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PM INDEPENDENCE DAY SPEECH

In his Independence Day address, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi highlighted India's transformation over the last 12 years, outlining the progress made across manufacturing, digital infrastructure, basic amenities, energy security, youth empowerment, innovation, social security and other key sectors.



Key highlights from the Prime Minister's address include:

1. Manufacturing: Scale and Self-Reliance

Over the last 12 years:

- Defence production has increased nearly 4 times.
- Khadi and Village Industries production has increased nearly 5 times.
- Electronics manufacturing has increased nearly 7 times.
- Modern railway coach production has increased 21 times.
- Mobile phone production has increased 35 times.

2. Digital India and Innovation

The Prime Minister highlighted the rapid expansion of India's digital and innovation ecosystem:

- Internet consumers have increased nearly 4 times.
- Patent grants have increased 4 times.
- Digital transactions have increased around 100 times.
- India has built a significantly larger digital and innovation ecosystem.

3. Faster Delivery of Basic Amenities

The Prime Minister highlighted the faster pace at which basic facilities are reaching ordinary citizens:

- Tap-water connections have been provided at an average annual pace nearly 15 times faster.
- LPG connections have been provided at an annual pace nearly 6 times faster.
- Toilets for the poor have been constructed at an annual pace nearly 4 times faster.
- Pucca houses for the poor have been provided at an annual pace nearly 3 times faster.
- Hundreds of obsolete laws have been abolished.
- Modern public transport, including metro systems, has reached several more cities.

4. Building the Semiconductor Ecosystem

The Prime Minister highlighted India's progress in building domestic semiconductor capabilities:

- India earlier had no major semiconductor manufacturing plant.
- A complete semiconductor ecosystem is now being built in India.
- Three semiconductor plants have been initiated.
- India has also started exporting chips.

5. Securing Critical Minerals

Highlighting the importance of critical minerals for emerging technologies, the Prime Minister referred to the steps being taken to strengthen India's capabilities in this sector:

- National Critical Mineral Mission has been launched.
- Critical Mineral Corridor has been announced in the Budget.
- Agreements have been signed with several countries for critical mineral supplies.



I-DAY 2026 - PM MODI'S TOP QUOTES FROM RED FORT

India was once among Fragile Five, now **fastest-growing economy**

The world has **stopped talking about globalization**

5 new nuclear reactors to power India's 100 GW nuclear goal by 2047

Railway electrification started in 1925, but for 90 years it has only reached 30%. We have completed the rest **70% within a decade**

Resources have been weaponized, diesel, chips, technology and even geography has been weaponized

Before 2014, piped gas was available in just 70 cities; in **12 years, we expanded it to 700**

'Sapta Dhara' – seven streams of strength — as a new framework for building a Viksit Bharat

6. Strengthening Energy Security

The Prime Minister underlined that energy security is an essential condition for building a developed India, particularly as technologies such as chips, AI and data centres require huge quantities of electricity.

Underlining the role of nuclear energy, the Prime Minister highlighted:

- The SHANTI Act as a major reform in the nuclear energy sector.
- India crossing an important milestone in Fast Breeder Nuclear Technology.
- The potential of the technology to play a major role in making India self-reliant in nuclear fuel.

7. Expanding Oil and Gas Exploration

The Prime Minister highlighted the change in India's approach towards offshore exploration:

- Nearly 99% of India's offshore area was earlier classified as a No-Go Area.
- The approach has now changed from No-Go Area to Go Ahead Area.
- Previously restricted areas have been opened for exploration.
- This has created possibilities for discovering new oil and gas reserves.

8. Energy Diversification

The Prime Minister highlighted the rapid expansion in different sources of energy.

City Gas Distribution

- 2014: Available in fewer than 70 cities.
- Today: Available in around 700 cities.

Piped Cooking Gas

- 2014: Around 20-22 lakh households.
- Today: Nearly 1.75 crore households.

Solar Energy

- 2014: Around 2 GW.
- Today: Around 160 GW.

PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana

- The scheme has crossed 50 lakh households.
- Lakhs of families are benefiting through lower or zero electricity bills.
- Families can also sell surplus electricity and earn.
- Assistance of up to around ₹80,000 per household is available.

9. Railways: Electrification and Future Fuels

The Prime Minister highlighted the transformation of Indian Railways:

- In 2014, after nearly 90 years, only around 30% of the railway network had been electrified.
- Today, Indian Railways has moved towards near-complete electrification.
- India has started work on its first Made-in-India hydrogen train.
- It is being developed as the world's longest and most powerful hydrogen train.

10. India's Resilience During Global Crises

The Prime Minister said that the capabilities built over the last 10-12 years were tested during:

- COVID-19 pandemic.
- Russia-Ukraine war.
- Conflicts in West Asia.

11. Affordable Fertiliser for Farmers

Highlighting the Government's efforts to protect farmers from high global fertiliser prices, the Prime Minister stated:

- **Urea:** Around ₹3,000 per bag internationally; Indian farmers get it for less than ₹300.
- **DAP:** More than ₹5,000 internationally; Indian farmers get it for ₹1,350.

12. Trade and Export Opportunities

The Prime Minister highlighted the new opportunities being created for Indian producers and exporters:

- Since 2014, India has entered into FTAs with around 40 countries.
- New opportunities have opened for agriculture, fisheries, MSMEs, textiles and other export sectors.

13. Youth at the Centre of Viksit Bharat

The Prime Minister said that India's youth have a major role in building Viksit Bharat and highlighted the new pathways opened up for them:

- **Startup India:** New avenues for innovation and entrepreneurship.
- **₹1 lakh crore Research Fund:** New opportunities for young researchers.
- **Digital India:** Empowerment through affordable data.
- **Skill India:** National skills ecosystem.
- **Space Sector:** Opened for private participation.
- **National Drone Policy:** New opportunities for young entrepreneurs and innovators.
- **Khelo India:** Strengthened sports ecosystem.

14. Education and Innovation

The Prime Minister highlighted the expansion of educational and innovation opportunities:

- **National Education Policy 2020:** Introduced after a gap of 35 years.
- **Universities:** Fewer than 350 during 2004–2014; around 650 new universities added in the following decade.
- **Medical Colleges:** Fewer than 400 before 2014; around 850 today.
- More than **10,000 Atal Tinkering Labs** have been established in schools.
- Focus has been placed on developing a technology and innovation mindset from an early age.

15. Startups, Space and AI

The Prime Minister highlighted India's growing startup and innovation ecosystem:

- An Indian space startup has launched a Made-in-India rocket.
- India now has around 2.5 lakh registered startups.
- AI is creating new opportunities for young Indians.
- India hosted the AI Impact Summit this year.

16. New Sectors and New Opportunities

Bioeconomy

- 2014: Around ₹60,000 crore.
- Today: Nearly ₹20 lakh crore.
- The expansion is creating new jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities.

Electric Vehicles

- Towards the end of the previous decade: Around 1.5 lakh EVs sold annually.
- Last year: Around 25 lakh EVs sold.

Aviation

- New airports and routes are creating employment.
- MRO is opening new opportunities.
- India is moving towards Made-in-India aircraft manufacturing.
- The Made-in-India C-295 defence transport aircraft has successfully completed its flight.

17. Rural Empowerment through SVAMITVA

The Prime Minister highlighted the impact of the SVAMITVA initiative:

- Around 3.25 crore families have received property cards.
- Around ₹140 lakh crore of economic potential has been unlocked in rural areas.
- Property records are enabling villagers to access bank loans against their property.

- New avenues for rural employment, self-employment and entrepreneurship have opened up.

18. Growth in Defence Exports

The Prime Minister highlighted the expansion of India's defence exports:

- Defence exports have increased more than 50 times.
- Indian defence equipment is now exported to around 100 countries.

19. Women-Led Development: Lakhpati Didi

Highlighting the growing role of women in India's development:

- The target of 3 crore Lakhpati Didis has been achieved.
- Women from general, Dalit, backward and tribal families have become Lakhpati Didis.

20. Expanding Social Security

The Prime Minister highlighted the expansion of social security coverage:

- Before 2014, around 25 crore people were covered by social security.
- Today, around 100 crore Indians are covered by one or another social security scheme.

21. Ayushman Bharat

The Prime Minister highlighted the financial relief provided to families through Ayushman Bharat:

- Beneficiary families have avoided an estimated ₹2 lakh crore in medical expenditure.

CAG PERFORMANCE AUDIT OF THE GREEN INDIA MISSION

The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has flagged major implementation gaps in the Green India Mission (GIM), noting a nearly 98% shortfall in achieving its forest-cover expansion target during 2015-16 to 2024-25.



CAG Performance Audit of the Green India Mission

About CAG Performance Audit of the Green India Mission:

What It Is?

- The CAG Performance Audit evaluated the planning, implementation, financial management and monitoring of the Green India Mission across 16 States and Union Territories during 2015-16 to 2024-25.
- It assessed progress in increasing forest/tree cover, improving forest quality, strengthening ecosystem services and supporting forest-dependent livelihoods.

Key Findings:

- 98% Shortfall in Forest-Cover Expansion: Against the targeted 1.4 million hectares (mha), increased forest cover was observed in only 0.03 mha.
- 92% Shortfall in Forest-Quality Improvement: Forest-cover quality improved over only 0.11 mha, compared with the target of 1.4 mha.
- Poor Landscape Selection: Areas with low-to-moderate climate vulnerability were selected in some cases instead of landscapes more vulnerable to climate change.
- Weak Planning & Financial Management: The audit identified inadequate scheme convergence, financial mismanagement, poor coordination and deficiencies in implementation planning.
- Deficient Monitoring & Inflated Achievements: 14 States failed to provide required public web links, while GIS analysis found no noticeable GIM-attributable change at 70% of sampled sites. The audit also flagged inflated data and overstated achievements.

Implications:

- Weak afforestation outcomes can constrain progress in carbon sequestration, biodiversity conservation and climate resilience.
- Poor monitoring, financial management and unreliable reporting weaken transparency and effectiveness of public environmental expenditure.
- Failure to improve forest ecosystems can undermine livelihoods, ecosystem services and climate resilience of communities living in and around forests.

GREEN INDIA MISSION

- The GIM was approved in 2011 and operationalised from 2015-16, with the objective of increasing forest cover on degraded lands and improving ecosystem services through an integrated landscape approach.
- Degraded forest lands, including shifting cultivation areas, scrublands, and abandoned agricultural lands, are targeted for restoration to enhance biodiversity, carbon sequestration, and resilience to climate change.
- The Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA) was established under the Compensatory Afforestation Fund Act, 2016, to utilise funds collected for compensatory afforestation and related activities, including those under GIM.
- The Forest Survey of India (FSI) conducts biennial assessments of forest cover and publishes the India State of Forest Report (ISFR), which serves as a critical data source for monitoring ecological outcomes of restoration initiatives.
- Urban greening initiatives, such as the Nagari Van Yojana (Urban Forest Scheme), complement GIM by enhancing green cover in urban areas to improve air quality and micro-climates.

WHAT IS THE GREEN INDIA MISSION (GIM)?

- The Green India Mission (GIM) is one of the eight missions under the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC), launched in 2008 to address climate change through sector-specific interventions.
- The mission adopts an integrated landscape approach, which involves restoring degraded lands through afforestation, agroforestry, and other ecological restoration techniques, while ensuring community participation and livelihood support.
- GIM is implemented through a decentralised framework, with funds allocated to States and Union Territories based on approved Annual Plans of Operations (APOs), which outline specific restoration activities and targets.

- The mission prioritises the involvement of local institutions such as Joint Forest Management Committees (JFMCs), Village Forest Committees (VFCs), and Self-Help Groups (SHGs) to ensure grassroots participation and sustainable outcomes.
- Monitoring and evaluation of GIM are conducted through multi-tiered systems, including geo-tagging of plantation sites, GIS-based mapping, drone surveillance, and third-party assessments to ensure transparency and accountability.
- Funds for GIM are utilised for afforestation, nursery development, post-plantation care, and livelihood-linked activities, with a focus on improving the survival rate of planted saplings and long-term ecological restoration.
- The mission aligns with India's international commitments, including the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 13 (Climate Action), SDG 15 (Life on Land), and the Paris Agreement on climate change.

KEY FEATURES

Feature	Significance
Integrated Landscape Approach	Adopts a holistic, multi-sectoral strategy to restore degraded forests and non-forest areas, integrating ecological, social, and economic dimensions for sustainable landscape management.
Eco-Restoration Targets (2015-16 to 2026-27)	Restoration of 1,84,467 hectares across 17 states and 1 UTs, demonstrating national-scale commitment to combating land degradation and enhancing carbon sinks.
Urban Forest Scheme (Nagar Van Yojana)	Aims to develop 600 urban forests and 400 urban gardens by 2026-27, targeting micro-climate improvement and urban air quality enhancement in 600 cities.
Community-Based Implementation	Engages Joint Forest Management Committees (JFMCs), Village Forest Committees (VFCs), and Self-Help Groups (SHGs) for planting, maintenance, and livelihood-linked activities, ensuring local ownership and sustainability.
Multi-Level Monitoring Framework	Utilises geotagging, GIS mapping, drone surveillance, and third-party audits to track survival rates, identify gaps, and enforce corrective measures, ensuring accountability and transparency.

WHY IT MATTERS

ECOLOGICAL RESILIENCE

- Enhances biodiversity conservation by restoring degraded ecosystems, thereby supporting critical habitats for flora and fauna.
- Augments carbon sequestration potential, contributing to India's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement.
- Improves soil health and water retention, mitigating desertification and land degradation in vulnerable regions.

CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION

- Supports India's climate action goals by increasing forest cover, a key pillar of the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC).
- Urban forests under NVY directly address urban heat islands and particulate matter pollution, aligning with climate-resilient city planning.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC BENEFITS

- Generates rural and peri-urban employment through afforestation, nursery development, and allied livelihood activities.
- Strengthens community resilience by integrating traditional knowledge with modern restoration techniques, fostering inclusive governance.

INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITIES

- Builds institutional frameworks for participatory forest management, enhancing the role of local institutions like JFMCs and VFCs.
- Leverages technological tools (GIS, drones, remote sensing) for evidence-based decision-making and adaptive management.

CHALLENGES

1. LAND TENURE AND RIGHTS

- Ambiguities in land ownership and forest rights under the Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006, can delay or obstruct restoration projects on community lands.
- Encroachment and competing land uses (agriculture, mining) pose threats to restored areas, necessitating robust legal and administrative safeguards.

2. CLIMATE VULNERABILITY

- Increased frequency of extreme weather events (droughts, floods) threatens sapling survival rates, requiring climate-resilient species selection and adaptive management.
- Regions with high aridity or salinity (e.g., parts of Rajasthan, Gujarat) face inherent ecological constraints in afforestation.

3. FUNDING AND RESOURCE GAPS

- Dependence on central allocations under CAMPA and state budgets may lead to funding shortfalls, especially during fiscal constraints.
- High maintenance costs post-planting (irrigation, protection from grazing) require sustained financial commitments beyond initial plantation phases.

4. TECHNOLOGICAL AND HUMAN RESOURCE CONSTRAINTS

- Limited capacity among state forest departments for advanced monitoring tools (drones, remote sensing) hinders real-time data collection.
- Shortage of skilled personnel for nursery management, species selection, and community engagement affects project efficacy.

5. MONITORING AND EVALUATION BOTTLENECKS

- Delayed or inconsistent reporting by states on survival rates and ecological outcomes undermines adaptive management.
- Third-party audits, while mandated, may lack independence or technical rigor, leading to gaps in accountability.

WAY FORWARD

- Strengthen convergence between GIM and state-level afforestation schemes (e.g., MGNREGA) to leverage additional funding and manpower for maintenance activities.
- Expand climate-resilient afforestation guidelines, incorporating species selection based on local ecological conditions and projected climate scenarios.
- Enhance capacity-building programs for forest department staff, JFMCs, and SHGs on nursery management, species diversification, and adaptive monitoring techniques.
- Mandate real-time geotagging and drone-based surveillance for all restoration sites, with quarterly survival rate assessments published in the India State of Forest Report.
- Integrate restoration projects with existing livelihood programs (e.g., Van Mitra Yojana) to ensure sustained community engagement and economic benefits.
- Establish a national-level grievance redressal mechanism for land disputes related to afforestation, ensuring timely resolution of encroachment issues.
- Promote public-private partnerships (PPPs) for urban forest development under NVY, leveraging corporate social responsibility (CSR) funds for scaling up urban green cover.

JOINT PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE (JPC)

The Lok Sabha referred the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026 to a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) following strong objections from Opposition parties and civil society.



Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC):

About Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC):

What It Is?

- A Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) is an ad hoc (temporary) parliamentary panel set up by the Parliament of India to conduct a detailed, clause-by-clause examination of a specific controversial Bill, complex legislative proposal, or major financial/governance issue.

Constitutional Framework & Governing Rules:

- **Constitutional Status:** The JPC is not explicitly mentioned in the Constitution of India.
- **Governing Provisions:** It is an ad hoc committee set up under the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha. It is formally constituted when a motion moved in one House is adopted and concurred with by the other House.

Aim: To overcome the time constraints of floor debates by providing an in-depth, bipartisan platform to examine legislation, hear expert testimony, scrutinize evidence, and suggest necessary amendments or safeguards before a Bill becomes law.

Composition & Membership:

- **Dual-House Representation:** Drawn from both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha.
- **Ratio:** The number of Lok Sabha members is typically **twice** the number of Rajya Sabha members (a 2:1 ratio reflecting the relative strength of the two Houses).
- **Proportional Representation:** Membership and chairmanship reflect the relative party strengths in Parliament, giving the ruling party/coalition a majority.
- **Chairperson:** Appointed by the Speaker of the Lok Sabha.

Key Functions:

- **Clause-by-Clause Scrutiny:** Conducts threadbare examination of every provision and clause of a referred Bill to identify administrative, legal, or constitutional loopholes.
- **Summoning Power & Taking Evidence:** Authorized to call for official records, papers, and documents, as well as summon government officials, technical experts, and public stakeholders to present evidence.
- **Public & Stakeholder Consultations:** Invites written submissions and conducts oral hearings with affected organizations, industry bodies, and civil society representatives.
- **Formulating Recommendations & Dissent Notes:** Prepares a comprehensive advisory report containing proposed changes, with dissenting members permitted to append formal Notes of Dissent.
- **Post-Report Dissolution:** Once its final report is submitted to Parliament, the committee automatically stands dissolved.

NATIONAL FOOD SECURITY (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2026

Leading public health and nutrition experts—including Dr. Soumya Swaminathan and Dr. V. Mohan—jointly highlighted the policy implications of the draft National Food Security (Amendment) Bill, 2026.



The Proposed Reset

About The Proposed Reset: National Food Security (Amendment) Bill, 2026

What it is?

- The proposed reset aims to resolve structural inequities between individual and household entitlements under the NFSA. Currently, **Priority Households (PHH)** receive 5 kg of foodgrains per person per month, whereas **Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY)** households (the poorest of the poor) receive a flat quota of 35 kg per household per month.

Key Features of the Draft National Food Security (Amendment) Bill, 2026:

- **Amends NFSA, 2013:** Proposes to amend the first proviso to Section 3(1) of the National Food Security Act, 2013.
- **Per-Person AAY Entitlement:** Every person belonging to an Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) household will be entitled to 7 kg of foodgrains per month.
- **35-kg Household Ceiling:** The total entitlement of an AAY household will be capped at 35 kg per month, irrespective of household size.
- **Shift from Household to Individual Basis:** Replaces the existing uniform 35 kg per household entitlement with a per-person allocation, subject to the overall ceiling.
- **Addressing Intra-Category Inequity:** Seeks to correct disparities under which smaller AAY households receive more foodgrain per capita than larger households.
- **Rational & Nutrition-Linked Allocation:** Aims to provide a more rational distribution of foodgrains and better align entitlements with individual nutritional requirements.
- **Government-Determined Implementation:** The extent of AAY coverage will continue to be specified by the Central Government for each State, while the amendment will take effect from a date notified in the Official Gazette.

Key Data & Statistics:

- **Drop in Healthy Diet Inaffordability:** Household consumption surveys indicate that the share of Indian households unable to afford the ICMR-NIN recommended healthy diet fell from **~52% in 2011-12 to ~25% in 2023-24**.
- **Impact of Draft Proposal on Small Households:** In Tamil Nadu, **84.5% of AAY households (15.75 lakh out of 18.64 lakh)** have fewer than 5 members. Capping their entitlement at 7 kg/person would reduce the state's monthly AAY allocation by **35.6%** (from 65,261 to 42,040 tonnes).
- **Outdated Population Ceiling:** The NFSA beneficiary ceiling remains capped at **81.35 crore people** based on the 2011 Census. Against an estimated 2025 population of 146.4 crore, the current system covers only **55.6% of the population**, falling short of the intended statutory targets (75% rural and 50% urban).
- **Double Burden of Malnutrition (NFHS-6 & ICMR-INDIAB Data):**
 - Under-5 stunting fell to **29.3%**, but child wasting (**19.0%**) and underweight rates (**31.8%**) remain largely stagnant.
 - Only **~15% of infants** (6-23 months) receive a minimally adequate diet.
 - Over **101 million Indians have diabetes** and **136 million have prediabetes**.
- **Carbohydrate Intake & Glycemic Risk:** The ICMR-INDIAB study revealed that carbohydrates supply **62.3% of daily energy** nationally (versus 12% from protein). Adults with the highest carbohydrate intake face **30% higher odds** of developing type 2 diabetes.

Key Issues & Concerns Surrounding the Amendment:

- **The Small Household Vulnerability Trap:** Capping AAY allocations at 7 kg per person disproportionately penalizes small households consisting of single elderly individuals, widows, or persons with disabilities who heavily rely on the full 35 kg quota.
- **Stagnant Beneficiary Ceilings:** Delaying the recalculation of beneficiary ceilings until the post-2026/2027 Census excludes millions of eligible rural and urban poor who have entered the population since 2011.
- **Cereal-Centric Over-Reliance:** Providing carbohydrates alone fails to reverse wasting, micronutrient deficiencies, and NCD risks. ICMR-NIN 2024 guidelines recommend that cereals/millets supply **at most 45% of total daily energy**, with the remainder coming from pulses, milk, vegetables, and fats.

- **Digital Authentication & Last-Mile Friction:** Biometric failures on Electronic Point of Sale (ePoS) devices or lack of offline workarounds risk denying food access to elderly and mobile beneficiaries.

Recommendations & The Way Forward:

- **Enforce an Explicit No-Loss Safeguard:** Ensure that any revised per-person formula preserves the existing 35 kg monthly baseline for all AAY households, treating support above 35 kg for larger households as a separate entitlement.
- **Separately Budget and Finance Dietary Diversification:** Expand the Public Distribution System (PDS) basket to include subsidized pulses, local millets, and healthy edible oils without reducing cereal allocations.
- **Recalculate Coverage Ceilings Post-Census:** Update NFSA beneficiary limits using the 2027 Census figures and revised deprivation criteria to eliminate exclusion errors.
- **Leverage PDS Outlets for NCD Screening & Awareness:** Use Fair Price Shops to distribute multilingual nutrition information and voluntarily link beneficiaries to local **Ayushman Arogya Mandirs** for diabetes and hypertension screenings.
- **Strengthen Last-Mile Delivery Protocols:** Enforce reliable offline authentication mechanisms, assisted delivery, and doorstep delivery for mobility-impaired individuals to guarantee dignified access.

Conclusion:

Resetting the National Food Security Act provides an opportunity to transition from basic calorie security to holistic nutrition security. Preserving the 35 kg AAY baseline while separately funding dietary diversification ensures that India's safety nets protect vulnerable families from both hunger and non-communicable diseases. Ultimately, the success of India's food security policy must be evaluated not merely by the volume of grain distributed, but by whether every family can access a healthy diet with dignity.

THE INDONESIAN BABIRUSA

Chester Zoo in the UK announced the birth of Rana, a rare babirusa piglet, amid declining wild populations threatened by African swine fever, habitat loss, and hunting in Indonesia.



The Indonesian Babirusa

About The Indonesian Babirusa:
What It Is?

- The **babirusa** (genus *Babirusa*)—commonly known as the **pig-deer**—is one of the oldest living and strangest wild pig species. The name babirusa comes from the Malay language, describing its distinctive look and stag-like upper tusks.

Geographic Range: Endemic exclusively to four Indonesian islands: **Sulawesi, Togian, Sula, and Buru.**

Ecosystem: Inhabits tropical rainforests, swamps, and wetlands, frequently choosing areas near riverbanks and natural ponds rich in aquatic plants.

IUCN Status: Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.

Key Characteristics:

- **Unique Upper Tusks (Males Only):** Male babirusas possess upper canine teeth that grow upward, pierce through the skin of their snout, and curve backward toward their forehead.
- **Small Litters & Long Gestation:** Unlike standard pigs that give birth to large litters, female babirusas give birth to only one or two piglets per litter after a highly predictable 155 to 161-day gestation period.
- **Sparse Hair & Unstriped Piglets:** They possess barrel-shaped bodies with bristly, nearly hairless grey-brown skin. Uniquely for wild pigs, newborn piglets lack protective camouflage stripes.
- **Agile Omnivorous Foragers:** They use specialized hooves to dig for roots and insect larvae, stand on two hind legs to reach high leaves, and can run at speeds up to 30 mph.
- **Distinct Behaviors & Scent-Marking:** Solitary or social in small groups, they communicate through grunts and tooth-clattering, and practice an unusual ploughing behavior – kneeling and pushing their heads through soft sand while foaming at the mouth.

Significance:

- Babirusas aid seed dispersal and forest regeneration, making them indicators of ecosystem health.
- An ancient pig lineage depicted in prehistoric Indonesian cave art; captive breeding provides a genetic safeguard against extinction.

MOON BASE PROGRAMME

During the 9th meeting of the India-US Civil Space Joint Working Group (CSJWG) held at ISRO headquarters in Bengaluru, NASA officially invited the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) to join its historic Moon Base programme.

- The invitation builds upon the growing strategic space partnership between the two nations under the **Artemis Accords**.



The Moon Base Programme

About The Moon Base Programme: What It Is?

- The **Moon Base programme** is an ambitious NASA-led initiative to build humanity's first permanent lunar outpost near the **lunar South Pole**. It serves as a sustainable surface habitat where astronauts will live, work, conduct scientific research, and test deep-space survival technologies.

Lead Agency: National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).

Announced On: 2026

- **Phased Rollout:**
 - **Phase 1 (2026–2029):** Gain reliable surface access, conduct robotic reconnaissance, and test early technologies.
 - **Phase 2 (2029–2032):** Deploy foundational surface infrastructure (power networks, logistics, communications, and lunar terrain vehicles).
 - **Phase 3 (2032+):** Assemble a permanently crewed, expandable outpost for extended astronaut stays.

Aim: To establish an enduring human presence on the Moon, explore volatile water-ice resources in the lunar South Pole, and establish a technological stepping stone for future crewed missions to Mars.

Key Features:

- **Strategic South Pole Positioning:** Capitalizes on the unique geology of the lunar South Pole, where high elevated ridges receive near-continuous sunlight for solar energy, while nearby craters shield vast deposits of water ice.
- **Commercial & Private Sector Integration:** Heavily leverages commercial partners (such as Astrobotic, Blue Origin, Firefly Aerospace, and Intuitive Machines) for cargo landers, surface rovers, and autonomous drones.
- **In-Situ Resource Utilization (ISRU):** Focuses on harvesting lunar regolith and extracting water ice to generate oxygen, drinking water, and rocket propellant on-site.
- **Phased Modular Infrastructure:** Built step-by-step using expandable surface habitats, uncrewed logistics landers, surface power grids, and pressurized rovers.
- **Open Scientific Data Architecture:** Designed under the Artemis Accords framework to enable transparent, international sharing of lunar scientific data and environmental observations.

Environmental & Engineering Challenges:

- **Extreme Thermal Fluctuations:** Temperatures range from minus 203°C in permanently shadowed craters to elevated heat in sunlit zones, placing heavy stress on power systems, electronics, and batteries.
- **Complex Lighting & Long Shadows:** Low Sun angles near the pole create moving, multi-kilometer shadows, disrupting solar power generation and hindering visual navigation.
- **Abrasive & Charged Lunar Regolith:** Fine, razor-sharp lunar dust clings electrostatically to spacesuits, seals, optical sensors, and mechanical joints, causing rapid mechanical wear and seal degradation.
- **Hazardous & Rugged Terrain:** Steep crater slopes, boulder fields, and uneven topographies complicate automated landings, surface construction, and rover traversals.

INDIA'S INDIGENOUS NEXT GENERATION OFFSHORE PATROL VESSEL

Yard 3037 (**Shruti**), a Next Generation Offshore Patrol Vessel (NGOPV) built for the Indian Navy, was successfully launched at M/s Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers (GRSE) in Kolkata.



Shruti: India's Indigenous Next Generation Offshore Patrol Vessel

About Shruti: India's Indigenous Next Generation Offshore Patrol Vessel:

What It Is?

- **Shruti** (Yard 3037) is an indigenously designed and constructed Next Generation Offshore Patrol Vessel (NGOPV) belonging to the Shachi-class.
- Named after India's ancient cultural heritage (Shruti, referring to the four Vedas), the ship is engineered to perform a wide spectrum of multi-domain maritime operations in both coastal and deep-sea waters.

Developed By: Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers (GRSE), Kolkata.

Aim: To augment the Indian Navy's surface fleet capabilities for constant ocean surveillance, protection of offshore assets, anti-piracy operations, counter-infiltration, and Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) missions.

Key Features:

- **Dimensions & Displacement:** Measures approximately **110 meters in length** with a displacement of **2,500–2,900 tonnes**, featuring an optimized hull form for reduced drag and superior seakeeping.
- **Speed & Extended Endurance:** Powered by two high-efficiency diesel engines capable of attaining speeds exceeding **25 knots**, with an operational range of **8,500 nautical miles** and an endurance of **60 days at sea**.
- **Advanced Armament & Defensive Systems:** Equipped with a 76mm Super Rapid Gun Mount (SRGM), AK-630 Close-In Weapon Systems(CIWS), Very Short Range Air Defense (VSHORADS) missiles, Kavach chaff decoy launchers, and the Maareech advanced torpedo defense system.
- **Aviation & UAV Support Capabilities:** Features an expansive stern helipad and an enclosed hangar capable of embarking and operating a 15-tonne multi-role helicopter alongside Remotely Piloted Aircraft(RPAs/UAVs).
- **Symbolic Crest & Modern Avionics:** The crest design features the **Ursa Major constellation** and a red-and-white lighthouse, symbolizing guidance and constant sea vigilance. The vessel integrates an Electronic Warfare (EW) suite, state-of-the-art navigation radars, and an Integrated Platform Management System (IPMS).

13TH BRICS EDUCATION MINISTERS' DECLARATION

The 13th BRICS Education Ministers' Meeting concluded in Bhubaneswar, Odisha, with the adoption of the 13th BRICS Education Ministers' Declaration under India's BRICS Chairship 2026.



Adoption of the 13th BRICS Education Ministers' Declaration

About Adoption of the 13th BRICS Education Ministers' Declaration:

What It Is?

- The **13th BRICS Education Ministers' Declaration** is a joint policy framework adopted by BRICS member countries to deepen cooperation in education, skills, research, innovation, and academic mobility.
- It reflects India's 2026 BRICS Chairship theme, **Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability**, and places learners, teachers, researchers, and youth at the centre of cooperation.

Aim: To build inclusive, resilient, future-ready, and human-centred education systems through stronger cooperation among BRICS countries in foundational learning, skill development, research, academic mobility, and institutional capacity.

Key Outcomes:

- **Strengthening ECCE and Foundational Learning:** Promotes universal access to quality Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), school readiness, foundational literacy and numeracy, and age-appropriate digital learning.
- **Cooperation in Skills and TVET:** Strengthens the BRICS TVET Cooperation Alliance and supports India's proposed International Skill Gap Study to identify emerging workforce requirements.
- **Research, Innovation and AI:** Encourages joint research, start-up collaboration, and the safe, ethical and human-centred use of Artificial Intelligence in education.
- **Mutual Recognition of Qualifications:** Advances discussions on an MoU for Mutual Recognition of Qualifications (MRQ) to improve academic mobility and cross-border recognition of degrees.
- **Academic Leadership and Institutional Cooperation:** Promotes the BRICS Rectors' Forum, faculty exchanges, STEM scholarships, and exploratory work toward a BRICS University Global Ranking and Evaluation System.

Significance:

- Creates a platform for BRICS countries to share educational technologies, skills, research capabilities, and institutional best practices.
- Focus on AI, TVET, research, and skill-gap assessment can improve employability and prepare youth for emerging industries.
- Recognition of traditional and indigenous knowledge systems combines civilisational knowledge with modern education and research.

THE INDIAN PEACOCKS

India presented five Indian peacocks—including four blue peafowl and one rare white-feathered male—to the United Nations Office at Geneva(UNOG).



The Indian peacocks

About The Indian peacocks:

What It Is?

- The Indian Peacock (or Indian Peafowl) is a large, colorful bird belonging to the pheasant family (*Phasianidae*). Declared the **National Bird of India in 1963**, it holds immense cultural, ecological, and mythological significance across the Indian subcontinent.

Habitat & Distribution:

- **Habitat:** Inhabits open lowland forests, thorn scrub, agricultural fields, grasslands, and riverbanks. Highly adaptable, it frequently roams near human settlements, parks, and village outskirts.
- **Distribution:** Native to South Asia, spanning India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, and Pakistan, while being introduced to several other regions worldwide.

IUCN Red List: Least Concern

Wildlife Protection Act (WPA), 1972: Schedule I

Key Characteristics:

- **Pronounced Sexual Dimorphism:** Males (*peacocks*) feature a vibrant metallic-blue head and neck with a fan-shaped crest, while females (*peahens*) are smaller with dull brown plumage that acts as camouflage during nesting.
- **Iridescent Train & Ocelli:** The male's distinctive tail is actually an elongated upper-tail covert train featuring over 200 feathers adorned with iridescent eye-spots (*ocelli*), unfolded like a magnificent fan during courtship displays.
- **Genetic Color Variants (White Peafowl):** While the typical wild coloration is cobalt blue, genetic variations such as **leucism** produce rare, entirely white-feathered peafowl (which possess normal pigment in their eyes, distinguishing them from albinos).
- **Omnivorous Diet & Roosting Behavior:** Ground-feeding omnivores that consume seeds, grain, insects, small reptiles, and young snakes (including cobras). They roost overnight in large groups high up on tall trees or structures to escape predators.
- **High Adaptability:** Displays strong tolerance to varying microclimates, ranging from dry semi-arid plains to wet tropical forests and urban green spaces.

Significance:

- Represents India's national bird and symbolizes beauty, heritage, and ecological harmony.
- Showcases India's commitment to biodiversity conservation and environmental diplomacy through global initiatives.

LAKE MEAD

Lake Mead — the largest artificial reservoir in the United States — fell to a record low water level of 1,040.4 feet (317.1 meters) above sea level.



Lake Mead

About Lake Mead:
What It Is?

- Lake Mead is the largest man-made reservoir by volume in the United States. Created by the damming of the Colorado River, it serves as a primary storage source for drinking water, agricultural irrigation, and hydroelectric power across the American Southwest.

Location: Lies along the **Arizona–Nevada border**, approximately 25 miles (40 km) east of Las Vegas, Nevada.

National Recreation Area: Established in 1936 as the first designated U.S. National Recreation Area, spanning 2,338 square miles (6,055 sq km) and stretching along 240 miles of the Colorado River.

Origin & History

- Formed in the 1930s following the construction of the **Hoover Dam**(completed 1936) on the Colorado River.
- Named in honor of Elwood Mead, who served as the Commissioner of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation from 1924 to 1936.

Key Geographical Features:

- **Massive Volumetric Capacity:** At full pool (1,220 feet above sea level), it can hold up to 31,047,000 acre-feet (approx. 38.3 billion cubic meters) of water, stretching 115 miles upstream with 550 miles of shoreline.
- **Distinctive Bathtub Ring:** A visible band of white mineral deposits along the surrounding rocky cliffs marks the high-water line from earlier decades when the lake was full.
- **Core Hydrological Anchor:** Functions alongside **Lake Powell** (behind Glen Canyon Dam) as part of a twin-reservoir system that manages the storage and release of the Colorado River's water.

Causes for the Decline:

- **Record Low Rocky Mountain Snowpack:** The Colorado River relies on snowmelt from the Rocky Mountains for its flow; the winter season recorded the worst snowpack levels on record, severely reducing water inflows.
- **Persistent Multi-Decade Megadrought:** The Southwest US has been experiencing a multi-decade dry spell exacerbated by rising temperatures and high evaporation rates.
- **Systemic Over-Allocation & Overuse:** For decades, legal water allocations granted to the seven basin states (Arizona, California, Nevada, Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming) and Mexico have exceeded the river's average natural flow.

Significance:

- Falling water levels reduce turbine efficiency, potentially cutting Hoover Dam's power generation by up to 70%.
- Lake Mead supplies water to 25–30 million people. Low levels trigger mandatory water cuts and greater reliance on deep-water pumping.

THE HALLANIYAT ISLANDS

The Oman Environment Authority launched containment operations after an oil spill covering ~390 sq km off southern Oman.

- The spill originated from the explosion-damaged Caroline Bezengi, a Russian shadow fleet tanker that grounded near the protected Hallaniyat Islands.



The Hallaniyat Islands

About The Hallaniyat Islands:

What It Is?

- The Hallaniyat Islands (formerly known as the Kuria Muria Islands) comprise an archipelago of five islands located off the southern coast of Oman in the Arabian Sea. Recognized for their untouched marine habitats and exceptional biodiversity, the islands were designated as a **protected nature reserve** by Royal Decree in 2025.

Governorate: Dhofar Governorate (Southern Oman).

Inhabited Island: Al Hallaniyya is the largest island in the group and the only one with a permanent human settlement equipped with basic civic infrastructure.

Key Features:

- **Topography & Marine Terrain:** The archipelago features rugged limestone cliffs, rocky sub-littoral zones, and mixed coral-algal ecosystems.
- **Critical Turtle Nesting Hub:** Houses one of the world's most important nesting grounds for **Loggerhead sea turtles**, along with significant nesting populations of Green and Hawksbill turtles.
- **Endangered Marine Mammal Sanctuary:** Surrounding waters are home to the isolated, non-migratory **Arabian Sea humpback whale** population, alongside frequent pods of Spinner and Risso dolphins.
- **Pristine Coral Reefs:** Features virgin, high-diversity coral formations—including newly discovered endemic species from the Oculinidae family—and abundant spiny lobster populations.
- **Key Avian Breeding Ground:** Uninhabited islets like **Al Qabliyya Island** provide predator-free resting and nesting havens for species such as the Red-billed Tropicbird, Masked Booby, and Audubon's Shearwater.

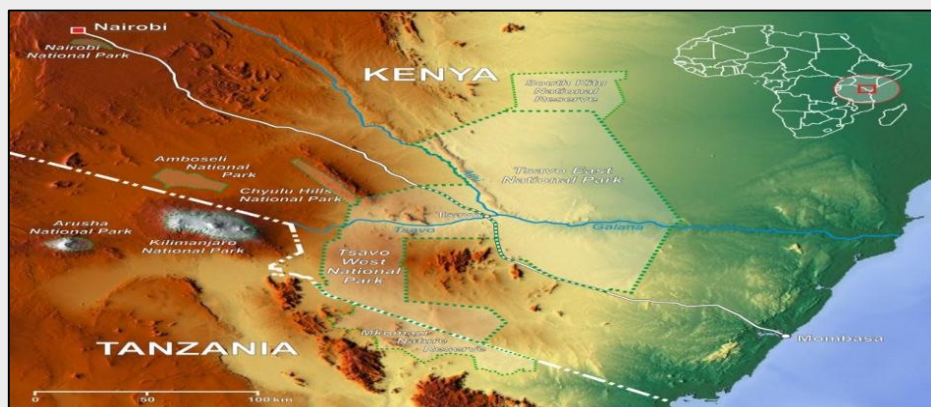
Environmental Implications:

- The 390 sq km oil slick threatens coral reefs, coastal bird colonies, and endangered Arabian Sea humpback whales.
- Rough Khareef seas (4-m waves and strong winds) hinder cleanup, forcing reliance on floating booms and absorbents.

AMBOSELI NATIONAL PARK

In Kenya's **Amboseli National Park ecosystem**, a mystery unfolded following the sudden deaths of 15–16 African elephants within a single month.

- The Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) launched an investigation after preliminary tests detected **cyanide poisoning**, likely linked to agrochemicals from nearby farms.



Amboseli National Park

About Amboseli National Park:

What It Is?

- Amboseli National Park (formerly Maasai Amboseli Game Reserve) is one of Kenya's most famous and ecologically significant national parks. Renowned as the **Land of Giants**, it is internationally celebrated for harboring large herds of free-ranging African elephants set against the backdrop of Mount Kilimanjaro.

Location: Situated in Kajiado County, southern Kenya, abutting the border with Tanzania.

Drainage & Basin: Protects a dried-up Pleistocene lake basin in a semi-arid savanna ecosystem.

History & Conservation Status:

- **Establishment:** Originally designated as a game reserve for the Maasai people, it was gazetted as a National Park in **1974** to protect its core swamps and wildlife corridors.
- **UNESCO Biosphere Reserve:** Designated as a UNESCO Man and Biosphere Reserve in **1991** due to the historical coexistence of the indigenous Maasai pastoralists, their livestock, and wildlife.

Key Geographical & Ecological Features:

- **Core Size & Landscape Boundaries:** Covers a core area of **392 square kilometers** at the center of a vast 8,000 km² cross-border ecosystem spanning the Kenya–Tanzania border.
- **Mount Kilimanjaro Drainage System:** Although located in a rain-shadow semi-arid plain, the park features permanent freshwater swamps and sulfur springs fed by underground runoff from Mount Kilimanjaro and the Chyulu Hills.
- **Rich Biodiversity:** Home to over 1,600 to 1,800 elephants, along with large carnivores (lions, leopards, cheetahs, spotted hyenas) and extensive herbivore herds (buffaloes, zebras, wildebeests, and impalas).
- **Important Bird Area (IBA):** Hosts over 400 bird species—including 47 raptor species and endangered species like the Malagasy pond heron.
- **Landscape Corridors & Community Conservancies:** Relies on community-owned group ranches (such as Kimana, Kuku, and Olgulului) that form vital migration corridors connecting Amboseli to Tsavo West National Park and Mount Kilimanjaro.

Implications:

- Dead elephants showed paralysis, while postmortems detected cyanide and crop remains, suggesting crop-raiding or retaliatory poisoning.
- The incident underscores rising conflict from agricultural expansion, prompting calls to strengthen pesticide regulation and enforcement.

AGNI-IV INTERMEDIATE-RANGE BALLISTIC MISSILE

The Strategic Forces Command (SFC) successfully conducted a routine training launch of the Agni-IV intermediate-range ballistic missile off the coast of Odisha.



The Agni-IV Ballistic Missile

About The Agni-IV Ballistic Missile: What It Is?

- Agni-IV is an indigenous, nuclear-capable, two-stage solid-fueled **Intermediate-Range Ballistic Missile (IRBM)**. Operating with a strike range of approximately **4,000 kilometers**, it serves as a core land-based component of India's nuclear triad.

Designed & Developed By: Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).

Aim: To provide a highly mobile, survivor-capable, and precise land-based nuclear deterrent against regional strategic threats across Asia, strengthening India's policy of Credible Minimum Deterrence and No First Use.

Key Features:

- **Extended Strike Range:** Capable of delivering a **1-tonne (1,000 kg)** conventional or nuclear warhead up to a distance of **4,000 kilometers**.
- **Solid-Propellant Propulsion:** Powered by a high-performance two-stage solid-fuel engine housed in lightweight composite rocket motor casings.
- **Road-Mobile Survivability:** Transportable and launchable via mobile Transporter Erector Launchers (TELs), enabling rapid repositioning across countrywide road networks to avoid targeting by enemy silo-tracking assets.
- **Advanced Inertial Navigation:** Incorporates an indigenous **Ring Laser Gyroscope-based Inertial Navigation System (RINS)** paired with a Micro-Inertial Navigation System (MINGS) for high-precision targeted strikes.
- **Stealth & Avionics Innovations:** Designed with a significantly reduced radar cross-section (RCS) and re-entry heat shield technology, allowing the missile to withstand thermal re-entry temperatures above 3,000°C while resisting electronic countermeasures.
- **Redundant Digital Flight Controls:** Features a distributed, high-speed digital computer bus and redundant flight-control architecture to guarantee trajectory accuracy and mission success.

Significance:

- Road mobility and rapid launch capability improve survivability against preemptive attacks, strengthening India's nuclear deterrence.
- Technologies like composite materials, ring laser gyroscopes, and digital controllers enabled the development of Agni-V and Agni-P.

Echoes from the Depths...

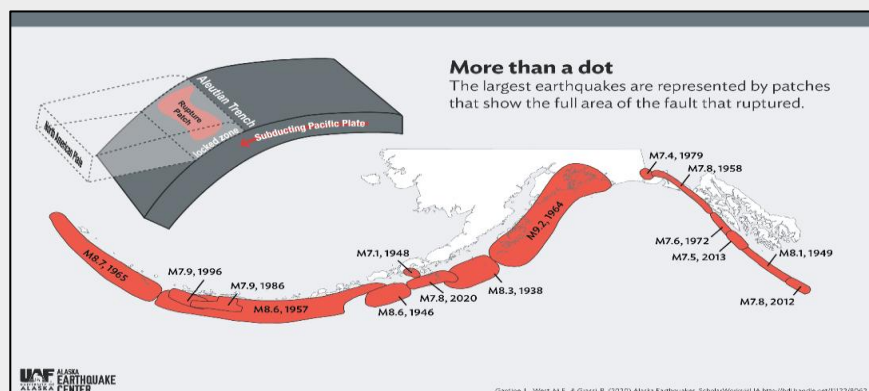
[Sreejith K R]

Understanding and Mitigating Modern Megaeathquakes

The July 29, 2025 magnitude 8.8 earthquake off the coast of Kamchatka, Russia, is now tied for the 6th-largest recorded in the world. It was followed immediately by tsunami alerts that spanned the Pacific, including Alaska. On June 24, 2026, Venezuela experienced a pair of strong earthquakes off the northern coast, west of Caracas. The first shock was reported around magnitude 7.2, followed by a larger main event about 39 seconds later at roughly magnitude 7.5. These quakes have caused significant damage in several cities. When massive tremors shake the earth in quick succession, it naturally prompts public concern: Do these megaeathquakes signal a systemic breakdown of the Earth's crust, and what do they foretell for our planet's future?

Tectonic Instability: A Normal Beat of a Living Planet

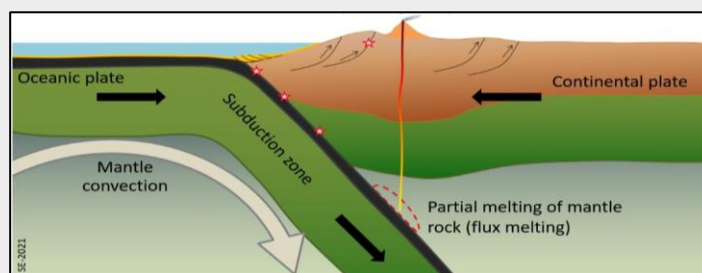
From a geophysical standpoint, clustered megaeathquakes do not necessarily point to a sudden, permanent global crisis or an unprecedented breakdown of the crust. Instead, they reflect the continuous, restless motion of Earth's tectonic plates. Zones like the Kuril-Kamchatka arc or the



Pacific-North American plate boundaries are defined by subduction, where immense stress accumulates over decades or centuries as one plate grinds beneath another.

When a massive earthquake hits, it suddenly lets out a huge burst of energy while shifting pressure to nearby parts of the fault. This can set off more big quakes or aftershocks close by – and sometimes even tiny tremors halfway across the planet. Far from meaning the Earth is falling apart, these events are just a normal part of our planet's ongoing cycle of shifting and releasing stress.

Anticipating Future Changes



Looking forward, recurring high-magnitude seismicity reminds us that our planet is physically evolving. Geologically, these megaeathquakes drive permanent changes:

Coastal Topography: Subduction zone earthquakes frequently cause sudden coastal uplift or subsidence, permanently altering shorelines.

- **Tsunami Hazard Mapping:** Large submarine ruptures displace entire water columns, reshaping how coastal communities plan evacuation routes and sea defenses.
- **Stress Redistribution:** Fault segments adjacent to recent ruptures experience heightened loading, guiding scientists on where future monitoring must be intensified.

Modern Research and Threat Analysis

To stay ahead of these hazards, seismologists and geophysicists employ an array of sophisticated technologies. Global Navigation Satellite Systems (GNSS) and high-precision strain meters track crustal deformation down to the millimeter in real time. Researchers also analyze seismic wave propagation and ambient noise data to image deep fault structures and identify locked patches where stress is critically high. Furthermore, advanced aftershock forecasting models utilize machine learning to estimate the daily probabilities of subsequent large tremors, shifting disaster management from a purely reactive stance to a probabilistic, forward-looking strategy.

Mitigating Casualties and Destruction

While humanity cannot prevent earthquakes, the catastrophic loss of life and infrastructure can be heavily mitigated through proactive engineering and preparedness. Key defensive measures include:

- **Strict Seismic Building Codes:** Retrofitting older infrastructure and enforcing resilient architectural standards—such as base isolation systems and flexible steel frames—ensure buildings absorb shockwaves rather than collapsing.
- **Early Warning Systems:** Automated networks can detect the initial, harmless primary seismic waves (P-waves) and issue seconds-to-minutely warnings, allowing trains to halt, power grids to shut down, and citizens to take cover. E.g. Google Maps and Android work together to provide earthquake information by displaying crisis alert cards, emergency details, and affected area maps. While your phone's built-in Android system detects the actual seismic waves using tiny motion sensors, Google Maps helps visualize the epicenter, magnitude, and safety resources once an event occurs
- **Community Preparedness:** Regular drills, robust tsunami evacuation protocols, and public education are vital lifelines that turn scientific data into effective human survival.

Moving forward, the key to surviving our planet's restless tectonic activity lies in shifting from reactive disaster management to proactive resilience. Governments and scientific communities must prioritize universal early-warning networks, strict enforcement of modern seismic building codes, and cross-border data sharing to monitor hidden fault lines. Ultimately, by combining cutting-edge geophysical research with grassroots community preparedness, we can transform scientific insights into a powerful shield, ensuring that future megaequakes result in resilient communities rather than human tragedies.

HOW GNSS AND STRAIN

GNSS Tracking

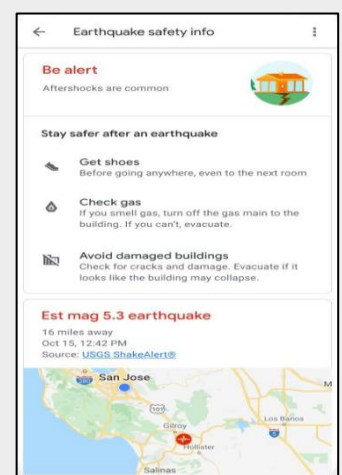
Uses satellite signals to find exact positions on Earth.

Measures slow movements of large land areas over months and years.

Records shifts in three directions: north, east, and up.

Strain Meter Tracking

Measures how



Nature's Invisible Economy

[Aiswarya C]

Forests, wetlands and mangroves do work worth trillions and never send an invoice. India is now learning what it costs when that work stops.

Every economy rests on a balance sheet it never audits. Forests filter the water that reaches a city's taps. Wetlands swallow the monsoon surge before it reaches the street. Bees and bats pollinate a large share of what ends up on the plate, and soil microbes quietly rebuild the fertility that farming spends.

Ecologists call these ecosystem services: the flow of benefits nature supplies free of charge, sorted by the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment into provisioning, regulating, cultural and supporting kinds.

India is unusually exposed to this ledger. Hundreds of millions of people draw part of their livelihood from forests. The Sundarbans mangroves have repeatedly absorbed the force of cyclones that would otherwise have landed on villages. Chennai and Mumbai learned the price of paved-over wetlands the hard way. Himalayan snow and forest hydrology feed the rivers that feed the plains. None of this appears as a line item in GDP. Its loss appears immediately, as flood damage, crop failure and migration.



That is precisely the difficulty. Ecosystem services are public goods: the benefits are diffuse and shared, the profits from clearing them are concentrated and immediate. National accounts register the timber felled, not the watershed lost. Responsibility is scattered across ministries and states. And the cost of conservation falls hardest on forest dwellers and pastoralists while the benefit accrues to distant cities, an asymmetry that turns conservation into conflict.

The correction begins with visibility. Natural capital accounting puts ecosystem stocks and flows into the national books, where budgets can finally see them; India has made a start through its environment statistics work. Payment for ecosystem services turns that recognition into money. The Finance Commission's use of forest cover as a criterion for sharing revenue with states is, in effect, a national scheme of this kind, and state-level watershed payments show the logic works closer to the ground.

Accounting alone restores nothing. A seawall must be poured again in thirty years; a mangrove belt planted today is thicker in thirty. Nature-based solutions are the rare infrastructure that appreciates. But it appreciates only under guard: mangroves survive where the fishing village has reason to protect them, forests regenerate where the households using them hold secure tenure and a share of what standing trees are worth. Treat those people as an obstacle to be compensated and restoration fails. Treat them as the workforce and it does not.

One Nation, One Election: Constitutional Questions Beyond Logistics

[Sarath KP]

Few constitutional proposals in recent years have stirred as much excitement—and as much apprehension—as the idea of *One Nation, One Election*. Its proponents make a persuasive administrative case: fewer elections mean lower public expenditure, less frequent enforcement of the Model Code of Conduct, better deployment of security forces, and governments that can focus more on governing than campaigning.



The High-Level Committee on Simultaneous Elections, chaired by former President Ram Nath Kovind, has reinforced these arguments, presenting a roadmap that seeks to restore synchronised electoral cycles through constitutional and statutory changes. These are important objectives, yet constitutions are not written merely to make governments function efficiently. They exist to ensure that power remains accountable, representative, and restrained.

India's Constitution was never intended to be a handbook for administrative convenience. It was designed to hold together an astonishingly diverse society by distributing power, respecting differences, and protecting democratic choice. That is why the real question before us is not whether simultaneous elections are administratively feasible, but whether they sit comfortably with the constitutional architecture of the Republic.

The first concern is federalism. Parliament and the State Legislatures derive their legitimacy from different democratic conversations. A voter in Kerala may judge a state government on public health or education, while the same voter may evaluate the Union government on foreign policy or national security. Simultaneous elections risk merging these distinct conversations into a single national narrative, where regional concerns struggle to compete with larger political themes. Democracy flourishes through diversity of voices; it need not march to a single electoral rhythm.

There is also the question of constitutional tenure. Articles 83 and 172 of the Indian constitution envisage a normal five-year term for legislatures, while also recognising that political realities may lead to premature dissolution. Even the Kovind Committee's proposals—such as introducing a common 'Appointed Date' and a one-time synchronisation of electoral cycles—would require significant constitutional departures from the existing framework of independently elected legislatures with separate electoral mandates. Achieving synchronisation would almost certainly require some assemblies to sacrifice part of their elected mandate, while others may continue beyond the tenure originally endorsed by the electorate. Administrative neatness may justify such adjustments, but constitutional morality demands a more searching question: can the people's mandate be shortened or extended simply to fit an electoral calendar?

The proposal also touches the heart of India's parliamentary democracy. Under the Westminster system, a government survives only so long as it enjoys the confidence of the House. If a government falls before completing its term, should constitutional conventions bend to preserve a pre-fixed election schedule? A system that begins adjusting parliamentary accountability to suit administrative convenience risks placing procedure above principle.

None of this suggests that electoral reform should be resisted. India's electoral process can certainly become less expensive, less disruptive, and more efficient. But efficiency, however desirable, is a means—not an end. The strength of a constitutional democracy lies not in how seamlessly it conducts elections, but in how faithfully it preserves the values those elections are meant to protect.

Ultimately, the debate on *One Nation, One Election* is not about synchronising polling dates. It is about defining the character of Indian democracy itself. The choice before the Republic is not between efficiency and inefficiency, but between administrative convenience and constitutional fidelity. That is a distinction too important to be lost in the mechanics of the electoral calendar. Constitutional democracies are rarely judged by the ease with which they are governed; they are judged by the principles on which they choose to govern.

Article IV

Presidential Reference under Article 143: Constitutional Dialogue between the Executive and the Judiciary

[Jithin Ponnezhan]

Constitutional democracies thrive not merely because they establish institutions of governance but because they create mechanisms through which these institutions engage in continuous dialogue. The Constitution of India establishes a system of checks, balances, consultation and constitutional conversation among the Legislature, Executive, and Judiciary. Article 143 occupies a distinctive position and enables the President of India to seek the Supreme Court's advisory opinion on questions of law or fact of public importance.

Article 143 transforms the Supreme Court from a mere adjudicatory institution into a constitutional adviser. It creates a structured avenue for dialogue between the Executive and the Judiciary without compromising judicial independence. Rather than resolving disputes after conflicts emerge, Article 143 seeks to prevent constitutional crises by enabling constitutional consultation before executive or legislative action. The significance of this provision extends beyond legal advice. Every Presidential Reference reflects a moment of constitutional uncertainty where the executive seeks judicial guidance on issues affecting federalism, separation of powers, minority rights, property, elections, resource allocation, or national unity. Consequently, the jurisprudence under Article 143 offers a remarkable narrative of India's constitutional evolution.

Article 143 has generated significant debates. Can advisory opinions undermine judicial neutrality? Does the executive occasionally use references to obtain political legitimacy rather than legal clarification? These questions have shaped scholarly discourse for decades. The history of Presidential References demonstrates that Article 143 has been invoked sparingly, only on matters possessing extraordinary constitutional significance. The advisory jurisdiction has become a constitutional safety valve, allowing institutions to resolve uncertainty without institutional confrontation.

Nature and Scope of Presidential Reference

Article 143 consists of two distinct clauses.

- Article 143 (1): The President may refer any question of law or fact of public importance which has arisen or which is likely to arise. Here, the Supreme Court may tender or may refuse to tender its opinion to the president. Example: The Supreme Court declined to provide its opinion in 1993 with respect to the Ram Janmabhoomi case.
- Article 143(2): It allows the President to refer disputes arising from out of any pre-constitution treaty, agreement, covenant, sanad or other similar instruments. In this case, the SC must tender its opinion to the President.

In both the cases, the opinion expressed by the SC is only advisory and not a judicial pronouncement. Hence, it is not binding on the president; she may follow or may not follow the opinion. However, it facilitates the government to have an authoritative legal opinion on a matter to be decided by it.

Presidential Reference (2025): Timelines for Governors and the President on State Bills

In 2025, the President sought the Supreme Court's advisory opinion after growing constitutional friction over delays by Governors and the President in acting upon Bills passed by State Legislatures. The reference followed judicial observations on gubernatorial inaction and raised broader questions concerning the scope of Articles 200 and 201.

Among the principal issues were:

- Whether the Constitution prescribes or permits judicially enforceable timelines for Governors and the President to act on State Bills.
- Whether the exercise of powers under Articles 200 and 201 is subject to judicial review.
- Whether constitutional authorities may indefinitely withhold assent without taking a decision.

Answering the reference made by the President of India, Droupadi Murmu, under Article 143 of the Constitution, the Supreme Court held that the Court cannot impose any timelines for decisions of the President and the Governor on granting assent to Bills under Articles 200 and 201 of the Constitution. The Court further held that the concept of Courts declaring "deemed assent" to the Bills if the timelines are breached was antithetical to the spirit of the Constitution and against the doctrine of separation of

powers. The concept of Courts declaring "deemed assent" is virtually a take over of the functions reserved for the Governor.

At the same time, the Court observed if there is a prolonged or unexplained delay by the Governor which frustrates the legislative process, then the Court can exercise a limited power of judicial review to direct the Governor to decide in a time-bound manner, without observing anything on the merits of the Bill.

Regardless of the eventual advisory opinion, the reference illustrates the continuing relevance of Article 143 in addressing constitutional uncertainty before it develops into a deeper institutional conflict.

Article 143 as Constitutional Dialogue

Unlike ordinary litigation, where the Court responds to competing claims of parties, the advisory jurisdiction allows constitutional questions to be examined in an atmosphere relatively free from adversarial pressures. The Executive may seek guidance before implementing a policy, thereby reducing the likelihood of unconstitutional action. The Judiciary in turn, provides constitutional interpretation without directly assuming executive functions. Such dialogue promotes constitutional stability and reinforces public confidence in governance.

Article 143 also contributes to cooperative constitutionalism. It enables constitutional institutions to resolve ambiguity through legal reasoning instead of political confrontation. In a diverse federal polity like India, where questions often arise at the intersection of law, politics, and governance, such dialogue serves as an important mechanism for preserving constitutional equilibrium.

Future of Advisory Jurisdiction

The constitutional challenges confronting India in the twenty-first century are increasingly complex. Questions concerning digital privacy, artificial intelligence, climate governance, cooperative federalism, electoral reforms, fiscal relations, constitutional offices, and the powers of independent institutions are likely to generate novel constitutional dilemmas.

In this context, Article 143 may assume renewed significance as a mechanism for obtaining authoritative constitutional guidance before conflicts escalate into institutional crises. However, its future effectiveness depends upon principled restraint by both the Executive and the Judiciary.

The Executive should invoke Article 143 only in cases involving genuine constitutional uncertainty of exceptional public importance, and not as a means of securing political validation. Equally, the Supreme Court should continue its established practice of answering only those references that advance constitutional governance while declining questions that are hypothetical, politically motivated, or lacking legal necessity.

There is also a compelling case for evolving clearer constitutional conventions regarding the circumstances in which Presidential References should be made. Such conventions would preserve the exceptional character of Article 143 and prevent its routine use. Ultimately, the vitality of Article 143 will depend not merely upon its textual provisions but upon the constitutional statesmanship of the institutions entrusted with its operation.

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COURSES

➤ Prelims Cum Mains Regular Batch

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

➤ Prelims Cum Mains Weekend Batch

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

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

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

➤ Civil Service Foundation Course

For Higher Secondary School Students

Course Fee: ₹ 5,900 (₹ 5,000 + GST ₹ 900)

➤ Talent Development Course

For Middle School & High School Students

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

➤ REHEARSE- Prelims Test Series

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

➤ RESILIENCE- Mains Test Series

17 Tests including compulsory papers

➤ REKINDLE- PCM REPEATERS BATCH

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

➤ REPHRASE- Mains Answer Writing Programme

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

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

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

OPTIONAL SUBJECTS

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

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

KERALA STATE CIVIL SERVICE ACADEMY

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