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Current Affairs Today — April 1, 2026

1 April 2026

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Current Affairs Today — April 1, 2026

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🔪 WHY IN NEWS

April 1, 2026 marked simultaneous milestones in space science (Artemis II launch), semiconductor manufacturing (Kaynes OSAT inauguration), indigenous naval shipbuilding (INS Shachi launch), and biodiversity governance (Nagoya Protocol leadership, Bhavasagara repository) — making it one of the richest single-day current affairs editions of 2026.

ARTEMIS II — INDIA-RELEVANT NASA MISSION LAUNCHES

NASA launched Artemis II on April 1, 2026, marking the first crewed mission beyond low Earth orbit since Apollo 17 in December 1972 — a 53-year gap — and the first crewed test of the Orion spacecraft and Space Launch System (SLS).

Mission Overview

Artemis II is not a lunar landing mission — it is a circumlunar flyby test. The crew of four will travel around the Moon's far side and return to Earth in approximately 10 days, validating the Orion spacecraft's life support, navigation, and re-entry systems before the landing mission (Artemis III).

Crew

- **Reid Wiseman** (Commander, USA) — oldest person to leave low Earth orbit
- **Victor Glover** (Pilot, USA) — first person of colour to travel beyond low Earth orbit
- **Christina Koch** (Mission Specialist, USA) — first woman to travel beyond low Earth orbit and to the Moon's vicinity
- **Jeremy Hansen** (Mission Specialist, Canada) — first non-US citizen to travel beyond low Earth orbit and to the lunar vicinity

Why It Matters for India

India's Chandrayaan and Gaganyaan programmes operate in the same strategic space. ISRO is a partner nation in the Artemis Accords (signed October 2023) — the US-led framework for peaceful lunar exploration. India's LVM3 was identified for potential Artemis-related commercial launches.

UPSC Angle

Artemis programme, Artemis Accords, SLS, Orion spacecraft, Apollo 17 (last crewed lunar mission, 1972).

Mains GS-3: *India's space diplomacy and Artemis Accords — opportunities and constraints.*

★ FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGEPEDIA

ARTEMIS II — CORE DATA:

Launch date: April 1, 2026; Kennedy Space Center, Florida

Mission duration: ~10 days; circumlunar flyby (no landing)

Launch vehicle: Space Launch System (SLS) Block 1

Spacecraft: Orion (crewed); second flight of SLS

Crew: Reid Wiseman (CDR), Victor Glover (PLT), Christina Koch (MS1), Jeremy Hansen (MS2, Canada/CSA)

First crewed mission beyond LEO since Apollo 17 (December 7–19, 1972)

ARTEMIS PROGRAMME CONTEXT:

Artemis I: November 2022 — uncrewed lunar flyby (successful)

Artemis II: April 2026 — crewed circumlunar flyby

Artemis III: TBD — first crewed lunar landing since 1972; first woman on Moon

Budget: ~\$93 billion since 2012 (NASA programmes leading to SLS/Orion)

INDIA & ARTEMIS ACCORDS:

India signed the Artemis Accords: June 2023 (PM Modi's Washington visit)

ISRO-NASA joint missions: NISAR satellite (joint Earth observation, launch 2025)

Gaganyaan: India's first crewed orbital mission (ISRO); target 2026-27

OTHER RELEVANT FACTS:

Apollo 17 crew: Gene Cernan, Harrison Schmitt, Ron Evans (last humans on Moon — December 1972)

ISS altitude: ~400 km LEO; Moon distance: ~384,400 km average

Artemis Accords: 52 signatory nations as of 2026

KAYNES SEMICONDUCTOR OSAT PLANT — INDIA'S CHIP ECOSYSTEM

PM Narendra Modi inaugurated the Rs 3,300 crore Kaynes Technology semiconductor Outsourced Semiconductor Assembly and Test (OSAT) facility in Sanand, Gujarat, on March 31, 2026 — the first OSAT plant to achieve commercial production in India under the India Semiconductor Mission.

What is an OSAT Facility?

OSAT (Outsourced Semiconductor Assembly and Test) facilities perform the back-end stages of semiconductor manufacturing: assembly, packaging, and testing of chips after fabrication at a foundry. They are the final step before chips reach consumer electronics, EVs, and industrial systems.

Kaynes Technology — Key Details

- Company: Kaynes Technology India Ltd (listed on BSE/NSE)
- Location: Sanand, Gujarat (Electronics Manufacturing Cluster)
- Investment: ₹3,307 crore
- Products: **Intelligent Power Modules (IPMs)** — critical for EVs, industrial drives, energy-efficient appliances
- Production capacity: ~6.3 million units per day (at full scale)
- PM Modi’s remark: “A new bridge has been built between Sanand and Silicon Valley”

India Semiconductor Mission (ISM)

The ISM under MeitY provides incentives for semiconductor fabs, OSAT facilities, and compound semiconductor plants. Approved projects include:

- **Tata Electronics** — semiconductor fab (Dholera, Gujarat) + OSAT (Assam)
- **CG Power** — OSAT (Sanand, Gujarat) with Renesas/Stars Microelectronics
- **Kaynes Technology** — OSAT (Sanand, Gujarat) ← this facility

UPSC Angle

OSAT definition; India Semiconductor Mission; Kaynes Technology; Sanand Electronics Cluster; IPMs.

Mains GS-3: “Semiconductor supply chain security — evaluate India’s India Semiconductor Mission against global competition from Taiwan, South Korea and China.”

★ FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGEPEDIA

KAYNES OSAT PLANT:

Location: Sanand, Gujarat

Investment: ₹3,307 crore

Product focus: Intelligent Power Modules (IPMs) for EVs, industry

Capacity: ~6.3 million units/day at full scale

Type: OSAT (assembly + packaging + testing; no wafer fabrication)

INDIA SEMICONDUCTOR MISSION (ISM):

Nodal ministry: MeitY

Budget: ₹76,000 crore total incentive outlay

Approved projects: Tata Electronics (Dholera fab + Assam OSAT), CG Power (Sanand, with Renesas), Kaynes (Sanand)

India's semiconductor market size: ~\$30 billion (2024); target \$100 billion by 2030

SEMICONDUCTOR SUPPLY CHAIN CONTEXT:

Taiwan (TSMC): ~60% of global foundry market

CHIPS Act (USA, 2022): \$52.7 billion for domestic chip manufacturing

EU Chips Act (2023): €43 billion target

India's advantage: design talent (Indian-origin CEOs at Intel, Google, Microsoft, AMD)

OTHER RELEVANT FACTS:

Sanand Industrial Area: also hosts Tata Nano plant (converted), Ford (exited), Suzuki, Vestas

Semi-conductors in India: ~85% imported as of 2024

OSAT vs Fab: Fab = wafer fabrication (capital intensive, TSMC-level); OSAT = downstream packaging/testing

INS SHACHI — FIRST OF 11 NEXT GENERATION OFFSHORE PATROL VESSELS

Goa Shipyard Limited (GSL) ceremonially launched INS Shachi (Yard 1280), the first of 11 Next Generation Offshore Patrol Vessels (NGOPVs) being built concurrently at GSL (Goa) and GRSE (Kolkata) under a Rs 9,781 crore contract signed in March 2023.

NGOPV Programme

FEATURE	DETAILS
Total vessels	11 NGOPVs
Shipyards	GSL (Goa) + GRSE (Kolkata) — concurrent construction
Contract	₹9,781 crore; MoD–GSL–GRSE, March 2023
Length	~110 metres
Displacement	2,900 tonnes
Speed	25+ knots
Range	8,500 nautical miles
Indigenous content	~76%

Roles

Coastal and offshore surveillance · anti-piracy operations · search and rescue · humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) · protection of offshore assets (oil rigs, EEZ) · counter-infiltration

GSL Also Delivered ICGS Achal

Alongside the NGOPV launch, GSL delivered ICGS Achal — a Fast Patrol Vessel (FPV) — to the Indian Coast Guard on the same day, marking dual milestones.

UPSC Angle

*NGOPV programme; GSL; GRSE; INS Shachi; ₹9,781 crore contract; 76% indigenous content. **Mains GS-3:** India's defence indigenisation — DPP 2020, iDEX, Positive Indigenisation Lists and their outcomes.*

★ FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGEPEDIA

INS SHACHI / NGOPV:

Yard: 1280 (first of 11 NGOPVs)

Shipyards: Goa Shipyard Limited (GSL), Vasco-da-Gama, Goa

Contract: ₹9,781 crore; signed March 2023; GSL + GRSE concurrent build

Specifications: 110m, 2,900 tonnes, 25+ knots, 8,500 nm range

Indigenous content: ~76%

Launch ceremony: Mrs Shagun Sobti (wife of DCNS); Vice Admiral Tarun Sobti, DCNS, presided

GSL — GARDEN REACH VS GOA SHIPYARD:

GSL = Goa Shipyard Limited (Goa) — builds OPVs, survey vessels, FPVs

GRSE = Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers (Kolkata) — builds frigates (P17A), corvettes, OPVs, LSTs

Both are Defence PSUs under Ministry of Defence

INDIA'S NAVAL SHIPBUILDING PIPELINE (2026):

P17A frigates: Taragiri (4th), Vindhyagiri (5th) — GRSE-built; Udaygiri delivered

INS Dunagiri: delivered March 2026 (GRSE)

NGOPV (11 vessels): GSL + GRSE, ongoing

INS Vikrant (IAC-1): commissioned September 2022 — India's first domestic aircraft carrier

OTHER RELEVANT FACTS:

India's coastline: 7,516 km; EEZ: ~2.37 million sq km (one of world's largest)

ICGS Achal: FPV delivered to Indian Coast Guard (same day as Shachi launch)

Positive Indigenisation List IV (2024): 98 additional items mandated domestic production

IVFRT SCHEME 2026-31 — DIGITAL IMMIGRATION SYSTEM EXTENDED

The Union Cabinet approved the continuation of the Immigration, Visa, Foreigners Registration & Tracking (IVFRT) Scheme from April 1, 2026 to March 31, 2031, with a financial outlay of ₹1,800 crore — a 32% increase from the previous cycle's ₹1,365 crore.

What is IVFRT?

IVFRT is India's integrated digital platform for immigration, visa issuance, and registration of foreigners. It interlinks:

- Visa processing (e-Visa, sticker visa, diplomatic visa)
- Immigration clearance at international borders
- Foreigners Regional Registration Offices (FRROs)
- Intelligence sharing with MHA, MEA, and security agencies

Coverage and Performance (2021–2026 cycle)

- **Immigration posts covered:** 117
- **FRROs:** 15
- **Foreigners Registration Officers:** 850+
- **e-Visa clearance within 72 hours:** 91.24%
- **Fast Track Immigration-Trusted Traveller Programme (FTI-TTP):** Automated e-gates at 13 major airports; immigration clearance reduced from 2.5–3 minutes to **30 seconds**

2026–31 Enhancements Planned

Complete contactless, faceless visa process · AI-based risk profiling · biometric upgrades · expanded FTI-TTP to more airports · integration with NATGRID (National Intelligence Grid)

UPSC Angle

*IVFRT; FTI-TTP; FRRO; NATGRID; ₹1,800 crore outlay 2026-31; 117 immigration posts. **Mains GS-2:***

“Digital governance in border management — evaluate India's IVFRT scheme against internal security and facilitation objectives.”

★ FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGEPEDIA

IVFRT SCHEME:

Full form: Immigration, Visa, Foreigners Registration & Tracking

Ministry: Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)

Current cycle: April 1, 2026 – March 31, 2031

Outlay: ₹1,800 crore (previous: ₹1,364.88 crore for 2021-26)

Immigration posts: 117; FRROs: 15; FROs: 850+

e-Visa clearance in 72 hrs: 91.24%

FTI-TTP (FAST TRACK IMMIGRATION–TRUSTED TRAVELLER PROGRAMME):

Airports: 13 major airports (automated e-gates)

Time reduced: 2.5–3 minutes → 30 seconds per traveller

OTHER RELEVANT FACTS:

India's e-Visa: available for 167+ countries; introduced 2014

NATGRID: National Intelligence Grid — links 21 security/intelligence databases

FRRO: Foreigners Regional Registration Office (under MHA); manages long-stay foreigners

India processes ~30 million international passenger movements annually

CCTV SECURITY MANDATE — CHINESE BRANDS EFFECTIVELY BANNED

From April 1, 2026, India's new mandatory certification regime for internet-connected CCTV cameras came into force — effectively banning the sale of uncertified devices, particularly Chinese brands like Hikvision, Dahua, and TP-Link, which have not obtained BIS/STQC certification.

The New Rule

MeitY issued Essential Requirements (ER) norms for IP-connected CCTV cameras in April 2024, giving the industry a two-year compliance window. From April 1, 2026:

- All internet-connected CCTV cameras sold in India must be STQC-certified (Standardisation Testing and Quality Certification)
- Manufacturers must declare the country of origin of the System-on-Chip (SoC)
- Devices tested against cybersecurity vulnerabilities at accredited labs

- **507 camera models are currently certified** for sale

Why Chinese Brands Are Blocked

The government is not certifying products using Chinese chipsets or manufactured by Hikvision, Dahua, and TP-Link — citing national security risks around potential surveillance backdoors. These brands collectively dominated the Indian CCTV market until 2024.

Market Shift

- Domestic players now hold >80% market share (early 2026)
- Key Indian CCTV makers: CP Plus (Aditya Infotech), Honeywell India, Bosch India
- Existing installed Chinese CCTV devices are NOT banned — only new sales

UPSC Angle

*STQC; BIS certification; MeitY; Essential Requirements (ER) norms; Hikvision/Dahua ban. **Mains GS-3 (Internal Security + S&T):** “Evaluate the cybersecurity implications of Chinese hardware in India’s surveillance infrastructure.”*

★ FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGEPEDIA

CCTV CERTIFICATION MANDATE:

Effective date: April 1, 2026

Nodal ministry: MeitY

Certification body: STQC (Standardisation Testing and Quality Certification Directorate)

Standard: BIS mandatory certification + Essential Requirements (ER) norms (April 2024)

Certified models (as of April 2026): 507

Banned brands (de facto): Hikvision, Dahua, TP-Link (Chinese; refused certification)

Existing installations: NOT banned

SECURITY CONTEXT:

USA banned Hikvision and Dahua in 2022 (FCC ruling) for national security

UK placed Hikvision/Dahua on restricted list for government buildings (2022)

India's CCTV market (2024): ~₹7,000 crore/year

Domestic market share: >80% (2026, up from ~20% in 2020)

OTHER RELEVANT FACTS:

STQC: under MeitY; operates 20+ test labs across India

SoC (System-on-Chip): the brain of a CCTV — integrates CPU, GPU, memory controller, network interface

BIS: Bureau of Indian Standards (under Ministry of Consumer Affairs)

India has 130+ million CCTV cameras installed (2024) — 3rd largest market globally

INDIA LEADS WORLD IN NAGOYA PROTOCOL COMPLIANCE

India has issued 3,561 of the 6,311 total Internationally Recognised Certificates of Compliance (IRCCs) globally under the Nagoya Protocol — a 56.43% share — confirmed through MoEFCC data released on March 31, 2026.

What Are IRCCs?

When a country grants access to its **genetic resources** (plants, animals, microbes, traditional knowledge) to a foreign researcher or company under the Nagoya Protocol, it issues a permit. That permit is uploaded to the ABS Clearing-House and becomes an IRCC — internationally visible proof of lawful, prior-informed-consent-based access.

India's Framework

- **Biological Diversity Act, 2002** — the domestic law
- **National Biodiversity Authority (NBA)** — apex body; grants approvals for access
- **State Biodiversity Boards (SBBs)** — 33 boards for state-level access
- **Biodiversity Management Committees (BMCs)** — at local body level; maintain People's Biodiversity Registers (PBRs)

Benefit Sharing (2017–2025)

₹216.31 crore mobilised through NBA approvals; ₹139.69 crore disbursed to benefit claimants.

UPSC Angle

Nagoya Protocol; IRCC; ABS; CBD; NBA; BDA 2002; India's 56.43% share of IRCCs. Mains GS-3: "Access and Benefit Sharing under the Nagoya Protocol — assess India's performance and challenges in implementing the Biological Diversity Act."

★ FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGEPEDIA

INDIA & NAGOYA PROTOCOL:

IRCCs issued by India: 3,561 out of 6,311 globally → 56.43% share

Countries issuing any IRCCs: only 34 of 142 registered nations

Next highest: France (964), Spain (320), Argentina (257), Panama (156), Kenya (144)

Benefit sharing (2017-2025): ₹216.31 crore mobilised; ₹139.69 crore disbursed

NAGOYA PROTOCOL:

Full name: Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilisation

Parent treaty: Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), 1992

Adopted: October 29, 2010, Nagoya, Japan; entered force: October 12, 2014

India ratified: 2012

INDIA'S BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK:

Biological Diversity Act: 2002

National Biodiversity Authority (NBA): Chennai; 2003

State Biodiversity Boards (SBBs): 33

People's Biodiversity Registers (PBRs): ~2.7 lakh registered

ABS Clearing-House: managed by CBD Secretariat, Montreal

OTHER RELEVANT FACTS:

CBD's 3 objectives: conservation + sustainable use + fair benefit sharing

Aichi Biodiversity Targets (2010-2020): replaced by Kunming-Montreal GBF (2022)

Kunming-Montreal GBF: "30×30" target — protect 30% of land and ocean by 2030

Nagoya Protocol's ABS: counters "biopiracy" — theft of genetic resources without consent

NAVEGAON-NAGZIRA TIGER RESERVE GETS FULL BUFFER CONTROL

From April 1, 2026, the Navegaon-Nagzira Tiger Reserve (NNTR) in Maharashtra's Gondia district assumed administrative control of its 652.20 sq km notified buffer area, expanding its total size to 1,305.88 sq km — pursuant to a government resolution issued December 24, 2025.

About NNTR

- **Location:** Gondia and Bhandara districts, Maharashtra (eastern Maharashtra — Vidarbha region)
- **Established:** 2013 (declared Tiger Reserve)
- **Previous size:** 653.68 sq km (core + existing managed area)
- **New total size:** 1,305.88 sq km (core + full buffer)
- **Tiger count:** ~70+ tigers (one of the fastest-growing populations in central India)
- **Landscape corridor:** Part of the Central Indian Tiger Landscape — connects with Pench, Tadoba-Andhari, Umred-Karandla, and Bor reserves

Significance of Buffer Zone Control

Under the Wildlife Protection Act (WPA), 1972 (as amended 2006), Tiger Reserves comprise a **core zone** (inviolable) and a **buffer zone** (multiple-use). Buffer zone control enables:

- Year-round tourism management (including monsoon season)
- Ecotourism infrastructure (safari gates, homestays, adventure tourism)
- Coordinated anti-poaching and patrol
- Habitat corridor protection

UPSC Angle

NNTR location (Gondia, Maharashtra); total area 1,305.88 sq km; Tiger Reserve established 2013; WPA buffer zone provisions. **Mains GS-3:** Tiger reserve management — core vs buffer zone framework under NTCA and state forest departments.

★ FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGEPEDIA

■ NNTR — KEY DATA:

- Full name: Navegaon-Nagzira Tiger Reserve
- Location: Gondia + Bhandara districts, Maharashtra
- Established as Tiger Reserve: 2013
- Total area (from April 1, 2026): 1,305.88 sq km
- Buffer area transferred: 652.20 sq km
- Tiger population: ~70+ (growing)
- Landscape: Central Indian Tiger Landscape (CITL)

■ TIGER RESERVES IN INDIA (2026):

- Total Tiger Reserves: 57 (as of 2024-25)
- Project Tiger: launched 1973 (PM Indira Gandhi); now under NTCA
- NTCA: National Tiger Conservation Authority; under MoEFCC; statutory body under WPA
- India's tiger population: 3,682 (2022 census — 4th cycle); highest in the world
- States with most tigers: Madhya Pradesh (785), Karnataka (563), Uttarakhand (560)

■ WPA BUFFER ZONE FRAMEWORK:

- WPA 1972 Section 38V: defines core (critical tiger habitat) and buffer zones
- Core zone: inviolate; no human activity; notified by state government
- Buffer zone: multiple-use; managed for human-wildlife coexistence
- NTCA annual tiger monitoring: camera trap + pugmark surveys

■ OTHER RELEVANT FACTS:

- Maharashtra's Tiger Reserves: Tadoba-Andhari, Melghat, Pench, Navegaon-Nagzira, Sahyadri, Bor, Tipheshwar (7 total)
- Central Indian landscape: largest contiguous tiger habitat globally
- NNTR connectivity: corridors to Pench (MP), Tadoba (Chandrapur), Umred-Karandla (Nagpur)

BHAVASAGARA — INDIA'S FIRST DEEP-SEA FAUNA NATIONAL REPOSITORY

On March 30, 2026, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) officially designated CMLRE's "Bhavasagara" Referral Centre in Kochi as India's first National Repository for deep-sea fauna — under the Biological Diversity Act, 2002.

What is Bhavasagara?

- **Institution:** Centre for Marine Living Resources & Ecology (CMLRE), Kochi, Kerala
- **Parent ministry:** Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES)
- **Collection:** 3,500+ taxonomically identified and geo-referenced voucher specimens
- **Scope:** Invertebrates (cnidarians, annelids, molluscs, arthropods, echinoderms) + vertebrates (elasmobranchs, teleostean fishes) collected from India's deep-sea regions

Significance

- Provides a foundational resource for ocean scientists studying India's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) depths
- Supports **Blue Economy** policy by cataloguing exploitable and protected marine genetic resources
- Aligns with **UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2030)**
- Enables compliance with **CBD** and **Nagoya Protocol** for marine genetic resources

Deep Oceans Mission Link

India's **Deep Ocean Mission** (launched 2021, ₹4,077 crore, 5-year) aims to develop technology for deep-sea resource exploration. Bhavasagara provides the **taxonomy** baseline needed to identify and assess biodiversity at mission exploration sites.

UPSC Angle

Bhavasagara; CMLRE; MoES; Biological Diversity Act 2002; Deep Ocean Mission; Blue Economy. Mains GS-3: "Blue economy and deep-sea resource governance — examine India's institutional framework for marine biodiversity protection."

★ FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGE PEDIA

BHAVASAGARA:

Full name: Bhavasagara Referral Centre

Location: CMLRE, Kochi, Kerala

Ministry: MoES (Ministry of Earth Sciences)

Designation: National Repository for Deep-Sea Fauna (under Biological Diversity Act, 2002)

Date of designation: March 30, 2026 (by MoEFCC)

Specimens: 3,500+ (taxonomically identified + geo-referenced)

CMLRE:

Full name: Centre for Marine Living Resources & Ecology

Location: Kochi, Kerala

Parent: Ministry of Earth Sciences

Focus: marine biodiversity, fisheries, EEZ resources

DEEP OCEAN MISSION:

Launched: June 2021

Budget: ₹4,077 crore (5-year)

Ministry: MoES

Key component: Matsyayantra — India's deep-sea manned submersible (target: 6,000m depth)

India's EEZ: ~2.37 million sq km; exclusive rights to resources therein

OTHER RELEVANT FACTS:

Biological Diversity Act 2002: authorises MoEFCC to designate repositories

UN Decade of Ocean Science: 2021-2030; goal — generate science for sustainable ocean governance

India's coastline: 7,516 km; maritime zones: territorial sea (12 nm) + EEZ (200 nm)

Blue Economy policy: launched 2023; aims to double ocean-related GDP by 2030

CEC REMOVAL MOTION — FIRST IN INDIAN HISTORY

The INDIA bloc submitted a notice to Parliament seeking the removal of Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar, backed by 190+ MPs across both Houses — marking the first time in India’s constitutional history that a formal removal motion has been moved against a sitting CEC.

Constitutional Framework

Article 324: The Election Commission comprises the CEC and other Election Commissioners appointed by the President. **Article 324(5):** The CEC can be removed only “in like manner and on like grounds as a judge of the Supreme Court” — i.e., by an order of the President passed after an address by each House of Parliament supported by a special majority (majority of total membership + 2/3 of members present and voting).

Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners Act, 2023

This Act (passed August 2023, replacing the Election Commission Act 1991) governs appointment and service conditions of the CEC. **Controversy:** The original 2023 Act removed the Chief Justice of India from the selection committee — replacing it with a Cabinet minister. This was challenged in the Supreme Court.

Charges Against CEC Gyanesh Kumar

- ❶ Partisan conduct — bias in managing electoral rolls
- ❷ Deliberate obstruction of electoral fraud investigation
- ❸ Mass disenfranchisement — specifically: Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in West Bengal
- ❹ Micro-observers deployed selectively in West Bengal (Opposition allegation)

Numbers Challenge

190+ MPs signed: ~130 Lok Sabha + 63 Rajya Sabha. For a successful removal: need majority of total LS membership (272+) and 2/3 of members present — well above current signatory count.

UPSC Angle

Article 324; CEC removal procedure (like SC judge); CEC Act 2023; SIR (Special Intensive Revision); Gyanesh Kumar. **Mains GS-2:** “Electoral Commission independence — examine the constitutional safeguards for the CEC and whether the 2023 Act undermines them.”

★ FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGE PEDIA

CEC REMOVAL — CONSTITUTIONAL BASIS:

Article 324(5): CEC removable only by Presidential order after special majority address in Parliament

Procedure: same as removal of Supreme Court judge (Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968)

Required majority: majority of total membership of each House + 2/3 of members present and voting

Current CEC: Gyanesh Kumar (appointed February 2025 under 2023 Act)

CEC AND OTHER ELECTION COMMISSIONERS ACT, 2023:

Passed: August 2023; replaced Election Commission (Conditions of Service) Act, 1991

Selection committee: PM (Chair) + Cabinet Minister + Leader of Opposition (3-member)

Controversy: removed CJI from selection committee; SC challenge pending

The 2023 Act was reviewed by Supreme Court in March 2023 (Anoop Baranwal case) — SC directed inclusion of CJI; Legislature passed 2023 Act reverting to executive committee

ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA:

Constitutional body: Article 324

Currently: 3 members — 1 CEC + 2 ECs

Previous CECs: T.N. Seshan (1990-96, landmark reforms), S.Y. Quraishi, Nasim Zaidi, Om Prakash Rawat, Sunil Arora, Sushil Chandra, Rajiv Kumar, Gyanesh Kumar

OTHER RELEVANT FACTS:

SIR (Special Intensive Revision): revision of electoral rolls by EC; Opposition alleged targeting of West Bengal Muslim voters

India's electoral roll: ~970 million registered voters (2024)

ECI established: January 25, 1950 (celebrated as National Voters Day)

PERSONS IN NEWS

Victor Glover — NASA astronaut; pilot of Artemis II; becomes the first person of colour to travel beyond low Earth orbit. Previously served on ISS Expedition 64 (November 2020 – April 2021).

Reid Wiseman — NASA astronaut; Commander of Artemis II; becomes oldest person to leave low Earth orbit.

Jeremy Hansen — Canadian Space Agency (CSA) astronaut; mission specialist on Artemis II; first non-US citizen to travel beyond low Earth orbit.

UPSC RELEVANCE

All entities, schemes, institutions, and figures cited above — see individual Facts Corners.

MAINS GS-3:

Semiconductor policy, naval shipbuilding indigenisation, deep-sea governance, biodiversity compliance.

MAINS GS-2:

Election Commission independence, CEC removal procedure, immigration digital governance.

INTERVIEW:

“India is the world’s largest democracy by voter count and the world leader in IRCC issuance under the Nagoya Protocol — how do these achievements reflect on India’s institutional capacity?”

★ FACTS CORNER — COMBINED QUICK REFERENCE

APRIL 1, 2026 — KEY NUMBERS:

Artemis II launch: April 1, 2026; 4 crew; ~10 days; circumlunar flyby

Kaynes plant: ₹3,307 crore; Sanand, Gujarat; 6.3 mn units/day capacity; OSAT

INS Shachi (NGOPV): 110m; 2,900 tonnes; ₹9,781 crore (11 vessels); 76% indigenous

IVFRT Scheme: ₹1,800 crore; 2026-31; 117 posts; 91.24% e-Visa in 72 hrs

CCTV mandate: 507 certified models; BIS/STQC; Hikvision/Dahua/TP-Link blocked

Nagoya Protocol: India 3,561 IRCCs (56.43% of global 6,311)

NNTR: 1,305.88 sq km total; Gondia, Maharashtra; 652.20 sq km buffer added

Bhavasagara: 3,500+ specimens; CMLRE Kochi; Deep-Sea Fauna National Repository

CEC removal notice: 190+ MPs; Article 324(5); first in Indian history

OTHER RELEVANT FACTS:

Artemis Accords signatories: 52 nations (India signed June 2023)

India Semiconductor Mission total outlay: ₹76,000 crore

Project Tiger launched: 1973; India's tiger count (2022): 3,682

Deep Ocean Mission: ₹4,077 crore; Matsyayantra submersible; 6,000m target depth

RBI extended export credit (450 days) to June 30, 2026; India's Feb 2026 exports: \$76.13 bn (+11.05%)

INCOME TAX ACT, 2025 REPLACES THE 64-YEAR-OLD 1961 ACT

The Income Tax Act, 2025 — which received Presidential assent in August 2025 — comes into operational force from April 1, 2026 (Assessment Year 2026-27). It replaces the Income Tax Act, 1961, which had accumulated 64 years of amendments, court rulings, and interpretations into a document of 819 sections across 47 chapters.

Key Structural Changes

FEATURE	OLD ACT (1961)	NEW ACT (2025)
Sections	819	536
Chapters	47	23
“Previous Year” + “Assessment Year”	Two separate concepts	Unified “Tax Year”
Language	Dense legal prose	Tables, formulas, simplified drafting

The “Tax Year” change: Under the old Act, income earned in “previous year” (April–March) was assessed in the “assessment year” (following April–March) — a source of chronic confusion. The 2025 Act replaces both with a single “Tax Year” concept, aligning India’s tax year with the financial year.

Tax slabs and rates unchanged — the 2025 Act is a restructuring and simplification exercise, not a rate revision. The Budget 2026 income tax changes (nil tax up to ₹12 lakh) were already implemented under the Finance Act; the Income Tax Act, 2025 carries forward these rates in the new structure.

Digital and faceless procedures expanded — the new Act codifies faceless assessment, faceless appeals, and digital filing as the default, not the exception.

UPSC Angle

*Income Tax Act, 2025 (replacing Act of 1961); Tax Year concept; CBDT; Presidential assent August 2025; effective April 1, 2026 (AY 2026-27); 536 sections, 23 chapters. **Mains GS-3:** “Tax reform and simplification — evaluate the Income Tax Act, 2025 as a structural reform. Does simplification alone address India’s tax compliance challenges?”*

★ FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGEPEDIA

INCOME TAX ACT, 2025:

Replaces: Income Tax Act, 1961 (64 years old)

Presidential assent: August 2025

Operative from: April 1, 2026 (Assessment Year 2026-27)

Sections: 536 (reduced from 819); Chapters: 23 (reduced from 47)

Key reform: Unified “Tax Year” replaces “Previous Year” + “Assessment Year”

Administered by: CBDT (Central Board of Direct Taxes) under Ministry of Finance

Tax rates: Unchanged (rates governed by Finance Acts separately)

Digital default: Faceless assessment + appeals codified

GRSE DELIVERS THREE WARSHIPS TO INDIAN NAVY IN A SINGLE CEREMONY

Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE), Kolkata, delivered three indigenously built naval platforms simultaneously — guided-missile frigate INS Dunagiri, survey vessel INS Sanshodhak, and ASW craft INS Agray — covering strike, survey, and underwater warfare in one delivery event.

The Three Vessels

INS Dunagiri (Yard 3023): Second frigate under Project 17A (Nilgiri-class) — stealth guided-missile frigates with advanced weapons, sensors, and reduced radar cross-section. Full contract: 7 frigates (3 at MDL Mumbai, 4 at GRSE Kolkata).

INS Sanshodhak (Yard 3028): Fourth and final Survey Vessel Large (SVL) in the SVL series. Purpose: hydrographic surveys, ocean mapping, coastal and offshore charting. Equipped with advanced shallow-water SONAR systems.

INS Agray (ASW-SWC): Fourth of 8 Anti-Submarine Warfare Shallow Water Crafts. Uses waterjet propulsion; equipped with lightweight torpedoes and indigenous rocket launchers. Designed for detecting and engaging submarines in India’s littoral waters.

UPSC Angle

Project 17A (Nilgiri-class frigates); INS Dunagiri; INS Sanshodhak (SVL); ASW-SWC; GRSE Kolkata; MDL Mumbai. Mains GS-3: “GRSE’s simultaneous delivery of three different warship types — what does this signal about India’s Defence PSU shipbuilding capacity?”

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GRSE TRIPLE DELIVERY (MARCH/APRIL 2026):

INS Dunagiri: Project 17A, Yard 3023; Nilgiri-class stealth guided missile frigate; 2nd of 4 GRSE P17A frigates

INS Sanshodhak: Yard 3028; Survey Vessel Large (SVL); 4th/final SVL; hydrographic surveys

INS Agray: ASW Shallow Water Craft (ASW-SWC); 4th of 8; waterjet propulsion; lightweight torpedoes

Builder for all three: GRSE (Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers), Kolkata

Project 17A total: 7 frigates (MDL: 3 + GRSE: 4); 6,670 tonnes; 149m length

SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT RULES, 2026 COME INTO FORCE

India's Solid Waste Management (SWM) Rules, 2026 — notified on January 27, 2026 — became operative from April 1, replacing the SWM Rules, 2016. The new rules introduce mandatory four-stream waste segregation and a centralised digital tracking portal for waste from collection to disposal.

Key Changes from 2016 Rules

- **Four-stream segregation** (new): Wet waste / Dry waste / Hazardous waste / Sanitary waste (old rules had only wet + dry + hazardous = three streams)
- **Digital tracking portal**: Centralised online system tracking waste from household collection to final disposal — addressing the “last-mile accountability” gap
- **Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)** provisions strengthened
- **Stricter penalties** for non-compliance by Urban Local Bodies (ULBs)

UPSC Angle

*SWM Rules, 2026 (effective April 1); replaces SWM Rules, 2016; four-stream segregation; nodal ministry MoEFCC. **Mains GS-3**: “Solid Waste Management in India — evaluate the shift from three-stream to four-stream segregation under the 2026 rules and its implementation challenges.”*

★ FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGEPEDIA

SWM RULES, 2026:

Effective: April 1, 2026; notified January 27, 2026

Replaces: Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016

Nodal ministry: MoEFCC

Four streams: Wet (biodegradable) + Dry (recyclable) + Hazardous + Sanitary

Key addition: Centralised digital waste tracking portal (collection → disposal)

Announced by: MoS Kirti Vardhan Singh

SPAIN RESTRICTS US MILITARY AIRSPACE — NATO FRICTION OVER IRAN WAR

Spain denied American military aircraft use of its airspace during the escalating US-Iran conflict — reflecting European discomfort with being drawn into the West Asian war. The move exposes fault lines within NATO between collective defence obligations and European strategic autonomy preferences.

The Strategic Significance

Spain's decision — echoing its 2003 refusal to support the Iraq War (under PM José María Aznar, though Spain did ultimately provide limited support) — signals that European NATO members are not automatically supportive of US military operations outside the NATO treaty area (Article 5 covers collective defence, not all US military operations globally).

India's angle: India's "strategic autonomy" doctrine closely watches European precedents. Spain's airspace restriction supports the narrative that **multi-alignment** (refusing to be drawn into others' conflicts) is viable even for treaty-bound nations — a validation India invokes for its own position on Russia-Ukraine, US-Iran, etc.

UPSC Angle

*NATO Article 5 (collective defence); Spain's NATO membership; US-Iran conflict; strategic autonomy; European strategic autonomy. **Mains GS-2 (IR):** "Spain's restriction of US military airspace reveals the limits of alliance solidarity — analyse the implications for NATO cohesion and India's strategic autonomy doctrine."*

★ FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGE PEDIA**SPAIN-NATO-US AIRSPACE:**

Spain: NATO member since 1982; EU member since 1986

Decision: Restricted US military aircraft from Spanish airspace during US-Iran conflict

NATO Article 5: Collective defence — “an attack on one is an attack on all” — does NOT obligate members to support all US military operations outside NATO area

Precedent: Spain opposed Iraq War 2003 (PM Aznar’s government was later voted out partly over this)

European strategic autonomy: EU concept — capacity for EU to act independently of US in security matters

★ COMBINED FACTS CORNER — APRIL 1, 2026 QUICK REFERENCE (UPDATED)
FLAGSHIP ITEMS:

Artemis II: April 1 launch; SLS + Orion; 4 crew; circumlunar flyby; ~10 days

Kaynes OSAT: ₹3,307 crore; Sanand, Gujarat; 6.3 mn units/day capacity; first commercial semiconductor production under ISM

INS Shachi (NGOPV): 110m; 2,900 tonnes; ₹9,781 crore (11 vessels); 76% indigenous; GSL Goa

Income Tax Act, 2025: Replaces 1961 Act; effective April 1; 536 sections, 23 chapters; Tax Year concept

GRSE triple delivery: INS Dunagiri (P17A) + INS Sanshodhak (SVL) + INS Agray (ASW-SWC)

SWM Rules, 2026: Effective April 1; 4-stream segregation; digital tracking portal; replaces 2016 rules

CEC removal notice: 190+ MPs; Article 324(5); first in Indian history; Gyanesh Kumar

POLICY CHANGES EFFECTIVE APRIL 1, 2026:

E2o ethanol blending: Mandatory at all petrol pumps from today

CCTV ER mandate: BIS/STQC certification mandatory; 507 models certified; Chinese brands effectively banned

IRDAI Ind AS: Mandatory for all insurers from April 1 (life, general, health, reinsurer)

Small Savings rates unchanged Q1 FY27: PPF 7.1%, SSY 8.2%, SCSS 8.2%, NSC 7.7%

OTHER KEY ITEMS:

IVFRT Scheme: ₹1,800 crore; 2026-31; MHA

NNTR buffer: 652.20 sq km; Gondia, Maharashtra; Maharashtra's 5th tiger reserve

Nagoya Protocol: India 3,561 IRCCs (56.43% of global 6,311)

Bhavasagara: 3,500+ specimens; CMLRE Kochi; Deep-Sea Fauna National Repository

Spain airspace: Denied to US military; NATO friction over Iran war

PM E-DRIVE: E-2W subsidy extended to July 31, 2026 (was March 31); total outlay ₹10,900 crore

RBI: Export realisation period extended 9→15 months; Feb 2026 exports \$76.13 bn (+11.05%)

Sources: [PIB](#) , [GKToday](#) , [InsightsIAS](#) , [NASA](#) , [GSL](#)

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