



KERALA STATE CIVIL SERVICE ACADEMY



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WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS

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Monthly Current Affairs Magazine

U.S-IRAN CONFLICT

Conflict Impact Analysis – Middle East Environmental Cost

Impact Area	Key Details
Air Pollution	Bombed refineries (Tehran, Aghdesieh, Shahrān, Karaj) released toxic hydrocarbons, sulfur/nitrogen compounds, heavy metals, and PFAS, creating a toxic legacy.
Health Crisis	Toxic exposure causes preterm births, low birth weights, and impaired lung growth, especially in pregnant women and children.
Water Crisis	Damage in water-stressed Iran risks systemic collapse, worsening unemployment, displacement, weak governance, and food price volatility.
Pollution	Bombed oil, chemical, and weapon sites leave toxic residues in soil and cross-border waterways.
Goeconomic Risk	WEF's 2026 Global Risks Report ranks armed conflicts as a major factor reshaping global markets, supply chains, and geopolitics.
Port Congestion	The Strait of Hormuz closure forced longer shipping routes and caused massive global port congestion.

Drivers of Conflict

Category	Nation	Particulars
Geopolitical Interests	Israel	Permanently neutralize Iran's nuclear program and dismantle the "Axis of Resistance" (Iran-led militias in Lebanon, Yemen, Iraq, and Syria).
Geopolitical Interests	United States	Maintain regional dominance, pursue regime change, and eliminate Iran as a strategic threat to U.S. interests.
Goeconomic Interests	United States	Secure maritime energy flows to Indo-Pacific allies, manage global oil prices, and advance pacts like the Abraham Accords and I2U2.
Nuclear Concerns	US & Israel	Act on assessments that Iran's nuclear and ballistic missile programs are nearing technically irreversible thresholds.
Nuclear Concerns	Iran	Contravened Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) restrictions by significantly boosting uranium enrichment after U.S. withdrawal.
Regional Proxies	Iran	Actively funds, arms, and trains regional militant groups (Hamas, Hezbollah, Houthis, and Shiite militias) via the IRGC Quds Force.

Cost of War in the Middle East

Category	Impact Area	Key Details
Human Cost	Rising Costs	Higher fuel and freight costs squeeze purchasing power, worsening food insecurity and straining budgets and livelihoods.
Human Cost	Development Loss	Iran suffers the sharpest HDI decline, losing 1 to 1.5 years of human development progress.
Human Cost	Poverty	Rising costs risk pushing 8.8 million people across 14 countries (over 5 million in Iran alone) into poverty.
Human Cost	Livelihoods	Gulf labor disruptions trigger immediate employment and income shocks for migrant workers and their families.
Economic Cost	Stagflation	Strikes on Iranian energy hubs (Kharg Island, South Pars) pushed Brent crude past \$110/barrel; shipping insurance spiked 50%, driving global inflation.
Economic Cost	Logistics	War-driven shipping and insurance surcharges ripple globally, affecting sectors from Taiwanese fabs to Brazilian farms.
Economic Cost	Supply Chains	The conflict cut ~33% of global helium supply, disrupting semiconductors, medical imaging, and high-tech sectors.
Economic Cost	Sovereign Debt	Record-high developed-nation debt may worsen with monetary tightening; Asian economies face widening fiscal deficits.
Food Security	Input Costs	Urea fertilizer prices jumped ~30%, and soybean oil hit a two-year high.
Food Security	Fertilizer Constraints	Fertilizer imports from the Middle East and energy disruptions directly hit agricultural supply chains.

Impact on India

- **Energy Imports:** ~50% of India's oil (2.5–2.7 million bpd) transits the Strait of Hormuz. Every \$1/barrel price increase adds \$1.8–\$2 billion to India's annual import bill.
- **Gas Reliance:** The Strait handles 80–85% of India's LPG and 60% of its LNG imports.
- **Agriculture:** Global fertilizer prices surged 40% due to the rising cost of natural gas, which accounts for 70% of urea and ammonia production costs.

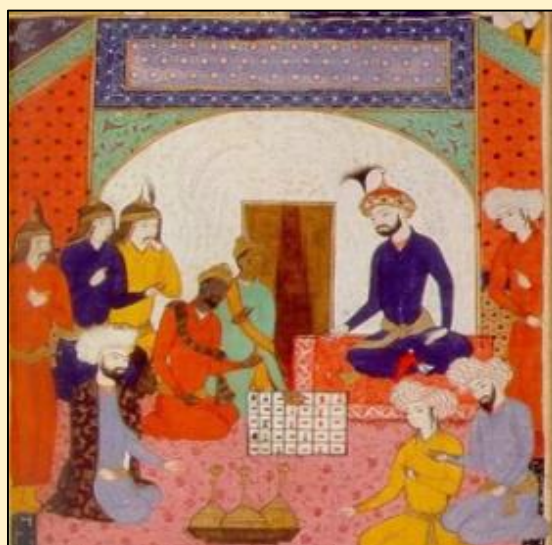
- India's urea subsidy budget sits at ~\$12.7 billion this fiscal year, creating a massive public expense.
- **Geopolitics:** The conflict functionally paralyzed the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEEC) and complicates broader connectivity plans with Iran and Central Asia.
- **Security Limitations:** India's need to balance diplomatic relations has exposed the limitations of its naval role as a regional security provider in the Indian Ocean.
- **Diaspora Safety:** The security of approximately 10 million Indian nationals living and working in the Gulf is a paramount national concern.

India's Measures

- **Evacuation:** India executed rapid, large-scale evacuation protocols utilizing civil aviation assets and with help from countries like Armenia and Azerbaijan.
- **Supply Chain Diversification:** Union Government established seven inter-ministerial empowered groups functioning as rapid-response teams.
 - **Oil and Gas:** The government is rigorously managing its strategic petroleum reserves and is actively sourcing additional **Regasified LNG (RLNG)** from spot markets to maintain pipeline hydraulics for prioritized domestic consumers.
- **Agriculture:** Department of Fertilizers initiated **emergency global procurement protocols** and India is proactively diversifying its sourcing to Russia, Morocco, Australia, Canada, Indonesia, and Egypt.
- **Diplomatic Channels:** Prime Minister has engaged directly with leadership across West Asia.
- **Economic Stabilization Fund:** Government has proposed the creation of an INR ₹573 billion (USD \$6.20 billion) economic stabilization fund to manage external shocks and supply chain disruptions.

THE IRAN-INDIA CIVILIZATIONAL RELATIONSHIP

Following the death of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei – who was killed in late February 2026 during initial military strikes on Iran by the United States and Israel – the Iranian government extended a formal invitation to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to attend the funeral service scheduled for July 2026.



The Iran-India Civilizational Relationship

About The Iran-India Civilizational Relationship:

What it is?

- Moving beyond contemporary regional power balances, the connection represents a deep civilizational link. This historical alignment has enriched both societies, deeply influencing their administrative architectures, linguistic evolutions, trade pathways, and monumental art forms.

Key Chronological Milestones and Evidence:

1. Antiquity and the Indo-Iranian Horizon:

- **Linguistic and Scriptural Affinities:** Clear ancestry is preserved in the structural and vocabulary links between the *Rig Veda* and the *Avesta* (the sacred text of Zoroastrianism). Striking theological parallels exist between the Sanskrit *asura* and Persian *ahura*, *soma* and *haoma*, and *yajna* and *yasna*.
- **Achaemenid Imperial Contacts (550–330 BCE):** Under the rule of Emperor Darius, the regions of Gandhara and Sind were formally integrated as territories of the Persian Empire. Indian regiments served within the Persian military, while overland trade routes connected the subcontinental interior deep into continental Eurasia.
- **Mauryan Artistic Adaptations:** Archaeological and art history assessments indicate that elite Mauryan imperial architecture – most notably the use of polished stone edict pillars and monumental public forms – absorbed structural inspiration from Achaemenid traditions.

2. Medieval Integration and Cosmopolitan Fusions:

- **The Lingua Franca of Governance:** With the rise of the Delhi Sultanate and the Mughal Empire, Persian emerged as the definitive language of diplomacy, law, and intellectual life across India, utilized widely by both Hindu and Muslim administrative elites.
- **The Indo-Persian Architectural Synthesis:** Rather than direct imitation, Indian builders creatively fused indigenous styles with Persian features like the arch, dome, *aiwan* (vaulted hall), *pishtaq* (formal entryway), and the *charbagh* (quadrilateral garden layout).
- **The Migration of Talent:** From the 16th century onward, a cosmopolitan wave of thousands of Iranian scholars, administrators, poets, physicians, and painters migrated to India for royal court patronage, deeply enriching early modern Indian scholarship and establishing the famous Mughal painting atelier.

3. Post-Independence and Modern Strategic Ties

- **Cold War Geopolitics:** Following Indian independence, New Delhi and Tehran maintained stable, functional diplomatic relations despite being aligned with opposing global treaty blocks.
- **Energy and Maritime Transit Security:** Iran evolved into a primary supplier of crude oil for India's economic growth, while New Delhi viewed Tehran as a geographical transit gateway to bypass land restrictions and access Afghanistan and Central Asia.

- **The Chabahar Port Anchor:** This joint maritime development project represents the peak of modern bilateral infrastructure integration, securing a resilient trade corridor to northern continental markets.

Key Geopolitical Challenges in a Changing West Asia:

- **Balancing Cross-Bloc Alliances:** India's rapid diplomatic expansion and security partnerships with Israel and Western groupings (such as the I2U2 minilateral network) complicate its long-term strategic relationship with Tehran.
- **Navigating Comprehensive Sanctions Regimes:** Unilateral Western sanctions on Iran's banking, shipping, and oil industries limit India's ability to maintain regular energy imports and execute trade settlements smoothly.
- **Managing Escalating Regional Hot Wars:** The current direct military conflict involving the U.S., Israel, and Iran threatens to destabilize West Asian maritime choke points, driving up trade insurance premiums and threatening the physical safety of millions of Indian expatriates working in the Gulf.
- **The Shadows of Third-Party Investments:** China's growing economic footprints and long-term infrastructure funding commitments in Iran challenge India's efforts to position itself as the primary infrastructure partner for regional development.

Way Forward:

- **Preserving Strategic Autonomy Through Multi-Alignment:** India must maintain its traditional diplomatic stance of strategic autonomy, engaging productively with all major West Asian centers – including Israel, Iran, and the GCC nations – without joining localized security blocks.
- **Securing the Financial Viability of Chabahar Port:** Insulate the Chabahar Port infrastructure operations from shifting global sanctions by utilizing local currency payment frameworks or designated humanitarian trade exemptions.
- **Re-engaging Shared Cultural Diplomacy Channels:** Use the deep historical and linguistic ties of the Indo-Persian heritage to create alternative paths for quiet, civilizational diplomacy during times of acute regional conflict.
- **Expanding Portability and Expatriate Grid Protections:** Coordinate with Iranian and Gulf authorities to build portable emergency communication corridors to safeguard the broader Indian diaspora against sudden shifts in the regional security matrix.

As a civilizational partner that helped shape India's historical, architectural, and administrative identity, Iran represents more than a standard energy supplier. Ultimately, as West Asia enters a period of deep structural volatility, maintaining a careful diplomatic balance and protecting its strategic autonomy will remain essential for India to secure its long-term economic and maritime interests across the region.

PADMA AWARDS 2026

The President of India conferred the **Padma Awards 2026** during the second Investiture Ceremony held at Rashtrapati Bhavan.



Padma Awards 2026

About Padma Awards 2026:

What It Is?

- The Padma Awards constitute the highest civilian honors of India, announced annually on the eve of Republic Day.
- These awards recognize exceptional and distinguished achievements or service across diverse fields, including Art, Social Work, Public Affairs, Science and Engineering, Trade and Industry, Medicine, Literature and Education, Civil Service, and Sports.

The awards are categorized into three distinct tiers of excellence:

1. **Padma Vibhushan:** Conferred for *exceptional and distinguished service* (the highest tier).
2. **Padma Bhushan:** Conferred for *distinguished service of high order* (the middle tier).
3. **Padma Shri:** Conferred for *distinguished service* in any field (the third tier).

History:

- **Inception:** Instituted by the Government of India in **1954** alongside the Bharat Ratna.
- **Evolution:** Originally designated as Pahela Varg (Class I), Dusra Varg (Class II), and Tisra Varg (Class III). These classifications were subsequently renamed to Padma Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan, and Padma Shri via a Presidential Notification issued in January 1955.
- **Suspensions:** The awards have been announced consecutively every year except for minor structural interruptions during the years 1978, 1979, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, and 1997.

Presented By: The awards are formally presented to the recipients by the **President of India** during a state ceremony held at Rashtrapati Bhavan, typically around March or April each year.

Process of Selection:

- **The Nominations Pipeline:** The nomination process is open to the public, encouraging self-nominations and recommendations from state governments, Union Territory administrations, central ministries, and institutional bodies between May and September each year.
- **The Committee Review:** All received recommendations are placed before the **Padma Awards Committee**, which is constituted by the Prime Minister every year. The committee is chaired by the Cabinet Secretary and includes the Home Secretary, the Secretary to the President, and four to six eminent individuals from civil society.
- **Final Approval:** The committee screens the nominees, evaluates their structural field impacts, and submits the finalized recommendations to the Prime Minister and the President of India for absolute final executive approval.

Key Features:

- **No Titular Affixation:** In accordance with Article 18(1) of the Constitution of India, these awards do not amount to titles. They cannot be used as prefixes or suffixes to the recipient's name (e.g., on letterheads, invitation cards, or books). Any such misuse results in the forfeiture of the award.
- **No Material Direct Perks:** The decoration comprises a Sanad (certificate) personally signed by the President alongside a bronze medallion replica. It does not carry any monetary cash grants, monthly allowances, or travel concessions on national transport networks.
- **Numerical Statutory Limit:** The total number of awards distributed in a single calendar year is legally restricted to a maximum cap of **120 awards** (excluding posthumous awards and allocations to Non-Resident Indians, Overseas Citizens of India, and foreigners).
- **Five-Year Higher Tier Limitation:** A recipient of a lower Padma award can only be considered for an upgrade to a higher tier after a minimum baseline of **five years** has elapsed since their previous decoration.
- **Posthumous Declarations:** The awards are generally not conferred posthumous; however, exceptions can be made by the government in highly deserving cases if the demise occurred recently prior to the Republic Day announcement.

Padma Vibhushan Winners (2026):

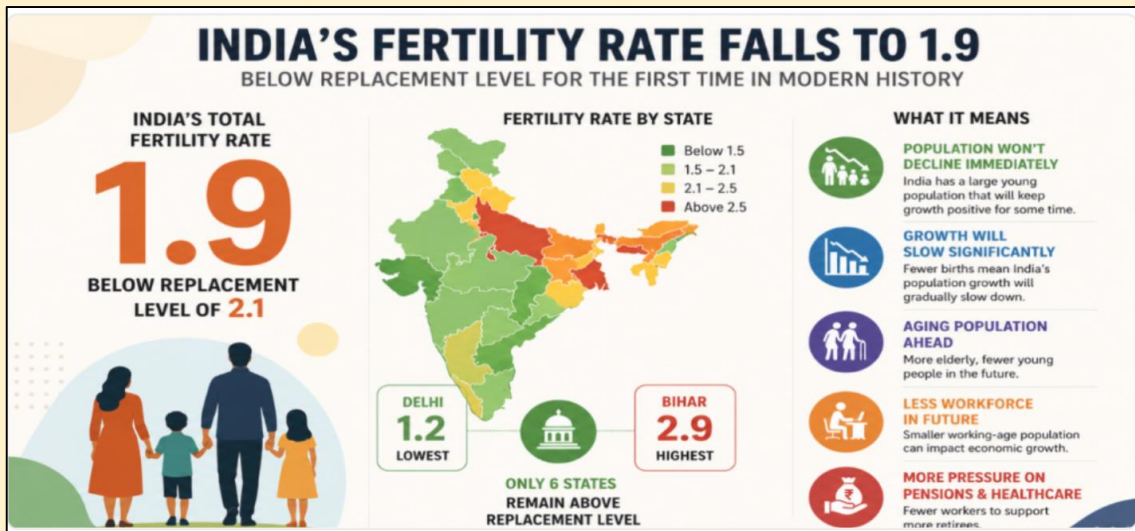
- **Shri P. Narayanan (Narayanji)** – Literature & Journalism
- **Hon'ble Justice (Retd.) Atul Sharachchandra Chandurkar** – Law & Public Jurisprudence

Padma Bhushan Winners (2026):

- **Dr. S.K.M. Maeilanandan** – Social Work & Entrepreneurship
- **Shri Mammootty (M.K.P.I. Ismail)** – Art (Cinema / Acting)
- **Shri Vellappally Natesan** – Social Leadership
- **Dr. Dattatreyyudu Nori** – Medicine (Oncology)
- **Shri Shibu Soren (Posthumous)** – Public Affairs & Social Reform
- **Smt. Alka Yagnik** – Art (Playback Singing)

INDIA'S LOWERING FERTILITY RATES

Recent data from the national Sample Registration System (SRS) reveals that India has entered a structural demographic transition, with its national Total Fertility Rate (TFR) slipping to **1.9 children per woman**.



About India's Evolving Low-Fertility Architecture:

What it is?

- The decline in India's fertility rate marks a major historical shift for a country that has long focused on controlling population growth. However, this demographic transition is not uniform, creating a divided economy where different states are moving at completely different speeds.
- While several southern and eastern states are rapidly transitioning into aging societies, poorer northern regions continue to produce large youth cohorts that are set to enter the workforce over the next two decades.

Key Data and Statistics on India's Fertility and Aging Trends:

1. The Deep Geographic TFR Divide:

- The Urban-Rural Variance:** While rural fertility remains close to the replacement mark, urban fertility has dropped sharply to **1.5 children per woman**.
- The Ultra-Low Cohorts:** Delhi has reached an ultra-low TFR of **1.2**, while Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal sit at **1.3**—levels lower than advanced economies like the United States (1.6) and matching Japan (1.3).
- The High-Fertility Pockets:** Conversely, northern states maintain high fertility rates, led by Bihar at **2.9**, followed by Uttar Pradesh (2.6), Madhya Pradesh (2.4), and Rajasthan (2.3).

2. Looming Senior Demographic Projections:

- The Multitude of Aging Populations:** India is currently home to approximately 150 million people aged 60 and above.
- The 2050 Surge:** By the year 2050, this elderly cohort is projected to more than double, skyrocketing to 347 million individuals, or nearly one-fifth of the country's total population.
- Severe Economic Vulnerability:** Reports from NITI Aayog reveal that 70% of the elderly are entirely dependent on others, while 78% have no formal pension coverage.

Key Institutional and Fiscal Challenges:

- **Mass Aging Preceding Mass Industrialisation:** Advanced economies like Western Europe and Japan aged only *after* they had fully industrialized, formalized their workforces, widened their tax nets, and built robust social safety nets.
 - India, by contrast, is entering mass aging on a fragile institutional footing, with a low per-capita income of around \$2,800.
- **An Exceptionally Narrow Direct Tax Base:** The state's capacity to fund senior welfare programs is heavily constrained because net direct taxpayers account for a minor **6% of the total population**.
- **A Highly Fragile, Informal Labor Market:** Because most workers spend their lives in informal or semi-formal roles, old-age income security remains entirely outside formal employment contracts. Contribution-based programs fail informal workers due to their highly volatile, unpredictable incomes.
- **Weak and Outdated Public Cash Transfer Safety Nets:** The old-age pension under the National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) provides a meager **₹200 a month** for individuals aged 60 to 79, and ₹500 for those above 80, which fails to protect seniors from poverty.
- **The Structural Weakening of the Household Safety Net:** Historically, India's welfare state has been hidden inside the home, where joint families and unpaid female labor absorbed eldercare costs. This setup is breaking down under the pressures of urbanization, migration, and nuclear households, leaving left-behind parents highly vulnerable to severe loneliness and health crises.
- **A Major Shift in National Healthcare Demand:** Aging populations will drastically shift medical demand away from short-term treatments toward the complex, long-term management of chronic illnesses like **hypertension, diabetes, dementia, physical disability, and palliative dependence**.

Way Forward:

- **Implementing an Inflation-Indexed Minimum Pension Floor:** Introduce a basic, publicly funded, inflation-indexed pension floor to serve as a baseline layer of risk-pooling for the informal workforce.
- **Mandating Nationwide Portability of Welfare Entitlements:** Build a national labor market where social protections are completely decoupled from local domicile rules, allowing interstate migrant workers to carry their healthcare and nutritional benefits across state borders.
- **Deploying Mission-Mode Actions for Geriatric Healthcare:** Launch targeted public healthcare programs to embed specialized geriatric care directly into nursing practices, district health planning, and primary health networks.
- **Shoring Up Human Capital Investments in Younger States:** Direct younger states like Bihar and Uttar Pradesh to invest aggressively in high-quality education, healthcare, and technical skills so their migrating youth do not get trapped in low-wage informality.
- **Strengthening Formal Public Systems to Replace Domestic Care:** As traditional family structures continue to weaken, the state must expand formal public assistance programs to handle responsibilities that households once carried quietly.

Entering mass aging before achieving widespread economic formalization or a broad tax base leaves the country's senior citizens uniquely vulnerable. Ultimately, sustaining this transition will depend on moving away from a reliance on shrinking family support systems toward building robust, portable public safety nets, inflation-indexed pensions, and advanced geriatric healthcare networks.

RECIPROCAL EXCHANGE OF LOGISTICS AGREEMENT

The India-Russia bilateral Logistics Support Agreement (LSA), known as the Reciprocal Exchange of Logistics Agreement (RELOA/RELOS), was officially operationalized in January 2026.



About The Reciprocal Exchange of Logistics Agreement (RELOS):

What It Is?

- RELOS is a foundational, non-offensive military cooperation agreement designed for administrative and technical purposes. It establishes a streamlined framework for the reciprocal use of each other's military bases, airfields, and ports for refueling, supplies, and maintenance during mutually agreed naval and aerial deployments.

Timeline and Bilateral Foundation:

- **Signing:** The agreement was formally signed by both nations in Moscow on February 18, 2025.
- **Operationalization:** The pact officially entered into force in **January 2026**.
- **Participating Members:** Exclusively bilateral between the Republic of India and the Russian Federation.

Aim: The aim of RELOS is to simplify and reduce administrative bureaucracy between the two militaries during joint operations. By replacing slow, case-by-case clearances with a standardized accounting system, the agreement aims to accelerate turnaround times, reduce logistics bottlenecks, and extend the operational reach of both nations' warships and military aircraft.

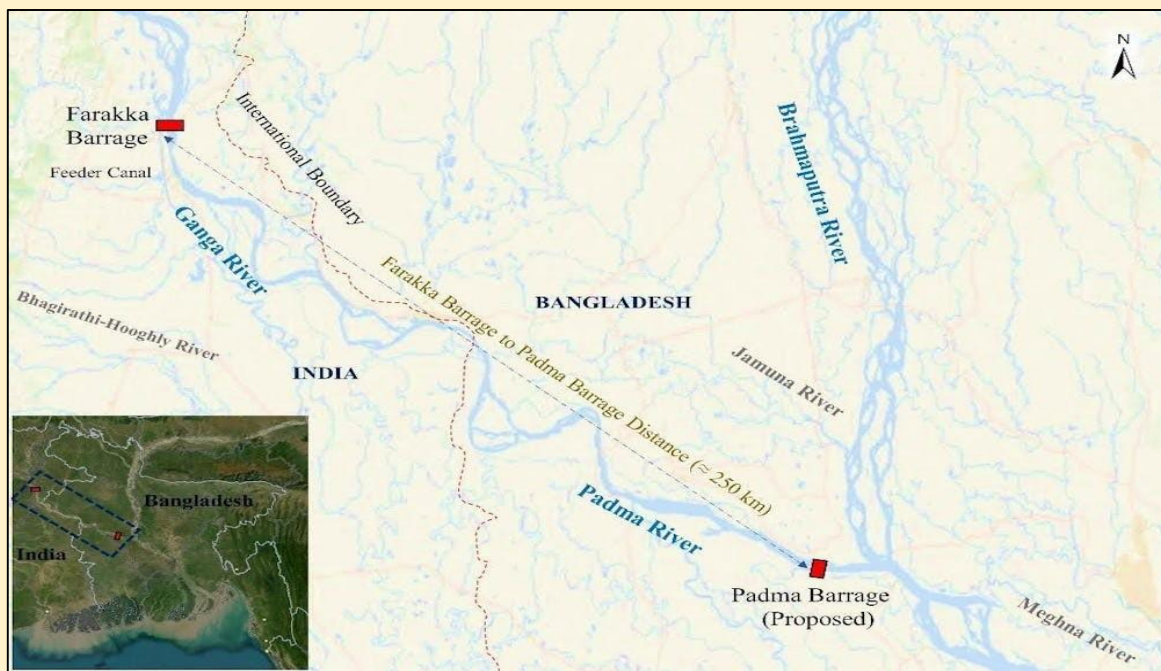
Key Features of the Agreement:

- **Regulated Operational Occasions:** The logistics framework can only be activated during specific, mutually planned events: joint military exercises, military training, Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) operations, or scheduled port visits.
- **The 3,000-Personnel Cap Explained:** The text includes an upper limit of **3,000 military personnel**. This figure is an administrative ceiling to accommodate large contingents, multiple ships, or accompanying aircraft during temporary joint exercises—it is **not** a mandate for standing troops.
- **Comprehensive Logistics Coverage:** The arrangement permits reciprocal access to standard military services, including:
 - Food, fresh water, and billeting (housing) for transit personnel.
 - Petroleum, oils, lubricants (POL), and transport services.
 - Medical assistance, storage facilities, and port repair operations.
 - Spare parts supply, maintenance calibration, and component access.

- **Strict Non-Basing Clause:** The agreement explicitly bars any provisions for permanent or long-term stationing of troops, assets, or the setting up of foreign military bases on either nation's territory.
- **Duration:** The pact features an initial validity period of **five years**, allowing both sides to review and modify terms as geopolitical needs evolve.

PADMA BARRAGE

Bangladesh has officially signed off on the construction of the Tk 50,443 crore (₹39,170 crore) Padma barrage to combat seasonal water scarcity and assert lower-riparian control over its water resources.



What It Is?

- The Padma barrage is a massive, planned transboundary water-management structure designed to act as a large reservoir. It serves as a defensive infrastructure choice by Bangladesh to regulate downstream flows, increase groundwater recharge, and secure water equity against upstream diversions like India's Farakka barrage.

Location:

- **The Riverway:** Being constructed entirely across the main channel of the **Padma River**.
- **Geopolitical Distance:** Positioned exactly **180 km downstream of India's Farakka barrage** in West Bengal, placing it very close to the India-Bangladesh international border.

Key Features:

- **Physical Dimensions:** The structural blueprint dictates a concrete-anchored barrage spanning **2.1 km in length**.
- **Storage Pool:** Engineered to hold a massive reservoir pondage capacity of **2,900 million cubic meters (cu. m)** of freshwater.
- **Demographic Outreach:** Optimized to directly stabilize agricultural irrigation and drinking water supply for **6.5 crore people** living across the vulnerable southwestern and northern regions of Bangladesh.
- **Financial and Time Outlay:** Projected to cost Tk 50,443 crore (approximately ₹39,170 crore) with an execution timeline spreading over **seven years**.

About the Padma River:

What It Is?

- The Padma River is a major, high-volume transboundary river flowing through Bangladesh. It is the **main downstream distributary of the Ganges River** after it crosses the international boundary from India into Bangladesh.

Origin and Convergence Journey:

- **The Indian Source:** The river originates at Devprayag, where the Alaknanda and Bhagirathi rivers merge to form the Ganga.
- **The Bangladesh Threshold:** After entering Bangladesh near Shibganj, the Ganga officially takes the name **Padma**.
- **The Confluence Conduits:** The Padma joins the Jamuna at Goalundo and later merges with the Meghna at Chandpur before reaching the Bay of Bengal.

Key Geological and Ecological Features:

- **Deltaic Gradient Baseline:** The Padma flows through extremely low-lying deltaic plains, making the region highly vulnerable to flooding and sea-level rise.
- **High Silt Sinking Mechanics:** Reduced river flow promotes heavy silt deposition, raising the riverbed and increasing flood risks during monsoon seasons.
- **Crucial Nutrient Carrier:** Sediment carried by the river enriches soils and aquatic ecosystems, supporting fisheries and local livelihoods.
- **Lifeline of the Sundarbans Mangroves:** Freshwater from the Padma maintains the salinity balance of the Sundarbans, sustaining its unique mangrove biodiversity.

UNICEF CHILDREN'S CLIMATE RISK REPORT 2026

A new UNICEF Children's Climate Risk Report 2026 has revealed that nearly 392 million children in India (92% of all children) are exposed to extreme heat, while 89 million face recurrent heatwaves.

About UNICEF's Children's Climate Risk Report 2026:

What is it?

- The **UNICEF Children's Climate Risk Report 2026** is a global assessment that evaluates children's exposure and vulnerability to climate and environmental hazards. It measures how overlapping climate risks such as extreme heat, drought, floods, storms, and air pollution affect children's health, education, nutrition, and survival.

Key Findings of the Report:

- **Massive Exposure of Indian Children to Extreme Heat:**
 - Around **392 million children in India (92%)** are exposed to extreme heat conditions.
 - An additional **89 million children** face recurrent heatwave events.
- **India Records Very High Climate Hazard Exposure:**
 - India's overall **hazard exposure score stands at 9.21/10**, among the highest globally.

- Only Pakistan (9.44) and Bangladesh (9.38) recorded higher scores in South Asia.
- **Extreme Heat Emerges as the Highest Risk:**
 - India received the maximum score of **10/10 for extreme heat exposure**.
 - Climate change is increasing the frequency, duration, and intensity of heatwaves.
- **Air Pollution Remains a Critical Threat:**
 - India's air pollution exposure score reached **9.94/10**.
 - Poor air quality continues to threaten child health and development.
- **Drought Vulnerability is Extremely High:**
 - The report assigns India a drought risk score of **8.84/10**.
 - Water scarcity poses growing risks to nutrition, livelihoods, and child welfare.
- **Multiple Climate Hazards Affect Children Simultaneously:**
 - Globally, **1.1 billion children** are exposed to at least three overlapping climate hazards.
 - In India, many children face a combination of extreme heat, drought, and air pollution.
- **Existing Heat Action Plans Lack Child-Centric Measures:**

While India has expanded Heat Action Plans, most lack provisions for:

- Schools and Anganwadis
- Night-time heat management
- Child vulnerability mapping
- Age-specific adaptation measures

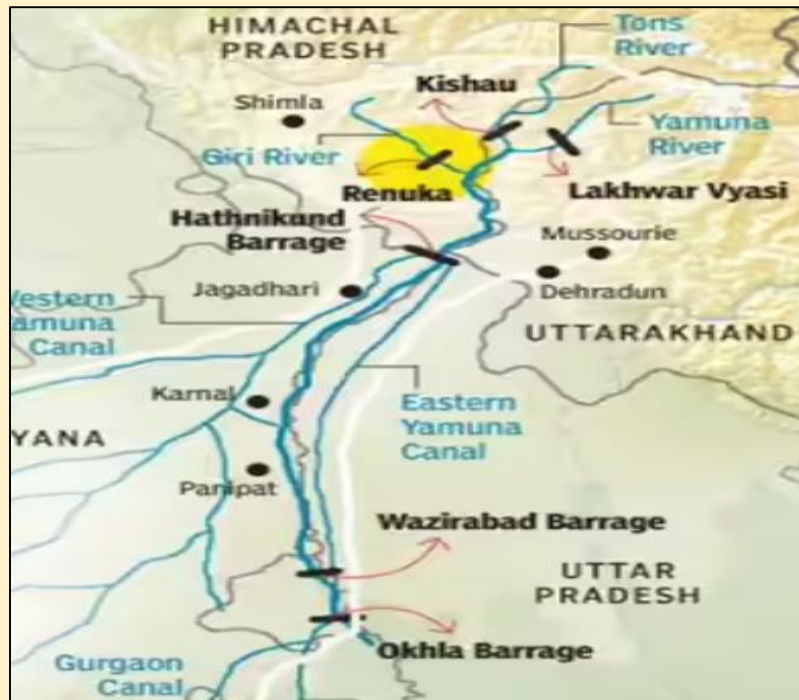
Implications:

- Rising heat stress, air pollution, and climate disasters can increase disease burden, malnutrition, and developmental challenges among children.
- Extreme heat and climate disruptions can reduce school attendance, learning capacity, and educational attainment.
- Climate adaptation policies must integrate child-specific measures, including resilient schools, healthcare systems, and social protection frameworks.

KISHAU MULTI-PURPOSE DAM PROJECT.

Union Home Minister chaired a crucial meeting in New Delhi where a historic consensus was reached among six stakeholder states to implement the long-pending Kishau Multi-Purpose Dam Project.

- The six states of **Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Haryana, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan** agreed to sign a memorandum of understanding (MoU)



About The Kishau Multi-Purpose Dam:

What It Is?

- The Kishau Multi-Purpose Dam Project is a large-scale, under-construction water infrastructure and hydro-power development venture.
- It has been designated as a project of national importance aimed at resolving inter-state water sharing issues, generating clean energy, and rejuvenating regional river ecosystems.

Location:

- River and Site:** The dam is being constructed across the **Tons River**, a primary tributary of the Yamuna River. It is situated roughly 39 km (24 mi) north of Dakpathar and upstream of the existing Ichari Dam.
- Geographic Border:** The mega-structure physically straddles the geographic border between the two northern Indian states of **Himachal Pradesh** and **Uttarakhand**.

Aim:

The primary aim of the project is to build an extensive water resource management network that secures downstream drinking water, expands agricultural irrigation across northern India, generates peak-load hydroelectric power, and increases the minimal ecological flow of the Yamuna River to aid its environmental recovery.

Key Features of the Project:

- **Engineering Specifications:** The design features a massive **236-meter-high concrete gravity dam** backed by an estimated financial investment of ₹11,500 crore.
- **Reservoir Capacity:** The structure will create a massive reservoir holding **1,324 Million Cubic Meters (MCM)** of live water storage capacity.
- **Power and Energy Generation:** The dam houses a hydroelectric power plant rated at **660 Megawatts (MW)**, which is projected to generate 1,379 Million Units (MU) of clean electricity annually.
- **Agricultural Coverage:** The storage network provides downstream water release systems capable of supporting the irrigation of **97,076 hectares** (239,880 acres) of agricultural crops.
- **The 90:10 Funding Framework:** Under the newly brokered agreement, the Central Government will fund **90 percent** of the project's water component as a national financial assistance grant, while the six stakeholder states will split the remaining 10 percent.
- **Inter-State Power and Water Swaps:** To balance out initial project expenses, a unique resource swap was agreed upon: in lieu of sharing the costs of the power component, the water capacity allocated to Himachal Pradesh will be systematically supplied to fulfill the demands of Delhi and Rajasthan.
- **Timeline:** Initially approved by the Ministry of Environment and Forests in 2018 after years of negotiation delays, the project is currently scheduled for full completion by **2028**.

COAL-TO-AMMONIUM NITRATE PROJECT

Bharat Coal Gasification and Chemicals Limited (BCGCL) and Mahanadi Coalfields Limited (MCL) have signed an agreement for the country's first indigenous coal-to-ammonium nitrate project.

About the Coal-To-Ammonium Nitrate Project

Location: Lakhanpur, Jharsuguda District, Odisha.

Objective: Produce **2,000 tonnes per day (TPD)** of Ammonium Nitrate.

Implementing Body: BCGCL, a Joint Venture (JV) between **Coal India Limited (CIL)** (51%) and **BHEL** (49%).

INDIA'S FIRST COMMERCIAL-SCALE COAL-TO-AMMONIUM NITRATE PROJECT

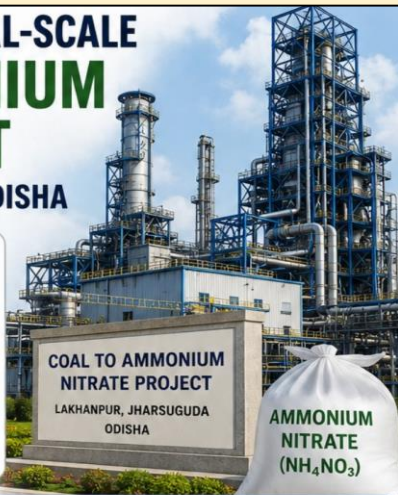
AT LAKHANPUR, JHARSUGUDA, ODISHA



The Prime Minister will lay the foundation stone of India's first commercial-scale **Coal-to-Ammonium Nitrate Project** at Lakhanpur, Jharsuguda district, Odisha.



The project, worth **₹25,016 crore**, is a major step towards **energy security, import substitution, and industrial self-reliance**.



COAL TO AMMONIUM NITRATE PROJECT
LAKHANPUR, JHARSUGUDA ODISHA

AMMONIUM NITRATE (NH₄NO₃)

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

 FIRST OF ITS KIND India's first commercial-scale Coal-to-Ammonium Nitrate Project.	 LOCATION Lakhanpur, Jharsuguda district, Odisha.	 PROJECT COST ₹25,016 crore (Approx.)	 STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE • Strengthens energy security • Reduces import dependence • Promotes Atmanirbhar Bharat • Boosts indigenous capability in key chemicals	 BENEFITS • Supports agriculture, defence, mining and infrastructure sectors • Generates employment and regional development
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Estimated Investment: Approximately **₹11,782 crore**. Recent reports on the land lease cite an investment potential of up to **₹25,000 crore** for the broader initiative.

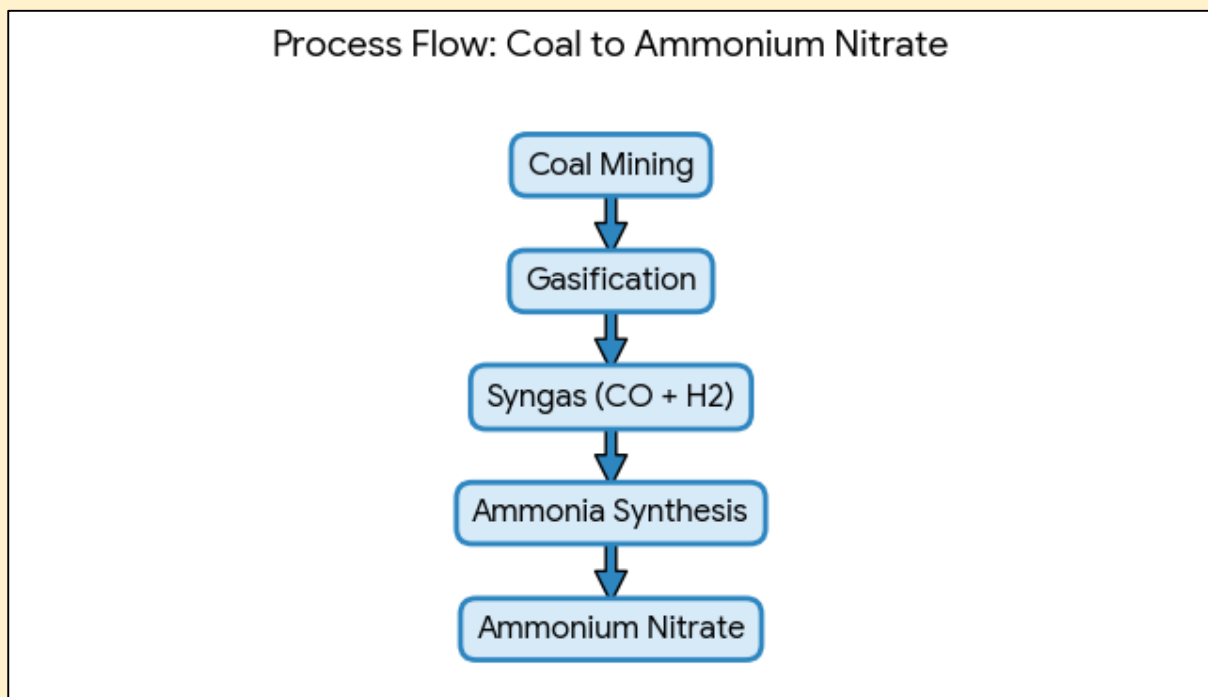
Product Usage: Primarily for **bulk explosives** used in mining (CIL is a major consumer) and **fertilizers** for agriculture.

The Core Technology: Coal Gasification

This project utilizes **indigenously developed Pressurised Fluidised Bed Gasification (PFBG) technology** by BHEL.

Coal Gasification is a thermo-chemical process that converts coal into **Syngas** (Synthesis Gas), which is a mixture primarily of **Carbon Monoxide** and **Hydrogen**.

- **Process:** Coal is partially oxidized by air, oxygen, steam, or carbon dioxide under controlled conditions.
- **Significance of PFBG:** Indian coal has a **high ash content** (often 30-45%), which clogs standard imported gasifiers. BHEL's PFBG technology is specifically designed to handle this high-ash Indian coal efficiently.

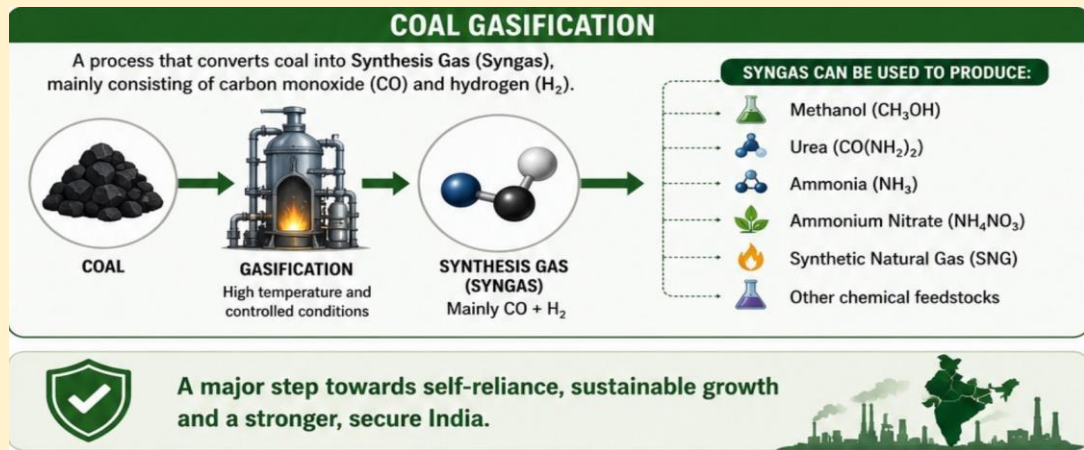


Strategic Significance

Reducing Import Dependence

Current Status: India is a net importer of chemicals and petrochemicals. A significant portion of Ammonium Nitrate and the natural gas required to produce it is imported.

Impact: This project serves as **backward integration** for Coal India Limited. By producing its own explosives raw material (ammonium nitrate), CIL reduces supply chain vulnerability and costs.



Utilizing Domestic Resources

India has the **4th largest coal reserves** in the world but lacks adequate oil and gas. Gasification offers a cleaner way to use this abundant coal for chemical production rather than just burning it for power.

It unlocks the value of **non-coking, high-ash coal** found in Odisha.

Technological Sovereignty

This is the first commercial deployment of **BHEL's home-grown gasification tech**. Success here validates India's ability to build complex industrial technology, moving away from reliance on expensive licensed technology from the West or China.

FAST X-RAY TRANSIENT (FXT)

Astronomers from the Indian Institute of Astrophysics have traced the likely origin of a rare Fast X-ray Transient (FXT) event, **EP241107a**, detected by the Einstein Probe in November 2024.



Key Findings

- FXTs are **energetic, non-repeating flashes of X-rays** lasting from a few minutes to several hours.
- They are a recently discovered class of transient cosmic events whose origin has remained uncertain.
- Researchers identified a radio counterpart of FXT **EP241107a** using the Karl G. Jansky Very Large Array.

- Follow-up observations were conducted using:
 - Himalayan Chandra Telescope
 - GROWTH India Telescope
 - Upgraded Giant Metrewave Radio Telescope

Likely Origin

- The event was probably caused by: Collapse of a massive star leading to a supernova and gamma-ray burst (GRB), or Merger of two neutron stars.
- Researchers concluded that EP241107a is most likely an **“orphan afterglow”**:
 - A gamma-ray-burst-like explosion whose gamma rays were not directly detected.
 - Represents a lower-energy member of the GRB population.

Fast X-ray Transients (FXTs)

- Sudden flashes of low-energy X-rays.
- Non-repeating and short-lived.
- Fade rapidly after detection.
- Associated with highly energetic cosmic explosions.

Proposed Sources

- Core-collapse supernovae.
- Binary neutron star mergers.
- Magnetars (highly magnetized neutron stars).
- Tidal disruption events involving white dwarfs and black holes.
- Gamma-ray bursts (GRBs).

Gamma-Ray Bursts (GRBs)

- Most energetic explosions known in the Universe.
- Emit intense gamma radiation for a few milliseconds to several minutes.
- Associated with the collapse of massive stars (Long GRBs) and Neutron star mergers (Short GRBs).
- Followed by multi-wavelength “afterglows” in X-ray, optical, and radio bands.

Neutron Star

- Extremely dense remnant of a massive star after a supernova.
- Mass ≈ 1.4 -2 solar masses compressed into a sphere about 20 km across.
- Composed mainly of neutrons.

[2023] Consider the following pairs: Objects in space: Description

1. Cepheids : Giant clouds of dust and gas in space
2. Nebulae : Stars which brighten and dim periodically
3. Pulsars : Neutron stars that are formed when massive stars run out of fuel and collapse

How many of the above pairs are correctly matched ?

- [A] Only one
- [B] Only two
- [C] All three
- [D] None

SUSHRUTA

The Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh in Scotland, widely considered the oldest surgical college in the world, unveiled a 90-kilogram bronze statue to honor the ancient Indian physician Sushruta.



Sushruta

About Sushruta:

Who He Was?

- Sushruta is a legendary ancient Indian physician and surgeon who is widely celebrated across the globe as the **“Father of Plastic Surgery”** and the **“Father of Surgery”**. He pioneered complex operative procedures, structural anatomical dissections, and structured medical education millennia before similar practices were established in the Western world.

History and Era:

- **Chronology:** He is believed to have lived and practiced approximately **2,600 years ago** (around 600 BCE).
- **Historical Timeline:** Sushruta performed advanced, calculated surgical procedures a millennium before Hippocrates and two millennia before prominent European medical stalwarts like Celsus and Galen emerged.

Literary Works: The *Sushruta Samhita*

Sushruta compiled his medical and surgical knowledge into the *Sushruta Samhita*, which remains one of the most detailed and foundational medical compilations from the ancient world surviving today.

- **Structural Division:** The compendium is divided into two primary sections: the *Purva-tantra* (which deals with advanced surgery, internal medicine, pediatrics, anatomy, and toxicology) and the *Uttara-tantra* (which covers psychiatry, care for the elderly, and diseases of the eye, ear, nose, and throat).

- **The Scope of the Text:** The treatise documents a vast medical lexicon containing:
 - 1,120 distinct illnesses and medical conditions.
 - Over 700 medicinal plants and hundreds of remedies derived from animal and mineral sources.
 - More than 300 complex medical and operative procedures.
 - Around 120 unique, highly specialized surgical instruments.

Key Contributions to Medical Science

- **Pioneering Rhinoplasty and Plastic Reconstruction:** His most celebrated contribution is the development of rhinoplasty (the surgical reconstruction of a severed nose) using a flap of skin harvested from the forehead or cheek (pedicle flap).
- **The Ashtavidha Shastrakarma (Eight Categories of Surgery):** He classified all surgical interventions into eight fundamental structural methods: *Chedana* (excision), *Bhedana* (incision), *Lekhana* (scraping), *Vyadhana* (puncturing), *Eshana* (probing), *Aharya* (extraction), *Visravana* (drainage), and *Seevana* (suturing).
- **Advanced Thermal Trauma Framework:** He created a modern-style classification system for burns, heat stroke, frostbite, and lightning strikes, grouping different forms of thermal injuries into a unified clinical framework long before Western medicine adopted this approach.
- **Lifestyle and Metabolic Medicine:** He identified lifestyle-correlated conditions resembling modern diabetes, obesity, and cardiovascular disorders.
- **Structured Hands-on Medical Education:** Sushruta mandated that students must perform practical mock surgeries on inanimate objects to master precision before operating on human patients.

THEWA ART

During Prime Minister of India visit to Slovakia, he gifted Thewa motif cufflinks to Slovak President Peter Pellegrini, bringing global attention to Rajasthan's centuries-old Thewa craft.



Thewa Art

About Thewa Art: What It Is?

- Thewa is an extraordinary traditional jewelry-making and decorative craft that involves the precise, delicate fusion of hand-carved sheets of pure gold onto vibrant, specially treated molten glass. The final artifact creates an illusion of a gold-rich, heavily ornamented piece while using minimal gold, making it look as though it glows from an internal light source.

Region Associated:

- **Primary Hub:** Exclusively practiced and preserved in the Pratapgarh district of Rajasthan, India.
- **Geographical Protection:** The craft holds a prestigious **Geographical Indication (GI) status** (awarded in 2013–2014).

History and Lineage:

- **The Invention:** The craft dates back nearly 400 years to the Mughal and Rajput eras. It was invented in 1707 by a master goldsmith named **Nathulal Soni**.
- **The Royal Title:** Impressed by the gold-on-glass filigree work, Maharaja Samant Singh of Pratapgarh patronized the art in the 1760s, granting a jagir (feudal land grant) to the family and bestowing upon them the title **Rajsoni** (Royal Goldsmith).
- **The Secret Tradition:** To protect the craft from commercial imitation, the structural secrets of the fusion process have been passed down strictly from father to son through generations, keeping it exclusively within the male lineage of the Rajsoni family.

Key Features of Thewa Art:

- **Pure Technique, Zero Glue:** The core uniqueness of Thewa lies in its secret thermal bonding process; hand-carved **23-carat gold foil** is permanently fused onto a base of colored glass without using any glue, solder, or synthetic pasting materials.
- **Intricate Latticework Process:** Master artisans spread a micro-thin sheet of gold (called Thewa Ki Patti) over a special lac-resin compound. They use a fine chisel to execute free-hand engravings, knocking off excess portions to create an openwork pattern before peeling and fusing it to the glass.
- **Belgian Glass Base:** The canvas traditionally utilizes imported, deeply saturated, multi-colored Belgian glass – predominantly in rich shades of green, red, blue, and maroon – which is treated to heighten its sparkling reflectivity.
- **Silver Framing (Chandi ki Dibiya):** Once the gold-on-glass artwork is complete, the delicate piece is framed inside an ornate, solid silver casing or ring mount, backed by an additional sheet of silver foil to maximize its brilliant luster.
- **Narrative & Symbolic Motifs:** The designs act as miniature storytelling canvases. Traditional motifs extensively feature:
 - **Flora and Fauna:** Intricate creepers, lotuses, peacocks, elephants, and running deer.
 - **Mythology:** Vivid scenes from Hindu epics, including depictions of Krishna, Radha, and Ganesha.
 - **Royal Court Life:** Historical hunting expeditions (Shikar), wedding processions (Baraat), and regal Darbar assemblies.

‘OPERATION AMISTAD’

In response to the devastating back-to-back earthquakes that recently hit Venezuela, India has officially launched ‘Operation Amistad’ as an emergency humanitarian mission.



Operation Amistad

About Operation Amistad:

What It Is?

- Operation Amistad is a fast-tracked, high-capacity Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) mission launched by the Government of India. It represents a major strategic and diplomatic deployment of emergency relief assets dispatched to aid a foreign nation dealing with a catastrophic natural disaster.

Nations Involved:

- **Donor Nation:** The Republic of India (dispatched via the Ministry of External Affairs and the Indian Armed Forces).
- **Recipient Nation:** The Republic of Venezuela.

Aim: The mission supports search-and-rescue, emergency medical care, and humanitarian relief in Venezuela’s earthquake-affected areas in coordination with local authorities.

Key Features of the Mission:

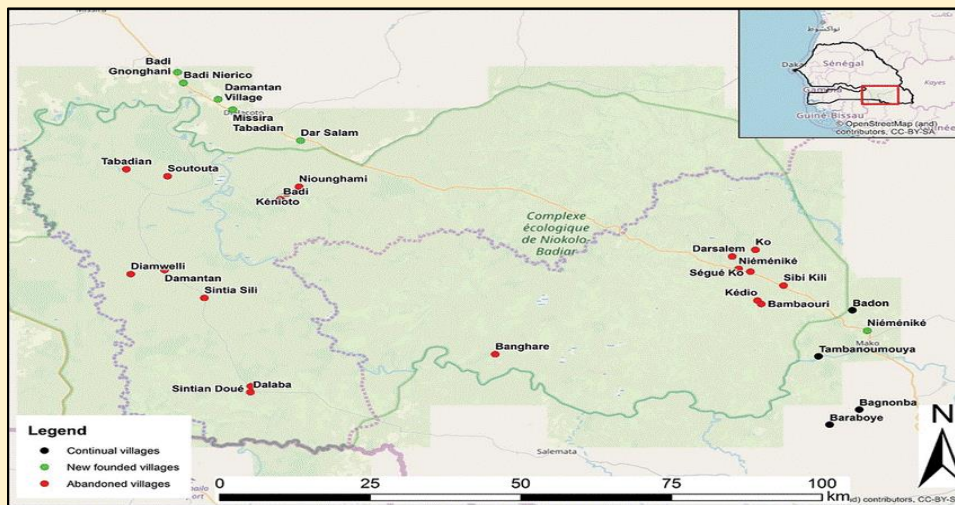
- **Strategic Airlift Framework:** Operated by two heavy-lift Indian Air Force (IAF) C-17 Globemaster strategic transport aircraft dispatched to ensure rapid transcontinental delivery.
- **Specialized Task Force:** Comprises a 41-member expert rescue team consisting of experienced search-and-rescue personnel, disaster response experts, and highly trained military medical professionals.
- **Heavy Humanitarian Cargo:** Carries **30 tons of relief supplies** alongside dedicated HADR pallets containing emergency shelters, blankets, and essential survival gear.
- **Targeted Medical Supplies:** Dispatches **6 tons of targeted medicines** and specialized medical equipment tailored to handle severe crush injuries, fractures, and thermal trauma.
- **Army Field Hospital Deployment:** Deploys a self-reliant Indian Army Field Hospital unit equipped to handle complex emergency surgeries and establish localized triage grids.
- **BHISHM Cube Technology:** Includes **two BHISHM (Bharat Health Initiative for Sahyog Hita and Maitri) cubes**. These are state-of-the-art, modular, and completely portable field hospitals engineered to be set up in minutes to deliver advanced trauma care in disaster zones without requiring existing infrastructure.

Significance:

- Operation Amistad highlights India's role as a global first responder, providing timely humanitarian assistance during international disasters.
- Deployment of BHISHM portable hospitals demonstrates India's advanced, self-reliant medical technology for rapid disaster relief and emergency healthcare.

NIKOLO-KOBA NATIONAL PARK

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) has approved US\$1.26 million for a new conservation initiative led by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in Niokolo-Koba National Park, Senegal.



The Niokolo-Koba National Park (PNNK)

About The Niokolo-Koba National Park (PNNK):

What It Is?

- Niokolo-Koba National Park is a vast, legally protected wildlife sanctuary, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and an designated international Biosphere Reserve. Spanning nearly 913,000 hectares, it represents one of the largest and most vital protected Sudanian savanna ecosystems remaining in West Africa.

Location:

- **Geographical Matrix:** Situated in southeastern **Senegal**, close to the border with Guinea.
- **Administrative Zones:** The park's massive borders extend across three primary regional departments of Senegal: **Kédougou, Tambacounda, and Kolda.**

How It Was Formed?

The park's creation followed a structured legal progression during the 20th century to shield West Africa's apex fauna from hunting pressures:

- **1925:** Initially established as a controlled hunting reserve to check rapid game depletion.
- **1954:** Formally elevated and declared a National Park under Senegalese state protections.
- **1981:** Inscribed as a **UNESCO World Heritage Site** due to its outstanding universal value and unique biodiversity.

- **The Danger Timeline:** The site was placed on the List of World Heritage in Danger in 2007 due to rampant poaching, mining, and dam projects. Following major anti-poaching initiatives and ecological overhauls, UNESCO formally **removed the park from the Danger List in 2024.**

Key Features

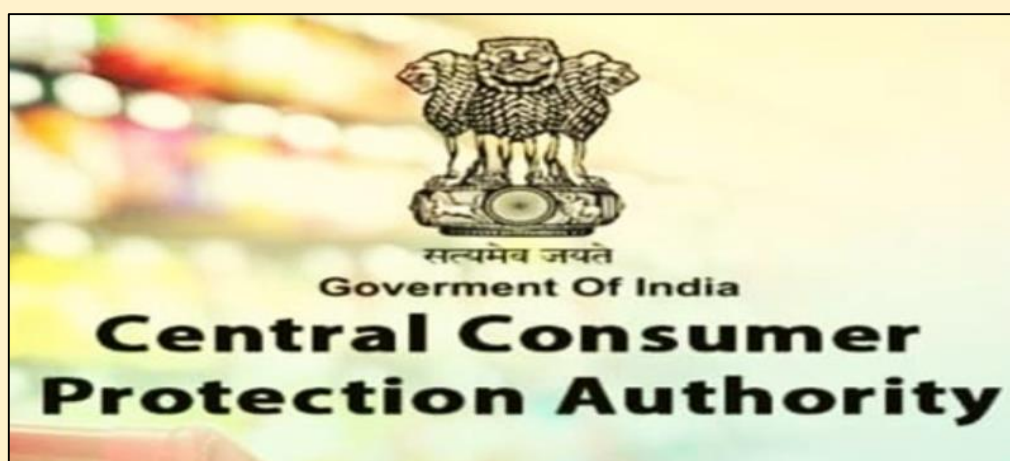
- **Hydrological Lifeline:** The park is traversed by the upper **Gambia River** and its tributaries, **Sereko** and **Niokolo**. During the dry season, permanent waterholes and marshes become vital water sources for wildlife.
- **Topography:** The landscape consists mainly of low-lying plains with rugged volcanic hills and crystalline uplands. **Mount Assirik** is the park's highest point.
- **Sudanian Savanna Biome:** The park preserves Sudanian savanna ecosystems, including open woodlands, bamboo forests, gallery forests, and marshy depressions (bafas).
- **Invasive Species Threat:** The rapid spread of **Mimosa pigra**, an invasive shrub, is degrading native grasslands and threatening the park's ecological balance.

Significance:

- The park protects over **70 mammal** and **329 bird** species, including the critically endangered **Western Giant Eland**, elephants, lions, leopards, chimpanzees, and wild dogs.
- Its forests and wetlands conserve the upper **Gambia River** basin, regulating water flow, reducing floods, and supporting downstream ecosystems and agriculture in West Africa.

CENTRAL CONSUMER PROTECTION AUTHORITY (CCPA)

The Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) penalized two prominent brands—Mrs. Bectors and Storia—₹1 lakh each for running misleading 100% product claims on their front packaging.



The Consumer Protection Act, 2019

About The Consumer Protection Act, 2019:

What It Is?

- The Consumer Protection Act, 2019 is a comprehensive, modernized piece of welfare legislation that replaced the legacy 1986 Act. It establishes a robust regulatory framework to safeguard, enforce, and protect the rights of consumers in India, adapting to contemporary retail challenges like e-commerce, digital advertising, and deceptive packaging.

Nodal Ministry: Administered by the **Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution**, Government of India.

Executive Arm: The Act established the **Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA)** as a powerful regulatory watchdog to investigate violations of consumer rights.

Aim:

- To formally shift the market burden from caveat emptor (let the buyer beware) to caveat venditor (Let the seller beware).
- To prevent misleading advertisements and unfair trade practices that falsely represent the standard, pure composition, or quality of consumer goods.
- To simplify consumer grievance redressal by establishing accessible, multi-tiered consumer dispute commissions across district, state, and national levels.

Key Legal Features of the Act

- **Definition of Misleading Advertisements (Section 2(28)):** Explicitly covers any advertisement or packaging claim that falsely describes a product, gives false guarantees, or deliberately conceals vital material information from consumers.
- **Definition of Unfair Trade Practices (Section 2(47)):** Classifies any false or deceptive representation regarding the standard, grade, style, pure composition, or quality of products as an illegal trade practice.
- **Suo-Motu Intervention Power:** Empowers the CCPA to independently take suo-motu (self-directed) cognisance of false marketing campaigns without requiring a formal consumer complaint.
- **Strict Penalty Framework:** Grants the authority the power to impose hefty financial penalties (such as the ₹1 lakh fine leveled against the offending food brands) and order the immediate discontinuation of deceptive product labels.
- **E-Commerce and Dark Patterns Governance:** Extends strict liability to online marketplaces, introducing legal protections against hidden costs, manipulative user interfaces (dark patterns), and fake reviews.

Significance:

- The CCPA clarified that complying with FSSAI standards does not justify misleading advertisements. Companies must ensure marketing claims are truthful and not deceptive.
- The ruling establishes that fine-print disclosures cannot override misleading front-label claims. This strengthens transparent labelling and protects consumers from deceptive marketing.

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