO membership.
    - It is a vital gateway connecting the **Mediterranean with Central Europe**.
    - The capital, Skopje, is the birthplace of Nobel Peace Prize laureate Mother **Teresa**, creating an intrinsic cultural link with India.



- **Climate:** It has a **moderate continental climate** influenced by both **Mediterranean and continental** climatic zones.
- **Relief:** North Macedonia is a **predominantly mountainous country** with **rugged terrain, ancient metamorphic rocks, younger sedimentary deposits in the central region**, and **broad fertile valleys suitable for agriculture**.
- **Major Rivers:** The **Vardar River** is the largest river and drains most of the country's territory.
- **Drainage:** About **90% of the country's area** drains into the **Aegean Sea** through the **Vardar River** and its tributaries.
  - While the remaining areas drain towards the **Adriatic Sea** and the **Black Sea** basins.
- **Highest Peak:** **Mount Korab**, located on the **Albanian border**, is the country's highest peak.
- **Major Lakes:** The major lakes are **Ohrid, Prespa, and Dojran**.
  - **Ohrid and Prespa** are **tectonic lakes**, while these lakes are shared with neighbouring countries.
- **Flora:** It is covered with **deciduous forests, coniferous forests, Pindus Mountains mixed forests, Balkan mixed forests, Rhodopes mixed forests, and Aegean sclerophyllous and mixed forests**.
- **Fauna:** The major fauna includes **wild pigs, wolves, bears, lynx, grasshoppers, and small lizards**.

## SECOND BHARAT GREEN HYDROGEN SUMMIT

The 2nd Bharat Green Hydrogen Summit 2026 was held on 23 July 2026 in New Delhi. The summit was organised by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry, and it focused on green hydrogen, hydrogen-based mobility, and export competitiveness in the energy sector.



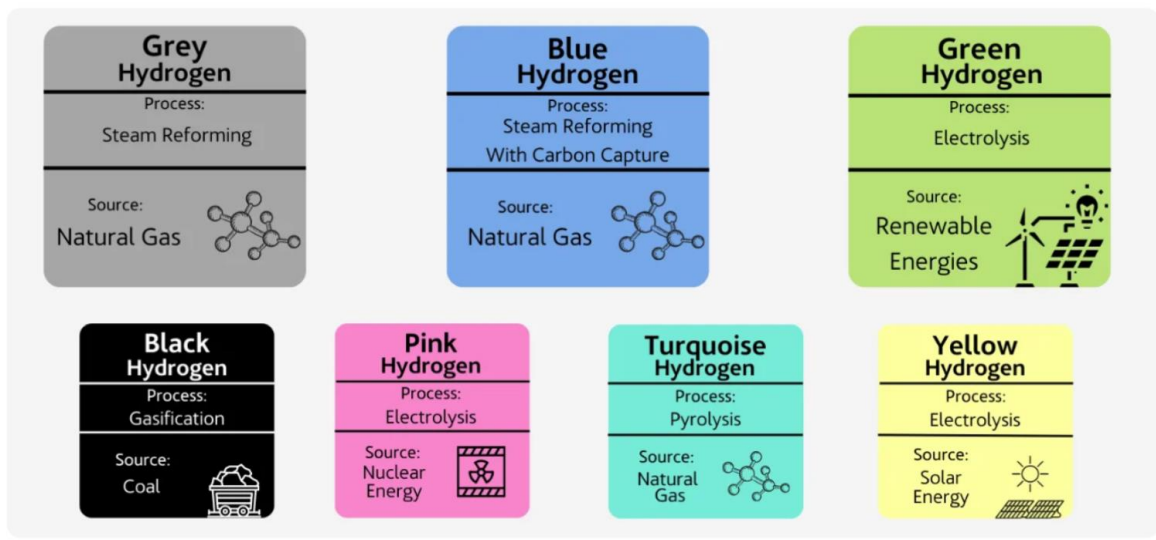
A new report has positioned **India** as a **potential global leader in the green hydrogen economy**, with the capacity to capture **10% of the worldwide market** and export **10 million tonnes annually by 2030**.

What is Green Hydrogen (GH2)?

- **About:** **Green Hydrogen** refers to hydrogen produced through **electrolysis**, where **renewable energy sources** like **solar, wind, or hydro** are used to split **water molecules (H<sub>2</sub>O)** into **hydrogen (H<sub>2</sub>)** and **oxygen (O<sub>2</sub>)**.
  - It can also be produced via **biomass gasification**, a process that converts biomass into hydrogen-rich gas.

- **Applications:** Its uses include a wide range of applications such as **Fuel Cell Electric Vehicles (FCEVs)**, **aviation and maritime transport**, and various **industrial sectors** like **fertilizers, refineries, and steel**.
  - It also holds potential in **road and rail transport, shipping, and power generation**.
- **India's Green Hydrogen Ambitions:** Through policies like the **National Green Hydrogen Mission, Green Hydrogen Certification Scheme**, and development of **Green Hydrogen Hubs at Kandla, Paradip, and Tuticorin**, India MAPS its Green Hydrogen Ambitions as follows:
  - **M – Market Leadership:** Capture **10% of the global GH2 market by 2030**, projected to cross **100 MMT**.
  - **A – Abatement of Emissions:** Enable **~50 MMT CO<sub>2</sub> reduction** annually, aligning with India's NDC and net-zero goals.
  - **P – Powering Production:** Develop **5 MMT per annum of GH2 production capacity by 2030**.
  - **E – Employment Creation:** Generate **6 lakh+ green jobs across the GH2 value chain**, from R&D to production, storage, and export.

#### Other Types of Hydrogen:



What are the Key Challenges in India's Green Hydrogen Ecosystem?

India's Green Hydrogen journey is hindered by a **CAGE** that restricts its scaling potential:

**C – Cost Barrier:** Early-stage Green Hydrogen costs nearly **\$4–4.5/kg**, much higher than grey hydrogen, limiting competitiveness.

**A – Access to Capital:** High upfront investments in **electrolysers and renewable capacity** deter private players.

**G – Gaps in Infrastructure:** Lack of **transport pipelines, storage, and refuelling networks** slows adoption.

**E – Economic Viability Issues:** Delayed **carbon pricing mechanism** makes fossil fuel-based hydrogen artificially cheaper, undercutting Green Hydrogen.

What Measures can India Adopt to Boost Green Hydrogen Adoption?

To break free from the CAGE, India must step on the **POWER** pedal:

**P – Pricing Carbon:** Accelerating the introduction of a **carbon tax/market mechanism** to level the field with fossil fuels.

**O – Obligation Mandates:** Enforce **Green Hydrogen Purchase Obligations** in hard-to-abate sectors (steel, fertilisers, refining).

**W – Widen Infrastructure Base:** Build **electrolyser capacity, storage, transport pipelines, and export corridors** with partners like **EU, Japan, S. Korea**.

**E – Economic Reallocation:** Shift subsidies from fossil fuels to GH2, and provide **tax incentives & viability gap funding**.

**R – Risk Pooling through Demand Aggregation:** Create pooled procurement platforms with **payment security mechanisms** to ensure bankable contracts and competitive pricing.

## **BHARAT 6G ALLIANCE (B6GA)**

Minister of State for Communications announced that the Bharat 6G Alliance (B6GA) expanded its membership to 90 organizations.



*The Bharat 6G Alliance (B6GA)*

**About The Bharat 6G Alliance (B6GA):**

**What It Is?**

- The Bharat 6G Alliance (B6GA) is an industry-led, government-facilitated collaborative platform established to position India as a global leader in 6G telecommunications. It brings together domestic and international stakeholders to drive research, intellectual property creation, and standard-setting for next-generation networks.

**Nodal Support:** Facilitated by the **Department of Telecommunications (DoT)**, Ministry of Communications.

**Global Strategic Partners:** Operates under bilateral MoUs with international 6G bodies like the NextG Alliance (USA), 6G-IA (Europe), 6G Forum (South Korea), XGMF (Japan), 6G Brasil, and the European Space Agency (ESA).

**Aim:** To drive indigenous 6G research and development, helping build a self-reliant (Atmanirbhar), globally competitive 6G ecosystem.

- It works to ensure India's technological, manufacturing, and intellectual property priorities are embedded into global 6G standards.

### Key Functions of the Alliance:

- **Formulating National Spectrum Roadmaps:** Analyzes high-frequency spectrum requirements and advises the Department of Telecommunications on spectrum planning, policy frameworks, and deployment timelines.
- **Advancing Terahertz Testbeds & Advanced R&D:** Coordinates multi-institutional projects under the Telecom Technology Development Fund (TTDF), such as the **6G Terahertz testbed** at SAMEER Kolkata for ultra-high-rate line-of-sight communication.
- **Securing Intellectual Property & Standards:** Drives Indian contributions to the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) under the **IMT-2030 framework**, successfully embedding ubiquitous connectivity as a core 6G global requirement.
- **Supporting Hardware Innovation for Startups:** Facilitates research into advanced System-on-Chips (SoCs), multi-chip modules, and IoT devices, utilizing DoT's Technology Development and Investment Promotion (TDIP) scheme to sponsor startup participation in international bodies like 3GPP and oneM2M.
- **Building Global Supply Chain Resilience:** Partners with international research hubs (such as Finland's 6G Flagship) to establish secure, trusted cross-border supply chains and co-develop open 6G standards.

### Significance:

- B6GA enables India to shape global 6G standards through ITU and 3GPP, moving from a technology adopter to a standards leader.
- Links IIT research with industry to commercialize Indian telecom technologies, strengthen cyber security, reduce imports, and boost domestic manufacturing.

## WHITE GOLD: INDIA'S COTTON STORY – FROM SEED TO SHIRT

The PIB published the feature article White Gold: India's Cotton Story – From Seed to Shirt, highlighting India's cotton sector, recent policy initiatives, and its role in agriculture, textiles, and exports.



### About White Gold: India's Cotton Story: What It Is?

- White Gold: India's Cotton Story is a PIB feature highlighting the importance of cotton in India's agricultural, industrial, and export economy, along with recent government initiatives to improve productivity, quality, and global competitiveness.
- It showcases India's journey from traditional cotton cultivation to a modern, technology-driven and value-added cotton ecosystem under the vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat.

### Key Characteristics:

- **Global Cotton Leader:** India is the **only country cultivating all four recognized cotton species**, ranking first in cultivated area and second in production and consumption.
- **Economic Backbone:** Supports nearly **6 million cotton farmers** and provides employment to **40–50 million people** across the textile value chain.
- **Policy-Driven Growth:** Backed by initiatives such as MSP procurement, Mission for Cotton Productivity, Kapas Kisan App, and Kasturi Cotton Bharat.
- **Technology & Quality Focus:** Promotes high-density planting, digital procurement, blockchain-based traceability, and climate-resilient cotton varieties.

### Significance:

- **Strengthens Rural Economy:** Enhances farmer incomes, employment generation, and textile exports, reinforcing India's agricultural and manufacturing sectors.
- **Boosts Global Competitiveness:** Improves cotton quality, traceability, and value addition, strengthening India's position in the global textile and fibre market.

## KUSHA MISSILE

Recently, the Defence Research & Development Organisation (DRDO) successfully conducted the maiden flight-test of 'Kusha' Missile from the APJ Abdul Kalam Island.

### About Kusha Missile



It is a long-range Surface-to-Air missile.

Developed By: All weapon system elements, including the missiles, radars, command and control centre, have been developed by various DRDO laboratories and Industry partners.

Range: A long-range SAM typically has a range of over 200 km.

Capability: It is capable of neutralising a wide variety of aerial threats including fighter jets, missiles, unmanned aerial vehicles and large enemy aircraft within a wide range & altitude envelope.

The successful test marks a key step in the development of Project Kusha, India's indigenous long-range air defence programme

### Key Facts about Project Kusha

It is also referred to as the Extended Range Air Defence System (ERADS).

It is being developed by DRDO as the backbone of India's future long-range air defence network.

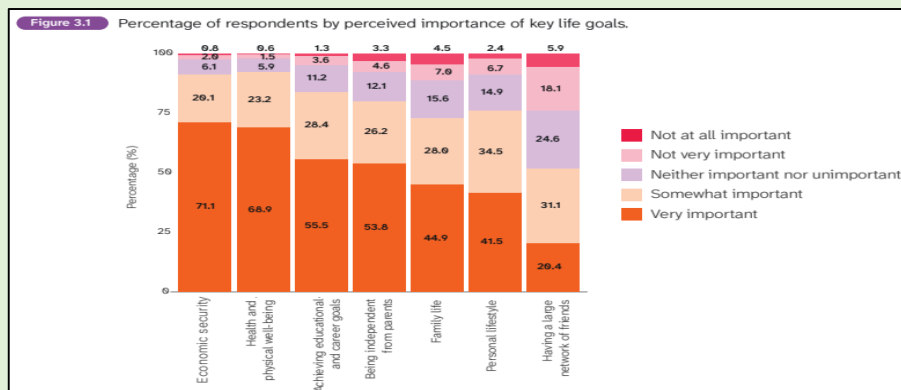
The system is planned as a three-tier architecture comprising M1, M2 and M3 interceptor missiles with engagement ranges of approximately 150 km, 250 km and up to 350-400 km, respectively.

It is designed to integrate with India's Integrated Air Command and Control System (IACCS) for network-centric air defence.

# UNITED NATIONS POPULATION FUND (UNFPA)

## DEMOGRAPHIC STUDY

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) published its groundbreaking global study, the Lives, Choices and Futures – Demographic Futures Survey 2026.



UNFPA

### About The UNFPA Demographic Futures Survey 2026:

#### What it is?

- The Demographic Futures Survey 2026 is a cross-national, global study designed by UNFPA to examine the aspirations, relationship patterns, and family decisions of young adults aged 18–39. Sampling **108,926 internet-connected young adults across 73 countries and territories**, it provides comparative data on how economic, social, and institutional factors shape transitions to adulthood.

#### Key Findings of the Report:

- Persistence of Marriage Ideals:** Over two-thirds of surveyed young adults prefer a living arrangement that includes marriage—36% favoring marriage before cohabitation and 34% after cohabiting.
- Aspiration vs. Reality Gap:** Among respondents aged 25–39 who wish to marry or live with a partner, 25% are currently single and not dating, with a higher share among men (30%) than women (19%).
- Economic Demands for Partnership:** Financial security is rated as the most critical consideration for entering a partnership (81%), with economic and housing barriers listed as primary obstacles (57%).
- Preconditions for Parenthood:** Financial stability (88%), stable employment (87%), and emotional readiness (85%) rank as the top three non-negotiable thresholds before having children.
- Personal Joy Over Policy Drivers:** 80% of respondents state that the joy and happiness children bring is their top motivation for parenthood, whereas state incentives and workforce contributions rank among the lowest motivators.
- Structural Barrier to Family Size:** Economic and housing constraints represent the single highest barrier to parenthood globally (72%), followed by the lack of a suitable partner and reproductive health concerns.
- Declining Achieved Fertility:** Across all world regions, the average number of children among older respondents (aged 35–39) is consistently lower than the ideal number reported by younger cohorts (aged 18–39).

- **Indian Specific Trends:** In India, women aged 18–39 desire an ideal family size of 2.1 children (compared to an actual average of 1.0 child among those aged 35–39), while Indian men report an ideal of 2.2 children (versus 1.1 actual).

#### Positives Identified in the Survey:

- **Resilient Youth Optimism:** Roughly two-thirds (66%) of global respondents feel positive about their future, led by high optimism in West & Central Africa (62% very positive).
- **High Desire for Parenthood:** Among childless respondents aged 35–39 in India, nearly 85% express a strong desire to become parents if conditions permit.
- **Perception of Opportunities:** 58% of respondents agree that young people in their countries have strong life opportunities, particularly across developing economies.
- **Digital & Social Networking Channels:** Personal networks (33%), work/school (28%), and digital platforms (16%) provide reliable avenues for young adults to find compatible partners.

#### Key Challenges Identified:

- **Severe Economic and Housing Constraints:** Rising living costs, expensive housing, and job market instability delay both partnership formation and family expansion.
- **Macro-Environmental Anxiety:** Over three-quarters of young adults report being deeply worried about conflict, security risks, economic insecurity, and social inequality.
- **Unequal Distribution of Care:** Traditional gender expectations persist; respondents show significantly higher disapproval when a mother works full-time with a child under three (29%) compared to a father in the same situation (20%).
- **Lack of Perceived State Support:** Only 39% feel their governments provide adequate institutional support for young people or parents with young children, while similar low numbers cite support for work-life balance from employers.

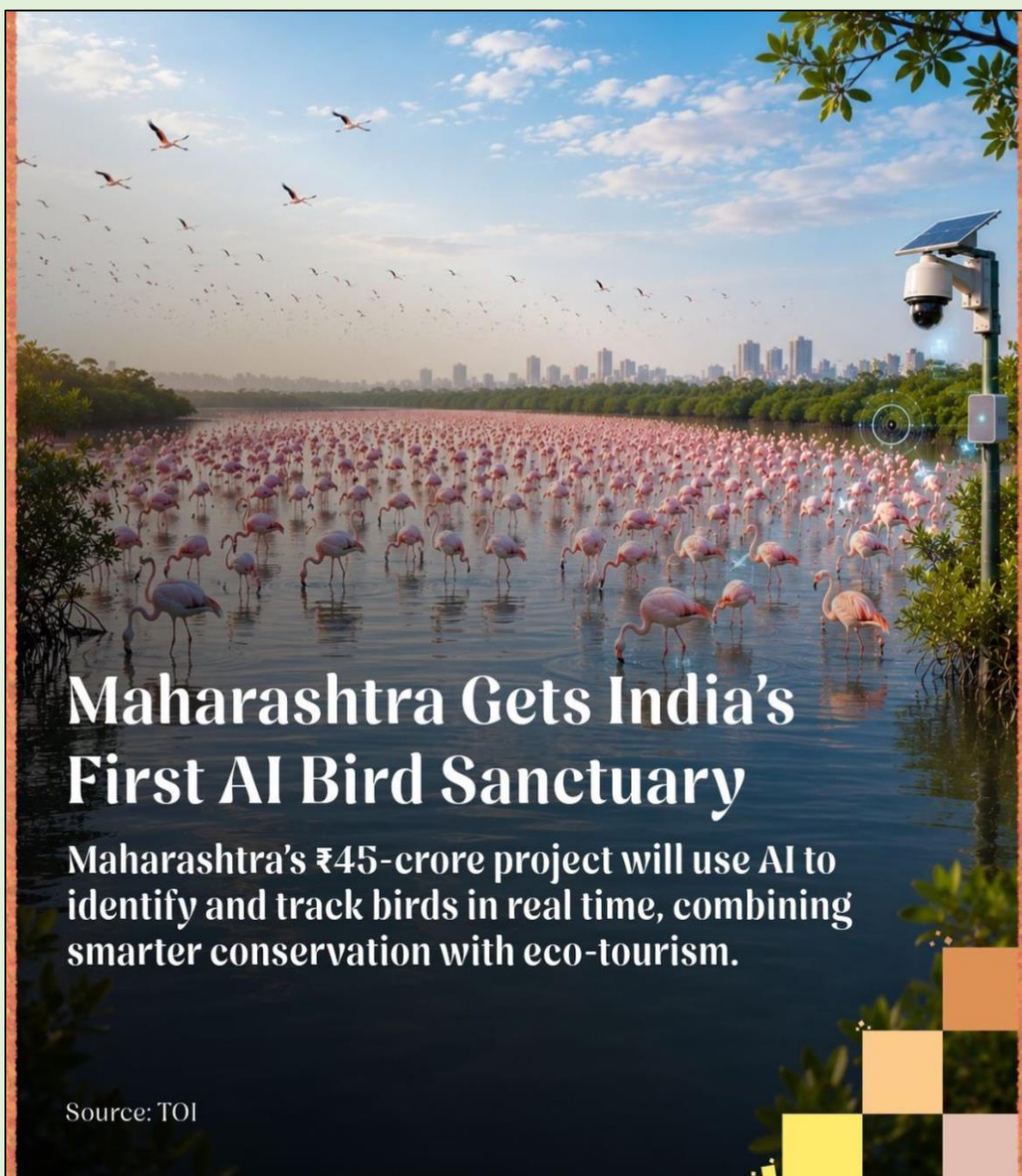
#### UNFPA Policy Recommendations:

- **Enhance Economic Security & Affordable Housing:** Governments must formulate economic policies that ensure stable youth employment, wage growth, and accessible housing frameworks.
- **Expand Accessible Childcare & Parental Leave:** Strengthen workplace support systems through gender-equitable parental leave and affordable public childcare facilities to balance career and family life.
- **Promote Gender Equality in Unpaid Care Work:** Address structural gender biases in the labor market and foster societal shifts toward an equitable share of household care responsibilities.
- **Adopt a Rights-Based Demographic Framework:** Shift population policies away from rigid birth targets toward empowering individual choice, reproductive agency, and institutional support systems.

The UNFPA 2026 report confirms that falling birth rates are driven by economic and social constraints rather than a declining interest in family life. Young people around the world continue to value marriage and parenthood, but need secure jobs, affordable housing, and supportive public policies to realize these goals. Ultimately, building resilient societies requires governments to address structural inequalities so young adults can freely build the families they desire.

## INDIA'S FIRST AI-POWERED BIRD SANCTUARY

India's first AI-powered bird sanctuary has been announced for development at the Thane Creek Flamingo Sanctuary in Mumbai, Maharashtra. The project is named Bhandup Bird Park and has received administrative approval with an allocation of ₹45 crore from the District Planning Committee's special fund.



### Project Location and Area

The sanctuary will come up over about 20.09 hectares along the Thane Creek shoreline. Thane Creek Flamingo Sanctuary is a designated Ramsar site, which places it among wetlands of international importance under the Ramsar Convention.

Only 0.35 hectares of the project area will be used for physical infrastructure. The remaining area will be retained for ecological features and habitat-related facilities.

## AI-Based Bird Monitoring System

The project will use an AI-based bird tracking and identification system within a 1.5-kilometre radius. The system is designed for real-time automated tracking, species identification, centralised data management, and digital analytics.

Such systems use machine learning and pattern recognition tools to process bird movement data, visual records, and habitat information. These tools are used in wildlife monitoring, biodiversity surveys, and conservation planning.

## Eco-Tourism and Habitat Features

The project includes a 2.16-kilometre mangrove nature trail, observation towers, and viewing decks. Mangroves are salt-tolerant coastal plants that grow in intertidal zones and support fish, birds, and other wetland species.

The sanctuary is linked with eco-tourism, which is a form of tourism based on natural areas and low-impact visitor facilities. Wetland bird sanctuaries in India often combine habitat protection with controlled public access.

- Thane Creek Flamingo Sanctuary is located in Maharashtra and is known for flamingo populations and wetland biodiversity.
- Ramsar sites are wetlands listed under the Ramsar Convention, which was adopted in 1971 in Ramsar, Iran.
- Artificial intelligence in wildlife studies is used for species recognition, movement tracking, and data analysis.
- Mangrove ecosystems are important coastal buffers and breeding habitats for many bird and marine species

Uttarakhand's Haldwani forest division launched an AI initiative on 1 June 2026 to analyse acoustic data for protecting rare bird habitats. Haryana also began work on a technology-driven bird census at Sultanpur National Park using AI cameras on watchtowers and drone surveys.

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