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History, Art & Culture

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HISTORY, ART & CULTURE

9 Jul · 1

ASI Unearths Rare Copper Plates at Elephanta Island

In early July 2026, the ASI announced the discovery of two rare copper plates at Gharapuri (Elephanta) Island, giving fresh evidence of maritime trade under the Traikutaka and Chalukya dynasties.

- **The find:** Two copper plates unearthed by ASI Mumbai Circle at Morabander, Gharapuri (Elephanta) Island, in the 2025–26 season, preserved inside a large storage jar; announced early July...
- **Plate one:** Maharaja Indrasena of the Traikutaka dynasty, possibly the earliest direct record of the dynasty's founder; links ancient Aniruddhapura with Elephanta.
- **Plate two:** Provisionally attributed to Jayashraya Mangalarasa of the Chalukyas of Navasarika (7th–8th century CE).
- **Traikutakas:** Ruled the Konkan and northern Maharashtra around the 5th century CE; previously known mainly from coins.
- **Tamrapatra:** Copper-plate inscriptions, typically recording land grants.
- **Elephanta Caves:** UNESCO World Heritage Site (inscribed 1987), dedicated mainly to Shiva; island also called Gharapuri.
- **ASI:** Established 1861, under the Ministry of Culture, enforces the AMASR Act, 1958.
- **UNESCO Sites:** India has 44 World Heritage Sites (2026).

HISTORY, ART & CULTURE

11 Jul · 2

India and Kyrgyzstan Set Up Manas-Mahabharata Civilizational Centre

India and Kyrgyzstan established an International Centre for Civilizational Studies in Bishkek in July 2026, pairing the Kyrgyz epic Manas with the Mahabharata.

- **Manas:** Kyrgyz national epic, among the world's longest; on UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage list.
- **Mahabharata:** traditionally attributed to Sage Vyasa.
- **New centre:** International Centre for Civilizational Studies, Bishkek.
- **Milestone:** first-ever Hindi translation of the Manas released.
- **Bishkek:** capital of Kyrgyzstan.
- **India-Central Asia Summit:** running since 2022.
- **INSTC:** links India, Iran, Central Asia and Russia.

HISTORY, ART & CULTURE

12 Jul · 3

Sixth Lok Samvardhan Parv Opens in Dehradun

The 6th Lok Samvardhan Parv opened in Dehradun under PM VIKAS, with about 150 artisans showcasing handicrafts, handlooms and regional cuisine.

- **Event:** 6th Lok Samvardhan Parv, Parade Ground, Dehradun, July 11 to 15, 2026.
- **Inaugurated by:** Union Minister for Minority Affairs Kiren Rijiju with Uttarakhand CM Pushkar Singh Dhami.
- **Scale:** about 150 artisans, including about 90 women; handicrafts, handlooms and regional cuisine.
- **Organisers:** Ministry of Minority Affairs with the Uttarakhand Minorities Welfare and Waqf Development Corporation.
- **First:** Uttarakhand is the first State to co-organise the Parv with the Centre.
- **PM VIKAS:** Pradhan Mantri Virasat Ka Samvardhan, a 2023 merged scheme.
- **Merged schemes (5):** Seekho aur Kamao, USTTAD, Hamari Dharohar, Nai Roshni, Nai Manzil.
- **Components (4):** skilling, leadership and entrepreneurship, education, infrastructure.
- **Constitutional provisions:** Article 29 (protection of minority interests), Article 30 (right to establish and administer educational institutions).
- **National Commission for Minorities:** statutory body under the National Commission for Minorities Act, 1992.

HISTORY, ART & CULTURE

18 Jul · 4

Saushrutam 2026 Validating Ayurvedic Surgery on Sushruta Jayanti

President Droupadi Murmu inaugurated Saushrutam 2026, an international seminar on Ayurvedic surgery, at the All India Institute of Ayurveda on Sushruta Jayanti.

- **Sushruta** is called the **father of surgery**; the **Sushruta Samhita** is foundational to Ayurvedic surgery.
- **Shalya-tantra** is the surgical branch of the eight limbs (**Ashtanga**) of Ayurveda.
- **AIIA**, New Delhi, is the apex Ayurveda institute under the **Ministry of Ayush**.
- The **NCISM Act, 2020** created the National Commission for Indian System of Medicine as the statutory regulator.
- The **TKDL** is a joint effort of **CSIR** and the **Ministry of Ayush** to protect traditional knowledge from biopiracy.

HISTORY, ART & CULTURE

20 Jul · 5

Mount Olympus Up for World Heritage Status

Greece's Mount Olympus is a nomination at the Busan World Heritage session.

- **Site:** Mount Olympus, Greece (about 2,918 m).
- **Category:** mixed cultural and natural World Heritage nomination.
- **Evaluators:** ICOMOS (culture) and IUCN (nature).

UNESCO World Heritage Committee Meets in Busan, India Nominates Sarnath

The 48th session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee opened in Busan, South Korea, where India has nominated the Ancient Buddhist Site of Sarnath for World Heritage status.

- The **World Heritage Convention** was adopted in **1972** and is administered by UNESCO from its Paris headquarters.
- The Buddha's four key life events are linked to four sites: birth (**Lumbini**), enlightenment (**Bodh Gaya**), first sermon (**Sarnath**) and death or mahaparinirvana (**Kushinagar**).
- The **Dhamek Stupa** at Sarnath is believed to mark the spot of the first sermon.
- A **mixed site** meets both cultural and natural criteria; **Mount Olympus** in Greece was nominated in this category at Busan.
- India's first World Heritage sites, inscribed in **1983**, included the **Taj Mahal**, **Agra Fort**, **Ajanta Caves** and **Ellora Caves**.

Bal Gangadhar Tilak: The Making of Lokmanya

July 23 marks the birth anniversary of Bal Gangadhar Tilak, the Lokmanya who declared Swaraj his birthright, pioneered mass mobilisation and led the Home Rule Movement.

- **Lokmanya**: Means "accepted or revered by the people."
- **Ganesh Utsav and Shivaji Utsav**: Popularised by Tilak in the 1890s as public festivals to build unity and political consciousness.
- **Surat Split (1907)**: Congress divided into **Moderates** and **Extremists**; reunited at the **Lucknow Session (1916)**.
- **Home Rule Leagues (1916)**: Tilak's league (Maharashtra, Karnataka, Central Provinces, Berar) and **Annie Besant's** league (rest of India).
- **Gita Rahasya**: Written by Tilak during imprisonment in Mandalay (Burma); interprets the Gita's message as **Karma Yoga**, a philosophy of action.
- **Chandrashekhhar Azad**: Reorganised the **Hindustan Republican Association (HRA)** into the **Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA)**; also born on July 23.

Batukeshwar Dutt: The Revolutionary Who Made the Deaf Hear

July 20 marks the death anniversary of revolutionary Batukeshwar Dutt, who with Bhagat Singh bombed the Central Legislative Assembly in 1929. A GS1 deep dive on the revolutionary freedom struggle.

- **HSRA**: Hindustan Socialist Republican Association, reorganised in 1928; leaders included Chandrashekhhar Azad and Bhagat Singh.
- **Slogan origin**: "to make the deaf hear" came from the HSRA leaflet at the 1929 Assembly bombing.
- **Propaganda by deed**: a symbolic, publicity-driven act intended to awaken public opinion, not to kill.
- **Cellular Jail** (Kala Pani), Port Blair, Andaman Islands, housed leading political prisoners.
- **Jatin Das** martyred on the **63rd day** of the 1929 hunger strike for prisoners' rights.
- **Batukeshwar Dutt** born 1910, died **July 20, 1965**.
- The 1929 bombing protested the **Public Safety Bill** and **Trade Disputes Bill**.

Sarnath Inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List

Sarnath was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List on July 25, 2026 at the 48th session of the World Heritage Committee held at Busan, Republic of Korea.

- The World Heritage Convention was adopted in 1972; UNESCO is headquartered in Paris.
- The World Heritage Committee has 21 States Parties elected from among the members of the Convention.
- The Lion Capital of Ashoka at Sarnath is the source of the State Emblem of India.

Sarnath on the World Heritage List: India's 45th UNESCO Property and the Wheel of...

The Ancient Buddhist Site of Sarnath was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List on 25 July 2026, becoming India's 45th World Heritage property.

- Property name: Ancient Buddhist Site of Sarnath
- Date of inscription: 25 July 2026
- Session: 48th session of the World Heritage Committee, Busan, Republic of Korea
- Rank: India's 45th World Heritage property, Uttar Pradesh's fourth
- Criteria: cultural criteria (iii) and (vi)
- On India's Tentative List since 1998
- Chaukhandi Stupa: terraced brick mound with a later octagonal tower
- Dhamek Stupa: cylindrical stone and brick stupa with Gupta-period carving
- Ashokan Lion Capital: polished Chunar sandstone, about 250 BCE, housed in the Sarnath Museum
- UNESCO World Heritage Convention, 1972
- World Heritage Committee: 21 States Parties
- AMASR Act, 1958: 100 metre prohibited area, 200 metre regulated area

Shabdlok, India's First Immersive Language Museum

The Home Minister inaugurated Shabdlok, India's first immersive Museum of the Word, at the National Library in Kolkata, celebrating the languages of the Eighth Schedule.

- **Eighth Schedule languages (22)**: Assamese, Bengali, Bodo, Dogri, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Konkani, Maithili, Malayalam, Manipuri, Marathi, Nepali, Odia, Punjabi, Sanskrit...
- **Sindhi** was added by the 21st Amendment (1967); **Konkani, Manipuri, Nepali** by the 71st Amendment (1992).
- **National Library, Kolkata**: Located at Belvedere Estate; India's largest library by volume and a repository under the Delivery of Books and Newspapers (Public Libraries) Act.
- **Classical language status**: Grants a dedicated research and promotion framework; Tamil was the first to be so recognised, in 2004.
- **Ministry of Culture**: The nodal ministry for museums, libraries, archaeology and intangible heritage.

GEOGRAPHY

15 Jul · 12

New Study Explains How the Indian Plate Built the Tibetan Plateau

A July 2026 Nature Geoscience study shows how the underthrusting of the Indian plate beneath Eurasia drove the uplift of the Tibetan Plateau and explains the contrast between western and central Tibet.

- **Study (July 2026):** Published in **Nature Geoscience**; underthrusting of the Indian plate beneath Eurasia built the Tibetan Plateau and explains the west-central contrast.
- **Method: Thermochronology** on granite and sandstone from the **Rutog** and **Gerze** areas.
- **Collision:** India-Eurasia collision began about **50 million years ago**.
- **Plateau:** Highest and largest upland on Earth, averaging about **4,500 m**, the "**Roof of the World**."
- **Rivers:** Feeds the **Brahmaputra, Indus and Yangtze** headwaters; drives the **Indian monsoon**.
- **Exhumation:** Central Tibet slow from about **45 Ma**; western Tibet rapid between about **45 and 20 Ma**.
- **Himalayas: Fold mountains** formed by the same collision, making the belt highly seismic.

Environment & Ecology

15 items · cards 13–27

ENVIRONMENT & ECOLOGY

2 Jul · 13

Monsoon 2026 Opens with a Rainfall Deficit Under El Nino Shadow

India's southwest monsoon opened June 2026 with a 40 percent rainfall deficit, driven by a strengthening El Nino, an unfavourable MJO phase and missing low-pressure systems.

- **Deficit:** June 2026 monsoon opened about 40 per cent below normal.
- **Drivers:** Strengthening El Nino, unfavourable MJO phase, lack of low-pressure systems.
- **El Nino:** Warm phase of the El Nino Southern Oscillation (ENSO); suppresses the Indian monsoon.
- **MJO:** Eastward-moving tropical rainfall pulse, roughly 30 to 60 day cycle.
- **IMD:** Nodal forecasting agency; normal onset over Kerala around June 1.
- **June 30, 2026 advance:** More of Madhya Pradesh; remaining Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Bihar; parts of Uttar Pradesh; most of Uttarakhand; parts of Himachal Pradesh and Ladakh.
- **Significance:** Southwest monsoon delivers roughly 70 per cent of India's annual rainfall; critical for kharif sowing and reservoir and hydropower storage.

ENVIRONMENT & ECOLOGY

12 Jul · 14

Facts Corner

- **New species:** two solitary bees (Arunachal, ATREE) and *Sheathia meghalayensis*, a freshwater red alga (Meghalaya, BSI).
- **ICC Hall of Fame:** Sourav Ganguly, Anjum Chopra, Kevin Pietersen; instituted 2009.
- **Malala Day:** July 12; Nobel Peace Prize 2014 with Kailash Satyarthi; links to SDG 4 and RTE.
- **EIU Liveability Index 2026:** 173 cities, 30 indicators; Copenhagen first; Delhi and Mumbai around 120th.
- **Paper Bag Day:** July 12; Plastic Waste Management Rules 2016; single-use plastic ban (2022); EPR.

ENVIRONMENT & ECOLOGY

12 Jul · 15

Malala Day

July 12 is observed as Malala Day.

- **Malala Day:** July 12; from her 2013 UN Youth Assembly address.
- **Nobel Peace Prize 2014:** shared with Kailash Satyarthi of India; youngest-ever laureate.
- **Links:** SDG 4, Article 21A, Right to Education Act, 2009.

ENVIRONMENT & ECOLOGY

12 Jul · 16

New Bee and Freshwater Algae Species Described from India

Researchers described new species of solitary bees from Arunachal Pradesh and a new freshwater red alga from Meghalaya.

- **New bees:** *Elaphropoda triangulata* and *Habropoda adi* (Arunachal Pradesh), described by ATREE.
- **New red alga:** *Sheathia meghalayensis*, Meghalaya, described by the Botanical Survey of India.
- **India:** one of 17 megadiverse countries; four biodiversity hotspots.

ENVIRONMENT & ECOLOGY

12 Jul · 17

Paper Bag Day

July 12 is observed as Paper Bag Day.

- **Paper Bag Day:** July 12; promotes alternatives to plastic bags.
- **Policy:** Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016; single-use plastic ban from July 1, 2022.
- **EPR:** Extended Producer Responsibility on producers, importers and brand owners.

Sourav Ganguly Inducted into the ICC Hall of Fame

The ICC inducted Sourav Ganguly, Anjum Chopra and Kevin Pietersen into its Hall of Fame.

- **Inductees:** Sourav Ganguly, Anjum Chopra (India) and Kevin Pietersen (England).
- **ICC Hall of Fame:** instituted in 2009 (ICC centenary year).
- **Ganguly:** captained India to the 2003 World Cup final.

IITM Pune Makes First Observational Estimate of Monsoon Raindrop Evaporation

In July 2026 IITM Pune published the first observation-based estimate that about a quarter of monsoon rain evaporates before reaching the ground over the northern Western Ghats, sharpening flood, drought and climate prediction.

- **Event (around 12-13 July 2026):** IITM Pune published the first observational estimate of monsoon raindrop evaporation.
- **Finding:** About **25 per cent** of rain mass evaporates below the cloud on average (range about **4 to 61 per cent** daily) over the northern Western Ghats.
- **Term:** **Sub-cloud evaporation.**
- **Method:** **Stable water isotopes** of oxygen and hydrogen, from paired rain and vapour samples through the **2019** Pune monsoon.
- **Journal:** Atmospheric Chemistry and Physics.
- **IITM Pune:** Under the **Ministry of Earth Sciences.**
- **Western Ghats:** Orographic barrier to the monsoon; **UNESCO World Heritage Site.**
- **Southwest monsoon:** June to September.

Assam's Monsoon Floods and the Kaziranga Challenge

The Brahmaputra in spate flooded parts of Assam and Kaziranga National Park in mid-July 2026, spotlighting the state's annual flood cycle, disaster-management response and wildlife protection measures.

- The **Brahmaputra** is called the **Tsangpo** in Tibet and the **Jamuna** in Bangladesh; it is one of the few rivers in India with a masculine name ("son of Brahma").
- **Kaziranga** was declared a National Park in **1974** and a UNESCO World Heritage Site in **1985**; it hosts the highest density of one-horned rhinos.
- The one-horned rhinoceros (*Rhinoceros unicornis*) is listed as **Vulnerable** on the **IUCN Red List**.
- The **Disaster Management Act** was passed in **2005**; **NDMA** is chaired by the **Prime Minister**.
- **Beels** are the oxbow lakes and wetlands of the Brahmaputra floodplain, vital to Kaziranga's ecology.
- Kaziranga's animal corridors connect the park to the higher **Karbi Anglong** hills across **NH-715**.

Manasbal Lake, Reviving India's Deepest Freshwater Lake

Manasbal Lake in Ganderbal, Jammu and Kashmir, regarded as India's deepest natural freshwater lake, has shown an ecological revival in 2026 with the return of Siberian migratory birds.

- The **Central Asian Flyway** covers 30 countries and links breeding grounds in the Arctic and Central Asia with wintering grounds in the Indian subcontinent.
- India has over **90 Ramsar sites**, the highest in Asia.
- The **white-headed duck** is listed as **Endangered** on the IUCN Red List.
- **Wular Lake** was designated a Ramsar site in **1990** and is fed by the **Jhelum** river.
- The **NPCA** merged two earlier schemes, the National Lake Conservation Plan and the National Wetlands Conservation Programme.

The Teesta Stage-VI Tunnel Disaster and Himalayan Hydropower Risk

A suspected methane burst and explosion in NHPC's Teesta Stage-VI tunnel in South Sikkim trapped 25 workers, at least 22 of whom died, reopening the debate on hydropower safety in the fragile Himalaya.

- **Teesta river:** Rises near Pauhunri/Cho Lhamo in North Sikkim, flows through Sikkim and West Bengal, and enters Bangladesh where it joins the Brahmaputra system.
- **Head Race Tunnel (HRT):** the tunnel that carries water from the intake or reservoir down to the powerhouse turbines.
- **Methane hazard:** CH₄ is both explosive (in the 5 to 15 percent range in air) and an asphyxiant because it displaces breathable oxygen.
- **GLOF:** Sudden release of water from a glacial lake when its natural or artificial dam fails; a rising threat as Himalayan glaciers retreat.
- **NDMA:** Apex body under the Disaster Management Act, 2005, chaired by the Prime Minister; supported by the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF).

ICAR-CMFRI Launches DeepDATA App for Deep-Sea Biodiversity

The ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) launched **DeepDATA**, a mobile application for the digital documentation and verification of deep-sea fishes, at Kochi on July 23, 2026.

- Deep Ocean Mission is implemented by the Ministry of Earth Sciences.
- The International Seabed Authority, established under UNCLOS, is headquartered in Kingston, Jamaica.
- ICAR-CMFRI, established 1947, is headquartered at Kochi, Kerala.

Madurai Marks the 107th Year of a Heritage Banyan Amid Conservation Concerns

Activists and students at Meenakshipuram, Madurai, Tamil Nadu marked on July 27, 2026 the 107th birthday of the last surviving centenarian banyan tree in the locality, as part of an annual campaign against its felling.

- *Ficus benghalensis*, the National Tree of India, spreads through aerial prop roots.
- The fig-wasp mutualism is a textbook example of obligate coevolution.
- Biodiversity Management Committees are constituted at local body level under the Biological Diversity Act, 2002.

Malvi Camel Declared Endangered, NRCC Begins Conservation Breeding

Reports on July 27, 2026 confirmed that the Malvi or white camel is down to **102 animals**, and that the National Research Centre on Camel (NRCC), Bikaner, has begun a scientific conservation breeding programme for the breed.

- Nine recognised breeds; Kharai is the only swimming camel in the world.
- NRCC Bikaner, established 1984, functions under ICAR.
- Rajasthan declared the camel its State Animal in 2014; the Rajasthan Camel Act was passed in 2015.
- FAO observed 2024 as the International Year of Camelids.

A Strong El Nino Is Building: What the WMO's Latest Forecast Means for India

The World Meteorological Organization has forecast a strong El Nino developing through July-September 2026, raising the odds of extreme weather worldwide and carrying direct implications for India's post-monsoon and winter outlook.

- WMO Global Seasonal Climate Update, JAS 2026: strong El Nino forecast, ~2.0°C anomaly.
- Near-universal signal for above-normal global temperatures.
- El Nino: warm Pacific phase, typically linked to below-normal Indian monsoon rainfall.
- La Nina: cool Pacific phase, typically linked to above-normal Indian monsoon rainfall.
- Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD): the key offsetting/reinforcing factor that determines whether El Nino years still deliver a near-normal Indian monsoon.
- **India-specific stakes:** kharif crop maturation, reservoir replenishment, rabi-sowing water availability, food inflation risk.

Twenty Years of World Ranger Day: The People Standing Between Poachers and...

World Ranger Day marks its 20th anniversary in 2026, spotlighting the frontline forest and wildlife staff who enforce India's conservation laws, often at direct personal risk.

- Established 2007 by the International Ranger Federation; observed 31 July annually.
- 2026 theme: "Rangers: Guardians of a Changing Planet," sub-theme "20 Years of World Ranger Day: A Legacy of Protection, Courage, and Service."
- Wildlife Protection Act, 1972: legal basis for enforcement powers.
- Project Tiger (National Tiger Conservation Authority) and Project Cheetah: flagship programmes with dedicated field staff.
- State Forest Departments: primary employer, with uneven training/insurance/equipment standards across states.
- **Recurring policy gap:** inadequate insurance, training and compensation for frontline staff relative to job risk.

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

20 Jul · 28

Bill to Raise the Supreme Court's Judge Strength

A bill to increase the number of Supreme Court judges is part of the Monsoon Session agenda.

- **Bill:** Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Amendment Bill, 2026.
- **Change:** judges raised from 33 to 37 (excluding the CJI).
- **Basis:** Parliament fixes SC judge strength under Article 124.

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

21 Jul · 29

Anniversaries: The National Flag and a Presidential Election

Late July marks anniversaries tied to the National Flag and a presidential election.

- **National Flag:** adopted by the Constituent Assembly on July 22, 1947; Ashok Chakra has 24 spokes.
- **Neelam Sanjiva Reddy:** 6th President of India; elected unopposed (1977).

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

27 Jul · 30

CCEA Approves Ballari-Guntakal Third and Fourth Railway Lines

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) approved the construction of third and fourth railway lines between Ballari and Guntakal on July 24, 2026.

- PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan was launched on October 13, 2021.
- Guntakal is a major junction in Anantapur district, Andhra Pradesh; Ballari is in Karnataka.
- Rail freight carries a lower carbon intensity per tonne-kilometre than road, so capacity addition also serves India's emission-intensity target.

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

27 Jul · 31

CRPF Observes 88th Raising Day

The Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) observed its 88th Raising Day on July 27, 2026, drawing greetings from Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Vice President C.P. Radhakrishnan, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant...

- The seven CAPFs are the CRPF, BSF, CISF, ITBP, SSB, Assam Rifles and NSG.
- All CAPFs function under the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- The CRPF is the lead force for internal security duties and election security.

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

27 Jul · 32

Days Observed on July 27, 2026

Two observances fall on July 27, the CRPF Raising Day in India and Korean War Veterans Armistice Day internationally.

- Signed at Panmunjom on July 27, 1953; the Korean War ran from 1950 to 1953.
- No peace treaty has been signed, so the state of war formally persists.
- India chaired the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission; the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission was the parallel body supervising the ceasefire terms.
- The 60 Parachute Field Ambulance was India's contribution to the UN medical effort in Korea.

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

27 Jul · 33

Esha Singh Wins 25m Pistol Gold at the ISSF World Cup, Hangzhou

Esha Singh of Hyderabad won the women's 25m pistol gold at the International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF) World Cup at Hangzhou, China on July 27, 2026.

- ISSF founded 1907, headquartered at Munich, Germany.
- National Rifle Association of India founded in 1951.
- Manu Bhaker won two bronze medals at the Paris 2024 Olympics.

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

27 Jul · 34

Great Indian Bustard Chicks Enter India's First Rewilding Tunnel

Three Great Indian Bustard (GIB) chicks were released into India's first rewilding tunnel at the Godawan Conservation Centre, Ramdevra, Jaisalmer, Rajasthan, on July 26, 2026.

- Locally called *Godawan*; found mainly in Rajasthan and Gujarat.
- Listed in CITES Appendix I and under CMS Appendix I.
- Desert National Park is located in Jaisalmer and Barmer districts of Rajasthan.

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

27 Jul · 35

Gujarat Launches Cyber Financial Fraud e-Zero FIR

Gujarat launched the Cyber Financial Fraud e-Zero FIR system at Gandhinagar on July 27, 2026, at the hands of Deputy Chief Minister and Home Minister Harsh Sanghavi.

- I4C functions under the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- The Citizen Financial Cyber Fraud Reporting and Management System operates the 1930 helpline.
- CERT-In is the national nodal agency for cyber security incidents, under MeitY.

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

27 Jul · 36

Mirabai Chanu Completes Commonwealth Games Gold Hat-Trick

Saikhom Mirabai Chanu won the women's 48 kg weightlifting gold at the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow on July 26, 2026, delivering India's first gold of the Games and completing a hat-trick of Commonwealth Games titles.

- First held in 1930 at Hamilton, Canada, as the British Empire Games.
- India first participated in 1934; India hosted the 2010 edition at New Delhi.
- The 2030 centenary edition is to be hosted by Ahmedabad, India.
- Mirabai Chanu is from Manipur; she won Olympic silver at Tokyo 2020.

Prevention of Insults to National Honour (Amendment) Bill, 2026, and Vande Mataram

The Prevention of Insults to National Honour (Amendment) Bill, 2026, introduced in the Rajya Sabha by Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai on July 24, 2026, was moved for consideration and passing by Union Home Minister Amit...

- Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971 covers the Flag, the Constitution and the Anthem.
- Anandamath is set against the background of the Sannyasi Rebellion.
- Jana Gana Mana was first sung at the 1911 Calcutta session of the Congress.

Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill, 2026

Union Minister of State for Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions Dr Jitendra Singh introduced the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill, 2026 in the Lok Sabha on July 27, 2026. Speaker Om Birla adjourned the...

- Act No. 1 of 2024; assent February 12, 2024; in force from June 21, 2024.
- Offences are cognizable, non-bailable and non-compoundable.
- Individual candidates are dealt with under the norms of the examination authority, not under this Act.
- Covers UPSC, SSC, RRB, IBPS, NTA and Central Government departmental examinations.

Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Amendment Bill, 2026

The Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Amendment Bill, 2026, Bill No. 128 of 2026, moved by Minister of State for Law and Justice Arjun Ram Meghwal, was taken up on July 27, 2026.

- Article 124: establishment and constitution of the Supreme Court.
- Article 123: ordinance-making power of the President when Parliament is not in session.
- Judges are appointed by the President; the Collegium system flows from the Second and Third Judges Cases.

Vande Mataram and the National Honour Bill, 2026: Statutory Parity for the...

The Prevention of Insults to National Honour (Amendment) Bill, 2026 extends to Vande Mataram the statutory protection now available to the National Anthem.

- Published in *Bangadarshan*: November 7, 1875
- Included in *Anandamath*: 1882
- First sung at the Calcutta INC session by Rabindranath Tagore: 1896
- First two stanzas adopted by the Congress Working Committee: October 29, 1937
- Equal status declared by the Constituent Assembly: January 24, 1950
- 150th anniversary year: November 7, 2025 to November 7, 2026
- National Flag: Flag Code of India, 2002 and Section 2 of the 1971 Act
- National Anthem: adopted January 24, 1950; Section 3 of the 1971 Act; in Article 51A(a)
- National Song: not in Article 51A(a); protection proposed by the 2026 Bill
- Rendition: Jana Gana Mana, 52 seconds; Vande Mataram, 3 minutes 10 seconds
- National Song: a song recognised by declaration, distinct in law from the National Anthem
- Fundamental Duties: non-justiciable obligations in Part IVA, Article 51A, added by the 42nd Amendment, 1976

Viswanathan Anand Becomes FIDE Interim President

Viswanathan Anand assumed charge as Interim President of the International Chess Federation (FIDE) on July 24, 2026, after incumbent President Arkady Dvorkovich of Russia voluntarily suspended his powers on being included in the European...

- FIDE founded in Paris, July 20, 1924; headquarters Lausanne, Switzerland.
- Motto: Gens una sumus.
- Anand became India's first Grandmaster in 1988 and the first recipient of the Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna in 1991-92.

Vande Mataram Gets Statutory Protection: Parliament Passes the National Honour...

Both Houses have passed the Bill extending statutory protection to Vande Mataram, closing a gap that had left the National Song resting on convention rather than law.

- Rajya Sabha passed 29 July 2026; Lok Sabha passed 30 July 2026.
- Amends the Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971.
- Extends statutory protection to Vande Mataram; penalty up to 3 years or fine or both, minimum 1 year for repeat offence.
- Composed 1875 by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay; published in *Anandamath*, 1882.
- First sung 1896, Calcutta INC session, by Rabindranath Tagore.
- Equal status with the National Anthem declared by the Constituent Assembly, 24 January 1950.
- Not named in Article 51A(a), unlike the National Anthem.
- *Bijoe Emmanuel v. State of Kerala* (1986): respectful standing without singing does not violate the law; compelled singing would breach Articles 19(1)(a) and 25.

REPORTS, INDICES & SCHEMES

12 Jul · 43

EIU Global Liveability Index 2026

The Economist Intelligence Unit released its Global Liveability Index 2026.

- **Index:** EIU Global Liveability Index 2026; 173 cities, 30 indicators, 5 categories.
- **Top:** Copenhagen, then Vienna and Melbourne.
- **India:** New Delhi and Mumbai around 120th.

REPORTS, INDICES & SCHEMES

20 Jul · 44

72nd National Film Awards Announced

The 72nd National Film Awards were announced.

- **Best Feature Film:** Article 370 (72nd National Film Awards, for 2024 films).
- **Best Actor:** Kartik Aaryan and Mammootty (shared).
- **Highest film honour:** Dadasaheb Phalke Award (separate).

REPORTS, INDICES & SCHEMES

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Facts Corner

- **World Chess Day:** July 20 (FIDE, 1924); **Apollo 11** Moon landing anniversary (1969).
- **72nd National Film Awards:** Best Feature Film "Article 370"; Dadasaheb Phalke is the highest film honour.
- **FIFA World Cup 2026:** Spain beat Argentina; first 48-team edition; hosts USA, Canada, Mexico.
- **SC judges bill:** strength raised from 33 to 37 (excluding CJJ) under Article 124.
- **Mount Olympus:** Greece; mixed cultural-natural World Heritage nomination at Busan.

REPORTS, INDICES & SCHEMES

20 Jul · 46

Spain Win the First 48-Team FIFA World Cup

Spain won the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

- **FIFA World Cup 2026:** Spain beat Argentina; first 48-team edition.
- **Hosts:** United States, Canada and Mexico.
- **Badminton:** P V Sindhu won the Japan Open 2026.

REPORTS, INDICES & SCHEMES

20 Jul · 47

World Chess Day and the Apollo 11 Anniversary

July 20 marks World Chess Day and the anniversary of the first Moon landing.

- **World Chess Day:** July 20; FIDE founded in Paris, 1924 (UN-proclaimed 2019).
- **Apollo 11:** first crewed Moon landing, July 20, 1969.
- **India link:** the Chandrayaan lunar programme.

REPORTS, INDICES & SCHEMES

21 Jul · 48

Facts Corner

- **Angen:** first Santhali-language film to win a National Award (Best Debut Director, Non-Feature).
- **RBI FY27 forecast:** trimmed to about 6.6 per cent; repo rate 5.25 per cent.
- **West Bengal Martyrs Day:** July 21 (1993 march); national Martyrs' Day is January 30 and March 23.
- **National Flag:** adopted July 22, 1947; Ashok Chakra with 24 spokes.
- **Neelam Sanjiva Reddy:** 6th President, elected unopposed (1977).

REPORTS, INDICES & SCHEMES

21 Jul · 49

West Bengal Martyrs Day

July 21 is observed as Martyrs Day (Shaheed Diwas) in West Bengal.

- **July 21:** West Bengal Martyrs Day (Shaheed Diwas), from a 1993 march.
- **National Martyrs' Day:** January 30 (Gandhi) and March 23 (Bhagat Singh and others).

REPORTS, INDICES & SCHEMES

27 Jul · 50

Cabinet Approves BHAVYA-Rasayan Chemical Parks Scheme

The Union Cabinet approved **BHAVYA-Rasayan**, the Bharat Audyogik Vikas Yojana Rasayan, on July 24, 2026 to develop world-class chemical parks in India.

- Administered by the Department of Chemicals and Petrochemicals, Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers.
- A Challenge Route means States compete on prescribed criteria rather than receiving allocations by formula.

SOCIAL ISSUES

4 Jul · 51

National Creche Standards in Focus After the Bengaluru Daycare Case

A Bengaluru daycare abuse case in early July 2026 pushed national creche and childcare safety standards, and their weak enforcement, into sharp focus.

- **Trigger:** A child-abuse case at a Bengaluru daycare centre in early July 2026 put national creche and childcare safety standards in focus.
- **Response:** The Ministry of Women and Child Development and the Ministry of Labour and Employment moved to tighten childcare safety and labour-law compliance.
- **Legal basis:** Under the Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017, establishments with 50 or more employees must provide a creche facility; the Act also gives 26 weeks of paid maternity leave...
- **Mother's access:** Working mothers are allowed four creche visits a day, including rest intervals.
- **Safety norms:** Only women caregivers and helpers; mandatory police verification; character and medical-fitness certificates; preference for ground-floor location; proper ventilation and...
- **Public provision:** About 17,000 Anganwadi-cum-Creches (AWCCs) targeted under Mission Shakti.
- **Why it matters:** Central to the care economy, women-led development and the Female Labour Force Participation Rate (FLFPR).
- **SDG linkage:** SDG 5 (gender equality) and SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth).

SOCIAL ISSUES

5 Jul · 52

Maharashtra Recognises Women as Independent Farmers

On July 2, 2026, Maharashtra became the first Indian state to grant women legal recognition as independent farmers, decoupling farm-welfare access from land ownership through a Women Farmer Certificate.

- **Maharashtra Women Farmers Empowerment Bill, 2026:** Passed unanimously by the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly on July 2, 2026; piloted by Minister Pankaja Munde.
- **First in India:** Maharashtra becomes the first state to grant women legal recognition as independent farmers.
- **Women Farmer Certificate:** Unlocks subsidies, crop insurance, concessional loans, procurement and warehousing, independent of land ownership.
- **Expanded "farmer" definition:** Covers landless labourers, tenants, livestock rearers and women doing at least one season of farm work.
- **Dedicated fund:** Creates the Maharashtra State Women Farmers Fund.
- **Feminisation of agriculture:** Women perform an estimated 65 to 75 per cent of farm labour but own less than 14 per cent of agricultural land.
- **Core reform:** Decouples welfare-scheme access from land title, addressing structural exclusion.

SOCIAL ISSUES

7 Jul · 53

Chita Andolan: Tribal Protest Against the Ken-Betwa River Link

Around July 6, 2026, displaced tribal families revived the "Chita Andolan" pyre protest in Panna, MP, against the Ken-Betwa Link Project over rehabilitation.

- **Chita Andolan:** "Pyre protest" revived around July 6, 2026 on the Barana river near Kupa village, Panna district, Madhya Pradesh; led largely by tribal women; slogan "Nyay Do Ya Mar Do".
- **Trigger:** Suspended in April 2026 after assurances, it resumed as rehabilitation, compensation and land-for-land promises went unmet and homes were demolished.
- **Ken-Betwa Link Project (KBLP):** India's first river-interlinking project under the National Perspective Plan (NPP); transfers surplus Ken river water to the deficit Betwa basin.
- **Rivers:** Ken and Betwa are both tributaries of the Yamuna (itself a tributary of the Ganga).
- **Key structure:** Daudhan Dam, built on the Ken river inside the Panna Tiger Reserve.
- **Affected districts:** Chhatarpur and Panna in Madhya Pradesh; benefits target drought-prone Bundelkhand.
- **Legal safeguards:** RFCTLARR Act, 2013 (fair compensation and resettlement) and the Forest Rights Act, 2006 (forest-dweller rights).
- **Wider theme:** Development versus displacement; women-led environmental movements in the tradition of Chipko and the Narmada Bachao Andolan.

SOCIAL ISSUES

11 Jul · 54

World Population Day 2026 and India's Demographic Shift

World Population Day 2026 centres on young people's aspirations, even as India remains the most populous nation and its fertility falls below replacement level.

- **World Population Day:** Observed on July 11 since 1989, instituted by the UNDP Governing Council.
- **Origin:** Inspired by the "Five Billion Day" of July 11, 1987.
- **2026 theme:** "Realizing the hopes and aspirations of young people, today and for the future."
- **UNFPA:** UN sexual and reproductive health agency.
- **India:** World's most populous country, about 1.46 billion (UNFPA SOWP 2025); TFR at or below replacement level 2.1.
- **Kerala CBR (2024):** About 9.64, first time below 10; Alappuzha lowest; national CBR about 19 (SRS).

SOCIAL ISSUES

17 Jul · 55

Maharashtra Women Farmers Act 2026 Recognising the Woman Who Farms

Maharashtra becomes the first Indian state to legally recognise women in farming and allied work as farmers, decoupling farmer status from land ownership through a Woman Farmer Certificate.

- **First state** to legally recognise women in farming and allied work as farmers: **Maharashtra (2026)**.
- The reform **decouples farmer status from land ownership**, a first in Indian law.
- Allied activities covered: crop husbandry, animal husbandry, poultry, fishery, agro-forestry, vermiculture, mushroom cultivation and primary processing.
- Women form roughly **65 to 75 per cent** of the agricultural workforce but own **under 14 per cent** of agricultural land.
- Constitutional hook: **Article 15(3)** allows special provisions for women.
- Benefits unlocked: **collateral-free institutional loans** and **crop insurance**.

Nandan Nilekani Task Force on NTA Reform, Change in the Education Ministry

The Union Government constituted a six-member high-powered task force on July 26, 2026, chaired by Nandan Nilekani, to reform the National Testing Agency (NTA), days after a change in the Union Education Ministry.

- Established 2017; conducts JEE (Main), NEET-UG, UGC-NET, CUET and other examinations.
- Registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860.
- S. Somanath is a former Chairman of ISRO; V. Kamakoti is Director of IIT Madras.

Trapped Behind the Scam: Human Trafficking's New Frontier

This year's World Day against Trafficking in Persons theme spotlights a fast-growing form of exploitation: victims trafficked into forced labour running online scam operations.

- Observed 30 July, since 2013 (UN General Assembly); shares the date with International Day of Friendship (since 2011).
- 2026 theme: "Trapped Behind the Scam."
- IOM assisted over 3,500 victims across Southeast Asia, 2022-2025, from 39 countries.
- India among the top source countries, alongside Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Ethiopia, Kenya, Bangladesh.
- Victims lured by fake jobs, then coerced into running online scams.
- Article 23: constitutional prohibition on trafficking and forced labour.
- Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956: principal statute.
- I4C: national cybercrime coordination body; helpline 1930, cybercrime.gov.in.

ECONOMY & DEVELOPMENT

21 Jul · 58

RBI Trims Its FY27 Growth Forecast

The Reserve Bank of India revised its growth projection for FY27.

- **RBI FY27 GDP forecast:** about 6.6 per cent.
- **Repo rate:** 5.25 per cent (neutral stance).
- **Body:** Monetary Policy Committee (MPC).

ECONOMY & DEVELOPMENT

24 Jul · 59

Thirty Five Years of the 1991 Economic Reforms

July 24, 2026 marks 35 years since Finance Minister Manmohan Singh's 1991 Budget speech launched Liberalisation, Privatisation and Globalisation, transforming India from a state-led economy to a market-oriented one.

- **LPG** stands for **Liberalisation, Privatisation and Globalisation**, the three pillars of the 1991 reforms.
- **Licence Raj** refers to the elaborate system of licences, permits, and regulations that controlled business before 1991.
- The rupee was **devalued** in two steps in July 1991 by the Reserve Bank of India to restore export competitiveness.
- India **pledged gold** to the Bank of England and the Bank of Japan in 1991 to secure emergency foreign exchange.
- The **New Industrial Policy of 1991** abolished industrial licensing for most industries and reduced the list of industries reserved for the public sector.
- **Income Tax Day (July 24)** commemorates the introduction of income tax by **James Wilson** in **1860**.

ECONOMY & DEVELOPMENT

28 Jul · 60

Vizhinjam International Seaport Cleared for EXIM Cargo: Ending India's...

CBIC has cleared Kerala's Vizhinjam port for full export-import operations from August 18, 2026, a step toward reducing India's dependence on Colombo, Singapore and Klang for container transshipment.

- Location: Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala.
- Model: PPP; owner VISL (Government of Kerala SPV); operator AVPPL, an Adani Ports and SEZ concessionaire.
- Natural draft: about 20 metres.
- EXIM operations from August 18, 2026 (CBIC clearance).
- Initial import mode: FCL only, via Direct Port Delivery, cleared within 48 hours; no CFS yet, a 100-acre CFS is planned.
- About 75 per cent of India-linked transshipment cargo has historically routed via Colombo, Singapore or Port Klang.
- Transshipment: unloading cargo from a mother vessel onto a feeder vessel en route to final destination.
- Sagarmala Programme: launched 2015, Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, port-led development.
- Blue Economy: treats coastal and port infrastructure, fisheries and offshore energy as an integrated growth driver.

Persons & Awards in News

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PERSONS & AWARDS IN NEWS

21 Jul · 61

Angen: First Santhali Film to Win a National Award

Angen became the first Santhali-language film to win a National Film Award.

- **Film:** Angen (first Santhali film to win a National Award).
- **Director:** Ravi Raj Murmu (FTII); award for Best Debut Film of a Director (Non-Feature).
- **Language:** Santhali (Eighth Schedule).

SECURITY & DEFENCE

26 Jul · 62

Kargil Vijay Diwas 2026: Twenty-Seven Years On, What Operation Vijay Changed

India observed the 27th Kargil Vijay Diwas on July 26, 2026 at the Kargil War Memorial in Drass, Ladakh, marking the conclusion of Operation Vijay and the recapture of the intruded heights in 1999.

- Date observed: July 26, 2026, the 27th anniversary
- Principal venue: Kargil War Memorial, Drass, Ladakh
- Shaurya Sandhya held July 25, 2026, with a Yudh Sansmaran presentation honouring 40 bravehearts' families
- Duration: May to July 1999; victory declared July 26, 1999
- Key artillery: Bofors 155mm howitzer, used in direct-fire roles at high altitude
- Both countries had conducted nuclear tests in May 1998, making Kargil a limited war under a nuclear overhang
- Kargil Review Committee, chaired by K. Subrahmanyam, constituted 1999, reported 2000
- Defence Intelligence Agency, 2002
- National Technical Research Organisation, 2004
- Chief of Defence Staff and Department of Military Affairs, 2019
- The Param Vir Chakra was instituted in 1950, with effect from August 15, 1947
- The Line of Control came into being under the Simla Agreement of 1972, which renamed and redefined the earlier Ceasefire Line of 1949.

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POLITY & GOVERNANCE

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Passport Fees Revised for the First Time in Fourteen Years

From July 1, 2026, the MEA revised passport fees for the first time in about 14 years, raising the fresh 36-page adult passport from Rs 1,500 to Rs 2,500.

- **Effective date:** July 1, 2026; applies to applications submitted on or after this date.
- **First revision in about 14 years,** by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).
- **36-page adult passport:** Rs 1,500 to Rs 2,500 (normal); Tatkal Rs 3,500 to Rs 5,000.
- **60-page booklet:** Rs 2,000 to Rs 3,500 (normal); Tatkal Rs 6,000.
- **Statute:** Passports Act, 1967; fee change effected via amendment to the passport rules.
- **Issuing authority:** Consular, Passport and Visa (CPV) Division of the MEA.
- **Delivery:** Passport Seva Programme (e-governance backbone).
- **Key distinction:** A passport is a travel document; citizenship is governed by the Citizenship Act, 1955.

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

3 Jul · 64

29th National Conference on e-Governance

The 29th National Conference on e-Governance was held at Jaipur, Rajasthan, on the theme of AI-enabled, data-driven and secure digital governance for Viksit Bharat 2047.

- **Organisers:** DARPG, MeitY and the Government of Rajasthan.
- **Venue:** Jaipur, Rajasthan.
- **Theme:** AI-enabled, data-driven and secure digital governance for Viksit Bharat 2047.

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

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Facts Corner

- **MANAS:** anti-narcotics helpline 1933; NCB under the Ministry of Home Affairs; NDPS Act, 1985.
- **29th e-Governance Conference:** Jaipur; DARPG, MeitY and Rajasthan; theme Viksit Bharat 2047.
- **Henley Passport Index (July 2026):** India 80th (from 78th in May), 56 destinations; Singapore first.

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

3 Jul · 66

MANAS Anti-Drug Helpline Crosses a Milestone

The National Narcotics Helpline MANAS crossed nearly 10 lakh connection attempts, a government update indicated.

- **MANAS:** national anti-narcotics helpline, number **1933**; run by the NCB under the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- **NCB:** Narcotics Control Bureau, the nodal drug-enforcement agency (established 1986).
- **Legal base:** NDPS Act, 1985; PITNDPS Act, 1988.

New EPF Scheme 2026 Replaces the 1952 Scheme

The Centre notified the Employees' Provident Funds Scheme, 2026 under the Code on Social Security, 2020, replacing the 74-year-old 1952 scheme with AMNESTY and VISHWAS windows.

- **Notified:** June 29, 2026, in the official gazette by the Ministry of Labour and Employment.
- **Legal basis:** framed under the **Code on Social Security, 2020**, which consolidated nine central social-security laws.
- **Replaces:** the EPF Scheme, 1952, after about **74 years**.
- **Administered by:** the **Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO)**.
- **Contribution:** **12 per cent** each for employee and employer, unchanged; voluntary coverage now allowed above the wage ceiling.
- **New definitions added:** "authorised signatory", "excluded employee", "international worker".
- **Special measures:** Employees' Enrolment Campaign 2026, **VISHWAS 2026** (reduced damages for pre-June 2024 defaults), **AMNESTY 2026** (regularising informal PF trusts and unexempted establishments).
- **Four Labour Codes:** Code on Wages, Industrial Relations Code, Occupational Safety Health and Working Conditions Code, and the Code on Social Security.

Dalai Lama's 91st Birthday

July 6 marks the 91st birthday of the 14th Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso.

- **14th Dalai Lama:** Tenzin Gyatso, born July 6, 1935; in exile in India since 1959.
- **Base:** McLeodganj, Dharamshala, Himachal Pradesh.
- **Honour:** Nobel Peace Prize, 1989.

Facts Corner

- **Micromonospora shyamaprasadii:** new bacterium from West Bengal, named after S.P. Mookerjee (125th birth anniversary).
- **SIR:** Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls by the ECI; passport is a travel document, not citizenship proof.
- **Himachal GI:** eight new tags (Spiti Seabuckthorn, Kinnauri apple); state total 17; GI Act 1999.
- **Strait of Hormuz:** Persian Gulf to Gulf of Oman; about 20 per cent of global oil; bordered by Iran, Oman, UAE.
- **Dalai Lama:** 14th, Tenzin Gyatso, born July 6, 1935; Nobel Peace Prize 1989.

Government Notice to Meta Over Child-Safety Ads on Instagram

MeitY gave Meta seven days to explain and disable Instagram ads promoting CSAM after a BBC probe, reviving the intermediary safe-harbour debate.

- **MeitY action:** notice to Meta to disable Instagram CSAM advertisements and explain its ad-approval and moderation processes within seven days.
- **Trigger:** a BBC investigation found Instagram serving around 30 paid CSAM advertisements, with links to Telegram sale channels.
- **CSAM:** Child Sexual Abuse Material.
- **Section 79, IT Act 2000:** conditional safe harbour, exemption from liability for third-party content, lost on failure of due diligence.
- **Section 67B, IT Act:** penalises online child sexual abuse material.
- **POCSO Act, 2012:** Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, the core child-protection criminal law.
- **IT Rules 2021:** a 2026 amendment mandates removal of CSAM within 24 hours of a complaint or order.

Himachal Pradesh Gets Eight New GI Tags

Eight traditional Himachal Pradesh products received Geographical Indication tags, raising the state's total to 17.

- **Himachal GI:** eight new tags, state total 17; include Spiti Seabuckthorn and Kinnauri apple.
- **Spiti Seabuckthorn:** cold-desert berry of the Spiti valley.
- **GI Act:** Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999; Registry at Chennai.

India Manages the Strait of Hormuz Disruption

India coordinated with shipping firms and maritime agencies to manage energy-supply risks through the Strait of Hormuz amid West Asian tensions.

- **Strait of Hormuz:** links the Persian Gulf to the Gulf of Oman; about 20 per cent of global oil transits it.
- **Borders:** Iran, Oman (Musandam) and the UAE.
- **India response:** diversified crude sourcing, refining and strategic reserves.

New Bacterium Named After Syama Prasad Mookerjee

A newly discovered bacterium was named *Micromonospora shyamaprasadii*, honouring Dr Syama Prasad Mookerjee on his 125th birth anniversary on July 6.

- **Micromonospora shyamaprasadii:** new actinobacterium discovered in West Bengal; named after S.P. Mookerjee.
- **Genus use:** *Micromonospora* species produce antibiotics such as gentamicin.
- **S.P. Mookerjee:** founder of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh (1951); 125th birth anniversary July 6, 2026.

Passport Is a Travel Document, Not Proof of Citizenship

Amid the Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls, the Ministry of External Affairs clarified that a passport is a travel document, not proof of citizenship.

- **SIR:** Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls, conducted by the Election Commission of India.
- **Legal base:** Representation of the People Acts, 1950 and 1951.
- **Passport:** a travel document, not conclusive proof of citizenship.

Raising the Supreme Court's Judge Strength from 33 to 37

The Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Amendment Bill, 2026 will raise the sanctioned judge strength from 33 to 37 (excluding the CJI) to cut a backlog of over 92,000 cases.

- **The change:** Supreme Court judge strength rises from **33 to 37 excluding the CJI**, so total strength moves from 34 to 38 including the CJI.
- **Vehicle:** Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Amendment Bill, 2026, replacing an Ordinance; to be taken up in the Monsoon Session (July 20 to August 13, 2026).
- **Parent Act:** Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Act, 1956, which fixes the sanctioned strength.
- **Article 124(1):** Empowers Parliament to fix the Supreme Court's judge strength by law.
- **Article 123:** Presidential ordinance-making power; an ordinance ceases to operate six weeks after Parliament reassembles unless converted into an Act.
- **Aim:** Cut a backlog of over 92,000 cases and speed up justice.
- **NJAC:** The National Judicial Appointments Commission was struck down by the Supreme Court in 2015; judicial appointments continue through the collegium.

The Ministry of Cooperation at Five: Cooperation 2.0

On July 6, 2026, the Ministry of Cooperation marked its 5th Foundation Day at Bharat Mandapam, where Amit Shah outlined a "Cooperation 2.0" roadmap for India's cooperative sector.

- **The event:** 5th Foundation Day of the Ministry of Cooperation at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi, on July 6, 2026; Amit Shah outlined a "Cooperation 2.0" roadmap.
- **Ministry:** Created July 6, 2021 (carved out of the Ministry of Agriculture); Amit Shah is the first and current Minister of Cooperation.
- **New launches:** A cooperative-sector life-insurance company; expansion of Bharat Taxi (a cooperative ride-hailing platform) to 500 cities in two years.
- **Reach:** Ministry initiatives said to have touched about 30 crore people; about 50,000 PACS computerised into e-PACS.
- **PACS:** Primary Agricultural Credit Societies, the grassroots base of the rural credit structure, now made multi-purpose.
- **State subject:** Cooperative societies fall under Entry 32 of the State List (Seventh Schedule).
- **Constitutional basis:** 97th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2011 inserted Part IX-B and added Article 43-B (Directive Principle); forming cooperatives is part of the Article 19(1)(c) right.
- **Motto:** "Sahkar Se Samridhi" (prosperity through cooperation).

Four States Sign Narmada NWDT Payment Pact

On July 7, 2026, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Maharashtra signed a payment agreement to settle long-pending dues on the Sardar Sarovar and Indira Sagar projects under the NWDT Award.

- **The pact:** On July 7, 2026 in New Delhi, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Maharashtra signed a one-time payment agreement settling dues on the Sardar Sarovar and Indira Sagar projects...
- **Attended by:** Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Jal Shakti Minister C.R. Patil; framed as "cooperative federalism."
- **Covers:** Cost-sharing, rehabilitation and resettlement, compensation for submerged land, interest on borrowings, and pending inter-state dues.
- **NWDT:** Constituted in 1969; final award in 1979.
- **Sardar Sarovar Project:** On the Narmada in Gujarat (Kevadia/Navagam), one of the world's largest concrete gravity dams by volume.
- **Indira Sagar Project:** In Madhya Pradesh (Khandwa).
- **SSP beneficiary states:** Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Rajasthan.
- **Legal framework:** Article 262 and the Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956, govern inter-state river water disputes.

EPFO Rolls Out CITES 2.01 Unified Member Platform

In July 2026, EPFO rolled out its upgraded CITES 2.01 platform, migrating about 34 crore member accounts into a single national system for faster services.

- **The launch:** Around July 8, 2026, Union Labour Minister Mansukh Mandaviya launched EPFO's upgraded CITES 2.01 platform.
- **Migration:** About 34 crore (340 million) member accounts moved from 120-plus decentralised databases into a single national system.
- **Benefits:** Any request processed at any office; auto-transfer of PF on job change; faster settlement; fewer rejections.
- **Timeline:** Approved by the Central Board of Trustees in 2021; rolled out in phases since January 2023.
- **Interest credit:** FY2025-26 rate of 8.25 per cent (about Rs 1.44 trillion) to reflect in passbooks by around July 15, 2026.
- **EPFO:** Under the Ministry of Labour and Employment; apex body is the CBT, chaired by the Union Labour Minister.
- **Law:** Employees' Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952.

Supreme Court May Refer 'Written Grounds of Arrest' to a Larger Bench

In July 2026 the Supreme Court indicated it may refer to a Constitution Bench whether written grounds of arrest must be furnished in all criminal cases.

- **Article 22(1):** Right to be informed of grounds of arrest and to consult a lawyer.
- **Article 21:** Protection of life and personal liberty.
- **Pankaj Bansal (2023):** Written grounds of arrest mandatory under PMLA.
- **Prabir Purkayastha (2024):** Written grounds of arrest mandatory under UAPA.
- **BNS and BNSS:** Replaced the IPC and CrPC from July 1, 2024.
- **Constitution Bench:** Minimum of five judges under Article 145(3).

JPC on One Nation One Election Nears Report on the 129th Amendment

The Joint Parliamentary Committee on simultaneous elections wrapped up its ninth state consultation in Goa on July 10-11, 2026, and is set to adopt its report around July 17.

- **Bill:** Constitution (129th Amendment) Bill, 2024, plus the Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2024.
- **JPC chair:** P.P. Chaudhary. Goa consultation on July 10-11, 2026 was the **ninth state consultation**; report expected around **July 17, 2026**; target rollout **2029**.
- **New Article 82A:** simultaneous elections, with an "appointed date" notified by the President on the first sitting of the Lok Sabha after a general election.
- **Articles amended:** 83 (duration of Houses of Parliament), 172 (duration of State Legislatures), 327 (Parliament's power over elections).
- **Kovind Committee:** High-Level Committee on Simultaneous Elections, reported March 2024; two-step synchronisation, local bodies within 100 days via a proposed Article 324A.
- **Article 368(2) proviso:** ratification by not less than half the State Legislatures needed for the local-body step.
- **Simultaneous election years:** 1951-52, 1957, 1962, 1967; cycle broke from 1968-69.

Ladakh to Get Autonomous Hill Councils for All Seven Districts

On 14 July 2026, Ladakh announced an Autonomous Hill Development Council for each of its seven districts and 17 new tehsils, deepening grassroots democracy in a Union Territory that has no legislature of its own.

- **Event (14 July 2026):** Ladakh to constitute an **AHDC in each of its seven districts**; **17 new tehsils** approved by the LG.
- **New councils:** Sham, Nubra, Changthang, Zaskar and Drass, adding to **Leh (1995)** and **Kargil (2003)**.
- **Tehsils:** Total rises from **15 to 32**.
- **Legal basis:** **Section 3(1)** of the **LAHDC Act** (one council per district); needs amendment and delimitation.
- **Status:** Ladakh is a **UT without a legislature** since the **J&K Reorganisation Act, 2019** (October 2019).
- **Pending demands:** **Sixth Schedule** inclusion and **statehood**.

Delhi Clears a Right to Time-Bound Services Bill

The Delhi Cabinet approved a bill to guarantee time-bound delivery of public services.

- **Bill:** Delhi Right to Time-Bound Delivery of Services (Cabinet-approved).
- **Effect:** legal timelines for notified public services, with accountability.
- **Frame:** public-service-guarantee laws and citizen-centric governance.

NIA Court Invokes Trial in Absentia Under BNSS Section 356

In July 2026, a Jammu NIA court moved towards a trial in absentia against Hafiz Saeed in the Pahalgam attack case, marking the first major use of Section 356 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita.

- **Event (July 2026):** Jammu NIA court issued a non-bailable warrant against **Hafiz Saeed**; NIA to pursue **trial in absentia** in the **Pahalgam attack** case (26 killed).
- **Legal basis:** First major use of **Section 356 BNSS** (full trial of an absconding proclaimed offender).
- **BNSS:** Replaced the **CrPC, 1973**; in force from **1 July 2024** with the **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita** and **Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinyam**.
- **Safeguards:** Offence of **10 years/life/death**; **two warrants 30 days apart**; **90-day** wait; public notice; court-appointed counsel.
- **Case step:** NIA supplementary charge sheet filed **6 July 2026**.
- **Rights context:** **Article 21** includes the right to a fair trial and presence at trial.

New Chairman for the National Commission for Minorities

A new Chairman was appointed to the National Commission for Minorities.

- **Body:** National Commission for Minorities (NCM).
- **Basis:** National Commission for Minorities Act, 1992 (statutory).
- **Ministry:** Ministry of Minority Affairs.

Supreme Court: Deletion From Electoral Roll Is Not Loss of Citizenship

The Supreme Court, hearing pleas on the West Bengal Special Intensive Revision, held that removal from the electoral roll does not strip a person of citizenship and that the Election Commission cannot finally determine citizenship.

- **SIR** stands for **Special Intensive Revision**, a house-to-house verification of the full electoral roll.
- The **ECI** is a **constitutional body** under **Article 324**; it is not a citizenship-deciding authority.
- **Article 326** provides for elections on the basis of **adult suffrage**.
- The **Representation of the People Act, 1950** deals with electoral rolls; the **1951 Act** deals with the conduct of elections.
- Citizenship is granted and determined under the **Citizenship Act, 1955**, a **Union** subject decided by the **Central Government**.
- The July 17, 2026 West Bengal order is **separate** from the **Bihar SIR verdict of May 27, 2026**, which upheld that exercise.

A Bill to Protect Vande Mataram Under the National Honour Act

On July 20, 2026, the government introduced a Bill in the Rajya Sabha to extend the criminal protection of the National Honour Act to the national song Vande Mataram. A polity and free-speech deep dive.

- **Parent law:** Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, **1971**.
- **Current punishment** for insulting the National Anthem: imprisonment up to **three years**, or fine, or both.
- **National Song author:** Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay; **National Anthem author:** Rabindranath Tagore.
- **Anandamath**, the novel carrying Vande Mataram, was published in **1882**; the song was first written around **1876**.
- **January 24, 1950:** the Constituent Assembly adopted both Jana Gana Mana as Anthem and gave Vande Mataram an equal status of honour.
- **Key case:** Bijoe Emmanuel v. State of Kerala (**1986**) protected the right not to sing while standing respectfully.
- **Constitutional angle:** freedom of speech, Article **19(1)(a)**; freedom of conscience, Article **25**.

Dharmendra Pradhan Resigns Over Exam Leaks: Ministerial Accountability and the...

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan resigned on July 25, 2026 amid nationwide student protests over paper leaks, spotlighting executive accountability, NTA reform and the anti-paper-leak law.

- The doctrine of collective responsibility in India is drawn from the British Westminster model and is expressly incorporated in Article 75(3).
- The NTA is an autonomous body registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860, functioning under the Ministry of Education.
- The Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024, makes offences cognisable, non-bailable and non-compoundable.
- Jantar Mantar in Delhi is a state-designated site for peaceful demonstrations after protests were shifted from the Boat Club and India Gate areas.
- The National Recruitment Agency (NRA) framework is tasked with preparing guidelines for the conduct of exams under the anti-paper-leak regime.

The Supreme Court Number of Judges Amendment Bill 2026

The Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Amendment Bill, 2026 raises the sanctioned judge strength from 33 to 37 (excluding the CJI), replacing an ordinance and aiming to cut pendency.

- **Article 124:** Establishes the Supreme Court and provides for the appointment of judges.
- **Collegium system:** Evolved through the **Three Judges Cases**; the CJI plus senior-most judges recommend appointments and transfers.
- **Ordinance (Article 123):** Has the same force as an Act but must be laid before Parliament and ceases to operate **six weeks** from the reassembly of Parliament unless replaced by an Act.
- **Retirement age:** Supreme Court judges retire at **65 years**; High Court judges at **62 years**.
- **Pendency:** Backlog reduction is also pursued through **fast-track courts, e-Courts, mediation and Lok Adalats**.
- **Money Bill vs ordinary Bill:** This is an **ordinary Bill** amending an existing statute, needing passage by both Houses.

EU Fines Google Over Antitrust Breach

The European Commission imposed a fresh antitrust fine on Google.

- **Fine:** about 890 million euros on Google (European Commission, July 23, 2026).
- **EU tool:** the Digital Markets Act regulates "gatekeeper" platforms.
- **India:** CCI and the proposed Digital Competition Bill.

European Commission Fines Google 890 Million Euros

The European Commission fined Google 890 million euros on July 23, 2026 for breaches of the Digital Markets Act, the first DMA penalty against the company and the largest issued under the regulation so far.

- The Digital Markets Act entered into force in 2022 and regulates designated gatekeepers on an ex-ante basis.
- India's proposed equivalent category is the Systemically Significant Digital Enterprise, based on 9 Core Digital Services plus financial and user thresholds.

Tougher Penalties for Exam Paper Leaks: The 2026 Amendment

The Union Cabinet has approved a draft bill to amend the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024, sharply raising penalties for paper leaks ahead of the Monsoon Session.

- **Article 16** of the Constitution guarantees equality of opportunity in matters of public employment, the constitutional value the law seeks to protect.
- The **NTA** was established in **2017** as an autonomous body under the Ministry of Education to conduct entrance examinations such as **JEE (Main), NEET-UG, CUET and UGC-NET**.
- **Non-compoundable** means the offence cannot be settled by compromise between parties; only the court can decide the outcome.
- The Act protects **bona fide candidates**, who are not to be prosecuted for the malpractice of organised networks.
- The 2024 Act extends to examinations by both central recruitment agencies and any authority notified by the central government.

First Villages, Not Last: PM Interacts with Viksit Vibrant Village Programme 2026...

Prime Minister Narendra Modi interacted with participants of the Viksit Vibrant Village Programme 2026 on July 26, 2026, a MY Bharat youth immersion across 74 border villages in Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand.

- PM interaction: July 26, 2026, by video conferencing
- Implementing platform: MY Bharat (Mera Yuva Bharat)
- Duration: two phases, June 4 to June 30, 2026
- Coverage: 74 vibrant villages in Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand
- Participants: over 400 youth from every State and Union Territory
- Selection: nationwide online quiz with over 3 lakh participants
- Approved February 2023; Central Sector Scheme, Ministry of Home Affairs
- Outlay Rs 4,800 crore for FY 2022-23 to 2025-26, of which Rs 2,500 crore for roads
- 662 villages across 46 blocks
- Approved April 2, 2025; outlay Rs 6,839 crore for FY 2024-25 to 2028-29
- 1,954 villages identified across 15 States and 2 Union Territories
- Launched February 2026 from Nethanpur, Cachar district, Assam, by Home Minister Amit Shah

NTA Overhaul and a Minister's Exit: The Nilekani Task Force and Ministerial...

A six-member task force under Nandan Nilekani will redesign the NTA examination lifecycle, days after the Education Minister resigned over the NEET-UG 2026 leak.

- Chair, Nandan Nilekani, co-founder of Infosys, Chairman of UIDAI from 2009 to 2014
- Rollout target, CBT mode for NEET and other major examinations from 2027
- Legal form, society under the Societies Registration Act, 1860
- Article 74(1), Council of Ministers to aid and advise the President
- Article 75(1), appointment of Ministers on the advice of the Prime Minister
- Article 75(2), Ministers hold office during the pleasure of the President
- Article 75(3), collective responsibility to the House of the People
- Article 78, Prime Minister communicates decisions of the Council to the President
- Article 315, Union Public Service Commission as a constitutional body
- Article 317, removal and tenure protection of UPSC members
- Collective responsibility: the entire Council of Ministers stands or falls together before the Lok Sabha, an express mandate under Article 75(3).
- Society: a body registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860, created and reconstituted by executive action rather than by statute.

Public Examinations Amendment Bill, 2026: Ten Years in Jail, Rs 10 Crore Fine for...

Parliament took up a Bill raising paper-leak punishment to 10 years and Rs 10 crore, with fast-track courts and time-bound trials. What it changes and what it misses.

- Introduced in Lok Sabha, 27 July 2026
- Cabinet approval, 24 July 2026
- Minimum imprisonment, raised from 3 years to 5 years
- Maximum imprisonment, 10 years
- Maximum fine, Rs 10 crore, raised from Rs 10 lakh
- Investigation deadline, 2 months
- Trial deadline, 3 months from chargesheet, day-to-day hearing
- Short title, Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024
- Act number, No. 1 of 2024
- Article 246, distribution of legislative powers between Union and States
- 42nd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1976, shifted Education to the Concurrent List
- Article 111, assent of the President to Bills

Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Amendment Bill, 2026: Why 38 Judges May Not...

Lok Sabha takes up the Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Amendment Bill, 2026, raising the apex court sanctioned strength from 34 to 38 judges including the CJI.

- Sanctioned strength after the 2026 Bill: 38 including the CJI
- Working strength when the Cabinet cleared the proposal on May 5, 2026: 32
- Pendency: 92,823 as on April 30, 2026
- Constitution Bench under Article 145(3): minimum five judges
- Retirement age under Article 124(2): 65 years
- First Judges Case, S.P. Gupta v. Union of India, 1981
- Second Judges Case, 1993, created the Collegium
- Third Judges Case, Presidential Reference, 1998, expanded it to CJI plus four senior-most judges
- Fourth Judges Case, October 16, 2015, struck down the NJAC by 4:1
- Sanctioned strength: the maximum number of judges a court may have in law
- Ordinance: temporary law made by the President under Article 123 when Parliament is not in session
- Special Leave Petition: discretionary appeal to the Supreme Court under Article 136

Air India Group Reports FY26 Combined Net Loss of Rs 22,238 Crore

Air India and Air India Express posted a combined FY26 net loss of Rs 22,238 crore, more than double the previous year's Rs 10,859 crore loss, despite privatisation in 2022, reported July 28, 2026.

- Combined net loss: Rs 22,238 crore, against Rs 10,859 crore in FY25.
- Tata Sons stake: 73.82 per cent; Air India privatised in 2022.

Custody, Pellets and a Report Card: What the NEET Protest Ruling and SPIR 2025...

The Supreme Court ordered the release of minors detained in NEET protests as a leaked RAF diary and the Status of Policing in India Report 2025 exposed a wider pattern of unaccountable force.

- Bench: CJI Surya Kant, Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V. Mohana.
- Directed release of minors without criminal antecedents; barred coercive action; ordered evidence preservation.
- Arose from NEET-UG 2026 paper-leak protests.
- RAF diary confirmed Delhi Police pellet-gun authorisation, contradicting prior denials.
- SPIR 2025 theme: "Police Torture and (Un)Accountability"; publishers Common Cause and Lokniti-CSDS.
- Sample: 8,276 personnel, 82 locations, 17 states.
- Over 30 per cent justify third-degree methods; only 41 per cent say arrest procedures are always followed; about 25 per cent strongly support using force against suspects, and about 22 per...
- Prakash Singh v. Union of India (2006): fixed DGP tenure, State Security Commission, Police Establishment Board, Police Complaints Authority, separation of investigation from law-and-order...

Gulveer Singh Wins India's First-Ever CWG Medal in Men's 10,000m

Gulveer Singh won silver in the men's 10,000m at the 2026 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow on July 29, 2026, India's first-ever Commonwealth Games medal in the event, finishing behind Australia's Ky Robinson.

- CWG 2026 Glasgow: silver, men's 10,000m, 27:49.78, India's first-ever medal in the event.
- Indian national record: 27:00.22; Asian 10,000m champion; 2023 Asian Games bronze.

ICMR-NICPR's Indigenous Cervical Cancer Drug Candidate Licensed for...

ICMR's National Institute of Cancer Prevention and Research (NICPR) licensed SHetA2, an indigenous anti-HPV therapeutic candidate for Cervical Intraepithelial Neoplasia (CIN), to Emcure Pharmaceuticals for commercialisation, reported in...

- Developer: ICMR-NICPR with the University of Oklahoma.
- Target: Cervical Intraepithelial Neoplasia (CIN).
- Licensed to: Emcure Pharmaceuticals; currently Phase I trial stage.

IIP Growth Hits 23-Month High of 7.3% in June 2026

India's Index of Industrial Production (IIP) grew 7.3 per cent year-on-year in June 2026, its fastest pace in 23 months, up from a revised 5.0 per cent in May, per Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) data released...

- Growth: 7.3 per cent, a 23-month high; May revised to 5.0 per cent.
- Base year: 2011-12; released by MoSPI.
- Electricity and gas supply led growth at 10.6 per cent, linked to heatwave demand.

Oman Presents Voluntary Fee Plan for Strait of Hormuz Passage

Oman proposed a joint regional mechanism for the Strait of Hormuz under which Iran would collect voluntary, not compulsory, fees from passing vessels, modelled on the Strait of Malacca system, reported July 28-29, 2026.

- Carries about 20 per cent of world oil and LNG trade.
- Oman's proposal models the voluntary-fee cooperative used at the Strait of Malacca.

One Nation, One Election: The JPC Gets More Time, the Federalism Questions Remain

The Lok Sabha extended the JPC's tenure on the 129th Constitutional Amendment Bill to the Winter Session, with a phased 2029-to-2034 rollout still pending consensus on the hardest federalism questions.

- Constitution (129th Amendment) Bill, 2024, with the companion Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2024.
- JPC: 41 members, chaired by P.P. Chaudhary; tenure extended 29 July 2026 to the last week of the Winter Session.
- JPC stated 11 July 2026 that the framework "conforms to the Constitution."
- Stated rollout: about 20 State Assemblies aligned with the 2029 Lok Sabha election first; full nationwide synchronisation including local bodies discussed for 2034.
- Article 172: normal 5-year term for State Legislative Assemblies.
- Kesavananda Bharati v. State of Kerala (1973): basic structure doctrine.
- S.R. Bommai v. Union of India (1994): federalism as a basic feature.
- Handling of premature Assembly dissolution within a synchronised cycle.
- Interaction with the Tenth Schedule (anti-defection law).
- State-level electoral autonomy under Article 172.

Registration of Births and Deaths (Amendment) Bill, 2026 Introduced

Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai introduced the Registration of Births and Deaths (Amendment) Bill, 2026 in the Lok Sabha on July 29, 2026, amending Section 13(3) of the parent 1969 Act.

- Parent Act: Registration of Births and Deaths Act, 1969; Section 13(3) amended in 2026.
- Delay over 2 years: now requires a Judicial Magistrate First Class order.
- Delay of 1-2 years: requires DM/SDM/Executive Magistrate approval.
- National Register of Births and Deaths introduced via the 2023 amendment.

Solar Power Curtailment Reaches 8,133 GWh in Q1 FY27

Government data disclosed that 8,133 GWh of solar power generation was curtailed in the April-June 2026 quarter due to transmission bottlenecks and grid-security requirements, reported July 28, 2026.

- Total: 8,133 GWh (April-June 2026).
- Monthly: April 2,417 GWh, May 3,235 GWh, June 2,481 GWh.
- Cause: transmission bottlenecks, not a renewable generation shortfall.

The Cauvery Order: Adjudication in a Drought Year

The CWRC ordered Karnataka to release water to Tamil Nadu even as basin inflows ran well below average, testing whether a fixed tribunal award can flex to real monsoon variability.

- CWRC ordered 3,500 cusecs release at Biligundlu, for 15 days from 29 July 2026.
- Karnataka reservoir inflows: 65.86 per cent below the 30-year average (1 June to 27 July 2026).
- Tamil Nadu's claimed backlog: 9.46 tmc ft, as of 26 July 2026.
- CWDT final award: 2007; modified by the Supreme Court's 2018 verdict.
- CWMA is the apex implementation body; CWRC is its technical sub-body issuing release orders.
- Article 262 and the Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956 provide the legal basis for tribunal adjudication.
- Article 262(2) allows Parliament to bar Supreme Court jurisdiction over such disputes by law.

West Bengal Moves to Curb Gram Panchayat Pradhans' Powers

The West Bengal government is preparing a bill to strip gram panchayat pradhans of the authority to issue birth and death certificates and disburse funds, transferring these functions to bureaucrats, reported in late July 2026.

- 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992, added Part IX, giving panchayats constitutional status as institutions of local self-government.
- West Bengal's proposed bill would shift certificate-issuance and fund-disbursal from elected pradhans to bureaucrats.

Ajinkya Rahane Announces Retirement from International Cricket

Former India Test captain Ajinkya Rahane announced retirement from international cricket across all formats on July 30, 2026.

- Retired 30 July 2026; 85 Tests, 90 ODIs, 20 T20Is.
- Captained India's 2020-21 series win in Australia.

Kerala Cabinet Clears Five Governance Reforms to Cut Project Delays

The Kerala Cabinet approved a five-point administrative reform package on July 29, 2026 aimed at cutting bureaucratic delays and revenue leakages.

- Approved by the Kerala Cabinet, 29 July 2026; CM V.D. Satheesan.
- Key platforms: SAMPATH (asset registry) and PlanSpace 2.0 (project tracking).

Maharashtra Becomes First State to Qualify for Second RKVY Instalment

Maharashtra became the first State to qualify for the second instalment under the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY) after utilising over 75 per cent of its first-instalment funds, reported July 27, 2026.

- First instalment Rs 335 crore; over 75 per cent utilised, unlocking a second Rs 335 crore tranche.
- Union Agriculture Minister: Shivraj Singh Chouhan.

Sarvesh Kushare Wins India's First-Ever CWG Medal in Men's High Jump

Sarvesh Kushare won silver in the men's high jump at the 2026 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow, India's first-ever medal in the event at the CWG, on his Games debut.

- CWG 2026 Glasgow, silver, men's high jump, 2.25 m; India's first-ever medal in the event.

The 850-Seat Question: Why Delimitation Keeps Testing India's Federal Bargain

The Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026 was defeated in April and the Delimitation Bill withdrawn, but Shashi Tharoor's pushback against a monsoon-session revival keeps the 850-seat federalism debate alive.

- 42nd Amendment (1976): froze seat count at 1971 Census levels.
- 84th Amendment (2001): extended freeze to the first Census after 2026; allowed boundary redrawing on 1991 data.
- 87th Amendment (2003): allowed 2001 Census data for boundary redrawing.
- Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026: introduced 16 April 2026, defeated 17 April 2026 (298 of 352 votes, short of the required two-thirds); companion Delimitation Bill and UT Laws...
- Revival reported for the Monsoon Session, 20 July to 13 August 2026.
- Current Lok Sabha: 543 seats; proposed expansion figure under discussion: 850.
- Southern/lower-fertility States' concern: reduced relative political weight despite meeting population-stabilisation goals.
- Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, 2023 (women's reservation) rollout is contingent on this delimitation exercise.
- Article 82: Parliament's power to enact a Delimitation Act and readjust Lok Sabha/State seats after each Census.
- Article 170: parallel provision for State Legislative Assemblies.

No More Backdoor Registrations: Parliament Tightens the Births and Deaths Act

The Registration of Births and Deaths (Amendment) Bill, 2026 raises the bar for delayed registration, closing a route long used to manufacture fraudulent age and citizenship documents.

- Registration of Births and Deaths (Amendment) Bill, 2026: introduced 29 July, passed by Lok Sabha 31 July 2026.
- Amends Section 13 of the 1969 Act.
- Two-tier delayed-registration structure: 1-2 years (District/Sub-Divisional/authorised Executive Magistrate), beyond 2 years (Judicial Magistrate, First Class, plus verification and fee).
- Closes a route previously used for backdated age/citizenship documentation.
- CRS data underpins welfare targeting, vital statistics and legal proceedings.
- **Related body:** Registrar General of India, custodian of the CRS and the Sample Registration System.

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SUMAN Roadmap 2030 and National Ambulance Services Guidelines

Union Health Minister J.P. Nadda launched the SUMAN Roadmap 2030 and the first-ever National Ambulance Services Guidelines 2026 to strengthen maternal and emergency care.

- **Launched:** June 29, 2026, at the 16th Conference of the Central Council of Health and Family Welfare (CCHFW), by Union Health Minister J.P. Nadda.
- **SUMAN:** Surakshit Matritva Aashwasan (Safe Motherhood Assurance).
- **Roadmap 2030 goal:** zero preventable maternal and newborn deaths; MMR below 70 per 100,000 live births by 2030 (SDG 3.1).
- **Coverage:** 130 districts across 13 high-focus States.
- **Tracking model:** four stages, antenatal, third-trimester, intrapartum and postnatal; SUMAN Panchayat for community accountability.
- **NAS 2026:** first-ever Operational Guidelines on National Ambulance Services.
- **NAS features:** Integrated Command and Dispatch Centres, AIS-125 vehicle standards, GIS health-facility mapping, integration with emergency number 112.
- **Data note:** India's MMR has declined over the years as tracked by the Sample Registration System (SRS).

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The Labour Codes and the 50 Per Cent Wage Rule

The four Labour Codes have moved into active enforcement, bringing the 50 per cent wage rule into effect for employers.

- **Four Labour Codes:** Wages; Industrial Relations; Social Security; Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions.
- **Code on Wages:** enacted 2019.
- **50 per cent wage rule:** basic pay to be at least 50 per cent of total remuneration.

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Odisha Launches Gyanodaya: Free Education from KG to PG

Odisha becomes the first Indian state to offer universal free education from KG to postgraduate level under the Rs 5,467.55 crore Gyanodaya scheme.

- **Scheme name:** Gyanodaya, Shiksharu Samruddhi, approved by the Odisha Cabinet on July 1, 2026.
- **Outlay:** About Rs 5,467.55 crore over five years; first-year outlay about Rs 895.57 crore.
- **Coverage:** Free education (admission-fee waiver) from KG to PG in government and government-aided institutions, effective from the 2026-27 session; includes Classes 9 to 12 and regular UG...
- **Beneficiaries:** Roughly 32 lakh students a year.
- **Exclusions:** Self-financing, private-unaided, PPP-mode, and professional or technical courses.
- **First in India:** Odisha is the first state to offer a universal KG-to-PG free-education scheme.
- **Constitutional link:** Article 21A (Right to Education, ages 6 to 14), RTE Act 2009; scheme extends access below and above this band.
- **Global link:** Advances SDG 4 (Quality Education).

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Upgrading the National Ambulance Code (AIS-125)

MoRTH has proposed amendments to AIS-125, the National Ambulance Code, notified as GSR 382(E) on May 14, 2026, adding neonatal and multi-stretcher ambulances and e-ambulance power norms.

- **Development:** MoRTH has proposed amendments to AIS-125, the National Ambulance Code, notified as draft GSR 382(E) on May 14, 2026, and open for public comment.
- **New categories:** Neonatal Road Ambulance (for premature or sick newborns) and Multi-stretcher Road Ambulance.
- **Rescue capability:** Higher ambulance classes must carry rescue and extraction equipment for crash victims.
- **E-mobility:** Electric ambulances (e-ambulances) must have a dedicated power source for medical equipment.
- **AIS-125:** The Automotive Industry Standard that classifies road ambulances by medical capability and specifies their equipment and safety features.
- **Road-safety data:** In 2024, India recorded about 4,87,707 road accidents and about 1,77,175 fatalities; roughly half of crash deaths are preventable with Golden Hour care.
- **Golden Hour:** The first hour after serious injury; a concept now defined in the amended Motor Vehicles Act.
- **PM-RAHAT:** Cashless treatment up to Rs 1.5 lakh per victim for up to seven days, funded by the Motor Vehicle Accident Fund.

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National One Health Mock Drill in Vidisha

The Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying conducted "Pashujanya Yudh Abhyas", a national One Health mock drill, at Vidisha, Madhya Pradesh, in early July 2026.

- **Pashujanya Yudh Abhyas:** national One Health mock drill at Vidisha, Madhya Pradesh.
- **Conducted by:** DAHD, under the National One Health Mission.
- **One Health:** integrated human, animal and environmental health approach.

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UDISE+ 2025-26: Teacher Count Crosses One Crore

On July 8, 2026, the Ministry of Education released UDISE+ 2025-26 data: school teachers crossed one crore for the first time and dropout rates fell across levels.

- **UDISE+:** Unified District Information System for Education Plus, the official digital database for school education maintained by the Ministry of Education; it replaced the DISE system.
- **Release:** UDISE+ 2025-26 data and PGI 2.0 released on July 8, 2026.
- **Teacher milestone:** School teachers crossed one crore for the first time, about 1.02 crore in 2025-26 (up from about 1.01 crore in 2024-25).
- **Dropout:** Secondary dropout fell 8.2 per cent to 7.0 per cent; preparatory dropout fell 2.3 per cent to 1.8 per cent.
- **Retention:** Secondary retention rose 47.2 per cent to 51.9 per cent.
- **High-dropout States:** Ladakh, Gujarat, Chhattisgarh and Karnataka (secondary level).
- **PGI 2.0:** Performance Grading Index that grades States and UTs on a 10-tier framework.
- **Policy frame:** Linked to NEP 2020 (100 per cent GER in school education by 2030), the Right to Education (RTE) Act, and SDG 4 (quality education).
- **Key metric:** Pupil-teacher ratio (PTR), a core quality indicator improved by the rising teacher count.

TribeX Tribal Learning Platform Launched

The Ministry of Tribal Affairs launched TribeX, a digital learning platform on tribal culture.

- **TribeX:** digital learning platform on tribal culture by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs.
- **Offer:** free certificate courses and thousands of resources.
- **Complements:** EMRS, PM-JANMAN, Dharti Aaba tribal initiatives.

Health Ministry Ends Licensing Exemption for High-Alcohol Medicines

The Union Health Ministry has withdrawn the licensing exemption for medicinal formulations containing more than 12 per cent ethyl alcohol, bringing them under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act.

- **Measure:** July 2026, the Health Ministry ended the licensing exemption for medicinal formulations with **more than 12 per cent ethyl alcohol**; now licensed and prescription-only.
- **Aim:** curb misuse of high-alcohol syrups and tinctures as intoxicants.
- **Statute:** Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 and Drugs and Cosmetics Rules, 1945 regulate import, manufacture, distribution and sale of drugs and cosmetics.
- **Regulator:** CDSCO, headed by the DCGL, is the national drug regulator.
- **Schedule H1:** prescription plus a maintained sales record.
- **Federalism:** manufacturing licences are issued by State licensing authorities.

Third NAMASTE Day Marks the Push for Mechanised Sanitation

On July 14, 2026 the third NAMASTE Day renewed the drive to end hazardous manual sanitation through mechanisation and to protect the dignity of sewer and septic-tank workers.

- **Event:** Third **NAMASTE Day**, July 14, 2026; main event at **Rabindra Sadan, Kolkata**, led by Union Minister **Virendra Kumar**.
- **Full form:** National Action for Mechanised Sanitation Ecosystem.
- **Ministries:** MoSJE and MoHUA, jointly.
- **Goals:** **zero fatalities** and **100 per cent mechanisation** of hazardous sewer and septic-tank cleaning.
- **Beneficiaries:** sewer and septic-tank workers, waste-pickers, and rehabilitated manual scavengers.
- **Law and predecessor:** complements the **2013 Manual Scavengers Act**; succeeds the **SRMS**.

Draft National Health Research Policy 2026 Released for Consultation

The government has released the draft National Health Research Policy 2026 for public consultation, updating the 2011 policy and aiming to strengthen and coordinate India's health research ecosystem.

- **Event (July 2026):** Government released the **draft National Health Research Policy 2026** for **public consultation**.
- **Updates:** The **National Health Research Policy 2011**.
- **Prepared by:** **Department of Health Research (DHR)**, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
- **Scientific lead:** **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)**.
- **Aims:** Strengthen the research ecosystem, improve coordination, promote ethics and quality, encourage indigenous innovation, and align research with national health priorities.
- **Context:** **National Health Policy 2017** is the overarching framework; India's health-research spending is low as a share of GDP.

Nita Ambani Honoured by Fortune India

Nita Ambani received a Fortune India Most Powerful Women recognition.

- **Person:** Nita Ambani, Reliance Foundation.
- **Honour:** Fortune India Most Powerful Women (2026).
- **Fields:** philanthropy, education, sports, arts.

France Bans Social Media for Under-15s: Lessons for India

France became the first EU country to ban social media for children under 15, reviving the debate on age verification, the DPDP Act and online child safety in India.

- The **DPDP Act, 2023** is India's first standalone data-protection law; it provides for a **Data Protection Board of India** to enforce its provisions.
- A **data fiduciary** is any person who alone or with others determines the purpose and means of processing personal data.
- **Age assurance** is the umbrella term for methods (age verification, age estimation) used to establish a user's age online.
- **Article 21** of the Constitution, through the **Puttaswamy (2017)** judgment, recognises the **right to privacy** as a fundamental right, the constitutional anchor of India's data-protection regime.
- The **IT Rules, 2021** were framed under the **Information Technology Act, 2000**.

Samudra Pradakshina: All-Women Circumnavigation

A tri-service all-women team completed a global circumnavigation under Samudra Pradakshina.

- **Expedition:** Samudra Pradakshina, first tri-service all-women circumnavigation.
- **Voyage:** about 25,500 nautical miles over roughly 314 days.
- **Milestone:** rounded Cape Horn via the Drake Passage.

World Hepatitis Day 2026: India's Elimination Push Under NVHCP

On World Hepatitis Day 2026, PIB highlighted the National Viral Hepatitis Control Programme's screening and treatment scale, against WHO's 2030 elimination target.

- Observed July 28 since 2010 (WHO).
- Marks the birthday of Dr Baruch Blumberg, discoverer of Hepatitis B virus, Nobel Prize 1976.
- 2026 theme: "Hepatitis: Let's Break It Down."
- A and E: faecal-oral transmission, not chronic.
- B, C, D: blood-borne/body-fluid transmission, can become chronic; D requires B co-infection.
- Hepatitis C is curable with direct-acting antivirals.
- Launched 2018, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
- Over 21 crore screened, over 6 lakh on treatment, over 1,150 treatment sites (to March 2026).
- Focus: Hepatitis B and C.
- 90 per cent reduction in new chronic infections.
- 65 per cent reduction in hepatitis-related deaths.
- Hepatitis B birth dose given within 24 hours of birth under India's Universal Immunisation Programme.

Four Serotypes, One Season: What Dengue Hyper-Endemicity Means for India

An ICMR-linked study found all four dengue serotypes co-circulating across at least eight states, a hyper-endemic pattern that raises the risk of severe dengue and complicates vaccine strategy.

- All 4 serotypes (DENV-1 to DENV-4) co-circulating in at least 8 Indian states.
- Hyper-endemic = simultaneous multi-serotype circulation, distinct from single/dual-serotype patterns.
- Antibody-dependent enhancement (ADE): prior-serotype antibodies can worsen a different-serotype secondary infection.
- Second infections with a different serotype carry higher severe-dengue (DHF/DSS) risk than first infections.
- NVBDCP: umbrella vector-borne disease control programme.
- Integrated Vector Management: source reduction, biological control, targeted larvicide/fogging.
- India has approved the Qdenga dengue vaccine.

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India and Japan Hold the 16th Annual Summit

India and Japan held their 16th Annual Summit in New Delhi on July 2, 2026, adopting a Joint Declaration on Economic Security and a Joint Statement on AI Cooperation.

- **16th India-Japan Annual Summit:** Held in New Delhi on July 2, 2026; PM Narendra Modi hosted Japanese PM Sanae Takaichi (July 1 to 3 visit), her first India visit since taking office.
- **Two outcome documents:** Joint Declaration on Economic Security and Joint Statement on AI Cooperation.
- **Economic Security Declaration:** Covers resilient supply chains in semiconductors, critical minerals, IT, clean energy and pharmaceuticals; denounces "economic coercion".
- **AI cooperation:** Vertical AI for manufacturing, healthcare and mobility; large language models; AI governance and safety; data-centre and semiconductor resilience.
- **Japan-India Economic Forum:** Around 120 cooperation agreements; projected Japanese private investment of about USD 12.5 billion.
- **Partnership tiers:** Special Strategic and Global Partnership (elevated 2014); 2+2 dialogue (foreign and defence ministers); Quad partners.
- **Connectivity flagship:** Mumbai-Ahmedabad High Speed Rail uses Japanese Shinkansen technology; India set to adopt the E10 Shinkansen.
- **Summit rhythm:** Annual summits alternate between New Delhi and Tokyo.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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PM Modi in Ghana: Ties Elevated to a Comprehensive Partnership

PM Modi's July 2 to 3, 2026 Ghana visit, the first by an Indian PM in over 30 years, elevated ties to a Comprehensive Partnership with four MoUs and Ghana's highest honour.

- **Visit:** July 2 to 3, 2026; first by an Indian Prime Minister to Ghana in over 30 years.
- **Honour:** "The Officer of the Order of the Star of Ghana", conferred by President **John Mahama**.
- **Upgrade:** bilateral ties elevated to a **Comprehensive Partnership**.
- **MoUs (four):** culture; standards (**Bureau of Indian Standards**); Ayurveda and traditional medicine; **Joint Commission Mechanism** between Foreign Ministries.
- **Cooperation offered:** West Africa vaccine hub, Digital Public Infrastructure, skilling, and the "**Feed Ghana**" initiative.
- **Tour:** five nations, July 2 to 9, 2026: Ghana, Trinidad and Tobago, Argentina, Brazil (BRICS Summit) and Namibia.
- **BRICS:** India chairs BRICS in 2026, its fourth chairship (after 2012, 2016, 2021).
- **India's stand:** development-partnership model, not a debt-trap model; capacity-building and technology-sharing that respect partner sovereignty.

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India Chairs the UNCTAD Consumer Protection Expert Group

India is chairing UNCTAD's Ninth Session of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Consumer Protection in Geneva (July 6 to 8, 2026), led by Consumer Affairs Secretary Nidhi Khare.

- **The event:** India chairs the Ninth Session of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts (IGE) on Consumer Protection Law and Policy, held under UNCTAD at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, from...
- **UNCTAD:** United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, established in 1964, headquartered in Geneva; deals with trade, investment and development, including consumer protection.
- **India's chair:** Nidhi Khare, Secretary, Department of Consumer Affairs.
- **UNGCP:** United Nations Guidelines for Consumer Protection, adopted in 1985 and revised in 2015; the IGE is its principal intergovernmental review platform.
- **Consumer Protection Act, 2019:** India's domestic law that created the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) and introduced product liability and rules for e-commerce.
- **CCPA:** Central Consumer Protection Authority; has issued guidelines against dark patterns and greenwashing.
- **Dark patterns:** Deceptive online design that manipulates consumer choices; **greenwashing:** misleading environmental claims about products.

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India-Indonesia Summit: BrahMos Deal and 20 Outcomes

On July 7, 2026, the India-Indonesia summit during PM Modi's Jakarta visit produced 20 outcomes headlined by a BrahMos missile supply pact for Indonesia.

- **India-Indonesia summit:** Held on July 7, 2026 during PM Modi's state visit (July 6 to 8, 2026), his fourth, hosted by President Prabowo Subianto; produced 20 outcomes (14 MoUs and 6...).
- **BrahMos pact:** India to supply BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles (reported around USD 630 million); Indonesia is the third foreign buyer after the Philippines and Vietnam.
- **BrahMos basics:** India-Russia joint venture (DRDO and NPO Mashinostroyeniya); named after the Brahmaputra and Moskva rivers; supersonic (about Mach 3); land, sea, air and submarine launch.
- **Other deals:** MoU on the indigenous Astra BVR air-to-air missile; maritime safety and security framework; critical-minerals and steel supply chain (nickel, rare-earth magnets); joint...
- **Civilian honour:** PM Modi conferred the "Bintang Adipurna", Indonesia's highest civilian award.
- **Cultural visit:** Prambanan Temple, a 9th-century UNESCO-listed Hindu temple in Yogyakarta.
- **Multilateral weight:** Indonesia is the largest ASEAN economy and the 11th full BRICS member (joined January 2026).
- **Policy frame:** Act East policy; Atmanirbhar Bharat in defence; India as a net security provider in the Indo-Pacific.

India Hosts the 7th BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting

On July 7 to 8, 2026, India hosted the 7th BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting in New Delhi, chaired by Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri, ahead of the 6th BIMSTEC Summit later in 2026.

- **The event:** 7th BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting, hosted by India in New Delhi on July 7 to 8, 2026, chaired by Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri, ahead of the 6th BIMSTEC Summit later in 2026.
- **BIMSTEC:** Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation.
- **Founded:** 1997, through the Bangkok Declaration.
- **Members (7):** India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Myanmar, Nepal and Bhutan. Pakistan is not a member.
- **Secretariat:** Dhaka, Bangladesh.
- **Charter:** The BIMSTEC Charter entered into force on 20 May 2024, giving the grouping legal personality.
- **Sectors:** Reorganised into 6 sectors (Trade and Investment, Connectivity, Security, Energy, Blue Economy, People-to-People contacts); India leads the Security sector.
- **Strategic context:** BIMSTEC is India's pivot after SAARC's paralysis and the meeting point of the Neighbourhood First and Act East policies.

India-Australia Third Annual Summit: Uranium, Defence and Critical Minerals

At the third Australia-India Annual Summit in Melbourne on July 8-10, 2026, the two leaders operationalised uranium supply, deepened defence ties and launched a Critical Minerals Corridor.

- **Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP):** The highest tier of India-Australia relations, elevated at a virtual summit in June 2020.
- **Civil Nuclear Cooperation Agreement:** Signed 2014, entered force 2015; operationalised for uranium supply by the July 9, 2026 Administrative Arrangement.
- **ECTA:** The Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement, in force December 29, 2022, to be succeeded by a fuller CECA.
- **Quad:** The India-Australia-Japan-United States grouping focused on a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific.
- **Cocos (Keeling) Islands:** An Australian Indian Ocean territory, site of the temporary space-tracking terminal for Gaganyaan.

BRICS Adopts the Guwahati Declaration on Anti-Narcotics

BRICS anti-drug agencies adopted the Guwahati Declaration to strengthen cooperation against narcotics.

- **Declaration:** Guwahati Declaration, BRICS Heads of Anti-Drug Agencies Meeting.
- **Context:** India's BRICS Chairship 2026; real-time intelligence sharing.
- **Proposal:** a BRICS Virtual Working Group on narcotics.

Facts Corner

- **India-Canada CEPA:** third round in Ottawa; target conclusion 2026; trade of about 50 billion dollars by 2030.
- **Wimbledon 2026:** Jannik Sinner (men) and Linda Noskova (women) win the singles titles.
- **E20 FAQ:** Ministry of Petroleum FAQ on E20 (20 per cent ethanol) petrol; minimum RON 95; EBP Programme.
- **DRDO:** Chairman/Secretary DDR&D post in interim charge since Dr Samir V. Kamat's retirement; ACC to decide.
- **Kashmir Martyrs' Day:** July 13, 1931 Srinagar killings; holiday status withdrawn in 2019.

Government Issues E20 Fuel FAQ

The government issued a detailed FAQ clarifying concerns about E20 petrol.

- **E20:** petrol blended with 20 per cent ethanol; minimum RON 95.
- **Programme:** Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) Programme; E20 target met ahead of schedule.
- **Aim:** cut crude imports and carbon emissions; the FAQ addresses mileage and vehicle-compatibility concerns.

India and Canada Conclude Third Round of CEPA Talks

India and Canada concluded the third round of negotiations for their Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA).

- **Talks:** third round of the India-Canada CEPA, held in Ottawa.
- **Target:** conclude the agreement in 2026; bilateral trade of about 50 billion dollars by 2030.
- **Coverage:** goods, services, IP, rules of origin, SPS and TBT.

India and New Zealand Elevate Ties to a Strategic Partnership

On 10-11 July 2026, PM Modi's Auckland visit, the first by an Indian PM in about 40 years, elevated India-New Zealand ties to a Strategic Partnership with a non-binding Roadmap to 2030 and MoUs across defence, trade and ocean research.

- **Event (10-11 July 2026):** PM Modi visited Auckland; met NZ PM Christopher Luxon; first Indian PM visit in about **40 years**.
- **Outcome:** Ties elevated to a **Strategic Partnership**; adopted the non-binding **Roadmap to 2030**.
- **Roadmap span:** Defence and maritime security, trade, education, climate and disaster management.
- **MoUs:** Defence and maritime security, hydrography, dairy, food technology, sports, ocean research, culture.
- **Trade target:** Roughly double two-way trade to about **NZ\$7 billion by 2030**; **FTA talks continue**.
- **New Zealand:** Capital **Wellington**, largest city **Auckland**; member of **Five Eyes** (US, UK, Canada, Australia).
- **Diaspora:** Large Indian community in New Zealand.

Kashmir Martyrs' Day

July 13 marks the anniversary of the 1931 Srinagar killings.

- **Date:** July 13, 1931 Srinagar killings (22 people).
- **Status:** official-holiday status withdrawn in 2019.
- **Context:** the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019 created the UTs of Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh.

Sinner and Noskova Win Wimbledon 2026

The 2026 Wimbledon Championships concluded with new singles champions.

- **Men's champion:** Jannik Sinner (Italy), beating Alexander Zverev.
- **Women's champion:** Linda Noskova (Czech Republic), beating Karolina Muchova.
- **Wimbledon:** oldest Grand Slam; the only Major played on grass.

Ten Years On: The South China Sea Arbitration and UNCLOS

July 12, 2026 marked a decade since the arbitral award in Philippines v. China rejected Beijing's nine-dash line, reviving debate on UNCLOS and the rules-based maritime order.

- **Anniversary:** July 12, 2026 marked ten years since the 2016 South China Sea arbitral award.
- **Case:** Philippines v. China; tribunal under **Annex VII of UNCLOS**, with the **PCA, The Hague** as registry.
- **Ruling:** China's **nine-dash line** and historic-rights claims have **no legal basis** under UNCLOS; China rejects the award.
- **UNCLOS:** adopted 1982, in force 1994; territorial sea 12 nm, EEZ 200 nm.
- **Parties:** India and China are parties; the United States is not.
- **India's stand:** peaceful settlement of disputes and freedom of navigation in accordance with UNCLOS.

Central Vista to Be Called Kartavya Bhawan Area

The government announced that the Central Vista precinct will be officially referred to as the Kartavya Bhawan Area.

- **Renaming:** Central Vista to be officially called the Kartavya Bhawan Area.
- **Includes:** Kartavya Marg and the new Kartavya Bhawan office buildings.
- **Earlier:** Rajpath was renamed Kartavya Path in 2022.

India Enrols First Newborn in the NeoSep1 Global Trial

India enrolled its first newborn in the NeoSep1 global trial against drug-resistant neonatal sepsis.

- **Trial:** NeoSep1, against drug-resistant neonatal sepsis; GARDP-funded.
- **Relevance:** India's high birth and AMR burden.
- **Concept:** neonatal sepsis is a bloodstream infection in newborns; AMR reduces treatment options.

India Launches SHANTI Campaign for a UN Security Council Seat

Around 13-14 July 2026, India formally launched at UN Headquarters its SHANTI campaign for a non-permanent UN Security Council seat for the 2028-29 term, foregrounding its peacekeeping record ahead of the June 2027 election.

- **Event (13-14 July 2026):** India launched the **SHANTI** campaign at UN Headquarters for a non-permanent UNSC seat for the **2028-29 term**.
- **SHANTI:** Securing Holistic Advancement through Norms, Trust and Integrity.
- **Election:** Due **June 2027**; sole **Asia-Pacific Group** seat, reportedly vs **Tajikistan**.
- **Past terms:** India non-permanent member **eight times** (1950-51 to 2021-22).
- **Peacekeeping:** ~2.9 lakh personnel across about **50 UN missions**.
- **UNSC:** **15 members, 10 non-permanent** (UNGA, two-thirds majority, two-year terms, no immediate re-election) and **5 permanent (P5)** with veto.
- **G4:** India, Germany, Japan, Brazil, seek permanent seats.
- **Opposed by:** **Uniting for Consensus (Coffee Club)**.

July 14 Observances

July 14 carries several international observances.

- **Bastille Day:** July 14; France's national day (storming of the Bastille, 1789).
- **World Chimpanzee Day:** July 14; marks Jane Goodall's Gombe study (1960).
- **Shark Awareness Day:** July 14; apex-predator conservation.

Karnataka to Set Up a Government AI University

Karnataka announced a plan to set up a state-run Artificial Intelligence university.

- **Plan:** Karnataka to set up a state government AI university (announcement stage).
- **Aim:** AI talent, research and skilling.
- **National frame:** the IndiaAI Mission.

India Hosts the 5th BIMSTEC Security Chiefs Meeting

India hosted the 5th BIMSTEC National Security Advisers Meeting in New Delhi, chaired by NSA Ajit Doval, adopting maritime HADR and law-enforcement guidelines. Bay of Bengal security explained for UPSC.

- **Event:** 5th BIMSTEC National Security Advisers (Security Chiefs) Meeting, New Delhi, **July 16, 2026**.
- **Chair:** NSA **Ajit Doval**; **Secretary-General Indra Mani Pandey** and all seven members attended.
- **Focus areas:** counter-terrorism, cyber security, maritime security.
- **Outcomes:** guidelines for the **maritime component of HADR**; guiding principles for **maritime law-enforcement conduct at sea**.
- **BIMSTEC:** founded **1997** (Bangkok Declaration); Secretariat in **Dhaka**; India leads the **Security Pillar**.
- **India's stand:** zero tolerance for terrorism, including **cross-border terrorism**; India as net security provider in the Indian Ocean Region.

India-EU Trade and Technology Council Toward Horizon Europe

The third India-EU Trade and Technology Council in Brussels agreed to open negotiations on India's association to Horizon Europe, the EU's EUR 93.5 billion research programme.

- **Horizon Europe** is the EU's key funding programme for research and innovation, the successor to Horizon 2020.
- **Association** status lets non-EU countries participate in the programme almost like member states; India would be among a small set of associated partners.
- The **India-EU Strategic Partnership** dates to 2004.
- The EU's only other TTC partner is the **United States**, underlining India's status as a trusted-technology partner.
- The TTC runs in parallel with the **India-EU FTA** talks, covering standards and emerging tech that tariff deals do not.

The US-Saudi Civilian Nuclear Agreement and Its Ripples

The United States and Saudi Arabia have announced a landmark civilian nuclear cooperation agreement, reviving debates on non-proliferation, West Asian security and India's interests in the Gulf.

- The **IAEA**, headquartered in **Vienna**, verifies peaceful use of nuclear material through safeguards and inspections.
- The **NPT (1968)** rests on three pillars: **non-proliferation, disarmament and the peaceful use** of nuclear energy.
- The **Abraham Accords (2020)** normalised relations between Israel and several Arab states, including the UAE and Bahrain.
- Saudi Arabia and India elevated ties through the **Strategic Partnership Council** established in 2019.
- India's civil nuclear cooperation expanded after the **2008 NSG waiver** and the India-US civil nuclear deal.

India Joins the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies

India deposited its Instrument of Acceptance of the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies, becoming the 123rd member to ratify the first WTO pact with an environmental objective.

- The **WTO** was established in **1995** as the successor to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (**GATT, 1947**) and now has over 160 members.
- The **Ministerial Conference** is the WTO's highest decision-making body and meets roughly every two years.
- **Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala** of Nigeria is the WTO's first woman and first African Director-General.
- **Special and Differential Treatment (S&DT)** provisions give developing and least-developed countries flexibilities such as longer implementation periods and technical assistance.
- India's flagship fisheries scheme is the **Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY)**, launched in 2020 to promote a sustainable and inclusive fisheries sector.

Chandigarh Declaration: 16th BRICS Health Ministers' Meeting Under India's 2026...

Under India's 2026 BRICS chairship, the 16th BRICS Health Ministers' Meeting concluded in Chandigarh, adopting a health declaration and launching a Mission for Healthy Lifestyle and a Network of Centres of Excellence on mental wellness.

- **NIMHANS** (National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences), Bengaluru, is an Institute of National Importance and will coordinate the BRICS mental-wellness network.
- **Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM)** creates a unique Ayushman Bharat Health Account (ABHA) ID for interoperable digital health records.
- **U-WIN** digitises India's Universal Immunisation Programme, building on the Co-WIN model.
- **Indonesia** became the newest full BRICS member in early 2025, the first Southeast Asian nation in the bloc.
- **Universal Health Coverage (UHC)** means all people receive needed health services without financial hardship, a UN Sustainable Development Goal target.

Jaishankar Meets Wang Yi in Manila: Peace at the Border First

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar met Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Manila, reaffirming that peace in the border areas is the prerequisite for normal India-China ties while raising trade imbalance and supply-chain concerns.

- The **Line of Actual Control (LAC)** is the effective boundary between India and China, distinct from a formally delimited border.
- **Aksai Chin** and **Arunachal Pradesh** are integral parts of India; Arunachal Pradesh is an inseparable part of the Indian Union.
- **Rare earth elements** are 17 metals critical for electronics, defence and clean-energy technologies, where China dominates global supply.
- The **SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organisation)** and **BRICS** are groupings in which both India and China participate.
- The **Galwan Valley clash (June 2020)** was the first deadly India-China border incident in over four decades.

India Presses Maritime Security at the 21st East Asia Summit

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar told the 21st East Asia Summit in Manila on July 23, 2026 that international waterways must remain safe and unimpeded, and that attacks on seafarers, civilian shipping and infrastructure cannot be...

- The East Asia Summit was established in 2005 and has 18 members; India is a founding member.
- The Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea dates from 2002 and is not legally binding.

No Gold Standard: The US-Saudi Civil Nuclear Deal and the Enrichment Question

The United States and Saudi Arabia signed a civil nuclear cooperation agreement and a bilateral safeguards agreement on July 22, 2026, without the enrichment renunciation that made the 2009 UAE deal a non-proliferation benchmark.

- Signatories: US Energy Secretary Chris Wright and Saudi Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman
- US Department of Energy: foundation for a 30-year, multi-billion-dollar partnership
- On July 23, 2026 President Trump made the deal contingent on Saudi accession to the Abraham Accords
- "Gold standard": the 2009 US-UAE agreement, under which the UAE renounced enrichment and reprocessing before opening Barakah
- Enrichment levels: natural uranium about 0.7 per cent U-235; reactor grade 3 to 5 per cent; weapons grade about 90 per cent
- A 123 Agreement derives from Section 123 of the US Atomic Energy Act, 1954
- Vision 2030: tourism, mega projects, financial sector, AI data centres
- Abraham Accords, 2020: UAE, Bahrain and Morocco, mediated by the first Trump administration
- 2023: Saudi-Israel normalisation nearly concluded under the Biden administration; IMEC announced the same month
- Since October 7, 2023, Riyadh conditions normalisation on a credible pathway to a Palestinian state on 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as capital
- The NPT opened for signature in 1968 and entered into force in 1970; the IAEA was established in 1957 and is headquartered in Vienna.
- The Nuclear Suppliers Group was formed in 1974 following India's first nuclear test; India received an NSG waiver in 2008.

Safe and Unimpeded: India Presses Maritime Security at the 21st East Asia Summit

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar told the 21st East Asia Summit in Manila on July 23, 2026 that attacks on seafarers and civilian shipping cannot be countenanced, and backed a legally binding South China Sea Code of Conduct.

- Venue: Manila, Philippines; EAM S. Jaishankar in Manila on July 22 and 23, 2026
- India backed a substantive, effective and legally binding South China Sea Code of Conduct, compliant with UNCLOS 1982
- India announced it will host the 7th EAS Maritime Security Conference in Kochi
- Established 2005; first summit Kuala Lumpur, December 2005
- 18 members: 10 ASEAN states plus India, China, Japan, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand, United States, Russia
- The United States and Russia joined in 2011
- UNCLOS adopted 1982; the reference framework for maritime entitlements
- Act East Policy, upgraded from Look East at the ASEAN-India Summit, 2014
- SAGAR, Security and Growth for All in the Region, 2015
- ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific, adopted by ASEAN in 2019
- ASEAN was founded in 1967 by the Bangkok Declaration; it has ten member states and operates by consensus.
- India became an ASEAN Sectoral Dialogue Partner in 1992 and a full Dialogue Partner in 1996.

Foreign Secretary Misri's Beijing Visit Reaffirms Border Peace

Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri concluded a two-day visit to Beijing on July 28, 2026, meeting Vice Minister Sun Haiyan of the Communist Party of China's International Department, with both sides reaffirming the importance of peace and...

- FS Misri's Beijing visit: July 27-28, 2026.
- October 2024 patrolling agreement covers eastern Ladakh, following the 2020 Galwan clash.
- Galwan clash, June 2020: 20 Indian soldiers killed; Chinese casualties never officially confirmed by China.

A Roadmap, Not Yet a Peace: Hamas Agrees to a Gaza Disarmament Plan

Hamas has agreed in principle to a phased disarmament roadmap tied to Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, overseen by a new transitional body, but the plan's details remain to be finalised within a fortnight.

- Announced 30 July 2026; Hamas agreed in principle to disarm.
- Transitional body: National Committee for the Administration of Gaza, with a weapons monopoly during transition.
- Full roadmap details due within 14 days, pending international verification.
- DDR = Disarmament, Demobilisation, Reintegration, the standard post-conflict transition model.
- Israeli withdrawal is phased, tied to disarmament milestones, not a fixed calendar.
- Supports a two-state solution; maintains ties with both Israel and the Palestinian Authority.
- Regional stability affects India's energy routes and Gulf diaspora.

Choke Point: The US-Iran War Reaches the Strait of Hormuz, and India's Oil Bill

Five months into the US-Iran conflict, a fresh wave of strikes has collapsed shipping traffic through the Strait of Hormuz, exposing how much of India's crude and gas supply passes through a single, contested waterway.

- US-Iran war began 28 February 2026; the Hormuz-specific campaign began 19 March 2026.
- Fresh escalation: US strikes near Bandar Abbas and Kish, 29 July 2026.
- Hormuz shipping traffic collapsed from a ~120/day baseline, falling further through late July, at times to single digits.
- Roughly 30-40 per cent of India's ~5 million bpd crude imports transit the Strait of Hormuz as of mid-2026.
- India depends on Gulf LNG as well as crude, compounding the exposure.
- PM Modi called for de-escalation and freedom of navigation in a July call with President Trump, after voicing "deep concern" in March 2026.
- Russian crude has been the largest single-country source since 2022 sanctions-driven discounting began.
- West African and US crude add route diversity but at higher freight cost.
- Chabahar port remains India's Iran-routed connectivity investment, adding complexity to India's balancing act.

Neighbourhood First, Priced in Rupees: India Extends Bhutan a Rs 4,000-Crore...

At the 5th India-Bhutan Development Cooperation Talks in Thimphu, India extended a fresh concessional line of credit tied to Bhutan's 13th Five-Year Plan, reaffirming hydropower-anchored development diplomacy.

- 5th India-Bhutan Development Cooperation Talks, Thimphu, 31 July 2026.
- New line of credit: Rs 4,000 crore (Nu 40 billion), Exim Bank of India to Bhutan's Finance Ministry.
- 12 new projects approved, worth Rs 332 crore.
- Total reaffirmed Indian support for Bhutan's 13th Five-Year Plan (2024-29): Rs 10,000 crore.
- Bhutan's hydropower exports to India are a major share of Bhutanese government revenue.
- **Talks leadership:** Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri (India), Dasho Pema Lektup Dorji (Bhutan).

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April to May Fiscal Deficit Data

The Controller General of Accounts (CGA) released fiscal data for April to May of the financial year 2026-27.

- **CGA:** Controller General of Accounts, the apex accounting authority of the Union government.
- **FY27 fiscal-deficit target:** 4.3 per cent of GDP.
- **Fiscal deficit:** the excess of total expenditure over total non-borrowed receipts.

ECONOMY & DEVELOPMENT

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CA Day: ICAI Foundation Day

July 1 is observed as Chartered Accountants' Day (CA Day), marking the foundation of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI).

- **ICAI:** established under the **Chartered Accountants Act, 1949** (in force July 1, 1949).
- **Nature:** statutory professional body under the Ministry of Corporate Affairs.
- **Role:** audit, assurance, taxation and financial reporting.

ECONOMY & DEVELOPMENT

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Facts Corner

- **CA Day:** July 1; ICAI under the Chartered Accountants Act, 1949.
- **Four Labour Codes:** Wages, Industrial Relations, Social Security, OSH and Working Conditions; 50 per cent wage rule in force.
- **FY27 fiscal-deficit target:** 4.3 per cent of GDP; data by the CGA.
- **Southwest monsoon:** June to September; normal full coverage around July 8.

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GST Enters Its Tenth Year: Nine Years of the Goods and Services Tax

On July 1, 2026, the Goods and Services Tax completes nine years and enters its tenth year, with GST 2.0 simplifying slabs and collections crossing Rs 22 lakh crore.

- **Rollout date:** July 1, 2017; celebrated as GST Day. July 1, 2026 completes nine years and begins the tenth year.
- **Enabling law:** 101st Constitutional Amendment Act, 2016.
- **Key Articles:** 246A (concurrent taxing power), 269A (inter-state supply/IGST), 279A (GST Council).
- **GST Council:** Chaired by the Union Finance Minister; decisions need a three-fourths majority; Centre one-third weight, States two-thirds.
- **Nature of tax:** Destination-based, multi-stage, value-added, with input tax credit.
- **Slabs after GST 2.0 (Sept 2025):** 5% and 18% primary, plus 40% demerit rate for sin and luxury goods.
- **Taxpayer base:** grew from about 66.5 lakh (2017) to about 1.65 crore (2026).
- **Collections:** rose from about Rs 7.4 lakh crore (FY18) to about Rs 22.27 lakh crore (FY26).
- **Subsumed taxes:** central excise, service tax, state VAT, entertainment tax, octroi and others.

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Additional Investment in the NIIF

The Union Cabinet approved an additional investment of about Rs 30,000 crore in the National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF).

- **NIIF:** National Investment and Infrastructure Fund, established **2015**.
- **Structure:** Master Fund, Fund of Funds, Strategic Opportunities Fund.
- **Purpose:** to catalyse long-term infrastructure investment.

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Days in News: July 2

July 2 is marked by a few international observances of general-awareness interest.

- **World Sports Journalists Day:** July 2; commemorates the founding of AIPS.

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Facts Corner

- **IndiaSkills 2026-27:** national skill competition; around 63 categories; feeds into WorldSkills.
- **HSBC India Manufacturing PMI (June 2026):** 54.2; above 50 signals expansion.
- **NIIF:** established 2015; additional investment of about Rs 30,000 crore approved.
- **World Sports Journalists Day:** July 2.

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HSBC India Manufacturing PMI, June 2026

The HSBC India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) for June 2026 eased to a three-month low of 54.2.

- **PMI:** Purchasing Managers' Index; above 50 signals expansion.
- **June 2026 Manufacturing PMI:** 54.2 (from 55.0 in May).
- **Compiled by:** S&P Global for HSBC.

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IndiaSkills Competition 2026-27 Launched

The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship launched the IndiaSkills Competition 2026-27, the country's largest national skill competition.

- **IndiaSkills:** national skill competition under the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship.
- **Categories:** around 63 skill trades.
- **Feeds into:** the WorldSkills international competition.

RBI Rolls Out the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme 2026

From July 1, 2026, the RBI's RB-IOS 2026 replaced the 2021 framework, raising compensation for financial loss to Rs 30 lakh under a One Nation, One Ombudsman approach.

- **Scheme:** Reserve Bank Integrated Ombudsman Scheme (RB-IOS) 2026, effective July 1, 2026, replacing the 2021 framework.
- **Approach:** "One Nation, One Ombudsman", a single cost-free, expeditious, non-adversarial redress mechanism.
- **Financial-loss compensation:** Raised from Rs 20 lakh to Rs 30 lakh.
- **Mental agony or harassment compensation:** Raised from Rs 1 lakh to Rs 3 lakh.
- **Dispute value:** No upper limit.
- **Coverage:** Banks, eligible NBFCs, non-bank PPI issuers and credit information companies; newly extended to rural co-operative banks.
- **Escalation window:** After 30 days of no or unsatisfactory reply, and within one year of the entity's response.
- **Administered by:** Reserve Bank of India (RBI), the country's central bank and banking regulator.

ADB Approves USD 182.89 Million for Karnataka School Clusters

The Asian Development Bank approved USD 182.89 million to set up 500 integrated school clusters in Karnataka.

- **ADB:** headquarters Manila; founded 1966; India a founding member.
- **Loan:** USD 182.89 million for 500 school clusters in Karnataka.
- **NEP 2020:** recommended school complexes and clusters for resource sharing.

Air Marshal Ashutosh Dixit Is New IAF Vice Chief

Air Marshal Ashutosh Dixit assumed charge as the 51st Vice Chief of the Air Staff of the Indian Air Force.

- **VCAS:** second-highest post in the IAF; Air Marshal Ashutosh Dixit is the 51st.
- **IAF head:** Chief of the Air Staff.
- **CDS:** Chief of Defence Staff heads the tri-service structure.

CCEA Clears Two Highway Projects Worth Rs 14,114 Crore

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved two road projects worth about Rs 14,114.81 crore to ease congestion and boost logistics.

- **Total outlay:** Rs 14,114.81 crore across two projects.
- **CCEA:** chaired by the Prime Minister; approves major economic and infrastructure proposals.
- **HAM:** Hybrid Annuity Mode blends public funding (40 per cent) with private investment (60 per cent).

Facts Corner

- **CCEA highways:** Rs 14,114.81 crore; Kanpur-Kabrai and Delhi NH-148AE tunnel (HAM); PM GatiShakti.
- **Nameri:** Assam tiger reserve; 3 (2022) to 12 (2025); validated by WII; NTCA and Project Tiger (1973).
- **West Bengal GI:** 7 new tags (Nolen Gurer Sandesh, Baruipur guava and more); GI Act 1999; Registry at Chennai.
- **ADB:** USD 182.89 million for 500 Karnataka school clusters; HQ Manila, founded 1966.
- **IAF:** Air Marshal Ashutosh Dixit, 51st Vice Chief of the Air Staff.

West Bengal Gets 7 New GI Tags

West Bengal received 7 new Geographical Indication tags, adding traditional sweets, produce and handloom products to its roster.

- **GI Act:** Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999.
- **GI Registry:** Chennai; India's first GI was Darjeeling Tea; a GI is valid for 10 years and is renewable.
- **West Bengal:** 7 new GI tags, including Nolen Gurer Sandesh and Baruipur guava.

ACME's Green Ammonia and Methanol Deals with Japan

ACME Group signed binding deals to export 405,000 tonnes of green ammonia to IHI and 100,000 tonnes of green methanol to Mitsubishi Gas Chemical from Odisha.

- **The deals:** ACME Group will supply 405,000 tonnes per year of green ammonia to IHI Corporation (10-year contract) and 100,000 tonnes per year of green methanol to Mitsubishi Gas Chemical...
- **Production hub:** Paradeep, Odisha; the projects are expected to create over 7,600 jobs in the state.
- **Standards:** the green methanol complies with EU RFNBO (Renewable Fuels of Non-Biological Origin) norms and International Maritime Organization (IMO) marine-fuel standards; green methanol is...
- **Japan's support:** the green-ammonia deal is backed by Japan's Contract-for-Difference (Cfd) scheme run by METI (Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry).
- **NGHM:** National Green Hydrogen Mission, launched 2023, run by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE); outlay about Rs 19,744 crore; target 5 MMT green hydrogen per year by 2030 with...
- **Green hydrogen:** hydrogen made by electrolysis of water using renewable electricity, emitting no carbon; green ammonia and green methanol are its transportable derivatives.

Assam Produces India's First Commercial Matcha Tea

Assam became the first Indian state to commercially produce matcha tea, the Chief Minister announced on July 3, 2026.

- **Matcha:** shade-grown, stone-ground green tea.
- **Site:** Chota Tingrai Tea Estate, Tinsukia district, Assam; India-Japan collaboration.
- **Sold via:** Guwahati Tea Auction Centre.

Facts Corner

- **Matcha:** Assam's Chota Tingrai Estate, India's first commercial matcha; sold at the Guwahati Tea Auction Centre.
- **IRENA:** over 90 per cent of new renewables cheaper than fossil in 2025; about USD 480 billion in avoided fuel costs; headquarters Abu Dhabi.
- **GST:** June 2026 collections about Rs 1,94,812 crore, up 13.9 per cent; GST Council under Article 279A.
- **One Health drill:** Pashujanya Yudh Abhyas at Vidisha, MP; DAHD under the National One Health Mission.
- **Ram Vilas Paswan:** born July 5, 1946; founder of the Lok Janshakti Party.

June 2026 GST Collections Rise 13.9 Per Cent

Gross GST collections for June 2026 reached about Rs 1.95 lakh crore, data released on July 1, 2026 showed.

- **June 2026 gross GST:** about Rs 1,94,812 crore, up 13.9 per cent year on year.
- **Import GST:** up 34.6 per cent.
- **GST Council:** constitutional body under Article 279A.

Ram Vilas Paswan Birth Anniversary

July 5 marks the birth anniversary of Ram Vilas Paswan, born on July 5, 1946.

- **Ram Vilas Paswan:** born July 5, 1946, Khagaria, Bihar; founder of the Lok Janshakti Party.
- **Known for:** long service across Union ministries and a record Hajipur victory margin.

India Launches Its First Drone Cooperative

At the National Drone Summit 2026, India launched its first cooperative-led drone platform and the "1 Panchayat, 1 Drone Udyami" mission under the Ministry of Cooperation.

- **The launch:** on July 4, 2026, at the National Drone Summit 2026 (theme "From Policy to Prosperity") at The Leela Palace, New Delhi, India launched the Drone Tech Multi-State Co-operative...
- **Partner and vision:** built in partnership with the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), under the Ministry of Cooperation's "Sahkar Se Samridhi" vision.
- **Flagship mission:** "1 Panchayat, 1 Drone Udyami", aiming for a trained and certified drone entrepreneur at every panchayat.
- **Skilling:** Advanced Skill Centres will train in drone technology, artificial intelligence, robotics, GIS and remote sensing, and electric mobility.
- **Ministry of Cooperation:** established in 2021 to strengthen the cooperative sector.
- **Timing:** the International Day of Cooperatives fell on July 5, 2026; the initiative complements the Namo Drone Didi scheme (2023) for women's SHGs.

Adani-IRH Announce \$11.5 Billion Odisha Aluminium Project

A \$11.5 billion integrated aluminium project was announced in Odisha, reported as India's largest FDI in metallurgy.

- **Project:** integrated greenfield aluminium, Odisha; about \$11.5 billion.
- **Partners:** Adani Enterprises and International Resources Holding (UAE), 50:50.
- **Significance:** reported as India's largest metallurgy FDI.

Facts Corner

- **Cyttopsis indica:** new deep-sea fish by ICAR-CMFRI, Kochi; 350 to 500 m, Lakshadweep Sea.
- **SDG Index:** India 94th of 167 (score 68.3), up from 99th; SDR 2026 by SDSN; Finland first.
- **Indiahandmade:** Ministry of Textiles; zero-commission; over 64 lakh artisans.
- **SOLVE:** ISRO sub-orbital solid-propellant vehicle; Sriharikota.
- **Odisha aluminium:** Adani and IRH (UAE), about \$11.5 billion, largest metallurgy FDI.

Indiahandmade Crosses 64 Lakh Artisans

The Indiahandmade e-commerce portal crossed 64 lakh onboarded artisans and weavers.

- **Indiahandmade:** Ministry of Textiles portal; zero seller commission.
- **Scale:** over 64 lakh artisans and weavers onboarded (July 2026).
- **Feature:** 22 scheduled languages, AI-powered listings.

New Deep-Sea Fish Cyttopsis indica Discovered

Scientists identified a new deep-sea fish, Cyttopsis indica, off the coast of Kerala.

- **Cyttopsis indica:** new deep-sea "Indian dory", described by ICAR-CMFRI, Kochi.
- **Depth:** about 350 to 500 metres, Lakshadweep Sea.
- **Method:** confirmed by DNA sequencing.

On This Day

July 7 is the birthday of former India cricket captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni.

- **M.S. Dhoni:** born July 7, 1981, Ranchi; only captain to win all three major ICC white-ball trophies.
- **World Chocolate Day:** observed July 7.

Air India and SIAEC Sign MRO MoU

Air India signed an agreement with SIA Engineering Company to build a maintenance, repair and overhaul ecosystem in India.

- **MRO:** Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul of aircraft.
- **Partners:** Air India and SIA Engineering Company (a Singapore Airlines subsidiary).
- **Policy:** GST on MRO cut to 5 per cent; 100 per cent FDI allowed.

Cabinet Doubles the Government's NIIF Commitment

The Union Cabinet approved an additional Rs 30,000 crore for the National Investment and Infrastructure Fund.

- **NIIF:** established 2015; Government stake 49 per cent; managed by NIIF Limited.
- **New commitment:** additional Rs 30,000 crore; total about Rs 60,000 crore.
- **Funds:** Master Fund, Fund of Funds, Strategic Opportunities Fund.

Facts Corner

- **NIIF:** additional Rs 30,000 crore, total about Rs 60,000 crore; established 2015; 49 per cent government stake.
- **INS Mahendragiri:** sixth Project 17A frigate; Mazagon Dock; BrahMos and Barak-8; over 75 per cent indigenous.
- **Gas curbs lifted:** emergency Natural Gas Supply Regulation Order provisions removed as Hormuz LNG resumed.
- **Char Kaman:** four Qutb Shahi arches near Charminar; Charminar built 1591.
- **Air India MRO:** MoU with SIA Engineering Company for an MRO ecosystem in India.

Government Lifts Emergency Gas-Supply Curbs

The government withdrew emergency natural-gas supply restrictions as LNG shipments through the Strait of Hormuz resumed.

- **Curbs lifted:** emergency provisions of the Natural Gas (Supply Regulation) Order, 2026.
- **Legal base:** the emergency order was issued under the Essential Commodities Act.
- **Context:** LNG via the Strait of Hormuz resumed after the West Asia ceasefire.

INS Mahendragiri to Be Commissioned

INS Mahendragiri, the sixth Project 17A stealth frigate, is set for commissioning at Visakhapatnam.

- **INS Mahendragiri:** sixth Project 17A stealth frigate; built by Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders.
- **Weapons:** BrahMos and Barak-8; over 75 per cent indigenous content.
- **Project 17A:** seven frigates, follow-on to the Shivalik class.

Telangana to Restore Hyderabad's Char Kaman

Telangana sanctioned the restoration of the historic Char Kaman near Charminar in Hyderabad.

- **Char Kaman:** four arches near the Charminar; late 16th century, Qutb Shahi dynasty.
- **Charminar:** built 1591 by Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah.
- **Qutb Shahi monuments:** on UNESCO's Tentative List.

Facts Corner

- **ACITI:** India-Australia-Canada tech partnership; AI, clean energy, critical minerals, supply chains; launched July 9, 2026.
- **UNCTAD WIR 2026:** India FDI about 39 billion dollars, up 44 per cent; India now 11th largest recipient.
- **South Indian Bank:** Mahesh Muralidhar Pai approved as MD and CEO; bank headquartered at Thrissur, Kerala.
- **Small Arms Destruction Day:** July 9; linked to the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms, 2001.
- **Happy City Index 2026:** Jaipur around 6th, only Indian city in the top 10; published by the Institute for Quality of Life, London.

India, Australia and Canada Launch the ACITI Tech Partnership

India, Australia and Canada launched the Australia-Canada-India Technology and Innovation Partnership (ACITI) on July 9, 2026.

- **ACITI:** Australia-Canada-India Technology and Innovation Partnership, launched July 9, 2026.
- **Focus areas:** AI, clean and green energy, critical minerals, supply-chain resilience.
- **Origin:** conceived at the G20 Johannesburg summit, November 2025.

International Small Arms Destruction Day

July 9 is observed each year as International Small Arms Destruction Day.

- **Observance:** International Small Arms Destruction Day, July 9.
- **Focus:** destroying surplus and illicit small arms and light weapons (SALW).
- **Framework:** UN Programme of Action on Small Arms (UNPoA), 2001.

RBI Approves New Chief for South Indian Bank

The Reserve Bank of India approved a new Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer for South Indian Bank.

- **Appointment:** Mahesh Muralidhar Pai as MD and CEO, South Indian Bank (three-year term).
- **Bank:** South Indian Bank, headquartered at Thrissur, Kerala.
- **Legal base:** Section 35B, Banking Regulation Act, 1949.

Facts Corner

- **World Bank:** India stays lower-middle-income (since 2009), GNI per capita about 2,760 dollars; Atlas method.
- **Guwahati Declaration:** BRICS anti-drug agencies, under India's BRICS Chairship 2026.
- **Axis Bank:** N.S. Vishwanathan (former RBI Deputy Governor) re-appointed Non-Executive Chairman, cleared by RBI.
- **Leander Paes:** named Asian Tennis Federation Player Ambassador; 1996 Olympic bronze; Hall of Fame 2024.
- **Global Energy Independence Day:** July 10; renewable energy and energy efficiency.

Global Energy Independence Day

July 10 is observed as Global Energy Independence Day.

- **Observance:** Global Energy Independence Day, July 10.
- **Theme:** renewable and alternative energy, energy efficiency.
- **India link:** International Solar Alliance, National Green Hydrogen Mission, PM Surya Ghar.

Leander Paes Named Asian Tennis Federation Ambassador

Tennis great Leander Paes was named a Player Ambassador of the Asian Tennis Federation.

- **Honour:** Leander Paes named an Asian Tennis Federation Player Ambassador.
- **Legacy:** 1996 Atlanta Olympic singles bronze; Tennis Hall of Fame (2024).
- **Role:** promoting tennis across Asia.

RBI Clears N.S. Vishwanathan as Axis Bank Chairman

The Reserve Bank of India approved the re-appointment of N.S. Vishwanathan as Non-Executive Chairman of Axis Bank.

- **Appointment:** N.S. Vishwanathan re-appointed Non-Executive Chairman, Axis Bank.
- **Background:** he is a former RBI Deputy Governor.
- **Legal base:** RBI approval under the Banking Regulation Act, 1949.

World Bank Keeps India in the Lower-Middle-Income Group

The World Bank's updated country income classification retained India in the lower-middle-income category.

- **Classification:** India stays lower-middle-income (since 2009), GNI per capita about 2,760 dollars.
- **Method:** GNI per capita via the World Bank Atlas method; four income bands.
- **Relevance:** reaching high-income status is the goal of Viksit Bharat 2047.

ADB Trims India's Growth Forecast

The Asian Development Bank lowered its growth forecast for India for 2026-27.

- **Forecast:** ADB cut India 2026-27 growth to 6.6 per cent; inflation about 5.2 per cent.
- **ADB:** Asian Development Bank, headquartered in Manila.
- **Context:** global trade uncertainty and higher prices.

Aswath S Becomes India's 98th Chess Grandmaster

Aswath S earned the Grandmaster title to become India's 98th chess Grandmaster.

- **Achievement:** Aswath S, India's 98th chess Grandmaster.
- **From:** Kanyakumari, Tamil Nadu (aged 17).
- **GM title:** awarded by FIDE; needs three norms and a 2500 Elo peak.

Facts Corner

- **INS Mahendragiri:** sixth and final Project 17A stealth frigate; Mazagon Dock; over 75 per cent indigenous.
- **Aswath S:** India's 98th chess Grandmaster; from Kanyakumari, Tamil Nadu.
- **ADB:** cut India 2026-27 growth to 6.6 per cent; inflation about 5.2 per cent; based in Manila.
- **Uttarakhand:** declared fully literate under the ULLAS New India Literacy Programme.
- **Tribex:** Ministry of Tribal Affairs digital learning platform on tribal culture.

Uttarakhand Declared Fully Literate

Uttarakhand was declared a fully literate state under the ULLAS programme.

- **Milestone:** Uttarakhand declared fully literate under ULLAS.
- **ULLAS:** Understanding of Lifelong Learning for All in Society; the New India Literacy Programme.
- **Aim:** adult functional literacy and numeracy, aligned with NEP 2020.

India-UK CETA and Double Contribution Convention Enter Into Force

On 15 July 2026, the India-UK Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement and the Double Contribution Convention entered into force, giving India duty-free access on about 99 per cent of UK tariff lines.

- **Event (15 July 2026):** India-UK **CETA** and the **Double Contribution Convention (DCC)** entered into force.
- **Tariff access:** Duty-free on about **99 per cent** of UK tariff lines; zero tariffs on marine products, engineering and autos, leather and footwear, textiles, and chemicals and pharmaceuticals.
- **DCC:** Social-security (totalisation-type) pact; exempts Indian professionals from UK contributions for up to **five years** (raised from three); benefits **75,000-plus** workers.
- **Timeline:** Negotiations concluded **6 May 2025** (14 rounds); signed **24 July 2025** in London.
- **Signatories:** **Piyush Goyal** and **Jonathan Reynolds**.
- **Significance:** India's first FTA with a major developed economy in about a decade; template for the India-EU FTA.
- **Sensitivities retained:** Agriculture and dairy.

Rajiv Kumar Named HDFC Bank Chairman

The RBI approved Rajiv Kumar as part-time chairman of HDFC Bank.

- **Person:** Rajiv Kumar, former Finance Secretary and 25th Chief Election Commissioner.
- **Role:** part-time Chairman, HDFC Bank (three-year term).
- **Approval:** Reserve Bank of India.

Retail Inflation Rises to 4.38 Per Cent in June

CPI retail inflation crossed the RBI's 4 per cent target for the first time in over a year.

- **CPI June 2026:** 4.38 per cent (up from 3.93 per cent in May).
- **RBI target:** 4 per cent, band of plus or minus 2 per cent.
- **Data source:** Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI).

Fairfax Emerges as Preferred Bidder for IDBI Bank

Canada's Fairfax Financial was reported as the preferred bidder for a majority stake in IDBI Bank.

- **Bidder:** Fairfax Financial (Prem Watsa), for about 60.72 per cent of IDBI Bank.
- **Value:** about Rs 52,932 crore; pending RBI and regulatory nod.
- **Sellers:** Government of India and LIC, via DIPAM.

June Retail Inflation and the RBI Stance

Recent data and the RBI's bulletin kept the focus on retail inflation.

- **CPI June 2026:** about 4.38 per cent.
- **Repo rate:** 5.25 per cent (neutral stance).
- **RBI target:** 4 per cent, band of plus or minus 2 per cent.

US Tariffs on Generic Drugs and the Challenge for Indian Pharma

The United States has announced a phased tariff on imported generic medicines, testing India's position as the pharmacy of the world and exposing the supply-chain vulnerability of export-led Indian pharma.

- India is the world's largest supplier of generic medicines by volume and a leading exporter of vaccines.
- **Generic drugs** are bioequivalent copies of off-patent branded drugs, sold at far lower prices.
- **Active Pharmaceutical Ingredient (API)**, also called bulk drug, is the biologically active component of a medicine.
- The **PLI scheme** offers financial incentives on incremental sales to boost domestic manufacturing across sectors, including bulk drugs, medical devices and electronics.
- Reshoring or **onshoring** refers to bringing previously offshored manufacturing back to the home country.

Facts Corner

- **Income Tax Day:** July 24 (1860, James Wilson); law now the Income-tax Act, 1961, being replaced by the Income-tax Act, 2025.
- **SOFI:** published jointly by FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO; tracks SDG 2.
- **NITI Aayog:** set up 2015, chaired by the PM; new CEO Anurag Jain.
- **EPFO 3.0:** next-generation IT overhaul under the Ministry of Labour and Employment.
- **Ballari-Guntakal:** 3rd and 4th line (multi-tracking) approved by the CCEA.

Income Tax Day, July 24

July 24 is observed every year as Income Tax Day (Aaykar Diwas).

- **Income Tax Day:** July 24 (income tax introduced in India in 1860 by James Wilson).
- **Governing law:** Income-tax Act, 1961; the Income-tax Act, 2025 is set to replace it.
- **Administered by:** the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT).

RBI Moves on Polymer Banknotes

Bharatiya Reserve Bank Note Mudran Private Limited (BRBNMPL), the currency-printing arm of the Reserve Bank of India, issued a global Expression of Interest on July 17, 2026 seeking suppliers of polymer substrate sheets for printing Indian...

- BRBNMPL is a wholly owned subsidiary of the Reserve Bank of India, established in 1995, with presses at Mysuru and Salboni.
- Security Printing and Minting Corporation of India Limited (SPMCIL) is the Government of India undertaking that operates the other currency presses and the mints.
- The RBI's authority to issue banknotes derives from Section 22 of the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934; the Government of India issues the one-rupee note and all coins.

The First Gatekeeper Penalty: EU Fines Google 890 Million Euros Under the Digital...

The European Commission fined Google 890 million euros on July 23, 2026 for self-preferencing in Search and for restricting app developers from steering users to cheaper options outside Google Play.

- Total fine: 890 million euros, approximately 1 billion US dollars
- Search self-preferencing: 460 million euros
- Google Play anti-steering: 430 million euros
- Compliance window: 60 days
- Non-compliance exposure: periodic penalty payments up to 5 per cent of worldwide turnover
- First DMA penalty against Google; largest DMA sanction issued to date
- Entered into force in 2022
- Competition Act, 2002, enforced by the Competition Commission of India, operates ex post
- The Committee on Digital Competition Law recommended a separate ex-ante Digital Competition Act
- Basis: any of 9 identified Core Digital Services plus financial and user thresholds
- Thresholds: global market capitalisation above 75 billion US dollars; at least 1 crore end users or 10,000 business users
- Proposed maximum penalty: up to 10 per cent of global turnover

Days Observed Around July 28, 2026

Besides World Hepatitis Day on July 28 (covered in full above), the International Day for the Conservation of the Mangrove Ecosystem fell on July 26, 2026, its 11th UNESCO observance.

- International Day for the Conservation of the Mangrove Ecosystem: July 26, a UNESCO observance since 2015.
- MISHTI launched in Union Budget 2023-24, implemented through convergence with MGNREGS, CAMPA and other schemes.
- Sundarbans (West Bengal) holds India's largest mangrove cover.

GMR Aero Technic Signs MRO Licence Agreement with Honeywell Aerospace

GMR Aero Technic, part of the GMR Group and India's leading airframe maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) firm, signed a licence agreement with Honeywell Aerospace at Hyderabad on July 28, 2026, to service components on LEAP engines.

- LEAP engines are made by CFM International, a joint venture of GE Aerospace and Safran.
- GMR Aero Technic is headquartered at Rajiv Gandhi International Airport, Hyderabad.

Indian Railways Sanctions Rs 163 Crore for Parbhani-Mudkhed Traction Upgrade

Indian Railways approved Rs 163 crore on July 28, 2026 to upgrade the electric traction system on the Parbhani-Mudkhed double-line section, Nanded Division, South Central Railway, from a 1x25 kV to a 2x25 kV system.

- South Central Railway's Nanded Division covers parts of Maharashtra, Telangana and Karnataka.
- The National Rail Plan targets raising rail's freight modal share from about 27 per cent toward 45 per cent by 2030.

PIB Feature: Khelo India and India's Bid to Become a Top-10 Sporting Nation

PIB published a feature on July 28, 2026 on the Khelo India scheme's role in India's stated goal of becoming a top-10 sporting nation by 2036 and top-5 by 2047, tied to India's Olympic and Paralympic 2036 hosting ambitions.

- Launched 2017-18; administered by the Department of Sports, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports.
- KIRTI uses AI-based assessment tools for talent identification in the 9-18 age group.
- India's stated target: top-10 sporting nation by 2036, top-5 by 2047.

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Academic Bank of Credits and APAAR: Building Lifelong Learning

UGC set June 30, 2026, as the deadline for institutions to upload 2025 records to the NAD-ABC platform, advancing NEP 2020 credit portability and APAAR IDs.

- **ABC (Academic Bank of Credits):** Digital store of academic credits enabling transfer and redemption across institutions; regulated by the UGC under the Ministry of Education.
- **Platform:** Housed on **DigiLocker / National Academic Depository (NAD)**.
- **APAAR:** Automated Permanent Academic Account Registry, a unique **12-digit** "One Nation, One Student ID"; about **26.30 crore** verified IDs generated as of June 2026.
- **Deadline:** UGC set **June 30, 2026** for institutions to upload Examination Year 2025 records to NAD-ABC.
- **Policy link:** Backbone of **NEP 2020** Multiple Entry and Exit (MEE) and the **National Credit Framework (NCrF)**.
- **Privacy statute:** **Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023**, governs the handling of student data.

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NITI Aayog Roadmap to Unlock India's Tourism and Hospitality Sector

NITI Aayog and the Ministry of Tourism released a June 2026 report calling for a 90-day Visa-on-Arrival and single-licence reforms to unlock India's tourism sector.

- **Report:** "Unlocking Growth in the Tourism and Hospitality Sector", by NITI Aayog and the Ministry of Tourism.
- **Released:** June 30, 2026, at a National Workshop in New Delhi.
- **Central finding:** India's constraint is enabling conditions (regulatory complexity, procedural inefficiency), not weak demand.
- **Visa reform:** 90-day multiple-entry Tourist Visa-on-Arrival for select countries; broad-purpose e-visa categories.
- **Licensing reform:** single health trade licence and single liquor licence for hotels; removal of the Eating House Licence.
- **Economic weight (FY24):** about Rs 15.73 lakh crore (about 5.22% of GDP) and about 84.6 million jobs.
- **Visa Openness Index:** India scored 38.14, below the global average of about 40, trailing Thailand, Malaysia and Sri Lanka.
- **Federal note:** Tourism is largely a State subject, so cooperative federalism is essential for implementation.

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VB-G-RAM-G Replaces MGNREGA from July 1

The Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajeevika Mission (Gramin) Act, 2025, VB-G-RAM-G, replaced MGNREGA from July 1, 2026, raising the rural jobs guarantee to 125 days.

- **VB-G-RAM-G:** Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajeevika Mission (Gramin) Act, 2025; replaced MGNREGA with effect from July 1, 2026.
- **Guarantee raised:** From 100 to 125 days of employment per household per year.
- **Interim base wage:** About Rs 300 per day, roughly a 10 per cent increase over the earlier average notified wage.
- **Wage indexation:** Annual, revised each April 1, to the Consumer Price Index for Agricultural Labourers (CPI-AL).
- **Four thematic heads:** Water security; core rural infrastructure; livelihood infrastructure; extreme-weather mitigation.
- **Employment timeline:** Within 15 days of demand, failing which an unemployment allowance is paid.
- **Special provisions:** Single women, persons with disabilities, senior citizens, Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs), released bonded labourers and transgender persons.
- **MGNREGA (2005):** The predecessor; a demand-driven, rights-based wage-employment guarantee.

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Centre Overhauls PDS Rice Quality Norms

On July 1, 2026, the CCEA cut permissible broken-grain content in PDS rice for the first time in nearly three decades, benefiting over 80 crore beneficiaries.

- **Decision:** On July 1, 2026, the CCEA approved the first upgrade of PDS rice quality norms in nearly three decades.
- **New limits:** Broken-grain content cut in raw rice from 25 to 10 per cent, and in parboiled rice from 16 to 5 per cent.
- **Beneficiaries and savings:** Over 80 crore beneficiaries; targeted savings of about Rs 2,161 crore.
- **Rollout:** Phased across procuring states, with full implementation targeted by Kharif Marketing Season (KMS) 2027-28.
- **Broken rice use:** Diverted to industrial and ethanol use under the Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) programme, not mixed into edible rice.
- **Traceability:** QR-code tagging of rice bags planned for end-to-end supply-chain tracking.
- **Legal basis:** National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013; procurement by the Food Corporation of India (FCI) through the public distribution system (PDS).
- **CCEA:** Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by the Prime Minister.

REPORTS, INDICES & SCHEMES

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Henley Passport Index, July 2026

The July 2026 Henley Passport Index placed India at 80th, a slight slip from 78th in the May 2026 update, though up from 85th in 2025.

- **Henley Passport Index:** ranks passports by visa-free access; published by Henley & Partners using IATA data.
- **Top rank:** Singapore.
- **India:** ranked 80th in July 2026 (from 78th in May); around 56 visa-free or visa-on-arrival destinations.

IRENA Report on Renewable Power Costs in 2025

The International Renewable Energy Agency released its "Renewable Power Generation Costs in 2025" report in early July 2026.

- **IRENA:** International Renewable Energy Agency, headquarters Abu Dhabi, established 2009.
- **2025 finding:** over 90 per cent of new renewables cheaper than fossil fuels.
- **Savings:** about USD 480 billion in avoided fuel costs.

LokOS: The Digital Backbone for India's Self-Help Groups

LokOS, the digital operating system under DAY-NRLM, now manages 94.16 lakh SHGs and 10.03 crore members across 34 states and UTs.

- **LokOS (Lok Operating System):** web and mobile platform digitising SHGs under DAY-NRLM; "Lok" means people.
- **Scale:** 94.16 lakh SHGs and 10.03 crore members across 34 states and UTs; tracks around Rs 2 lakh crore in annual transactions.
- **Three-tier structure:** SHGs, Village Organisations (VOs), and Cluster Level Federations (CLFs).
- **DAY-NRLM:** launched as NRLM in June 2011; renamed Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana, National Rural Livelihoods Mission in 2015; Ministry of Rural Development.
- **SHE-LEAPS:** launched June 29, 2026; runs on LokOS; supports women-led farm and non-farm enterprises.
- **Lakhpati Didi:** target of Rs 1 lakh annual income per member; revised goal of 6 crore Lakhpati Didis by March 2029.

India Rises to 94th on the SDG Index

The Sustainable Development Report 2026 placed India at its best-ever 94th rank.

- **SDR 2026:** by the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN).
- **India:** 94th of 167, score about 68.3 (up from 99th in 2025).
- **Top:** Finland; the SDGs run to 2030.

Jaipur Enters the Happy City Index 2026 Top 10

Jaipur was reported among the top 10 cities in the Happy City Index 2026.

- **City:** Jaipur, around 6th in the Happy City Index 2026 (only Indian city in the top 10).
- **Publisher:** Institute for Quality of Life, London.
- **Parameters:** governance, environment, economy, mobility, community.

PM-SETU Scheme Gets Nationwide Rollout for ITI Upgradation

On July 7, 2026, the 4th National Steering Committee cleared the PM-SETU scheme for nationwide rollout, approving Rs 1,237.58 crore for ITI clusters in Odisha, Gujarat and Telangana.

- **PM-SETU:** Pradhan Mantri Skilling and Employability Transformation through Upgraded ITIs, a Centrally-sponsored scheme to modernise government ITIs.
- **Outlay:** Rs 60,000 crore over 5 years, shared as Centre Rs 30,000 cr, States Rs 20,000 cr and Industry Rs 10,000 cr.
- **Target:** Upgrade 1,000 government ITIs through 200 hub-and-spoke clusters with industry participation.
- **Timeline:** Announced in Budget 2024-25; Cabinet approval May 2025; first allocation Rs 6,140.50 crore in Budget 2026-27.
- **July 7, 2026 decision:** 4th National Steering Committee (chaired by MSDE Secretary Debashree Mukherjee) cleared nationwide rollout and approved Rs 1,237.58 crore for clusters in Odisha...
- **Nodal ministry:** Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE).
- **ITI:** Industrial Training Institute, the front line of India's vocational training system.
- **Hub-and-spoke model:** A strong anchor ITI (hub) lifts a group of surrounding institutes (spokes), with industry embedded in curriculum and placement.

UNCTAD World Investment Report 2026: India FDI Up 44 Per Cent

The UNCTAD World Investment Report 2026 showed that foreign direct investment into India rose sharply in 2025.

- **Report:** UNCTAD World Investment Report 2026.
- **India FDI:** about 39 billion dollars in 2025, up about 44 per cent.
- **Rank:** India rose to the 11th largest FDI recipient (from 13th).

NABARD Secures GI Registration for 28 New Products

In July 2026, NABARD facilitated Geographical Indication registration for 28 new products, boosting rural artisan livelihoods and cultural preservation.

- **The news:** Around July 10, 2026, NABARD facilitated GI registration for 28 new products, taking its GI-supported tally to 176 (of 538 promoted).
- **Products include:** Nalanda Bawanbuti Saree and Gaya Pattharkatti stone craft (Bihar), Kuchai Silk (Jharkhand), Bihi Pepa (Assam), Khajuraho Metal Craft (Madhya Pradesh).
- **Impact claimed:** Benefits 13,000-plus artisans and supports 50,000-plus jobs.
- **GI law:** Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999 (in force 2003).
- **GI Registry:** Chennai; validity 10 years, renewable.
- **India's first GI:** Darjeeling Tea (2004).
- **NABARD:** Established 1982 under the NABARD Act, 1981, on the Shivaraman Committee's recommendation; apex bank for agriculture and rural development.

India-Led Standards Adopted at Codex CAC49

India-led food standards were adopted at the 49th session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

- **Body:** Codex Alimentarius Commission (FAO and WHO, since 1963).
- **India-led standards:** dried coriander seeds and fresh curry leaves; new work on cashew kernels.
- **Relevance:** food safety and international food trade.

Railways Launches Reform Express Package

Indian Railways announced a set of freight and operational reforms.

- **Reforms:** a Railways package of about eight freight and operational measures.
- **Aim:** boost freight, simplify policy, cut logistics costs.
- **Frame:** the National Rail Plan and modernisation.

World Youth Skills Day and a Skills Outcomes Fund

July 15 is observed as World Youth Skills Day, and the government announced new skilling measures.

- **Day:** World Youth Skills Day, July 15 (UN, since 2014).
- **Announcement:** a proposed Skills Outcomes Fund (about Rs 530 crore), MSDE.
- **Frame:** Skill India Mission.

Cabinet Clears Two Elevated Corridors for Varanasi

The Cabinet approved two elevated corridors to decongest Varanasi.

- **Projects:** Varuna (about 43.2 km) and Ganga (about 46.0 km) elevated corridors, Varanasi.
- **Cost:** about Rs 25,446 crore; agency NHAI.
- **Model:** Hybrid Annuity Model (about 40 per cent government support plus annuities).

Facts Corner

- **IPHO 2026:** India won five golds, joint World No. 1; trained by HBCSE (TIFR).
- **CPI June 2026:** 4.38 per cent, first breach of the RBI's 4 per cent target in over a year.
- **Varanasi corridors:** Varuna and Ganga elevated corridors, about Rs 25,446 crore, NHAI under HAM.
- **Rajiv Kumar:** part-time Chairman of HDFC Bank; former Finance Secretary and 25th CEC.
- **World Snake Day:** July 16; India's "Big Four" venomous snakes; Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972.

India Sweeps Five Golds at the International Physics Olympiad

All five Indian students won gold at the 56th International Physics Olympiad.

- **Event:** 56th International Physics Olympiad, Bucaramanga, Colombia.
- **India:** five students, five golds, joint World No. 1.
- **Trainer:** HBCSE (TIFR, Department of Atomic Energy).

World Snake Day

July 16 is observed as World Snake Day.

- **Day:** World Snake Day, July 16.
- **Big Four:** common krait, Indian cobra, Russell's viper, saw-scaled viper.
- **Law:** Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972.

Delhi Approves a Start-up and Incubation Policy

The Delhi Cabinet approved a new Start-up and Incubation Policy.

- **Policy:** Delhi Start-up and Incubation Policy (over Rs 400 crore, five years).
- **Rollout:** state universities, colleges, polytechnics, ITIs.
- **Chief Minister:** Rekha Gupta.

Durand Cup Trophy Tour Reaches Guwahati

The trophies of the 135th Durand Cup were unveiled in Guwahati.

- **Tournament:** 135th Durand Cup, Asia's oldest football tournament.
- **Established:** 1888, named after Sir Mortimer Durand.
- **Event:** trophy tour unveiling in Guwahati.

Facts Corner

- **Social protection:** coverage crossed 100 crore people (about 68.4 per cent), recognised by the ILO at the BRICS Labour Ministers' Meeting, Hyderabad.
- **World Day for International Justice:** July 17; Rome Statute (1998), ICC at The Hague; India not a signatory.
- **Delhi Start-up Policy:** over Rs 400 crore for five years, under CM Rekha Gupta.
- **Durand Cup:** 135th edition; established 1888; Asia's oldest football tournament.
- **State of India's Environment:** tigers moving into invasive Lantana camara; rising human-tiger conflict.

India's Social Protection Coverage Crosses One Billion

India announced that its social protection coverage has crossed one billion people, recognised by the ILO.

- **Coverage:** from about 19 per cent (2015) to about 68.4 per cent (2026), over 100 crore people.
- **Recognition:** ILO, at the 12th BRICS Labour Ministers' Meeting, Hyderabad.
- **ILO:** founded 1919, headquartered in Geneva.

State of India's Environment Report Flags Changing Tiger Behaviour

A State of India's Environment report highlighted changing tiger behaviour and habitat.

- **Report:** State of India's Environment (CSE and Down To Earth).
- **Issue:** tigers moving into invasive Lantana camara thickets; rising conflict.
- **Lantana camara:** invasive shrub introduced in the colonial era.

World Day for International Justice

July 17 is observed as the World Day for International Justice.

- **Day:** World Day for International Justice, July 17.
- **Rome Statute:** adopted 1998; established the ICC (The Hague), about 125 members.
- **India:** not a signatory to the Rome Statute.

Dr Nandini Azad Wins the Bharat Samman

Dr Nandini Azad was honoured with the Bharat Samman 2026.

- **Awardee:** Dr Nandini Azad, Working Women's Forum.
- **Award:** Bharat Samman 2026.
- **Field:** women's empowerment, financial inclusion, grassroots development.

Facts Corner

- **IDBI Bank:** Fairfax Financial preferred bidder for about 60.72 per cent, around Rs 52,932 crore, via DIPAM.
- **PLFS June 2026:** all-India unemployment about 5.5 per cent (rural 5.0, urban 6.6).
- **Bharat Samman 2026:** Dr Nandini Azad, Working Women's Forum.
- **New species:** Likweli monkey (DR Congo), 24-million-year-old Kewra fossil (Assam), two new bees (Arunachal).
- **Nelson Mandela International Day:** July 18; 2026 theme on poverty and inequity.

June PLFS Bulletin Holds Unemployment at 5.5 Per Cent

The monthly Periodic Labour Force Survey bulletin for June 2026 was released.

- **Data:** PLFS monthly bulletin, June 2026 (NSO).
- **Unemployment rate (15+):** about 5.5 per cent all-India.
- **Split:** rural about 5.0 per cent, urban about 6.6 per cent.

Nelson Mandela International Day

July 18 is observed as Nelson Mandela International Day.

- **Day:** Nelson Mandela International Day, July 18.
- **Person:** Nelson Mandela, anti-apartheid leader and first democratically elected President of South Africa.
- **2026 theme:** combating poverty and inequity.

Facts Corner

- **Observances:** Nelson Mandela International Day (July 18); World Chess Day (July 20, FIDE founded 1924).
- **Nita Ambani:** Fortune India Most Powerful Women, Reliance Foundation.
- **National Commission for Minorities:** statutory body under the 1992 Act; new Chairman appointed.
- **CPI June 2026:** about 4.38 per cent; RBI repo rate 5.25 per cent.
- **Malabar pied hornbill:** sighted at Muyyam river, Kannur, Kerala.

Malabar Pied Hornbill Sighted in Kannur

Malabar pied hornbills were sighted in Kannur, Kerala.

- **Species:** Malabar pied hornbill.
- **Location:** Muyyam river, Kannur, Kerala.
- **Role:** seed disperser and forest-health indicator.

NITI Aayog's Investment Friendliness Index 2026

NITI Aayog released the first Investment Friendliness Index ranking States and UTs on their investment climate across 84 indicators and 8 pillars, with Gujarat, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu leading.

- **NITI Aayog** (National Institution for Transforming India) replaced the **Planning Commission** on **January 1, 2015**.
- Its **Chairperson** is the **Prime Minister**; day-to-day work is led by the **Vice-Chairperson** and a **CEO**.
- The **Doing Business** report was discontinued by the **World Bank** in 2021; its successor is the **B-READY** assessment.
- **Competitive federalism** encourages States to compete on governance and reform; **cooperative federalism** stresses Centre-State collaboration.
- The IFI is the **first** index to rank States specifically on their **investment environment**.

World Chess Day and Nelson Mandela International Day

The weekend brackets two international observances, Nelson Mandela Day and World Chess Day.

- **Nelson Mandela International Day:** July 18.
- **World Chess Day:** July 20; FIDE founded in Paris, 1924.
- **Origin:** chess traces to the ancient Indian game chaturanga.

Facts Corner

- **National Flag Adoption Day:** July 22, 1947 (Constituent Assembly, Nehru); Ashok Chakra with 24 spokes.
- **Dengue vaccine:** CDSCO approval for Qdenga, India's first; dengue spread by Aedes aegypti.
- **Naying HEP:** about 1,000 MW on the Siyom river, Arunachal Pradesh (NEEPCO); Siang is the Yarlung Tsangpo.
- **Tramadol seizure:** large synthetic-opioid haul; NCB is the nodal agency.
- **Lok Sabha:** an MP suspended during the disrupted Monsoon Session.

Large Tramadol Seizure

Enforcement agencies reported a major seizure of the opioid tramadol.

- **Seizure:** large quantity of tramadol, a synthetic opioid.
- **Concern:** synthetic-drug abuse and trafficking.
- **Nodal agency:** Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB).

National Flag Adoption Day and Pi Approximation Day

July 22 marks the adoption of the national flag and is also Pi Approximation Day.

- **National Flag:** adopted by the Constituent Assembly on July 22, 1947; Ashok Chakra has 24 spokes.
- **Resolution moved by:** Jawaharlal Nehru.
- **Pi Approximation Day:** July 22 (22/7).

Naying Hydropower Project Gets Environmental Clearance

An expert panel cleared a large hydropower project in Arunachal Pradesh.

- **Project:** Naying Hydroelectric Project (about 1,000 MW), Siyom river, Arunachal Pradesh.
- **Developer:** NEEPCO.
- **Context:** the Siang is the Yarlung Tsangpo; strategic water security.

Brazil's Amazon Fires at a Four-Decade Low

A report found Brazilian Amazon fires fell to their lowest since 1985.

- **Report:** MapBiomas; Brazilian Amazon burned area about 3.1 million hectares in 2025.
- **Trend:** lowest since 1985, down from a 2024 record.
- **Significance:** the Amazon is a major global carbon sink.

Commonwealth Games 2026 Open in Glasgow

The 23rd Commonwealth Games opened in Glasgow.

- **Event:** 23rd Commonwealth Games, Glasgow (opened July 23, 2026).
- **India:** flag-bearer Mirabai Chanu, baton-bearer Lovlina Borgohain.
- **Format:** a slimmed-down edition after Victoria's withdrawal.

Facts Corner

- **National Broadcasting Day:** July 23 (1927, Bombay); AIR under Prasar Bharati.
- **Chandrashekhar Azad:** born July 23, 1906; HSRA.
- **Net FDI May 2026:** about a USD 74 million outflow; April to May FY27 about USD 6.5 billion.
- **President Murmu:** state visits to Moldova, North Macedonia and Romania.
- **Commonwealth Games 2026:** opened in Glasgow; Mirabai Chanu flag-bearer, Lovlina Borgohain baton-bearer.

National Broadcasting Day and Chandrashekhar Azad's Anniversary

July 23 is National Broadcasting Day and the birth anniversary of Chandrashekhar Azad.

- **National Broadcasting Day:** July 23 (first radio broadcast, Bombay, 1927).
- **All India Radio:** now under Prasar Bharati.
- **Chandrashekhar Azad:** born July 23, 1906; reorganised the HRA into the HSRA.

Net FDI Turns Negative in May

The RBI Bulletin reported net foreign direct investment turning marginally negative in May.

- **Net FDI May 2026:** about a USD 74 million outflow.
- **Net FDI (April to May FY27):** about USD 6.5 billion, up year-on-year.
- **Source:** RBI monthly Bulletin.

President Murmu's Three-Nation Europe Tour

President Droupadi Murmu undertook a state visit to three European countries.

- **Countries:** Moldova, North Macedonia and Romania.
- **Firsts:** first Indian President to Moldova and North Macedonia.
- **Gesture:** Mahatma Gandhi bust unveiled in Skopje.

Ballari-Guntakal 3rd and 4th Railway Lines Approved

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs cleared a railway multi-tracking project.

- **Project:** 3rd and 4th line, Ballari-Guntakal section (about 46 km, Rs 1,264 crore, Karnataka-Andhra Pradesh).
- **Approved by:** the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA).
- **Benefit:** higher capacity on a congested freight corridor.

SOFI 2026 Report on Global Hunger

The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI) report was released by UN agencies.

- **SOFI:** published by FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO.
- **Tracks:** SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) and the affordability of a healthy diet.
- **FAO headquarters:** Rome, Italy.

Electric Boats Launched on the Ganga at Varanasi

New electric passenger boats were flagged off on the Ganga at Varanasi.

- **Boats:** five electric passenger boats flagged off on the Ganga at Varanasi (Namo Ghat).
- **Frameworks:** Namami Gange; inland waterways under IWAI.
- **Benefit:** lower pollution and noise on the river.

Facts Corner

- **World Drowning Prevention Day:** July 25 (UN-declared, WHO-led); presidential oath by convention on July 25 under Article 60.
- **President Murmu:** state visit to Romania (Bucharest), July 23, 2026; three MoUs.
- **Google:** fined about 890 million euros by the European Commission.
- **Samudra Pradakshina:** first tri-service all-women circumnavigation, about 25,500 nautical miles.
- **Ganga:** five electric passenger boats flagged off at Varanasi (Namami Gange, IWA).

President Murmu's State Visit to Romania

President Droupadi Murmu paid a state visit to Romania, the final leg of a three-nation Europe tour.

- **Visit:** Bucharest, July 23, 2026; first Indian President to Romania in about 30 years.
- **Agreements:** three MoUs (S&T, sports, Chair of Indian Studies).
- **Romania:** EU and NATO member; capital Bucharest.

World Drowning Prevention Day and the July 25 Oath Tradition

July 25 is observed as World Drowning Prevention Day and is also the traditional date for the Indian President's oath.

- **World Drowning Prevention Day:** July 25 (UN-declared, WHO-led).
- **Presidential oath:** taken on July 25 by convention since 1977; administered by the CJI under Article 60.
- **Current President:** Droupadi Murmu, the 15th President of India.

HelpAge India Report on Elderly Vulnerability to Climate Change

- HelpAge India is a non-governmental organisation working for the cause of disadvantaged elderly persons, established in 1978.
- The Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act was enacted in 2007.
- The National Programme for the Health Care of the Elderly (NPHCE) is implemented by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
- Atal Vayo Abhyuday Yojana (AVYAY) is the umbrella scheme of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment for senior citizens.

PM Interacts with Viksit Vibrant Village Programme 2026 Participants

Prime Minister Narendra Modi interacted with participants of the Viksit Vibrant Village Programme 2026 through video conferencing on July 26, 2026.

- Vibrant Villages Programme-I: approved February 2023, Rs 4,800 crore, 662 villages, northern border.
- Vibrant Villages Programme-II: approved April 2, 2025, Rs 6,839 crore, 1,954 villages, 15 States and 2 UTs, up to FY 2028-29.

Rajasthan Releases State Water Plan 2047

Rajasthan launched the Rajasthan State Water Plan 2047 on July 24, 2026, setting out a long-term framework for river-linking projects, groundwater conservation and public participation in water management.

- Water is a State subject under Entry 17 of the State List; inter-state rivers fall under Entry 56 of the Union List.
- The Central Ground Water Board categorises assessment units as safe, semi-critical, critical or over-exploited based on the stage of groundwater extraction.

SpaceX Starship Flight 13 Deploys 20 Starlink V3 Satellites

SpaceX launched Starship Flight 13 from Starbase, Texas on July 24, 2026, deploying all 20 Starlink V3 satellites.

- Hot staging means igniting the upper stage before separation from the first stage is complete.
- India's space reforms: IN-SPACe (2020), NSIL (2019), Indian Space Policy (2023), FDI liberalisation (2024).

United States and Saudi Arabia Announce Civilian Nuclear Agreement

US Energy Secretary Chris Wright and Saudi Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman signed a civil nuclear cooperation agreement and a bilateral nuclear safeguards agreement on July 22, 2026. On July 23, President Trump said the deal...

- The 2009 US-UAE agreement set the "gold standard" by renouncing enrichment and reprocessing before Barakah opened; this agreement has no equivalent clause.
- The IAEA Additional Protocol permits short-notice inspections to verify peaceful use.
- Saudi Arabia is a party to the NPT as a non-nuclear-weapon state; India is not a party to the NPT.

CGD Report: Delhi Has Highest Share of Schools Near Toxic Sites Among World...

A Center for Global Development (CGD) report found that about 91 per cent of schools in New Delhi are located within 5 km of a documented toxic site, the highest proportion among world capital cities studied, reported around July 29, 2026.

- Delhi: about 91 per cent of schools within 5 km of a documented toxic site, the highest among capitals studied.
- Lead-acid batteries account for about 86 per cent of global lead consumption.
- Governed in India by the Battery Waste Management Rules, 2022.

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India and Japan Sign First Defence Co-Development Pact: UNICORN Mast

At the 16th India-Japan Annual Summit on July 1 to 2, 2026, the two nations launched their first bilateral defence co-development project, the UNICORN stealth mast for the Indian Navy.

- **Event:** At the 16th India-Japan Annual Summit (New Delhi, July 1 to 2, 2026), the two nations launched their first bilateral defence co-development project, the UNICORN mast.
- **UNICORN:** Unified Complex Radio Antenna, an integrated stealth mast that consolidates a warship's antennas into one Fibre-Reinforced Plastic (FRP) radome to cut its Radar Cross-Section (RCS).
- **Origin:** Fitted on Japan's Mogami-class frigates; intended for future Indian Navy warships.
- **Partners:** Executed by Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) with Japanese firms NEC Corporation, Sampa Kogyo and Yokohama Rubber.
- **Legal base:** Memorandum of Implementation signed November 15, 2024, with Japan's Acquisition, Technology and Logistics Agency (ATLA), under the 2015 Defence Equipment and Technology Transfer...
- **Japan's shift:** Enabled by its review of the Three Principles on Transfer of Defence Equipment and Technology (2014); India's first receipt of advanced Japanese defence equipment.
- **Summit outcomes:** 16 outcomes and three joint statements, including a Joint Declaration on Economic Security; reaffirmed target of 10 trillion yen Japanese investment.
- **Framework:** India-Japan Special Strategic and Global Partnership (2014); Quad; free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific.
- **Leaders:** PM Narendra Modi and Japanese PM Sanae Takaichi.

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INS Trikand Foils a Piracy Attempt in the Gulf of Aden

On July 1, 2026, stealth frigate INS Trikand responded to a distress call from MV Golden Arsenal in the Gulf of Aden, with MARCOS sanitising the vessel after suspected pirates fled.

- **INS Trikand:** Talwar-class (Project 1135.6) stealth frigate; commissioned June 29, 2013; mission-deployed for anti-piracy in the western Indian Ocean.
- **The operation:** On July 1, 2026, responded to MV Golden Arsenal's distress call about 300 nautical miles east-north-east of Djibouti; MARCOS sanitised the vessel on July 2.
- **MV Golden Arsenal:** St. Vincent and the Grenadines-flagged bulk carrier; 21 crew including one Indian; crew sheltered in the citadel.
- **MARCOS:** Marine Commandos of the Indian Navy.
- **Gulf of Aden:** Connects the Red Sea (via Bab-el-Mandeb strait) to the Arabian Sea; carries roughly 11 per cent of global maritime trade.
- **India's posture:** Anti-piracy mission-based deployments in the IOR since 2008; Navy as "first responder" and "net security provider".
- **SLOCs:** Sea lines of communication through these waters are a direct Indian national interest.

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Indonesia Becomes First Foreign Buyer of India's Astra Mk1 Missile

In July 2026, Indonesia placed the first-ever export order for India's indigenous Astra Mk1 air-to-air missile, marking a milestone for defence exports.

- **The deal:** Around July 8 to 9, 2026, Indonesia placed the first-ever export order for the Astra Mk1, reported at 150-plus units, to arm its Su-30 and Su-27 fleet.
- **Package:** Part of a broader defence deal of about 630 million dollars with India.
- **Astra Mk1:** Indigenous beyond-visual-range air-to-air missile (BVRAAM).
- **Developer:** DRDO's Defence Research and Development Laboratory (DRDL); **producer:** Bharat Dynamics Limited (BDL).
- **Specs:** Range about 80 to 110 km; speed around Mach 4.5; engagement altitude up to about 20 km; active radar homing.
- **First foreign buyer:** Indonesia, marking India's maiden air-to-air missile export.
- **Export target:** India aims for defence exports of about Rs 50,000 crore.

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INS Mahendragiri Commissioned into the Navy

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh commissioned the stealth frigate INS Mahendragiri at Visakhapatnam.

- **INS Mahendragiri:** sixth and final Project 17A (Nilgiri-class) stealth frigate.
- **Builder:** Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders; over 75 per cent indigenous content.
- **Weapons:** BrahMos and Barak-8; designed by the Warship Design Bureau.

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DRDO Leadership in Transition

The DRDO Chairman's post remained in interim charge pending a full-time appointment.

- **DRDO:** the Defence Research and Development Organisation, under the Ministry of Defence.
- **Vacancy:** Chairman DRDO / Secretary DDR&D vacant since Dr Samir V. Kamat's retirement (May 31, 2026).
- **Appointments:** senior appointments are cleared by the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC).

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Facts Corner

- **Central Vista:** to be officially called the Kartavya Bhawan Area; follows Rajpath to Kartavya Path (2022).
- **Missile-defence coalition:** nine European countries and Ukraine, announced in Paris; air and missile defence.
- **NeoSep1:** GARDP-funded trial against drug-resistant neonatal sepsis; India enrolls its first newborn.
- **Karnataka AI University:** planned state government AI university (announcement stage); IndiaAI Mission.
- **July 14 observances:** Bastille Day (France); World Chimpanzee Day; Shark Awareness Day.

Nine European Nations and Ukraine Form a Missile-Defence Coalition

Nine European countries and Ukraine announced an anti-ballistic-missile coalition.

- **Coalition:** nine European countries and Ukraine, announced in Paris.
- **Purpose:** pooled air and missile defence; described as purely defensive.
- **Context:** European strategic autonomy amid the Ukraine war.

EPFO 3.0 IT Overhaul

The Employees' Provident Fund Organisation moved ahead with its next-generation "EPFO 3.0" system.

- **EPFO:** under the Ministry of Labour and Employment.
- **EPFO 3.0:** next-generation IT system for bank-like, real-time services.
- **Schemes:** EPF, EPS (pension) and EDLI (insurance).

27th Kargil Vijay Diwas Observed at Drass

India observed the 27th Kargil Vijay Diwas on July 26, 2026, with the principal ceremony at the Kargil War Memorial in Drass, Ladakh, led by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh.

- Operation Vijay was the Army operation; Operation Safed Sagar was the Air Force component; Operation Talwar was the Navy component.
- Four Param Vir Chakras were awarded for Kargil, two of them posthumously.
- The Kargil Review Committee was chaired by K. Subrahmanyam.

Gujarat's Cyber Financial Fraud e-Zero FIR: Registering a Case Without Entering a...

Gujarat launches a Cyber Financial Fraud e-Zero FIR service that converts 1930 helpline complaints into automatically registered FIRs routed to the jurisdictional station.

- Launched at Gandhinagar on 27 July 2026 by Deputy Chief Minister and Home Minister Harsh Sanghavi
- I4C Chief Executive Officer Rajesh Kumar joined virtually
- Trigger channels: helpline 1930 and cybercrime.gov.in
- First case: an Ahmedabad resident saved from losing over Rs 15.76 lakh in a digital arrest scam
- Status: attached office of the MHA with effect from 1 July 2024
- Zero FIR statutory basis: Section 173(1), Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023
- Refusal remedy: approach the Superintendent of Police under Section 175, BNSS, 2023
- IT Act, 2000: Section 66C identity theft, Section 66D cheating by personation using a computer resource
- Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023: Section 318 cheating, Section 316 criminal breach of trust, Section 111 organised crime
- Enforcement in 2025: 1.33 million mule accounts frozen, 1.2 million SIM cards deactivated
- NCRB Crime in India 2023: 86,420 cybercrime cases, rate up from 4.8 to 6.2
- Zero FIR: an FIR registered at any police station irrespective of territorial jurisdiction, numbered "0" and transferred to the competent station

Coast Guard Reforms 2026: Gender-Neutral Induction and a "Presumed Dead"...

Rajnath Singh unveiled gender-neutral officer induction and a faster "presumed dead" ex-gratia mechanism for the Indian Coast Guard, months after it marked its 50th Raising Day.

- Announced by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, July 28, 2026, Kartavya Bhavan-2, New Delhi.
- Present: Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh, DG ICG Paramesh Sivamani.
- Reform 1: gender-neutral induction into SSA and PA officer cadres.
- Reform 2: "presumed dead" declaration mechanism for faster ex-gratia and terminal benefits to families of personnel missing at sea.
- Raised 1 February 1977; Coast Guard Act, 1978 gave it statutory form.
- 50th Raising Day (Golden Jubilee): marked 1 February 2026.
- Motto: Vayam Rakshamah, "We Protect".
- Mandate: EEZ law enforcement, search and rescue, marine environment protection, anti-smuggling, coastal security.
- Secretary, Ministry of Defence vs Babita Puniya (2020): Supreme Court directs Permanent Commission for eligible women Army officers.
- Indian Air Force inducted women fighter pilots from 2016.
- ICG gender-neutral SSA/PA induction: 2026.

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WHO Lists First Diagnostic for the Bundibugyo Ebola Virus

On July 2, 2026, WHO added the first molecular diagnostic test for the Bundibugyo Ebola virus to its Emergency Use Listing, closing a gap open since 2007.

- **Event:** On July 2, 2026, WHO added the first molecular diagnostic for the Bundibugyo virus to its Emergency Use Listing (EUL).
- **The test:** Altona RealStar Filovirus Screen RT-PCR Kit, which detects viral RNA in blood samples.
- **The pathogen:** Bundibugyo virus (BDBV), a species of Ebola virus in the family Filoviridae, first identified in 2007 in Uganda.
- **Disease profile:** Zoonotic, fruit-bat reservoir; spreads via direct contact with bodily fluids; incubation about 2 to 21 days; case fatality typically 30 to 50 per cent.
- **Emergency:** PHEIC declared May 17, 2026 for a Bundibugyo outbreak in the DRC that spread to Uganda, with hundreds of deaths.
- **EUL:** WHO's risk-based mechanism to fast-track unlicensed vaccines, tests and treatments during public-health emergencies.
- **PHEIC:** A Public Health Emergency of International Concern is declared by the WHO Director-General under the International Health Regulations (2005).
- **India angle:** As the pharmacy of the Global South, India can build filovirus diagnostic and vaccine capacity for global preparedness.

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I-2SEA Submarine Cable: India's AI-Ready Undersea Link to Southeast Asia

Lightstorm, Microsoft, Singtel and Tata Communications signed the Joint Build Agreement for the 3,600 km I-2SEA subsea cable linking India to Singapore and Malaysia.

- **I-2SEA full form:** India to Southeast Asia Submarine Cable System, a 3,600 km undersea fibre-optic cable, Joint Build Agreement signed July 2, 2026.
- **Consortium:** Lightstorm (majority owner) with Microsoft, Singtel and Tata Communications; NEC Corporation of Japan is the system supplier; ASEAN Cables Pte Ltd (ACPL) is the marine...
- **Indian landing stations:** Machilipatnam (Andhra Pradesh), which feeds Hyderabad's AI and data-centre clusters, and South Chennai (Tamil Nadu). Overseas ends: Singapore and Kuala Lumpur...
- **Purpose-built for AI:** designed for AI training workloads, GPU clusters and hyperscale cloud data, not just general internet traffic.
- **Why cables matter:** about 95 per cent of all intercontinental data moves through submarine cables; deep three-metre burial protects against anchor and fishing damage.
- **Security context:** cable-cut and sabotage incidents in the Red Sea and Baltic Sea have made subsea cables a recognised critical-infrastructure and geopolitical concern.
- **India angle:** supports India's digital-sovereignty and data-localisation push and its ambition to be a global data-transit and AI hub linking South Asia and Southeast Asia (ASEAN).

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New Rules Bring Gene and Cell Therapies Under Central Licensing

The Drugs (Eighth Amendment) Rules, 2026 bring gene, cell and stem-cell therapies and xenografts under the Central License Approving Authority framework.

- **The rule:** Drugs (Eighth Amendment) Rules, 2026, amending the Drugs Rules, 1945; in force from June 29, 2026, reported July 2 to 3, 2026.
- **What it covers:** cell and stem-cell-derived products, gene therapeutic products (including CAR-T and gene-editing therapies) and xenografts (animal-tissue products such as heart valves)...
- **Framework:** brings these products under the Central License Approving Authority (CLAA) for uniform national regulation, after consultation with the Drugs Technical Advisory Board (DTAB).
- **Statute and regulator:** parent law is the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940; the regulator is the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO), headed by the Drugs Controller General of...
- **Definitions:** CAR-T (Chimeric Antigen Receptor T-cell) therapy re-engineers a patient's immune cells to fight cancer; a xenograft uses animal tissue in a human patient.
- **Policy link:** supports India's BioE3 policy (Biotechnology for Economy, Environment and Employment, 2024), which promotes precision biotherapeutics including cell and gene therapy.
- **Ethics angle (GS4):** raises questions on access and cost equity, consent, heritable (germline) gene edits, animal welfare and cross-species infection risk in xenotransplantation.

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World Zoonoses Day: India's One Health and the New Priority Disease List

On World Zoonoses Day (July 6), the NCDC's new priority zoonotic-disease ranking and the National One Health Mission anchor India's pandemic preparedness push.

- **World Zoonoses Day:** observed on July 6, commemorating Louis Pasteur's first successful rabies vaccine on July 6, 1885.
- **Scale:** about 60% of infectious diseases and about 75% of emerging infectious diseases are zoonotic (spread between animals and humans).
- **NCDC priority list:** produced through a Delphi consultation of about 50 experts using five criteria, severity, economic burden, pandemic potential, preventability and likelihood of spread...
- **National One Health Mission (NOHM):** anchored by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR); coordinated through the NCDC's Centre for One Health; integrates the National Rabies Control...
- **One Health:** an integrated human-animal-environment approach to health, central to post-COVID pandemic preparedness.
- **Rabies:** essentially 100% vaccine-preventable, yet remains a major Indian zoonosis; India targets zero dog-mediated human rabies deaths by 2030.

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ISRO Tests the SOLVE Sub-Orbital Vehicle

ISRO conducted a ground test of SOLVE, a sub-orbital launch vehicle for experiments.

- **SOLVE:** Sub-Orbital Launch Vehicle for Experiments; solid-propellant, sub-orbital.
- **Site:** Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota.
- **Use:** re-entry and atmospheric experiments, Gaganyaan parachute tests.

The National Data Governance Framework Policy 2026

On July 8, 2026, the Union Cabinet approved the National Data Governance Framework Policy 2026 to share anonymised government data for India's AI research and startups.

- **NDGFP 2026:** National Data Governance Framework Policy, approved by the Union Cabinet (chaired by PM Modi) on July 8, 2026.
- **Purpose:** Create a unified framework to share anonymised, non-personal government datasets for AI research, startups and innovation.
- **Origin:** Operationalises a draft policy first floated by MeitY in 2022.
- **Nodal body:** India Data Management Office (IDMO), under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY).
- **Platform:** Anonymised datasets from multiple ministries are hosted on the India Datasets Platform.
- **Scope:** Only non-personal and anonymised data; personal data remains under the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023.
- **Alignment:** Complements the IndiaAI Mission (Rs 10,372 crore outlay, approved March 2024).
- **Big idea:** Data as a public good, data democratisation and building sovereign AI capacity.
- **Key debate:** Open access and innovation versus privacy, re-identification risk, security and coordination with States.

AstraZeneca's Amaravati Genomic Oncology Centre: AI, Genomics and Public Cancer...

AstraZeneca India, with Strand Life Sciences and Qure.ai, is setting up an integrated precision oncology programme in Amaravati targeting lung and breast cancer in government hospitals.

- **Partners:** AstraZeneca India, Government of Andhra Pradesh, Strand Life Sciences, Qure.ai.
- **Components:** AI-powered X-ray screening (Qure.ai), genomic/biomarker testing (Strand Life Sciences), targeted treatment planning, follow-up.
- **Focus:** lung and breast cancer, deployed in government hospitals.
- **Uses a tumour's specific genetic mutations**, not just stage/location, to select therapy.
- **Requires population screening**, genomic testing infrastructure, and access to targeted drugs.
- **Ayushman Bharat:** India's flagship public health coverage scheme.
- **National Programme for Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases:** covers cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes and stroke.

ICMR i-DRONE Drones Cut TB Diagnosis Time and Cost in Telangana

An ICMR i-DRONE study in Telangana shows drone transport of TB sputum samples cut diagnosis turnaround from 15 days to 5 and slashed patient costs, boosting India's TB-elimination push.

- **i-DRONE** stands for **ICMR's Drone Response and Outreach**, first piloted in the North East.
- TB study conducted in **Yadadri-Bhuvanagiri district, Telangana**, with **AIIMS Bibinagar** under the **NTEP**.
- Diagnosis turnaround fell from about **15 days to 5 days**; **840 participants** enrolled.
- Patient out-of-pocket expense fell from about **Rs 9,451 to Rs 91**.
- Network: **11 PHCs, 60 sub-centres and 4 TB Units** in a hub-and-spoke model.
- Limitations: weather, payload and training requirements.

India Approves Its First Dengue Vaccine

India granted marketing approval for its first dengue vaccine.

- **Approval:** CDSCO marketing authorisation for a dengue vaccine (Qdenga).
- **Regulator:** CDSCO, India's national drug regulator.
- **Disease:** dengue, spread by *Aedes aegypti*; four serotypes.

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Nameri Tiger Reserve Records a Four-Fold Rise in Tigers

The Nameri Tiger Reserve in Assam recorded a rise from 3 tigers in 2022 to 12 by the end of 2025, with tigers returning to the Sonai-Rupai sanctuary.

- **Nameri:** tiger reserve in Assam; count rose from 3 (2022) to 12 (2025).
- **WII:** Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun, validates tiger estimation.
- **NTCA:** statutory body under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972; Project Tiger since 1973.

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Delhi EV Policy 2.0: A Roadmap for Vehicle Electrification

Delhi EV Policy 2.0 became operational on July 1, 2026, targeting 30 per cent fleet electrification by March 2030 through phased registration mandates and purchase incentives.

- **Delhi EV Policy 2.0:** Operational July 1, 2026 to March 31, 2030; issued by the Government of NCT of Delhi.
- **Headline target:** At least 30 per cent fleet electrification by March 31, 2030 (up from about 14 per cent under the 2020 policy).
- **Registration mandates:** From January 1, 2027, only electric three-wheelers and N1-category goods vehicles; from April 1, 2028, only electric two-wheelers.
- **Two-wheeler subsidy:** Rs 30,000 (Year 1), Rs 20,000 (Year 2), Rs 10,000 (Year 3), tapering by design.
- **Road-tax waiver:** 100 per cent for EVs priced up to Rs 30 lakh.
- **Infrastructure:** 32,000 charging points planned; school fleets to be at least 10 per cent EV within two years.
- **Fiscal backing:** About Rs 7,000 crore allocated within a Rs 15,000 crore investment plan.
- **National linkage:** Nests within NEMMP, FAME and PM E-DRIVE (Rs 10,900 crore, effective October 1, 2024).

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New Species and a Fossil in the News

Several new-species discoveries and a plant fossil were reported.

- **New primate:** Likweli monkey (*Colobus congoensis*), DR Congo.
- **Fossil:** about 24-million-year-old Kewra (screw pine), Assam.
- **Pollinators:** two new solitary bee species, Siang Valley, Arunachal Pradesh.

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New Polypore Fungus Species Discovered in Kolhapur

Botanical Survey of India-linked researchers identified a new polypore (bracket fungus) species, *Microporellus kolhapurensis*, in Bhudargad taluka, Kolhapur district, Maharashtra, with findings published in the journal *Nelumbo*.

- Located: Bhudargad taluka, Kolhapur district, Maharashtra.
- Published in *Nelumbo*, the research journal of the Botanical Survey of India.

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No Amnesty by Circular: The Supreme Court Ends Indefinite Ex-Post-Facto Green...

The Supreme Court struck down a 2021 executive memorandum that let projects begin without environmental clearance and regularise later, reaffirming that prior approval cannot be substituted after the fact.

- Struck down: MoEFCC Office Memorandum, 2021, allowing indefinite ex-post-facto environmental clearances.
- Bench: CJI Surya Kant, Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul Pancholi.
- Held: only a statutory notification, not an internal OM, can create an exception to the EIA Notification, 2006's prior-clearance mandate.
- Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, Section 3: empowers the Centre to restrict activities via statutory notification.
- EIA Notification, 2006: mandates prior environmental clearance before project commencement.
- Precautionary principle: prevent harm before it occurs.
- Polluter pays principle: cost of harm borne by the polluter, not normalised through shortcuts.

GEOGRAPHY

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Southwest Monsoon Progress

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) reported the continued northward progress of the southwest monsoon at the start of July.

- **IMD:** India Meteorological Department, under the Ministry of Earth Sciences.
- **Southwest monsoon:** June to September; main source of India's rainfall.

GEOGRAPHY

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Monsoon Session: An MP Suspended from the Lok Sabha

A Member of Parliament was suspended from the Lok Sabha during a disrupted session.

- **Event:** an MP suspended from the Lok Sabha during the Monsoon Session.
- **Basis:** the Rules of Procedure of the House on maintaining order.
- **Session:** Monsoon Session 2026 (July 20 to August 13).

HISTORY, ART & CULTURE

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Facts Corner

- **World Youth Skills Day:** July 15 (UN, since 2014); proposed Skills Outcomes Fund (about Rs 530 crore).
- **Codex CAC49:** FAO-WHO food-standards body (1963); India-led standards on coriander seeds and curry leaves.
- **Thukkachi temple:** UNESCO Asia-Pacific heritage conservation recognition; 12th-century Thanjavur region.
- **Reform Express:** Indian Railways package of about eight freight and operational reforms.
- **Delhi services bill:** Right to Time-Bound Delivery of Services, Cabinet-approved.

HISTORY, ART & CULTURE

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Tamil Nadu Temple Wins a UNESCO Heritage Award

A restored temple in Tamil Nadu received a UNESCO Asia-Pacific heritage award.

- **Temple:** Thukkachi Abathsahayeswarar Temple (12th century, Thanjavur region).
- **Award:** UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation.
- **Context:** Chola-era temple architecture and living heritage.

Persons & Awards in News

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PERSONS & AWARDS IN NEWS

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National Doctors' Day 2026 and the Legacy of Dr B.C. Roy

India observed National Doctors' Day on July 1, 2026, honouring Dr B.C. Roy, with a 2026 theme spotlighting doctors' well-being and safety.

- **National Doctors' Day (India):** Observed on **July 1** every year since **1991**.
- **Dr B.C. Roy:** Born and died on **July 1** (1882 to 1962); **second Chief Minister of West Bengal**; awarded the **Bharat Ratna in 1961**.
- **2026 theme (widely cited):** "Behind the Mask: Who Heals the Healers?", focused on doctors' well-being and safety.
- **National Medical Commission (NMC):** Replaced the Medical Council of India in **2020** as the regulator of medical education (NMC Act, 2019).
- **IMA:** Indian Medical Association, associated with Dr B.C. Roy, is the largest body of doctors in India.
- **Global note:** Doctors' Day dates vary by country; India's date is uniquely tied to Dr B.C. Roy.

PERSONS & AWARDS IN NEWS

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New NITI Aayog CEO Appointed

The government appointed a new Chief Executive Officer of NITI Aayog.

- **NITI Aayog:** National Institution for Transforming India, set up in 2015.
- **Chairperson:** the Prime Minister; the CEO ranks as Secretary to the Government.
- **CEO:** Anurag Jain (IAS).

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ECONOMY & DEVELOPMENT

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June 2026 GST Collections Rise Nearly 14 Per Cent

Gross GST collection for June 2026 rose 13.9 per cent year-on-year to about Rs 1,94,812 crore, the fastest growth in 13 months, driven by a surge in import revenue.

- **June 2026 gross GST:** About Rs 1,94,812 crore, up 13.9 per cent year-on-year (from about Rs 1,71,105 crore in June 2025); fastest growth in 13 months; data released July 1, 2026.
- **Net GST revenue:** About Rs 1,62,377 crore, up 11.2 per cent.
- **Import vs domestic:** Import GST surged about 34.6 per cent; domestic revenue grew a modest 6.5 per cent.
- **Q1 FY 2026-27 (April to June):** Cumulative gross collection about Rs 6.32 lakh crore, up 8.4 per cent.
- **All-time high:** April 2026, about Rs 2.43 lakh crore, the record single-month collection.
- **Nature of GST:** Destination-based, dual tax (CGST + SGST + IGST).
- **Constitutional basis:** 101st Constitutional Amendment Act, 2016; GST Council under Article 279A.
- **GST 2.0 (2025):** Two primary rates of 5 and 18 per cent, plus a 40 per cent demerit rate.

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IMF Trims India FY27 Growth Forecast to 6.4 Per Cent

The IMF's July 2026 World Economic Outlook Update lowered India's FY27 growth forecast to 6.4 per cent, while India stays the fastest-growing major economy.

- **WEO:** IMF flagship report, released April and October, with interim Updates in January and July.
- **IMF headquarters:** Washington DC; a Bretton Woods institution (1944).
- **India FY27 forecast:** 6.4 per cent (down 10 bps from 6.5 per cent).
- **India FY28 forecast:** raised to 6.7 per cent.
- **Downgrade drivers:** higher global energy prices and trade uncertainty.
- **Status:** India remains the world's fastest-growing major economy.

Aviva Set to Become India's First 100 Per Cent Foreign-Owned Life Insurer

UK insurer Aviva is acquiring the remaining 26 per cent of its Indian life JV, set to become the first 100 per cent foreign-owned life insurer in India.

- **Aviva India:** JV formed in 2001 with Dabur; Aviva buying the remaining 26 per cent.
- **Milestone:** set to be India's first 100 per cent foreign-owned life insurer.
- **FDI progression:** 26 per cent to 49 per cent (2015) to 74 per cent (2021) to 100 per cent (operational Feb 2026).
- **Regulator:** IRDAI, established 1999, headquartered in Hyderabad.
- **Governing law:** Insurance Act, 1938.
- **Penetration:** around 4 per cent of GDP, still low.
- **Vision:** Insurance for All by 2047.

Centre Mandates TReDS for All CPSE Payments to MSMEs

In July 2026 the Centre made TReDS compulsory for every Central Public Sector Enterprise settling MSME invoices, and confirmed a planned interlinking of GeM with TReDS.

- **Mandate (July 2026):** All CPSEs must settle MSME invoices through TReDS; earlier turnover-threshold gap closed.
- **GeM-TReDS interlink:** Purchase order to invoice to financing on one rail.
- **TReDS:** RBI-authorized electronic platform under the Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007; three participants (MSME seller, buyer, financier); reverse auction; **without recourse** to the...
- **Platforms:** RXIL, M1xchange, Invoicemart.
- **MSMED Act, 2006:** Section 15 (45-day payment), Section 16 (compound interest at 3x RBI bank rate).
- **Budget 2026-27:** CGTMSE cover for TReDS invoice discounting; TReDS receivables treated as asset-backed securities.
- **Related rails:** OCEN, Account Aggregator, Udyam, Samadhaan portal.
- **MSME weight:** about 30 per cent of GDP, about 45 per cent of exports.

Dhruva Space Becomes First Recipient of the Antariksh VC Fund

Hyderabad-based Dhruva Space is the first startup to receive an investment from the Antariksh Venture Capital Fund, India's dedicated space-tech fund anchored by IN-SPACE.

- **Event:** July 2026, Dhruva Space reported as first recipient of an investment (around **Rs 60 crore**) under the **Antariksh Venture Capital Fund (AVCF)**.
- **AVCF:** India's dedicated space-tech venture fund, **anchored by IN-SPACE**, managed by SIDBI Venture Capital Limited; corpus reported around **Rs 1,600 crore**.
- **IN-SPACE:** single-window autonomous body under the **Department of Space**, set up **2020**, promotes and authorises private space activity.
- **NSIL:** commercial arm of ISRO.
- **Policy:** Indian Space Policy 2023 opened the sector; up to **100 per cent FDI** permitted in parts of the space sector.
- **Note:** investment figures are as reported in press and company statements.

India Launches Its First Index of Services Production

On 14 July 2026, MoSPI released India's first monthly Index of Services Production (ISP), the services-sector analogue of the IIP, filling a long gap in tracking a services-led economy that contributes over half of GVA.

- **Event (14 July 2026):** MoSPI released India's first monthly **Index of Services Production (ISP)**, a trial series for **April 2026**.
- **Nature:** Services counterpart of the **IIP**; a **fixed-weight Laspeyres volume index**.
- **Base year:** **2024-25**, aligned with the revised **CPI** series.
- **Weights:** Drawn from **GVA**; services are **over 50 per cent of GVA**.
- **Sources:** Administrative records (railways, air, banking, insurance), **GST outward-supply data**, and **ASISSE** (health, education).
- **Cadence:** Published on the **29th of each month**, about a **60-day lag**.
- **Same-day releases:** New-base **WPI**, **Output PPI**, and **trial Input PPI** for June 2026.
- **MoSPI also compiles:** IIP, CPI and GDP.

Centre Launches Eighth Tranche of Critical Mineral Block Auctions

On 15 July 2026, the Ministry of Mines launched the eighth tranche of critical and strategic mineral block auctions, offering 20 blocks across nine states to strengthen India's supply-chain resilience.

- **Event (15 July 2026):** Ministry of Mines launched the **eighth tranche** of critical and strategic mineral block auctions.
- **Offer:** **20 blocks** across **9 states (13 new, 7 re-offered)**.
- **Minerals:** REEs, lithium, vanadium, gallium, tungsten, graphite, titanium, potash, cesium, rubidium.
- **Cumulative:** About **88 blocks** launched, **56 auctioned**, roughly **63 per cent** success rate.
- **Enabling law:** **MMDR Amendment Act, 2023** delisted **24 critical minerals** from the atomic-minerals list.
- **Institutions:** **National Critical Mineral Mission** (2025) and **KABIL** (overseas supplies).
- **Uses:** Clean energy, defence, fertilisers, semiconductors.

Mobile Phone Manufacturing Scheme: Deepening India's Electronics Value Chain

The Union Cabinet approved the Rs 62,500 crore Mobile Phone Manufacturing Scheme (MPMS) on July 15, 2026, shifting focus from final assembly to component and sub-assembly value addition.

- **MPMS outlay:** Rs 62,500 crore over five years (FY2026-27 to FY2030-31).
- **Nodal ministry:** MeitY (Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology).
- **Production target:** ~Rs 39 lakh crore cumulative; **jobs target:** ~60,000 direct.
- **Rank:** India is the world's second-largest mobile phone manufacturer.
- **Core shift:** from final assembly (PLI 1.0) to component and sub-assembly value addition, raising Domestic Value Addition (DVA).
- **Related:** Semicon 2.0 (semiconductor mission) was approved by the Cabinet on the same day, July 15, 2026.
- **Debate:** "Make in India vs Assemble in India"; component import-dependence on China; electronics trade deficit.

Navi Mumbai International Airport Opens to International Flights

Navi Mumbai International Airport launched its first international service with an Air India Express flight to Abu Dhabi, becoming the Mumbai region's second international gateway and easing load on Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj airport.

- A **greenfield airport** is built on a fresh site, unlike a **brownfield** expansion of an existing one.
- **CSMIA** in Mumbai handles among the highest passenger volumes in India on a constrained runway system.
- **UDAN** was launched in 2016 under the National Civil Aviation Policy to make flying affordable and connect underserved airports.
- The **Airports Authority of India (AAI)** is the statutory body overseeing airport operations and air navigation services.
- India-Gulf routes, especially to the UAE, are among the busiest international corridors for Indian aviation due to large diaspora and trade links.

A Greenfield Shipbuilding Cluster for Porbandar

MoPSW approved a greenfield shipbuilding cluster at Kuchhadi, Porbandar and a Rs 1,570 crore ship-repair facility at Vadinar under the Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047.

- India's coastline exceeds **7,500 km**, spanning nine coastal states and Union Territories.
- **Gross tonnage (GT)** measures a ship's total internal volume and is the standard unit for shipyard capacity.
- The **Gujarat Maritime Board** is one of India's largest state maritime boards, managing dozens of non-major ports.
- The **Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047** succeeds the earlier **Maritime India Vision 2030** as the guiding roadmap for the sector.
- South Korea, China and Japan together account for the vast majority of global shipbuilding output, leaving India with **under 1 per cent**.

Fifty-Seven Years of Bank Nationalisation

July 19, 2026 marks 57 years since the 1969 nationalisation of 14 major commercial banks. A look at how social-control banking reshaped credit, inclusion and the present privatisation debate.

- **July 19, 1969:** 14 banks nationalised by ordinance under PM **Indira Gandhi**; each had deposits above **Rs 50 crore**.
- The move captured roughly **85 per cent** of national deposits.
- Legal backing came from the **Banking Companies (Acquisition and Transfer of Undertakings) Act, 1970**.
- **1980:** a second round nationalised **6 more** banks (above Rs 200 crore), total **20**.
- **SBI** was already state-associated, formed in **1955** from the **Imperial Bank of India**.
- **Priority-sector lending** is now generally **40 per cent** of Adjusted Net Bank Credit for domestic banks.
- Later reforms drew on the **Narasimham Committee I (1991)** and **II (1998)**.

India Gets Its First E-Commerce Council (ECCI)

IAMAI has launched the E-Commerce Council of India (ECCI), the country's first national e-commerce council, to unify a digital-commerce ecosystem worth about USD 120 billion.

- **IAMAI** is an industry association representing digital and online businesses; it is not a government or statutory body.
- **ONDC** was incorporated as a Section 8 (not-for-profit) company and is backed by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT).
- The **CCI** was established under the **Competition Act, 2002**.
- The **Consumer Protection (E-Commerce) Rules, 2020** were framed under the **Consumer Protection Act, 2019**.
- **"Ex-ante"** regulation sets rules in advance to prevent harm, unlike "ex-post" action that punishes conduct after it occurs.

Mission for Cotton Productivity and India's White Gold Story

India leads the world in cotton area but lags in per-hectare yield. The five-year Mission for Cotton Productivity aims to lift output, promote extra-long-staple cotton and strengthen the textile value chain.

- Cotton is called **White Gold** for its economic value to farmers and the textile industry.
- **Extra-long-staple (ELS)** cotton has longer fibres, needed for premium, fine-count yarn.
- **Cotton Corporation of India (CCI)** is a public-sector undertaking under the Ministry of Textiles.
- **Kasturi Cotton Bharat** gives Indian cotton a certified brand identity with quality traceability.
- The **pink bollworm** is a major cotton pest that has shown resistance to earlier Bt cotton varieties.
- Major cotton-growing states include **Gujarat, Maharashtra, Telangana, Rajasthan and Haryana**.

NATGASIND: NSE Launches India's First Domestic-Benchmark Natural Gas Futures

The NSE is launching NATGASIND on July 27, 2026, India's first natural gas futures referenced to the domestic IGX Dahej hub price, a landmark for India-centric energy price discovery.

- **MMBtu** (Million Metric British thermal units) is the standard unit for pricing natural gas.
- The Indian Gas Exchange (IGX) is India's first automated national-level gas trading platform, a subsidiary of the Indian Energy Exchange (IEX).
- **APM** gas comes from the nomination fields of ONGC and Oil India Ltd and is priced under a government formula linked to a crude-oil index.
- India imports around half of its natural gas requirement, chiefly as LNG from Qatar, the US and the UAE.
- The Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB) regulates midstream and downstream gas infrastructure such as pipelines and city-gas networks.

BHAVYA-Rasayan Scheme: India Bets Rs 3,030 Crore on Three Dedicated Chemical Parks

Union Cabinet approves BHAVYA-Rasayan, a Rs 3,030 crore scheme to develop three dedicated chemical parks through a competitive Challenge Route over five years.

- Full form: Bharat Audyogik Vikas Yojana Rasayan
- Cabinet approval: 24 July 2026, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi
- Announced in: Union Budget 2026-27 by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman
- Outlay: Rs 3,030 crore, of which Rs 3,000 crore is capital and Rs 30 crore administrative
- Tenure: FY 2026-27 to FY 2030-31, five years
- FY 2026-27 Budget Estimate: Rs 600 crore
- Share of GDP: about 7 per cent
- PCPIR policy year: 2007, building on the 2005 chemical hub concept
- Key Starting Material (KSM): the base chemical from which drug intermediates and Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients are synthesised
- Active Pharmaceutical Ingredient (API): the biologically active component of a finished medicine
- Zero Liquid Discharge (ZLD): a treatment design in which no liquid effluent leaves the plant boundary, all water being recovered and reused
- China+1: a corporate sourcing strategy of adding a non-China manufacturing base to reduce single-country supply-chain concentration

CBDT Aligns Crypto-Asset Tax Reporting with the OECD's CARF

The Central Board of Direct Taxes shifted crypto reporting duties from investors to exchanges, aligning India with the OECD Crypto-Asset Reporting Framework ahead of April 2027 cross-border data exchange.

- CBDT guidance note issued July 24, 2026; widely reported from July 26 onward.
- Legal basis: Section 509, Income-tax Act, 2025; Rules 241-244, Income-tax Rules, 2026.
- Reporting shifts from individual investors to Reporting Crypto-Asset Service Providers (RCASPs).
- Cross-border automatic exchange begins April 2027.
- No change to the substantive tax treatment of VDAs.
- CARF is an OECD framework developed at the G20's request, extending automatic exchange of information to crypto-assets.
- CRS has covered bank accounts and custodial financial assets since 2017.
- Introduced Union Budget 2022-23.
- 30 per cent flat tax on VDA transfer gains; no expense deduction other than cost of acquisition.
- 1 per cent TDS under Section 194S.
- No inter-VDA or cross-head loss set-off.
- Continued under the Income-tax Act, 2025, effective April 1, 2026.

India's Data Centre Capacity to Hit 12 GW by 2030: The Energy and Water Trade-Off

A Wood Mackenzie report projects India's data centre capacity growing six-fold by 2030 on AI demand, with power availability, not land or capital, as the binding constraint.

- Total capacity: 2.2 GW (2025) to 12 GW (2030).
- AI-dedicated capacity: 275 MW (2025) to 6,546 MW (2030).
- Electricity demand: 10 TWh (2025), rising toward about 7 per cent of total electricity demand by 2040.
- Binding constraint: power availability, not land or capital.
- Water stress flagged in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.
- Hardware/compute: chips and data centres.
- Data: training and inference datasets, governed by the DPDP Act, 2023.
- Models: foundation models, e.g. Sarvam AI under the IndiaAI Mission.
- Odisha Sovereign AI Park: HCLTech and Sarvam AI with the Government of Odisha, announced July 24, 2026, about Rs 14,257 crore, operational by 2028.

The MSME Development (Amendment) Bill, 2026: Fixing India's Delayed-Payment...

The Rajya Sabha took up a Bill to speed up payments to MSME suppliers, mandate CPSE settlement through TReDS, and curb the use of arbitration to delay dues.

- Introduced by Union Minister Jitan Ram Manjhi, Rajya Sabha, July 28, 2026.
- Amends the MSME Development Act, 2006.
- Mandates CPSE invoice settlement through TReDS.
- Directs courts to order payment of at least 50 per cent of an arbitral award once a set-aside application has been pending for more than six months.
- Section 15: payment within 45 days of acceptance.
- Section 16: delayed payment attracts compound interest at three times the RBI notified bank rate.
- Sections 17-18: reference to the MSEFC for conciliation, then arbitration under the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996.
- Platforms: RXIL, Invoicemart, M1xchange.
- Enables without-recourse early discounting of MSME receivables.
- About 6.3 crore MSMEs in India.
- Contribute about 30 per cent of GDP and about 45 per cent of exports.
- 2020 classification revision: composite investment-and-turnover criteria, manufacturing/services distinction abolished.

Who Should Own the Runway and the Airline: India's Cross-Ownership Debate

The government is weighing whether to ease the 10 per cent cap on airport operators owning an airline stake, reopening a competition-policy question set in the 2006 privatisation era.

- Existing cap: 10 per cent, from 2006 Delhi/Mumbai privatisation agreements.
- Reportedly sought by the Adani Group, which formally denies plans to launch an airline.
- IndiGo and Air India together hold about 90 per cent of domestic capacity.
- Change requires Law Ministry clearance and Union Cabinet approval.
- Competition Act, 2002: prohibits abuse of dominant position.
- AERA: regulates airport tariffs.
- IndiGo MD has termed cross-ownership a conflict of interest with no global precedent.

Plastic Money, Take Two: RBI's Billion-Note Polymer Banknote Trial

The government has approved a large-scale field trial of polymer Rs 10 and Rs 20 notes, a decade after India's first, smaller polymer note experiment.

- Denominations: Rs 10, Rs 20; volume 1 billion notes each.
- Legal basis: Section 25, RBI Act, 1934.
- Informed to Parliament: 27 July 2026; paper currency continues alongside.
- Denomination: Rs 10.
- Cities: Kochi, Mysuru, Jaipur, Shimla, Bhubaneswar.
- Did not lead to nationwide rollout.
- Advantages: durability, counterfeit-resistance, lower lifecycle cost.
- Costs: higher upfront printing cost, different currency-processing handling.

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Delhi Notifies Its Electric Vehicles Policy 2026

Delhi notified its Electric Vehicles Policy 2026 on July 1, with a Rs 15,000 crore outlay, road-tax exemptions and a phased shift to zero-emission mobility.

- **Delhi EV Policy 2026 (EV Policy 2.0):** Notified **July 1, 2026** (Cabinet approval June 29, 2026); outlay about **Rs 15,000 crore**.
- **Focus: Battery Electric Vehicles (BEVs)** as zero-emission vehicles; hybrids get no incentives; over **30,000 public charging points** targeted.
- **Cars:** Full **road-tax and registration-fee exemption** for e-cars priced up to **Rs 30 lakh**.
- **Phase-out:** From **January 1, 2027**, only electric autos and e-goods three-wheelers newly registered; from **April 1, 2028**, no new petrol/CNG two-wheelers.
- **CAQM:** Commission for Air Quality Management, a statutory body for the NCR and adjoining areas.
- **National links:** **NCAP** (National Clean Air Programme) and **EV30@30** (30 percent EV sales by 2030).

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Assam's Borjuli Wetland: India's First Biodiversity Heritage Site for Wild Rice

Around July 2 to 3, 2026, Assam's Borjuli wild-rice habitat became India's first Biodiversity Heritage Site dedicated to wild rice, conserving the wild progenitor of cultivated rice.

- **Event:** Around July 2 to 3, 2026, the Borjuli wild-rice habitat in Sonitpur district, Assam, was declared a Biodiversity Heritage Site (BHS).
- **First of its kind:** India's first BHS dedicated to wild rice; Assam's third BHS. Area about 0.41 hectares.
- **Species:** *Oryza rufipogon*, the wild progenitor of cultivated rice (*Oryza sativa*), resistant to pests and diseases and tolerant of flooding and saline conditions, a reservoir for...
- **Project:** "In-situ Conservation and Management of Wild Rice," running since 2022.
- **Funding and execution:** Funded by the National Rainfed Area Authority (NRAA) under the Ministry of Agriculture; executed by ICAR-NBPGR (National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources) with the...
- **Legal basis:** A Biodiversity Heritage Site is declared by State Governments under Section 37 of the Biological Diversity Act, 2002.
- **Three-tier structure:** National Biodiversity Authority (NBA), State Biodiversity Boards (SBBs) and Biodiversity Management Committees (BMCs).
- **Total:** India has around 55 Biodiversity Heritage Sites.

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Tiger Conservation Roadmap Flags 25 Priority Reserves

Marking 18 years of the Sariska translocation, the NTCA released a Tiger Conservation Roadmap flagging 25 priority reserves and a shift from tiger numbers to reserve health.

- **Trigger:** In early July 2026, on the 18th anniversary of the Sariska translocation (2008), the MoEFCC and NTCA released a Tiger Conservation Roadmap.
- **Philosophy shift:** Goal moves from raising tiger numbers to reviving depleted reserves; reintroduction is now a "last resort".
- **Tiger population:** About 3,682, roughly 75 per cent of the global wild tiger population.
- **Priority reserves:** 25 flagged (out of 58) where habitat, prey base or population is under stress; index built with the Wildlife Institute of India (WII).
- **Reintroduction preconditions:** Suitable habitat, adequate prey, strong security, community support and favourable socio-economics.
- **Project Tiger:** Launched 1973; NTCA is a statutory body under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972; Chairman is MoEFCC minister Bhupender Yadav.
- **Tiger reserves:** 58 in total; Madhav National Park notified as the 58th in March 2025.
- **Sariska (2008):** World's first scientific big-cat translocation into a landscape of local extinction; monitored via M-STrIPES.

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Canscora agni: A New Fire-Loving Plant of India's Savannas

Botanists have described *Canscora agni*, a fire-loving herb from a savanna hill near Pune, spotlighting the value of India's misclassified grasslands.

- **Canscora agni:** newly described plant species; a small herb with white petals and winged stems.
- **Family:** Gentianaceae (the gentian family); genus *Canscora*; closest relative *Canscora alata*.
- **Location:** Sus Hill, Pune district, Maharashtra; found in fire-prone savanna.
- **Name:** "Agni" means fire in Sanskrit and Marathi, reflecting its fire-adapted habitat.
- **Status:** proposed Critically Endangered, known from a single tiny location.
- **Open Natural Ecosystems (ONEs):** India's savannas and grasslands, often misclassified as "wasteland" or "degraded forest" and wrongly targeted for afforestation.
- **Fire ecology:** periodic natural fire clears woody growth and helps native grasses and dwarf herbs thrive.

The Asiatic Lion and the Case for a Second Home

The 16th Asiatic Lion Census (2025) counted about 891 lions in Gujarat, but the entire species in one landscape revives the case for a second home at Kuno in Madhya Pradesh.

- **16th Asiatic Lion Census (2025):** about 891 lions in the Saurashtra (Gir) landscape, up 32.2% from 674 in 2020; surveyed May 10 to 13, 2025, across about 35,000 sq km, 58 talukas and 11...
- **Distribution:** about 394 lions inside the Gir National Park and Sanctuary; about 507 (44.22%) outside protected areas.
- **Barda Wildlife Sanctuary:** near Porbandar, emerged as a "second home" with about 17 lions, the first there since 1879.
- **Kuno directive:** in 2013 the Supreme Court directed translocation of some lions to Kuno National Park, Madhya Pradesh, to create a separate second population; the directive remains largely...
- **Single-population risk:** concentrating the species in one landscape leaves it exposed to a single catastrophe such as an epidemic; a canine distemper outbreak killed many Gir lions in 2018.
- **Status:** on the IUCN Red List the lion species (*Panthera leo*) is "Vulnerable" while the Asiatic subpopulation (the subspecies *Panthera leo persica*) has been listed as "Endangered" on the...

El Nino 2026 Could Strain India's Power Grid

In early July 2026, a CREA analysis warned that a developing El Nino could open a power gap of nearly 18 TWh in India, likely filled by coal and adding about 17 million tonnes of CO₂.

- **The report:** CREA (Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air) analysis, early July 2026, on the impact of a developing El Nino (July 2026 to June 2027) on India's power grid.
- **Projected gap:** About 18 TWh total; cooling demand up about 10 TWh, hydropower down about 2.9 TWh, wind down about 4.9 TWh.
- **Emissions impact:** The gap, if filled by coal, could add about 17 million tonnes of CO₂; a severe scenario needs up to 24 TWh of extra coal generation.
- **Record demand:** India's peak power demand recently touched an all-time high of about 270 GW.
- **El Nino:** Abnormal warming of the central and eastern Pacific Ocean; the warm phase of the El Nino Southern Oscillation (ENSO), which also includes La Nina (cool phase) and a neutral phase.
- **India-monsoon link:** El Nino years are generally associated with a weaker south-west monsoon.
- **India's targets:** 500 GW of non-fossil-fuel capacity by 2030 and net-zero by 2070; battery and pumped-hydro storage are key to smoothing renewable intermittency.

NTCA 29th Meeting: STRIDES 2026 and the Roadmap to Rescue

The National Tiger Conservation Authority met for its 29th session at Coimbatore on July 9, 2026, releasing STRIDES 2026 and a Roadmap to Rescue for wild-animal rehabilitation.

- **NTCA:** Statutory authority under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, constituted 2006; chaired by the Union Environment Minister.
- **Project Tiger:** Centrally sponsored conservation scheme launched in 1973.
- **STRIDES 2026:** Status of Tiger Reserves: Infrastructure, Development, Ecology and Social parameters.
- **Roadmap to Rescue:** Strategy for temporary and transit facilities for rescue, rehabilitation and release of wild animals in tiger landscapes.
- **CASFOS Coimbatore:** The Central Academy for State Forest Service, functioning under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

Centre of Excellence on Human-Wildlife Conflict Inaugurated

Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav inaugurated a Centre of Excellence on Human-Wildlife Conflict at WII-SACON, Coimbatore, on July 10, 2026.

- **Centre of Excellence on HWC:** National hub for research, policy support and capacity-building, hosted at WII-SACON, Coimbatore, announced by PM Modi at the 7th NBWL meeting.
- **National HWC Portal:** Centralises conflict data across states for evidence-based mitigation.
- **NBWL:** Apex advisory body on wildlife, statutory under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, chaired by the Prime Minister.
- **SACON:** Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History, Coimbatore.
- **WII:** Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun.
- **Section 11, WPA 1972:** Governs hunting and handling of dangerous wild animals.

National CAMPA Approves Four Species Projects and Aastha Van Yojana

At its 7th Governing Body meeting on July 10, 2026, National CAMPA approved four species recovery projects and the Rs 3,000 crore Aastha Van Sanrakshan Yojana.

- **National CAMPA:** Statutory authority under the Compensatory Afforestation Fund (CAF) Act, 2016, managing compensatory-afforestation funds.
- **7th Governing Body meeting:** Held July 10, 2026, at CASFOS, Coimbatore, chaired by Bhupender Yadav.
- **Four projects:** River Dolphins Action Plan, Project Snow Leopard Phase-II, Indian Rhinoceros Action Plan, Wild Water Buffalo programme.
- **Aastha Van Sanrakshan Yojana:** About Rs 3,000 crore over 5 years to conserve nearly 15,000 sacred groves.
- **Ganges river dolphin:** National Aquatic Animal, IUCN Endangered.
- **Snow leopard (*Panthera uncia*):** IUCN Vulnerable.

SC-NBWL Clears RhoDIS Rhino DNA Strategy and Pygmy Hog Recovery

The 91st Standing Committee of the National Board for Wildlife, held at Coimbatore on July 9, 2026, approved a RhoDIS-based rhino strategy and added the pygmy hog to the Species Recovery Programme.

- **91st SC-NBWL:** July 9, 2026, CASFOS Coimbatore, chaired by Bhupender Yadav; reviewed 118 infrastructure, defence and conservation proposals.
- **NBWL:** Section 5A, Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972; full Board chaired by the Prime Minister, Standing Committee by the Union Environment Minister.
- **RhoDIS:** Rhino DNA Index System, a forensic database of individual rhino genetic fingerprints; links seized horn to a poached animal and maps population genetics; anchored with WII, Dehradun.
- **Greater One-Horned Rhino:** *Rhinoceros unicornis*, IUCN Vulnerable, CITES Appendix I, WPA Schedule I.
- **Great Indian Bustard:** *Ardeotis nigriceps*, IUCN Critically Endangered; power-line collision is the main threat.
- **Pygmy hog:** *Porcula salvania*, IUCN Endangered, world's smallest wild pig, confined to Manas grasslands; added to the Species Recovery Programme (a component of the Integrated Development of...

Indian Grey Hornbill Returns to Gir After Four Years

A peer-reviewed study confirms that the Indian Grey Hornbill, reintroduced into Gujarat's Gir landscape from 2021, has survived, held territory and bred over four years.

- **Species:** Indian Grey Hornbill, *Ocyrceros birostris*; **Least Concern** on the IUCN Red List.
- **Event:** July 2026 study in the journal **Birds** confirmed a successful reintroduction into the **Gir landscape, Gujarat**.
- **Timeline:** locally extinct 1950s to 1960s; reintroduced from **2021**; one pair bred in year one, three more pairs nested in year two.
- **Ecological role:** keystone **seed dispersers** and **cavity-nesters**; the **female seals herself into a tree cavity** during nesting.
- **Gir:** the **only wild habitat of the Asiatic lion**.
- **Concept:** reintroduction restores a locally extinct species to its former range; success is measured by survival, territory and breeding.

PARIVARTAN Scheme Replacing NCR Polluting Trucks and Buses

MoHUA approved PARIVARTAN operational guidelines on July 16, 2026 to replace old commercial trucks and buses in the NCR with BS-VI or electric vehicles under a Rs 9,585 crore outlay.

- **PARIVARTAN** targets about **2.07 lakh beneficiaries**: roughly **1.91 lakh truck owners** and **16,329 bus owners**.
- **Eleven manufacturers** covering **over 95 per cent** of the commercial-vehicle market have committed to a **minimum 8 per cent discount**.
- The **CAQM** was established under the Commission for Air Quality Management in the National Capital Region and Adjoining Areas Act, **2021**.
- **GRAP** classifies action into stages tied to the Air Quality Index (AQI), with the most severe stage triggered at "Severe Plus" readings.
- BS-VI emission norms were rolled out nationwide from **April 1, 2020**.

Draft CAFE-III Norms: Reshaping How India Regulates Car Fuel Economy

The Bureau of Energy Efficiency released draft CAFE-III norms on July 16, 2026, introducing Carbon Neutrality Factors and super-credits to decarbonise India's passenger-vehicle fleet.

- **CAFE:** Corporate Average Fuel Economy, regulates **fleet-average CO2 in g/km**, not individual cars.
- **Issuing body:** Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE), under the Ministry of Power; legal basis is the **Energy Conservation Act**.
- **CAFE-III window:** FY2027-28 to FY2031-32; replaces CAFE-II ending March 31, 2027.
- **M1 vehicle:** passenger vehicle with up to **8 seats in addition to the driver**.
- **New tools:** Carbon Neutrality Factors (CNFs) for ethanol/biofuels/CBG; super-credits (volume derogation) for BEV, REEV, PHEV, SHEV, FFV.
- **Public comments:** open till **August 6, 2026**.
- **Linkages:** E20 ethanol-blending programme and the net-zero-by-2070 pathway.

DeepDATA: A Citizen-Science App to Map India's Deep-Sea Life

ICAR-CMFRI, Kochi has launched DeepDATA, a citizen-science app to document deep-sea fishes and build a national digital repository under the Deep Ocean Mission, advancing India's marine-biodiversity and blue-economy goals.

- **CMFRI** was established in **1947** and is India's premier marine fisheries research institute.
- The **blue economy** refers to sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth, livelihoods and ocean health.
- **Samudrayaan** aims to send humans to a depth of about **6,000 metres** aboard **Matsya-6000**.
- **Citizen science** is scientific research conducted with participation from the general public.
- India's **Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)** extends up to **200 nautical miles** from the coastline.

India-Norway River Kinetic Energy: A Damless Power Pilot in Arunachal

Arunachal Pradesh signed an MoU with Norway's Tidal Sail AS for India's first 500 kW River Kinetic Energy Demonstration Project, generating power from river current without dams or reservoirs.

- **Hydrokinetic energy** captures energy from flowing water without impoundment; tidal, wave and river-current systems all fall under this family.
- Conventional hydropower relies on **potential energy** stored by height (head); kinetic systems rely on **velocity** of flow.
- Arunachal Pradesh has among the highest untapped hydropower potential in India, but projects face ecological and seismic scrutiny.
- **India and Norway** cooperate on oceans and clean energy, including through the earlier India-Norway Integrated Ocean Initiative.
- Decentralised renewable energy directly supports **Sustainable Development Goal 7 (affordable and clean energy)**.

India's Paddy Fields Emerge as Global Methane Hotspots

A global assessment in Nature Food finds India's flooded paddy fields among the world's largest methane emission hotspots, spotlighting climate-smart rice cultivation.

- Methane is generated in paddy fields by **methanogenic bacteria** under **anaerobic (oxygen-starved)** flooded conditions.
- Agriculture and paddy are major sources of India's methane, alongside **enteric fermentation in livestock** and waste.
- The **Global Methane Pledge** was launched at the **COP26** climate summit in Glasgow (2021).
- Because methane is short-lived, cutting it delivers **rapid** climate benefit compared with long-lived CO2.
- India also runs schemes such as **Per Drop More Crop** under PMKSY that support water-efficient farming, complementing methane-reduction goals.

Rewilding the Godawan: Great Indian Bustard Chicks Enter Jaisalmer's Soft-Release...

Three captive-bred Great Indian Bustard chicks entered a Rs 9.25 crore rewilding tunnel at Ramdevra, Jaisalmer, the first such release in India.

- Site: Godawan Conservation Centre, Ramdevra, Jaisalmer, Rajasthan
- Cost: Rs 9.25 crore
- Dimensions: about 160 m long, 64 m wide, 14 m high
- First cohort: three chicks, released 26 July 2026
- Stay: about four months under continuous CCTV, minimised human contact
- Captive population: 82 birds as of April 2026
- IUCN Red List: Critically Endangered
- Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972: Schedule I
- CITES: Appendix I; CMS: Appendix I
- Wild population: around 150 birds, over ninety per cent in the Thar Desert
- Desert National Park: notified 1980, Jaisalmer and Barmer, about 3,162 sq km
- Project Great Indian Bustard, Rajasthan, launched 5 June 2013

International Tiger Day 2026: Project Tiger at 50-Plus and the "Beyond Reserve"...

India marked International Tiger Day with 58 Tiger Reserves and rising numbers, but dispersing tigers outside core reserves are testing the next phase of conservation policy.

- Observed July 29, since the 2010 St Petersburg Tiger Summit.
- Project Tiger launched 1 April 1973, Corbett National Park, Uttarakhand.
- Population: about 40,000 (c. 1900) fell to 1,827 (1972), a roughly 95 per cent decline.
- 58 Tiger Reserves, 18 states, about 84,500 sq km (2.56 per cent of India's area).
- NTCA constituted under the Wildlife (Protection) Amendment Act, 2006 (Chapter IV-B of the 1972 Act).
- All India Tiger Estimation: quadrennial, camera-trap and DNA-based.
- Tiger: Schedule I species under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
- "Beyond reserve" management: dispersing tigers from at-capacity reserves entering unprotected landscapes.
- Corridors link reserves for genetic exchange; loss of corridor connectivity risks genetic isolation.
- Human-tiger conflict compensation is State-administered with central assistance.

The Seventh Draft: Western Ghats ESA Notification and a Decade of Deadlock

The Centre issued its seventh draft Eco-Sensitive Area notification for the Western Ghats, covering 56,825.7 sq km across six states, reviving a process stalled since the Gadgil and Kasturirangan reports.

- Proposed area: 56,825.7 sq km, across Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu.
- Goa's ESA unchanged at 1,461 sq km, 108 villages.
- Gazette published 27 July 2026; 60-day objection window.
- Bans new mining/quarrying/sand mining and new/expanded thermal power plants; existing mining phases out within 5 years or on lease expiry.
- Gadgil Committee (2011): entire Western Ghats, about 1,29,037 sq km.
- Kasturirangan Committee (2013): about 37 per cent of the Western Ghats, roughly 60,000 sq km.
- Six earlier drafts (2014-2024) failed to reach finalisation.
- Legal basis: Section 3, Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.

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India Approves Its First Private Point-in-Space Helicopter Approach

On July 1, 2026, the DGCA approved India's first private Point-in-Space instrument approach for helicopters, at Undavalli Heliport in Andhra Pradesh.

- **Event:** On July 1, 2026, DGCA approved India's first private Point-in-Space (PinS) Instrument Approach Procedure for helicopters.
- **Location:** Undavalli Heliport, Andhra Pradesh.
- **Developed by:** Airports Authority of India (AAI); approved by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA).
- **How it works:** Uses satellite-based navigation (GNSS), aided by GAGAN, to enable precise instrument approaches to heliports without ground-based landing aids.
- **GAGAN:** GPS Aided GEO Augmented Navigation, India's satellite-based augmentation system that improves GPS accuracy and reliability.
- **Standards:** Designed per DGCA regulations and ICAO Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs).
- **Benefit:** All-weather safety, disaster response, remote-area and pilgrimage access; strengthens the UDAN regional connectivity ecosystem.
- **Minister:** Ram Mohan Naidu, Union Minister for Civil Aviation.

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India Demonstrates Its First Indigenous Tactical Aerostat

On July 1, 2026, IIT Delhi with DRDO funding and a domestic startup demonstrated India's first indigenous low-cost tactical aerostat for high-altitude surveillance up to about 20 km.

- **What:** India's first indigenous low-cost **tactical aerostat**, a helium-filled lighter-than-air platform.
- **Who:** IIT Delhi, with **DRDO** funding and a domestic startup partner; demonstrated **July 1, 2026**.
- **Altitude:** operates up to about **20 km**.
- **Payloads:** high-resolution cameras, infrared detectors, radar and communication relays.
- **Aerostat vs balloon:** an aerostat is **tethered** to the ground; a free balloon is not.
- **Aerostat vs drone:** aerostat gives endurance, altitude and low-cost persistent coverage; the drone gives flexibility and mobility.
- **Uses:** border surveillance, disaster communications, and logistics in remote terrain.
- **Policy fit:** supports **Atmanirbhar Bharat**, defence indigenisation and import substitution.

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CG Semi OSAT: India's Semiconductor Assembly Push at Sanand

On July 4, 2026, PM Modi inaugurated the Rs 7,600 crore CG Semi OSAT chip assembly and test facility at Sanand, Gujarat, under the India Semiconductor Mission.

- **CG Semi OSAT plant:** Inaugurated by PM Modi on July 4, 2026 at Sanand, Gujarat; Rs 7,600 crore (about USD 870 million).
- **Joint venture:** CG Power and Industrial Solutions (India), Renesas Electronics (Japan) and Stars Microelectronics (Thailand).
- **OSAT:** Outsourced Semiconductor Assembly and Test, the back-end (assembly, testing, packaging) of the chip value chain, distinct from front-end fabrication (a "fab").
- **ATMP:** Assembly, Testing, Marking and Packaging, the Indian scheme's term for the same back-end work.
- **Capacity:** Starts around 200 million units per year, scalable toward billions; second unit (G2) expected end-2026.
- **End markets:** Automotive, 5G, IoT and power sectors; chips exported to Japan, the US and Europe.
- **Policy frame:** Built under the India Semiconductor Mission (ISM); complemented by Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes.
- **Sanand cluster:** Also hosts Micron and Kaynes Technology semiconductor units.
- **Why OSAT first:** Lower capital and technology barrier than a fab; builds skills and supply base; captures the "China plus one" diversification opportunity.

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SpudCell: The First Fully Synthetic Cell From Non-Living Chemicals

In early July 2026, University of Minnesota researchers reported SpudCell, the first cell built bottom-up from non-living chemicals that can grow, replicate its DNA and divide.

- **SpudCell:** First cell built bottom-up (de novo) from purified, non-living chemical components; reported early July 2026 (announced around July 1).
- **Who:** Researchers Kate Adamala and Aaron Engelhart and teams at the University of Minnesota.
- **What it can do:** Run a complete cell cycle, grow, replicate its DNA and divide.
- **Structure:** A liposome (lipid sphere) holding purified enzymes, ribosomes and a genome of about 90,000 base pairs across several DNA plasmids.
- **Not alive:** Cannot feed itself, cannot survive without external inputs, cannot replicate over many generations, and cannot evolve.
- **Two approaches:** Top-down (strip a living cell's genome, e.g. JCVI-syn3.0) versus bottom-up / de novo (build from non-living parts, e.g. SpudCell).
- **Status:** Released as a preprint; not yet peer-reviewed.
- **Applications:** Drug delivery, biomanufacturing and understanding the origins of life.
- **Concerns:** Bioethics, dual-use risk and the question of what counts as "life".

CSIR-IITC Develops India's First Indigenous HFO-1234yf Refrigerant Process

CSIR-IITC, Hyderabad, has developed India's first indigenous process to make HFO-1234yf, a low-GWP fourth-generation refrigerant, in July 2026.

- **HFO-1234yf:** Fourth-generation refrigerant, near-zero ODP, GWP about 4; replaces R-134a (GWP about 1,430).
- **CSIR-IITC:** Indian Institute of Chemical Technology, Hyderabad, under CSIR, Ministry of Science and Technology.
- **Montreal Protocol (1987):** Treaty protecting the ozone layer.
- **Kigali Amendment (2016):** Amendment to the Montreal Protocol targeting the phase-down of HFCs.
- **India and Kigali:** Ratified in 2021; HFC phase-down begins in 2032.
- **Significance:** Atmanirbhar Bharat in green chemistry, import substitution and climate-treaty compliance.

ISRO Clears CE20 Cryogenic Engine for Gaganyaan

ISRO completed the flight-acceptance hot test of an indigenous CE20 cryogenic engine on July 6, 2026, clearing it for an upcoming Gaganyaan mission.

- **CE20:** indigenous cryogenic upper-stage engine, developed by LPSC.
- **Propellants:** liquid oxygen (LOX) and liquid hydrogen (LH2).
- **Thrust:** about 19 to 22 tonnes; powers the C25 stage of LVM3.
- **Test site:** ISRO Propulsion Complex (IPRC), Mahendragiri, Tamil Nadu.
- **LVM3:** formerly GSLV Mk III, India's heavy-lift launcher.
- **Gaganyaan:** India's first crewed orbital mission; needs a human-rated launcher.
- **Context:** India built cryogenic capability indigenously after the 1990s technology-denial regime.

India's First Hydrogen-Powered Passenger Train Cleared

The Railway Board has approved India's first regular hydrogen fuel-cell passenger service on the 89-km Jind-Sonipat section in Haryana.

- **Route:** Jind-Sonipat, 89 km, Northern Railway, Delhi Division, Haryana.
- **Rake:** built by Integral Coach Factory (ICF), Chennai; 10 coaches; 1,200 kW hydrogen fuel-cell propulsion.
- **Operations:** maximum service speed 75 kmph; two round trips a day; flag-off around July 17, 2026.
- **Emissions:** only water vapour and heat; no tailpipe CO₂, NO_x or particulates.
- **Programme:** "Hydrogen for Heritage", Budget 2023-24; 35 trains planned on heritage and hill routes.
- **National Green Hydrogen Mission:** approved January 2023; outlay about Rs 19,744 crore; target 5 MMT a year by 2030; SIGHT programme is the key instrument.
- **Railways goal:** net-zero carbon emitter.
- **Global first:** Germany's Coradia iLint (Alstom), 2018.

China's Helium Export Ban and the Geopolitics of a Critical Gas

In July 2026 China imposed a temporary, immediate ban on helium exports amid disrupted Strait of Hormuz shipping, exposing India's near-total import dependence on a gas critical for chips, MRI machines and rockets.

- **Event (around 10 July 2026):** China imposed a temporary, immediate ban on helium exports.
- **Trigger:** Disrupted **Strait of Hormuz** shipping during the West Asia conflict and a **Qatar** facility closure.
- **China's role:** Imports over **85 per cent** of its helium (over half from Qatar); re-exports Russian helium to Europe; an intermediary node, not a producer.
- **Helium basics:** Second lightest element; inert noble gas; lowest boiling point (about minus 269 degrees Celsius); extracted from natural gas; escapes to space once released, effectively...
- **Top suppliers:** Qatar and the United States.
- **India:** No commercial production; imports almost all helium (US and Qatar); exploration discussed for the **Rajmahal basin**.
- **Critical uses:** Chip lithography and wafer cooling, MRI superconducting magnets, rocket-tank purging.

Parrot Bornavirus 4 Detected in India for the First Time

Indian scientists have reported the first detection and genetic characterisation of Parrot Bornavirus 4, the cause of the fatal Proventricular Dilatation Disease, raising biosecurity and conservation concerns.

- **Event (July 2026):** First detection and genetic characterisation of **PaBV-4** in India, across **83 captive psittacine birds**.
- **Positivity:** About **87.5 per cent** of dead birds and about **54.5 per cent** of PDD-suspected birds.
- **Virus:** **Single-stranded RNA** virus, genus **Orthobornavirus**; infects **psittacines**.
- **Disease:** **Proventricular Dilatation Disease (PDD)**, damaging the **nervous and digestive systems** and dilating the **proventriculus**.
- **Regulation:** **CITES** internationally; **Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972**, and **Living Animal Species (Reporting and Registration) Rules** in India.
- **Concern:** Biosecurity and conservation risk linked to the captive-bird and exotic-pet trade.

DRDO Field-Tests Quantum Key Distribution for Unbreakable Military Links

DRDO completed field trials of an indigenous fibre-based Quantum Key Distribution system on July 15, 2026, developed with Taqbit Labs for ultra-secure military communication.

- **QKD** secures communication using quantum physics (no-cloning theorem and measurement-disturbance), not mathematical hardness.
- **Developed by:** DRDO (Ministry of Defence) with **Taqbit Labs, Bengaluru**; field trials completed **July 15, 2026**.
- **Medium:** photons and their polarisation states transmitted over **optical fibre**.
- **Threat countered:** harvest-now, decrypt-later; QKD is future-proof against quantum-computer attacks.
- **Key distinction:** QKD is a cryptography technology, **not quantum computing**.
- **National Quantum Mission:** 2023, **Rs 6,003 crore**, under the **Department of Science and Technology (DST)**.

Semicon 2.0: India Semiconductor Mission Enters Its Second Phase

The Union Cabinet approved Semicon 2.0 (ISM 2.0) with a Rs 1,27,500 crore outlay to build India into a full chip value-chain hub. Pillars, terms and UPSC angles explained.

- **Parent programme:** India Semiconductor Mission (ISM), under **MeitY**.
- **Semicon 2.0 outlay: Rs 1,27,500 crore**, approved by the Union Cabinet on **July 15, 2026**.
- **Six pillars:** chip design; machinery and materials; new fabs; ATMP/OSAT; R&D and advanced nodes; talent development.
- **Anchor project (ISM 1.0):** Micron ATMP unit at **Sanand, Gujarat**.
- **First advanced fabs:** targeted for commissioning around **2028**.
- **Ecosystem:** ~105 chip-design startups; ~68,000 students trained across 315 universities.
- **Strategic frame:** semiconductor sovereignty, China+1 / friend-shoring, Atmanirbhar Bharat.

Lestes Paloti: A New Damselfly from the Western Ghats

Lestes paloti, a new spreadwing damselfly described from Kerala, is the first new Lestes species from the Western Ghats in nearly a century and a marker of India's freshwater biodiversity.

- **Lestes paloti** is the first new **Lestes** from the Western Ghats since **Lestes malabaricus (1929)** and the first from India since **Lestes garoensis (1987)**.
- Recorded in **six Kerala districts:** Kannur, Kozhikode, Wayanad, Malappuram, Palakkad and Ernakulam.
- Lives in **scrub and laterite hillocks away from open water**, unusual for a damselfly.
- Shows **seasonal colour change:** brown in the dry season, bluish in the monsoon.
- **India's four biodiversity hotspots:** the Himalaya, the Western Ghats, the Indo-Burma region and Sundaland (Nicobar).
- Order **Odonata** = dragonflies + damselflies; larvae are aquatic, making them sensitive indicators of freshwater health.

White Rabbit Network India Builds One Nation One Time

India inaugurated its first White Rabbit based IST dissemination demonstration network at Bengaluru, delivering sub-nanosecond time synchronisation independent of foreign GPS.

- **IST is UTC+5:30**, based on the longitude of **82.5 degrees East** passing near Mirzapur, Uttar Pradesh.
- The **National Physical Laboratory (NPL)** is a constituent laboratory of the **Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR)**.
- **White Rabbit** technology originated at **CERN**, the European Organization for Nuclear Research.
- **Legal Metrology** in India is governed by the **Legal Metrology Act, 2009**.
- **RRLs (Regional Reference Standards Laboratories)** function under the Legal Metrology Division to maintain and disseminate national measurement standards.

e200X: India's First Full-Scale eVTOL Air-Taxi Prototype

The ePlane Company, incubated at IIT Madras, unveiled PT-01, the full-scale prototype of its e200X electric vertical take-off and landing air taxi, marking India's move into urban air mobility.

- **DGCA** (Directorate General of Civil Aviation) is India's civil aviation regulator, under the Ministry of Civil Aviation.
- A **Design Organisation Approval (DoA)** certifies an entity's competence to design aircraft; it precedes type certification.
- The ePlane Company was co-founded by faculty and researchers linked to **IIT Madras**, a leading start-up incubation hub.
- Vertical take-off needs no runway, so eVTOLs use compact landing pads called **vertiports**.
- Electric propulsion eliminates direct carbon emissions in flight, aligning with India's clean-transport goals.

Skyroot Vikram-1 India's First Private Orbital Rocket Reaches Space

Skyroot Aerospace launched Vikram-1, India's first privately built orbital-class rocket, from Sriharikota on July 18, 2026, making India the third nation to reach orbit with a private launch vehicle.

- **Skyroot Aerospace** was founded in **2018** by former ISRO scientists and was the first Indian private firm to sign an MoU with ISRO.
- The **Vikram series** of rockets is named after **Dr Vikram Sarabhai**, the father of the Indian space programme.
- **IN-SPACE** is headquartered in **Ahmedabad, Gujarat**.
- Only three nations, the **United States, China** and now **India**, have reached orbit with privately developed launch vehicles.
- Orbital velocity for a low-earth orbit is roughly **7.8 km/second**; a sub-orbital flight never reaches this speed.
- India's flagship human spaceflight programme is **Gaganyaan**; the commercial small-satellite market is a key target for private launchers.

ICMR Licenses Indigenous Anti-HPV and Vaccine Technologies

The ICMR licensed three home-grown biomedical technologies, including the anti-HPV therapeutic SHetA2 and next-generation enteric vaccines, advancing Atmanirbhar Bharat in health.

- **ICMR:** Founded in 1911 (as the Indian Research Fund Association, renamed 1949); apex body for biomedical research under the Health Ministry, headquartered in New Delhi.
- **HPV vaccine:** India's first indigenous HPV vaccine, **CERVAVAC** (Serum Institute of India), was launched in 2022-23; SHetA2 is a therapeutic, not a vaccine.
- **Recombinant vaccine:** Made by inserting a gene coding for an antigen into a host cell, avoiding use of the live pathogen.
- **Patent Mitra:** ICMR initiative to guide innovators on intellectual property protection and commercialisation.
- **Enteric diseases:** Illnesses of the intestinal tract, often water-borne; typhoid, paratyphoid and shigellosis are key examples.

DRDO's First Indigenous 350 kg-Thrust Expendable Turbojet Engine

DRDO through GTRE Bengaluru, with Azad Engineering, developed India's first indigenous 350 kg-thrust-class expendable turbojet engine to power cruise missiles, loitering munitions and UAVs.

- **DRDO:** Established in **1958**; India's premier defence R&D agency under the **Ministry of Defence**.
- **GTRE (Gas Turbine Research Establishment):** DRDO lab in **Bengaluru** focused on aero gas turbine engines; earlier ran the **Kaveri** programme.
- **Thrust class: 350 kgf** roughly indicates the engine's forward pushing force; suited to subsonic cruise missiles and long-endurance drones.
- **Loitering munition:** A "kamikaze" drone that circles over a target area before striking; needs a cheap, reliable expendable engine.
- **Atmanirbhar Bharat in defence:** Backed by tools like the **positive indigenisation lists** and **Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP) 2020** promoting **Make in India** procurement.
- **Azad Engineering:** Hyderabad-based precision manufacturer supplying critical rotating components for the programme.

Data Sovereignty Sharpens: I4C Targets Bitchat, DoT Bars Telecom Data From...

Two July 2026 moves, the I4C order to GitHub to remove the Bluetooth app Bitchat and the DoT rule barring telecom data storage abroad, mark a hardening of India's data-sovereignty posture.

- **Data localisation** requires data to be stored on servers physically located within a country; **data sovereignty** subjects data to the laws of the country where it is generated.
- A **Bluetooth mesh network** relays messages phone-to-phone, so it keeps working during internet shutdowns or in remote areas.
- **I4C** was established in 2018 under the MHA; the **1930** number is the citizen helpline for reporting financial cyber fraud.
- **Lawful interception** is the legally sanctioned monitoring of communications by authorised agencies under due process.
- The **Telecommunications Act, 2023** replaced colonial-era telegraph and wireless laws and moves India from a licence regime toward an authorisation regime.

Odisha Sovereign AI Park: HCLTech and Sarvam AI Bet Rs 14,257 Crore on India's AI...

HCLTech signed an MoU with the Government of Odisha and Sarvam AI to build a Rs 14,257 crore AI data centre at the Odisha Sovereign AI Park, anchoring India's push for sovereign compute.

- A **foundation model** is a large AI model trained on broad data that can be adapted to many downstream tasks; Sarvam AI is building one for Indian languages under the IndiaAI Mission.
- **GPUs** (graphics processing units) are the specialised chips that make large-scale AI training feasible.
- **AIKosh** is the IndiaAI Mission's platform for curated datasets and AI resources.
- India is among the fastest-growing **data-centre markets** in the world, driven by cheap data, rising cloud use and AI demand.
- The **DPDP Act, 2023** is India's first comprehensive personal data protection law and empowers the Centre to restrict data flows to certain countries.

Starship Flight 13: SpaceX Deploys 20 Starlink V3 Satellites, Booster Splashdown...

SpaceX launched Starship Flight 13 from Starbase, Texas on July 24, 2026, deploying all 20 Starlink V3 satellites, though the Super Heavy booster splashed down harder than planned after an incomplete landing burn.

- Date: July 24, 2026, 5:51 p.m. Central Time, from Starbase, Texas
- Second flight of the Starship Version 3 configuration
- Super Heavy Booster 20 with 33 Raptor 3 engines; upper stage with six Raptor engines
- Payload: 20 Starlink V3 satellites, all deployed and contacted
- Earlier scrubs: July 16, 2026 at T-0 after four engines failed to ignite; July 23, 2026 due to weather
- Full reusability: recovery and reflight of both stages, as against Falcon 9's partial reusability
- IN-SPACe, Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre, created 2020, single-window authorisation body
- NewSpace India Limited, incorporated 2019, commercial arm of the Department of Space
- Indian Space Policy, 2023, defining roles of ISRO, IN-SPACe and NSIL
- Space-sector FDI norms liberalised in 2024
- Antrix Corporation, incorporated in 1992, was the earlier commercial arm of the Department of Space; NSIL now leads commercial activity.
- ISRO was established in 1969 and functions under the Department of Space.

India's Spaceteck Sector Crosses \$871 Million as Skyroot Becomes the First Unicorn

Six years after India opened its space sector to private players, cumulative startup funding has crossed \$871 million, with Skyroot Aerospace becoming the sector's first unicorn.

- Cumulative funding: about \$871 million, 241 rounds, 285 companies.
- Skyroot Aerospace: first spaceteck unicorn, about \$1.1 billion valuation (May 2026 round).
- Notable funded firms: Pixxel (about \$96M cumulative), Digantara (\$50M), EtherealX (\$20.5M), Bellatrix Aerospace (\$20M), AgniKul Cosmos (\$17M).
- Space sector opened to private participation: 2020.
- ISRO: research and development, government missions.
- NSIL: ISRO's commercial arm.
- IN-SPACe: regulatory authorisation for private space activity.

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DRDO's UFOSS: An Underwater Shield for the Indian Ocean

DRDO's Naval Physical and Oceanographic Laboratory is building UFOSS, a seabed fibre-optic sensor grid to detect submarines and strengthen India's anti-submarine warfare in the Indian Ocean.

- **UFOSS (Underwater Fibre Optic Sensing System):** A DRDO seabed acoustic surveillance network to detect and track submarines in the Indian Ocean Region; EoI issued June 20, 2026.
- **NPOL, Kochi:** The Naval Physical and Oceanographic Laboratory, a DRDO lab and India's lead centre for underwater sensors and sonar; it leads UFOSS, with the shore station at Kochi.
- **SQUIDS:** Superconducting Quantum Interference Devices, ultra-sensitive magnetometers that detect the faint magnetic signature of a submarine's steel hull.
- **Distributed acoustic sensing:** Technique that turns a fibre-optic cable itself into a chain of acoustic sensors by reading disturbances in the light it carries.
- **SOSUS / IUSS:** The US Sound Surveillance System (from 1954), a seabed hydrophone grid to track Soviet submarines, later folded into the Integrated Undersea Surveillance System.
- **ASW (Anti-Submarine Warfare):** Detecting and countering enemy submarines using ships, submarines, aircraft (P-8I) and fixed sensors.
- **Focus zones for UFOSS:** Ninety East Ridge, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and the Bay of Bengal.
- **SAGAR:** Security and Growth for All in the Region, India's Indian Ocean maritime vision.

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DRDO Flight-Tests Pinaka Long Range Guided Rocket at 60 km

On July 8, 2026, DRDO successfully flight-tested the Pinaka Long Range Guided Rocket to a 60 km range at Chandipur, advancing indigenous artillery modernisation under Atmanirbhar Bharat.

- **Pinaka:** A DRDO-developed multi-barrel rocket launcher named after the bow of Lord Shiva.
- **LRGR:** The Pinaka Long Range Guided Rocket, tested to a 60 km range on July 8, 2026.
- **ARDE:** The Armament Research and Development Establishment, the DRDO laboratory that develops Pinaka.
- **ITR Chandipur:** The Integrated Test Range in Balasore district, Odisha, used for missile and rocket trials.
- **Atmanirbhar Bharat (defence):** India's self-reliance drive to indigenise defence design, development and manufacturing.

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IAF Opens the AS-HAPS Stratospheric Airship Programme to Industry

On 14 July 2026, the IAF opened its Rs 15,000 crore Airship-based High Altitude Pseudo-Satellite (AS-HAPS) programme to private industry under Make-I, seeking partners for persistent stratospheric ISR platforms.

- **Event (14 July 2026):** IAF's **Directorate of Operations (Remote)** opened the **AS-HAPS** programme to private industry, seeking at least **two development partners**.
- **Outlay:** About **Rs 15,000 crore**.
- **Route:** **Make-I** category of the DAP; government funds **up to 70 per cent** of development cost.
- **Prior clearance:** **DAC, February 2026**.
- **Altitude:** Stratosphere, around **20 km (above 60,000 feet)**; endurance of **months**.
- **Position in stack:** Between **HALE drones** and **LEO satellites**.
- **Roles:** **ISR, ELINT, telecommunications, remote sensing**.

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BRO Strategic Infrastructure Conclave 2026 Border Roads for Future Warfare

At the BRO Strategic Infrastructure Conclave 2026 in New Delhi, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh called border roads, tunnels and airfields indispensable to future technology-driven warfare.

- The **BRO Strategic Infrastructure Conclave 2026** was held on **July 15 and 16, 2026**, in New Delhi.
- Theme: "*Enhancing Capability through Technology, Innovation and Execution Excellence*."
- Defence Minister **Rajnath Singh** called border infrastructure indispensable to future warfare.
- The **Border Roads Organisation** was raised in **1960** under the **Ministry of Defence**; motto "**Shramena Sarvam Sadhyam**."
- Publications released: **Path Pradarshak, Oonchi Sadken, Path Vikas**.
- **Vibrant Villages Programme** develops border villages; **Arunachal Pradesh** and **Ladakh** are integral parts of India.

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Exercise Pitch Black 2026 IAF Rafales Head to Australia

Exercise Pitch Black 2026, the RAAF's premier multinational air-combat drill, sees the Indian Air Force field its Rafale fighters for the first time over northern Australia.

- **Pitch Black** is held over **northern Australia** (Darwin, Tindal, Amberley) and is named for its focus on **night large-force operations**.
- The **C-17 Globemaster III** is the IAF's principal strategic airlifter, key to **expeditionary logistics**.
- India-Australia defence architecture includes the **2+2 Ministerial Dialogue, Malabar** and the **Quad**.
- The **Rafale** is a French twin-engine multirole fighter inducted by the IAF; Pitch Black 2026 is its **first appearance** at the exercise.
- Around **20 nations, 100 aircraft and 2,500+ personnel** join the 2026 edition.

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Operation Southern Readiness 26-2: India and the Combined Maritime Forces

The Indian Navy hosts Operation Southern Readiness 26-2 with the Combined Maritime Forces at Kochi, reinforcing India's role as a net security provider in the Indian Ocean Region.

- **Operation Southern Readiness 26-2** runs **July 20 to 23, 2026** at the **Southern Naval Command, Kochi**.
- The **Combined Maritime Forces (CMF)** groups **more than 40 nations** and is **headquartered in Bahrain**.
- **India became a CMF partner in 2023**, retaining operational independence.
- Focus areas: **maritime-domain awareness, information sharing, and coordinated responses** to piracy, trafficking and illegal fishing.
- **SAGAR** (Security and Growth for All in the Region) frames India's maritime outreach.
- The **IFC-IOR at Gurugram** shares real-time maritime information with partner nations.

INS Malvan and India Anti-Submarine Shallow Water Fleet

The Indian Navy commissioned INS Malvan, the second Mahe-class anti-submarine shallow water craft, at Karwar with over 80 per cent indigenous content, advancing Atmanirbhar Bharat in defence shipbuilding.

- **ASW-SWC** stands for **Anti-Submarine Warfare Shallow Water Craft**, designed to hunt submarines in coastal, shallow waters where larger warships cannot manoeuvre easily.
- **Cochin Shipyard Limited (CSL)** is a major Indian public-sector shipbuilder that also built the aircraft carrier **INS Vikrant**.
- **Karwar** in Karnataka hosts **INS Kadamba**, developed under **Project Seabird**, India's largest naval infrastructure project on the west coast.
- **LIMO (Low Intensity Maritime Operations)** cover tasks like coastal patrol, anti-infiltration, and protection of maritime assets short of full-scale conflict.
- The Government of India's **Atmanirbhar Bharat** push in defence aims to raise domestic content and reduce reliance on imported military platforms.

Machilipatnam Joins the Fleet: India's Shallow-Water Submarine Hunters Near...

Cochin Shipyard has launched Machilipatnam, the seventh of eight indigenous Mahe-class anti-submarine warfare shallow water craft, closing in on a coastal ASW capability gap that had persisted for years.

- INS Machilipatnam, launched 29 July 2026, Cochin Shipyard Limited.
- 7th of 8 Mahe-class ASW Shallow Water Craft; 78 metres; over 80 per cent indigenous content.
- Named after the historic Andhra Pradesh port town of Machilipatnam.
- Fills the shallow-water ASW/mine-warfare gap between deep-water fleet assets and coastal patrol craft.
- Indigenous sonar suite reduces import dependence for ASW's core sensor system.

Project Kusha: DRDO Test-Fires India's Indigenous Long-Range Air Defence Missile

DRDO conducted the maiden flight test of Project Kusha (LR-SAM) on July 23, 2026 off the Odisha coast, advancing India's indigenous long-range air-defence shield often called the Desi S-400.

- APJ Abdul Kalam Island, earlier known as Wheeler Island, off the Odisha coast is DRDO's principal missile-testing range.
- The S-400 Triumf deal with Russia, signed in 2018, is delivered in regiments and formed India's long-range interception backbone before Kusha.
- DRDO's Ballistic Missile Defence programme uses a two-tier system: the Prithvi Air Defence (exo-atmospheric) and the Advanced Air Defence (endo-atmospheric) interceptors.
- MRSAM stands for Medium-Range Surface-to-Air Missile, the land variant of the Barak-8 family.
- "Atmanirbharta" in defence is supported by successive Positive Indigenisation Lists issued by the Ministry of Defence.

INS Nipun and India's Deep-Sea Rescue Capability

The Navy's second indigenous diving support vessel, built with roughly 75-80 per cent local content, strengthens India's submarine rescue and underwater intervention capacity in the Indian Ocean Region.

- Nistar-class Diving Support Vessel; second in class after INS Nistar.
- Built by Hindustan Shipyard Limited, Visakhapatnam; delivered 30 July 2026.
- About 118 m, over 8,560 tonnes; 75-80 per cent indigenous content.
- Fitted with deep-sea saturation diving systems, ROVs, dynamic positioning.
- DSRV: Deep Submergence Rescue Vessel, the rescue submersible itself.
- Nistar-class DSV: surface support and diving platform.
- Builder: HSL, a Ministry of Defence PSU shipyard at Visakhapatnam.

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PMFME Crosses Two Lakh Credit-Linked Beneficiaries

The PMFME scheme has sanctioned loans to over 2 lakh micro food processing units, leveraging investment above Rs 20,300 crore.

- **Full form:** Pradhan Mantri Formalisation of Micro Food Processing Enterprises.
- **Launched:** June 29, 2020, under Atmanirbhar Bharat; nodal ministry MoFPI.
- **Type:** Centrally Sponsored Scheme; 60:40 Centre-State, 90:10 for NE and Himalayan States.
- **Outlay:** about Rs 10,000 crore; target 2 lakh micro enterprises.
- **Subsidy:** credit-linked capital subsidy of 35 per cent of eligible project cost, capped at Rs 10 lakh per unit.
- **Seed capital:** Rs 40,000 per SHG member.
- **Approach:** One District One Product (ODOP).
- **Milestone (July 11, 2026):** over 2 lakh units with loans sanctioned; over Rs 20,300 crore investment leveraged; nearly 11 lakh direct and indirect jobs.
- **Profile:** about 90 per cent first-generation entrepreneurs; about 44 per cent women; over 75,000 units formalised via Udyam, FSSAI and GST.
- **Union Minister, Food Processing Industries:** Chirag Paswan.

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NIPU-2026: A New Investment Policy to Make India Self-Reliant in Urea

The Union Cabinet approved NIPU-2026 to attract investment into nine new gas-based urea plants and cut India's import dependence. Policy design, subsidy context and UPSC pointers.

- **Policy:** National Investment Policy for Urea (NIPU-2026), Union Cabinet approval **July 15, 2026**.
- **Objective:** attract investment into **nine new gas-based urea plants**; self-reliance in nitrogenous fertiliser.
- **Urea nitrogen content:** **46%**; feedstock is **natural gas**.
- **Price regime:** only fertiliser still under **statutory price control**; subsidy routed to **manufacturers**.
- **Complementary reforms:** DBT in fertilisers, neem-coating of urea, **Nano Urea (IFFCO)**.
- **Strategic frame:** atmanirbharta in agri-inputs, subsidy rationalisation, energy and balance-of-payments linkages.

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NITI Aayog Bioeconomy Roadmap: India as a BioEconomy Powerhouse by 2035

NITI Aayog released "Building India as a Leading BioEconomy Powerhouse", targeting a USD 691 billion bioeconomy by 2035 with a Rs 50,000 crore growth fund and six National BioMissions.

- **Bioeconomy** refers to economic activity based on renewable biological resources and biotechnological processes, cutting across health, agriculture, industry and energy.
- India's bioeconomy has grown rapidly on the strength of vaccines, biosimilars and bio-services, with vaccine manufacturing a global standout.
- The **BioE3 Policy** was approved by the Union Cabinet in 2024 and promotes high-performance biomanufacturing.
- The **NITI Frontier Tech Hub (FTH)** is NITI Aayog's unit for emerging technologies such as biotech, quantum and advanced materials.
- India's stated climate goal of **net zero by 2070** intersects with bio-based fuels and materials that can lower industrial emissions.

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The Rs 37,500 Crore Coal and Lignite Gasification Scheme

The Ministry of Coal held a pre-application conference on July 20, 2026 for the Rs 37,500 crore surface coal and lignite gasification scheme. A GS3 deep dive on energy security and cleaner coal use.

- **Scheme name:** Scheme for Promotion of Surface Coal and Lignite Gasification Projects.
- **Outlay:** Rs **37,500 crore**; **pre-application conference held July 20, 2026**; deadline **September 7, 2026**.
- **Syngas** = carbon monoxide + hydrogen, made by reacting coal with limited oxygen and steam.
- **DRI** = Direct Reduced Iron, a sponge-iron feed for steelmaking.
- **SNG** = Synthetic Natural Gas, a domestic substitute for imported LNG.
- India's **2030 mission:** gasify **100 million tonnes** of coal.
- Expected impact: **~Rs 2.5 to 3 lakh crore** investment, **~75 million tonnes** coal/year, **~50,000 jobs**.

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Mission Golden Spice: A Value Chain for Lakadong Turmeric

The Ministry of DoNER launched Mission Golden Spice, a Rs 175.45 crore mission to build a GI-tagged global value chain for Meghalaya's high-curcumin Lakadong turmeric.

- A **Geographical Indication (GI)** identifies a product as originating from a specific place, where a given quality or reputation is essentially attributable to that origin; GIs in India are...
- The **first product to get a GI tag in India** was **Darjeeling Tea** (2004-05).
- The **Ministry of DoNER** was created to accelerate the socio-economic development of the eight North Eastern states.
- **Curcumin** is the principal curcuminoid in turmeric, valued for its anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties.
- **Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs)** aggregate small farmers to improve bargaining power, access to inputs, credit and markets.

REPORTS, INDICES & SCHEMES

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BHAVYA-Rasayan Scheme to Build Dedicated Chemical Parks

The Union Cabinet approved the BHAVYA-Rasayan scheme with a Rs 3,030 crore outlay to build three dedicated chemical parks with shared infrastructure, cutting India's import dependence in specialty chemicals.

- **BHAVYA** stands for **Bharat Audyogik Vikas Yojana**, an umbrella framework for industrial development; **Rasayan** (chemical) is its chemicals-sector component.
- A **CETP (Common Effluent Treatment Plant)** collects and treats wastewater from a cluster of small industries that cannot each run their own plant.
- A **TSDF (Treatment, Storage and Disposal Facility)** is a designated site for the safe treatment, storage, and disposal of hazardous waste, regulated under the Hazardous and Other Wastes...
- India's **specialty chemicals** demand is met partly through imports, making domestic parks strategically important for pharma, agrochemical, and electronics supply chains.
- The scheme is anchored by the **Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers**, which also administers the fertilizer subsidy and the petrochemicals sector.

Economy & Development

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THE HINDU

1 Jul · 381

Expensive State Borrowing and Fiscal Federalism

States bear the larger share of social spending yet borrow far more dearly than the Union; India needs cheaper access to domestic savings for the States.

- **Deepen the market for State paper.** Improve liquidity, transparency and benchmark issuance so SDL spreads narrow.
- **Channel patient savings.** Design instruments that match long-term domestic savings with State capital investment needs.
- **Protect capital spending.** Ring-fence and incentivise capital outlays so interest costs do not crowd them out.
- **Pair access with discipline.** Tie cheaper access to credible fiscal-responsibility frameworks that reward prudent States.

DOWN TO EARTH

2 Jul · 384

A Just Transition for Meerut's Sports Cluster

Meerut's labour-intensive, export-driven sports-goods MSME cluster must decarbonise and modernise without displacing workers, a test case for a just transition in India's traditional manufacturing.

- **Fund the shift.** Provide concessional finance and shared common facilities so small units can adopt clean, efficient processes.
- **Reskill and protect workers.** Pair decarbonisation with green skilling, and social protection so no worker is stranded by the transition.
- **Keep exports competitive.** Back quality, design and market access so greener Meerut goods stay competitive in over 100 markets.
- **Sequence it.** Adopt a phased, cluster-level, worker-centred road map rather than an abrupt, market-only shake-out.

BUSINESS STANDARD

1 Jul · 382

Nine Years of GST: The Unfinished Agenda

As GST completes nine years and enters its tenth with a two-slab structure, it has unified the market but still leaves petroleum, MSME compliance and state autonomy unresolved.

- **Bring fuel into GST.** Agree a phased, revenue-protected road map to include petroleum products and electricity, restoring the input-credit chain.
- **Simplify for MSMEs.** Cut returns and reconciliation burdens, fix input-credit mismatches, and lighten compliance for small firms.
- **Keep rationalising rates.** Consolidate remaining anomalies within the two-slab-plus-demerit structure.
- **Protect state autonomy.** Strengthen the GST Council as a cooperative-federalism forum and give states post-compensation revenue certainty.

THE HINDU

2 Jul · 385

A Unified Policy Architecture for India's Energy Future

India needs an integrated energy framework balancing adequacy, access, affordability and sustainability, not fragmented sector policies, to reach net zero by 2070.

- **Adopt an integrated national energy policy:** one framework built on the four As that sets economy-wide direction across all fuels and sectors.
- **Create a coordinating institution:** a body to align generation, grid, transport, industry and efficiency policies and resolve inter-ministerial conflicts.
- **Embed cooperative federalism:** bring states in as partners, given their control over distribution and land, to ensure delivery on the ground.
- **Preserve technology neutrality:** keep the framework flexible enough to absorb new technologies rather than locking in today's choices.
- **Publish a transition roadmap:** clear, credible milestones to 2030, 2035, 2047 and 2070 to give investors the certainty that mobilises capital.

INDIAN EXPRESS

1 Jul · 383

Tourism's Binding Constraint Is Governance

India's tourism potential is held back not by demand but by regulatory complexity; the NITI Aayog roadmap's push for visa liberalisation and single licences points the way.

- **Liberalise visas.** Roll out phased visa-on-arrival with multiple entry for select countries and rationalise e-visa categories.
- **Consolidate licences.** Introduce single health-trade and single liquor licences, remove redundant eating-house permits, and extend registration validity.
- **Deliver single-window clearance.** Scrap project-stage approvals and digitise approvals into one integrated window.
- **Carry states along.** Use cooperative federalism to help states adopt the reforms while protecting safety, hygiene, heritage and worker welfare.

BUSINESS STANDARD

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India Needs Durable Capital, Not Hot Money

As portfolio investors trim India exposure and Strait of Hormuz tensions ease, India must attract stable, long-term capital, FDI and long-horizon funds, to finance investment and growth.

- **Make policy predictable.** Stable tax rules and no retrospective surprises are what long-horizon investors price first.
- **Build cheaper, faster infrastructure.** Logistics, power and land at competitive cost are the real magnet for manufacturing FDI.
- **Deepen ease of doing business.** Cut approvals, digitise clearances and reduce compliance friction to convert intent into inflows.
- **Channel durable capital well.** Direct FDI and long-horizon funds into manufacturing, infrastructure and Global Capability Centres, and court Gulf and pension capital.

India Needs PPP 2.2: Capital That Keeps Moving

To finance its infrastructure pipeline, India must evolve PPPs from one-time capital mobilisation to continuous recycling of capital across project lifecycles.

- **Ring-fence proceeds for greenfield:** mandate that monetisation revenue funds new construction, not deficit financing, to keep capital genuinely recycling.
- **Ensure transparent valuation:** competitive, contestable pricing of assets to prevent under-valuation and rent-seeking.
- **Strengthen sector regulators:** independent oversight of tariffs and service quality so private operators of public monopolies cannot exploit users.
- **Deepen InvIT and securitisation markets:** build the financial infrastructure that lets long-term capital flow into de-risked assets.
- **Write robust concession contracts:** clear performance, hand-back and dispute-resolution terms so the state reliably recovers strategic assets.

Resilient, But Risks Need Watching

High-frequency indicators show underlying strength in the Indian economy, but US tariffs, currency pressure and FPI outflows are real downside risks that demand vigilant macro management.

- **Defend the rupee smartly.** Use reserves to smooth volatility, not to fix a level, and let the exchange rate absorb genuine shocks.
- **Diversify export markets.** Deepen trade with the EU, Gulf, ASEAN and Africa to cut dependence on tariff-exposed US demand.
- **Court durable capital.** Prioritise long-horizon FDI and long-tenor debt over hot money through policy stability and ease of doing business.
- **Protect MSME exporters.** Cushion tariff-hit clusters (textiles, seafood, auto components) with credit and market-access support.

India's IT Sector at a Crossroads

Weak demand, US visa uncertainty and AI are eroding the outsourcing model, so Indian IT must climb to higher-value work or hollow out from within.

- **Reprice the offering.** Shift from bodies-on-seats billing to outcome-based and services-as-software contracts where AI-driven productivity is the product, not a threat to it.
- **Build deep AI and domain capability.** Move up the value chain into consulting, platform engineering and vertical AI, and grow the global capability centre business.
- **Protect the pipeline.** Reskill at scale and rethink entry-level roles so AI augments juniors rather than eliminating the tier that grows into leaders.
- **Diversify markets and delivery.** Reduce over-reliance on a single geography and a single visa regime by expanding nearshore and domestic delivery footprints.

PPP 2.0: Match Capital to Risk

First-generation PPPs failed on a maturity mismatch, not private capital; PPP 2.0 must circulate finance by matching the right money to each risk profile.

- **Deepen long-term capital markets.** Grow the corporate bond market, InvITs and REITs so operational assets can be refinanced at scale.
- **Channel patient capital.** Enable pension and insurance funds and NIIF to invest in de-risked operational infrastructure.
- **Sequence financing to risk.** Use bank and equity for construction, then long-term instruments for operations.
- **Strengthen contracts and dispute resolution.** Reduce renegotiation risk with clear, enforceable and fair risk-allocation frameworks.
- **Use credit enhancement.** Deploy guarantees and pooled vehicles to crowd in patient capital where markets are still thin.

Unwelcome Surge: The GST Buoyancy Question

June's double-digit GST growth was powered by imports and pricey oil, not domestic demand, masking structural flaws GST still carries nine years on.

- **Read buoyancy by its source.** Distinguish demand-led growth from import- and inflation-led growth before drawing policy comfort.
- **Correct the inverted duty structure.** Rationalise rates so inputs are not taxed higher than outputs, freeing working capital.
- **Ease credit and refund frictions.** Speed up input-tax-credit and refunds, especially for MSMEs and exporters.
- **Bring fuel and power into GST.** Agree a phased, revenue-protected road map to include petroleum and electricity, restoring the credit chain.
- **Strengthen domestic demand.** Support consumption and investment so revenue rests on a strong home economy, not an expensive import bill.

From Statute to Shop Floor: Operationalising the Four Labour Codes

> "A labour reform is judged not by how many laws it merges, but by whether the worker it names actually gets paid, protected and covered." The four labour codes have finally moved from the statute book to the shop floor. With the EPF...

- **Fund and notify the gig-worker scheme.** Ensure the social-security fund for gig and platform workers is actually financed and that aggregator contributions flow, not just mandated on paper.
- **Universalise the wage floor.** Enforce the Code on Wages minimum wage across the informal sector, backed by timely payment and written contracts.
- **Keep compliance genuinely simpler.** Deliver true single digital registration and unified returns so small firms formalise rather than fear the new regime.
- **Build enforcement capacity.** Strengthen inspection, grievance redress and dispute resolution so the codes bite, and simplification does not become deregulation.

Minerals of the Future: India's Resource Diplomacy and the Global South

> "In the energy transition, whoever controls the minerals controls the future, and India is learning that securing them abroad is now as much diplomacy as it is mining." Lithium, cobalt and rare earths are the strategic commodities of...

- **Build processing and recycling at home.** Move up the value chain from ore to refined metal and magnets, since that is where China's leverage and the real security lie.
- **Make Africa a fair partnership.** Offer value-addition, skills and infrastructure rather than pure extraction, keeping India's Global South credibility intact.
- **Deepen plurilateral cooperation.** Use the Minerals Security Partnership and Quad critical-minerals cooperation to diversify secure supply.
- **Sustain domestic exploration and skills.** Fund geological surveys, exploration technology and a skilled mining workforce so the NCMM delivers on the ground.

Reform Delayed is Reform Denied: The Cost of India's Reform Inertia

> "A reform announced is not a reform delivered, and in economics, a dividend that arrives late arrives diminished." India is rarely short of a reform blueprint. It is short of speed. The reforms that matter most now, in factor markets...

- **Make implementation the reform.** Attach a time-bound operational road map, with rules, capacity and milestones, to every enacted reform, so the statute-to-effect lag shrinks.
- **Build factor-market consensus.** Use the cooperative-federalism route for land and labour, since these are concurrent or state subjects, rather than pushing change that later unravels.
- **Deepen judicial and regulatory capacity.** Faster contract enforcement and predictable regulation lower the cost of doing business more than any single big-bang reform.
- **Sequence privatisation and monetisation transparently.** Revive credible strategic disinvestment where it adds value, and ensure asset monetisation genuinely improves efficiency rather than...

Green Molecules, Global Markets: India's Hydrogen Export Bet

The next commodity India ships to the world may not be dug out of the ground but split out of water. Green molecules could do for the coast what software did for the city.

- **Drive down the cost curve.** Scale domestic electrolyser manufacturing under SIGHT and secure low-cost round-the-clock renewable power to close the gap with grey hydrogen.
- **Lock in offtake and certification.** Sign more long-term export contracts and build a robust green-certification regime that meets EU RFNBO and IMO standards.
- **Build the export backbone.** Invest in port infrastructure, storage and pipelines at hubs like Paradip and Gopalpur.
- **Anchor domestic demand too.** Use green ammonia in fertiliser and green hydrogen in refining and steel so the industry is not solely export-dependent.
- **Deepen green diplomacy.** Coordinate with buyer governments (Japan, the EU) on standards and financing so demand remains durable.

Mandate or Market: Designing Delhi's EV Rules for Charging and Grid Reality

A mandate is a promise the government makes on behalf of the market; Delhi's new EV rules promise cleaner air by decree, but a deadline without chargers and grid capacity behind it is a promise the city cannot keep.

- **Front-load charging.** Set enforceable charger-density and uptime targets ahead of each registration deadline, with priority for shared and captive charging in dense areas.
- **Ready the grid.** Fund distribution upgrades and adopt time-of-day EV tariffs and managed/smart charging to flatten the new peak.
- **De-risk the buyer.** Combine incentives with battery-as-a-service, priority lending and assured resale/buyback so asset-poor drivers can switch.
- **Clean the electrons.** Pair vehicle electrification with a greener grid so tailpipe savings are not offset by coal-fired charging.
- **Monitor and adjust.** Publish charger, grid-load and compliance data; treat deadlines as firm but the enabling targets as the real test of readiness.

The Factory Window: Why India's Manufacturing Moment Needs Factor Reform

India has the demand, the demographic dividend and a China-plus-one opening all at once, a window East Asia would have seized; but as long as land, labour and capital stay stuck in slow, costly factor markets, incentives like PLI will keep...

- **Digitise and consolidate land.** Complete land-title digitisation, ready industrial land banks with plug-and-play infrastructure, and rationalise stamp duty to cut acquisition time and...
- **Make the Labour Codes real.** Notify state rules quickly, ensure the flexibility and social-security promises actually reach workers, and dismantle threshold-based "dwarfism" incentives.
- **Deepen patient capital.** Strengthen the corporate-bond market and development finance so factories can borrow long and cheap.
- **Move up, not just in.** Pair assembly-stage PLI with deeper value addition, components and R&D, so India climbs the value chain rather than staying a final-assembly hub.
- **Skill for the floor.** Align skilling and apprenticeship with actual factory demand to convert the dividend into productivity.

The Unwelcome Surge: What June's GST Numbers Really Say

A tax figure can flatter to deceive. June's GST collection looked like a demand boom; read closely, it was an import bill in disguise.

- **Report GST by composition.** Publish the domestic-versus-import split prominently so the headline is not read as pure demand.
- **Watch the external account.** Track the crude, gold and edible-oil import bills and the rupee, since these drive both import GST and imported inflation.
- **Judge the economy on demand indicators.** Cross-check GST with consumption proxies such as two-wheeler sales, GST e-way bills for domestic supply, and rural wages before declaring a demand...
- **Stabilise imported-inflation channels.** Diversify crude and edible-oil sourcing and build buffer stocks to soften price shocks that feed through to both prices and the import tax line.

Grain for Fuel: India's Rice-to-Ethanol Dilemma

Blending ethanol into petrol cuts oil imports and carbon, and India reached its 20 per cent target years ahead of schedule. But a policy that pours subsidised food-grain, procured for the poor, into fuel tanks at prices below...

- **Prioritise second-generation ethanol.** Scale up cellulosic ethanol from rice straw and stubble; it is food-neutral and cuts stubble-burning.
- **Shift the feedstock mix to maize.** Support maize cultivation and offtake so grain-based ethanol leans on the less thirsty crop.
- **Cap grain diversion strictly.** Use FCI rice for ethanol only for genuinely surplus, non-issuable stock, never at the cost of NFSA entitlements.
- **Align with crop diversification.** Ensure ethanol offtake incentives do not undercut NITI Aayog and ICAR advice to move Punjab and Haryana away from paddy.
- **Rationalise the subsidy.** Reprice OMSS-D rice closer to economic cost so taxpayers do not subsidise private distillers below welfare valuations.
- **Sequence the roadmap carefully.** With BIS standard IS 19850:2026 notifying specs for E22, E25, E27 and E30 (effective May 15, 2026) and a roadmap toward about 27 per cent blending by 2030...

Rented Credibility: Bilateral Investment Treaties and Durable FDI

A bilateral investment treaty is rented credibility. A country that cannot yet promise stability through its own institutions alone borrows the assurance of an external tribunal to tell investors: your capital is safe here. The rent falls...

- **Balance the model BIT.** Retain reasonable policy space but restore credible protections and a workable path to arbitration, so the treaty is a believable signal.
- **Honour and enforce awards reliably.** Nothing builds durable investor trust faster than a state that keeps its word even when it loses.
- **Fix the fundamentals.** Non-retrospective tax, fast contract enforcement and predictable regulation are what convert treaty text into actual inflows.
- **Sequence the treaty push.** Prioritise BITs with capital-exporting partners (EU, US, Gulf states) whose durable, long-horizon capital India most wants.

The Price of a Frozen Pump: Fuel Pricing, Fiscal Cost and Credibility

A frozen fuel price is not a free fuel price. Every rupee the pump does not charge is a rupee an oil marketing company absorbs, a subsidy the budget hides, or a reform the state postpones. Relief you can see today is a cost someone pays...

- **Restore genuine two-way pricing.** Let pump prices fall when crude falls and rise modestly when it rises, so a credibility buffer is built in good times.
- **Move the subsidy on-budget and target it.** If the state wishes to shield vulnerable households, do it through transparent, direct-benefit LPG and transport support, not by hiding losses in...
- **Protect OMC balance sheets.** Predictable pricing preserves the cash flows OMCs need for refining, green energy transition and capex.
- **Face the pricing cost openly.** Trust in a pricing regime is built by explaining costs, not by concealing them behind a frozen pump.

India and the Pitfalls of Geoeconomics: Borrowing the Wrong Playbook

> "When the great powers turn trade into a weapon, the temptation is to arm oneself the same way. But a developing economy that copies the tactics of the powerful, without their power, may only wound itself." The world has entered an...

- **Use tools selectively and defensively.** Reserve screening, tariffs and controls for genuine security cases where India holds leverage, not as a general template.
- **Prioritise competitiveness over protection.** Address logistics, energy and regulatory costs so Indian industry wins on strength, not walls, and avoid layered QCO-plus-tariff protection that...
- **Diversify partners and supply chains.** Deepen FTAs (India-UK CETA, India-EFTA TEPA, the US interim deal) and the China-plus-one shift to reduce single-source dependence.
- **Protect strategic autonomy.** Judge every geoeconomic instrument against India's developmental interest, keeping multi-alignment and openness to capital central.

The Economics of Energy: Let Fuel Prices Send Honest Signals

> "A price is a message. When the government freezes the pump and pockets the windfall through tax, it is not protecting the consumer, it is muffling the message the market is trying to send." In **mid-June 2026**, a framework between the...

- **Restore genuine pass-through.** Let pump prices move daily with crude both up and down, as the 2017 framework intended, instead of freezing them for years.
- **Make the tax component transparent.** Adopt a rules-based, published excise formula so consumers can see how much of the pump price is tax and why it changes.
- **Protect OMC finances predictably.** Ensure stable marketing margins rather than freezes that force companies to absorb losses and then over-recover quietly.
- **Target support, not blanket suppression.** Use direct benefit transfers or targeted LPG support for the poor instead of suppressing prices for all, which distorts consumption and hides the...

Two Markets, One Cost Curve: How EV and Grid Storage Can Cut Cell Costs

> "A subsidy buys a discount once. A cost curve, driven by scale, keeps giving. India has two battery markets, electric vehicles and grid storage, and treating them as one could bend the price of the cell in a way no incentive can..."

- **Aggregate demand deliberately.** Coordinate EV and grid-storage procurement around common LFP cells so pooled volume drives the learning curve, not two separate small markets.
- **Fix the PLI design.** Reward operational, commissioned manufacturing and experienced makers over paper capacity, and re-tender lapsed quotas transparently.
- **Scale the storage pipeline.** Expand the VGF for BESS and firm up the 236 GWh storage trajectory so grid demand reliably feeds the cost curve.
- **Secure the minerals.** Advance the Reasi (J&K) lithium resource to a bankable stage and use the National Critical Minerals Mission to reduce cell-import dependence.

After the West Asian Crisis: India's Economic Reprieve

An oil-price shock is a tax India does not vote on; the West Asian ceasefire has just cut that tax, but the deeper story is that India had already diversified enough to soften the blow.

- **Save the windfall, do not spend it.** Use the fiscal room from cheaper oil to fill Strategic Petroleum Reserves at low prices and move Phase II cover toward the IEA norm.
- **Deepen diversification.** Extend the shift away from Hormuz-routed crude so no single chokepoint is decisive.
- **Hold the inflation-targeting line.** Let the RBI treat the price fall as a chance to anchor expectations, while watching food inflation from a possible El Nino.
- **Accelerate the demand side.** Push energy efficiency, public transport and the clean-energy transition so long-run oil dependence itself declines.

Cash Transfers: Safety Net and Fiscal Trade-off

A cash transfer can cushion a household through a hard year, but it cannot manufacture the income that would make the next year less hard, and no state can borrow its way out of that difference forever.

- **Protect capital expenditure.** Ring-fence a floor for growth-creating capex so recurring transfers do not crowd it out.
- **Anchor to the FRBM path.** Keep schemes within a credible fiscal-responsibility framework and be transparent about their revenue-account impact.
- **Target and rationalise.** Improve targeting so transfers reach those who most need them, releasing space for other priorities.
- **Pair cash with capability.** Link transfers to skilling, jobs and local economic infrastructure so households can graduate to earned income.

Where the Jobs Are: What Million-Plus Cities Tell Us About Urban Work

For the first time, official data profile employment across India's 46 largest cities, and the picture is striking: the million-plus cities are jobs engines, with higher participation, lower unemployment and better wages than urban India...

- **Treat cities as engines, not burdens.** Invest in urban infrastructure, services, public transport and flexible land use so agglomeration economies can be fully realised.
- **Build the care economy.** Expand affordable, quality childcare and eldercare, and support workplace flexibility, so that rising demand for women workers meets rising supply.
- **Make cities safe and accessible for women.** Safe, reliable public transport and safe public spaces are direct enablers of female participation.
- **Go place-based.** Use city-level PLFS disaggregation to design interventions suited to each city's labour market rather than a national blanket approach.
- **Formalise and upskill urban work.** Extend social security and skilling to the services and gig sectors that dominate big-city employment.

FDI Rebound: Counting the Rupees, Questioning Their Quality

A headline FDI number tells you money arrived; it does not tell you whether it built a factory or merely bought a share, and for a country chasing jobs and technology that difference is the whole story.

- **Track and target net, greenfield FDI.** Shift the policy focus from gross inflow rankings to net, capacity-creating investment as the real measure of success.
- **Rebuild a credible treaty regime.** Conclude balanced Bilateral Investment Treaties and offer swift, predictable dispute resolution to attract patient capital.
- **Deepen ease of doing business.** Sustain regulatory simplification, faster clearances and stable tax policy so that manufacturing and infrastructure investment converts intent into plants.
- **Channel FDI to jobs and technology.** Use targeted incentives to steer inflows toward sectors that add employment and transfer technology, consolidating the promising 2026 composition.

The Third Pillar: Can Cooperatives Carry Their New Weight

A cooperative earns the name "third pillar" only if it stays a member-owned institution while it scales, because the moment prosperity is delivered from above rather than governed from within, it becomes just another arm of the state...

- **Protect member democracy.** Ensure timely elections, independent audit and real one-member-one-vote control so that digitisation strengthens rather than bypasses members.
- **Respect the federal balance.** Coordinate with states, whose subject cooperatives are, so that central reform supports rather than supplants state autonomy.
- **Keep apex bodies accountable to primaries.** Design NCEL, NCOL and BBSSL so that value and voice flow back to the primary societies and their members, not only upward.
- **Invest in governance capacity.** Fund professional management, training and transparency in PACS so revival is durable and not dependent on continual central direction.

Back to Four Per Cent: What June's Inflation Turn Means for the RBI

For sixteen months inflation gave the Reserve Bank room to breathe, and June's expected turn back towards four per cent is the moment that comfortable slack starts to tighten.

- **Read the composition, not just the headline.** The RBI should base its stance on whether pressure is demand-led or supply-led, resisting a mechanical rate response to a supply-driven number.
- **Lean on supply-side management.** Government action on food stocks, buffer releases and fuel taxation can address the actual drivers more directly than monetary tightening.
- **Guard inflation expectations.** Clear communication that the RBI remains committed to the 4 per cent midpoint keeps expectations anchored even as the print firms.
- **Preserve policy space for growth.** With the reading still inside the band, the committee can stay watchful rather than pre-emptively tightening, protecting the recovery in rural demand and...

Seventeen Years in the Same Bracket: India and the Middle-Income Trap

Standing still on the income ladder while the economy grows is its own kind of warning, because it means India is running fast enough to stay in place but not yet fast enough to climb.

- **Raise productivity, not just investment.** Prioritise technology adoption, research and firm-level efficiency so growth comes from doing more with each worker, not only from adding more...
- **Invest deeply in human capital.** Expand and improve health, education and skilling so the workforce can move into higher-value activity, which is the core of escaping the trap.
- **Reform for firm growth.** Ease the constraints, in land, labour, credit and regulation, that keep firms small, since larger, more productive firms drive rising per-capita income.
- **Broaden the base of prosperity.** Support agriculture, informal-sector formalisation and lagging regions so per-capita gains are widely shared and durable, sustaining the growth needed for...

The Deal That Matters: Why the US Prize Dwarfs India's Other FTAs

India has been collecting trade agreements the way a traveller collects small souvenirs, useful and pleasant, while the one purchase that would change the journey, a deal with the United States, still sits unbought on the shelf.

- **Prioritise the US Bilateral Trade Agreement.** Treat it as the central objective of trade diplomacy, not one item among many, and sequence negotiating capital accordingly.
- **Put services and digital on the table.** Push for professional mobility, mutual recognition and fair data-flow rules where India's advantage is greatest, not a goods-only bargain.
- **Protect the genuinely sensitive, open the rest.** Shield vulnerable agriculture and dairy with calibrated safeguards while conceding market access where India can compete, so talks do not...
- **Keep diversification as insurance, not a substitute.** Continue deepening UK, EU and Japan ties to spread risk, while being clear that they complement rather than replace the US deal.

Defending the Rupee: The RBI Between Reserves and Room

A central bank defending its currency is spending its own ammunition, and every dollar it sells to hold the exchange rate is a dollar and a degree of policy freedom it no longer has for the next shock.

- **Intervene to smooth, not to fix.** Use dollar sales to curb disorderly volatility rather than to defend a specific level, conserving reserves for genuine shocks.
- **Guard reserve adequacy.** Weigh each intervention against the buffer it consumes, keeping reserves strong enough to reassure markets and absorb future external stress.
- **Attract durable inflows.** Prefer measures that draw stable, longer-term capital and export earnings over repeated spot intervention, addressing the pressure at its source.
- **Strengthen the external sector.** Build export competitiveness and a manageable current-account position so that the rupee faces less frequent and less severe pressure, reducing the need to...

The Dividend Is a Deadline: Jobs, Not Numbers, Decide It

A young population is not an asset in itself; it is a bill that comes due, payable only in jobs, and a country that cannot employ its youth does not bank the dividend, it inherits the burden.

- **Make job creation the central goal.** Orient industrial, trade and MSME policy explicitly around generating formal, productive employment at the scale the growing workforce requires.
- **Skill for the actual demand.** Align skilling and vocational training with the needs of industry so that youth are employable, closing the gap between education and the labour market.
- **Bring women into the workforce.** Remove the barriers, care burdens, safety, mobility, that keep female labour-force participation low, since the dividend cannot be realised while half the...
- **Act within the window.** Treat the demographic transition as a deadline, front-loading employment and skilling investment now, before ageing shifts the age structure and the opportunity...

From Access to Resilience: The Case for a Jan Dhan 2.0

An open bank account is a door, not a house, and a decade spent building doors does not by itself keep anyone dry when it rains.

- **Bundle protection with the account.** Make PMJJBY and PMSBY effectively automatic on every active Jan Dhan account through an opt-out design and UPI Autopay premium collection, and enforce...
- **Build a portable pension for informal work.** Extend Atal Pension Yojana and NPS coverage using the e-Shram registry, with government co-contribution for the lowest earners and full...
- **Design for irregular income.** Encourage micro-savings and recurring-deposit products that accept very small and irregular deposits, and use Account Aggregator based cash-flow lending so that...
- **Measure health, not headcount.** Replace accounts-opened as the headline metric with an outcome dashboard, covering active-usage rates, insurance and pension penetration, and the share of...

Quotas at the Gate: What CETA's Auto Tariffs Really Signal

India has not opened its automobile market; it has cut a small window in the wall, fitted a meter to it, and told the domestic industry exactly how many years it has to get ready.

- **Use the phase-in as an adjustment window, not a grievance.** The staged expansion of the quota gives the domestic industry a defined runway; policy support should be tied to measurable gains...
- **Administer the quota transparently.** Publish allocation, utilisation and certificate data, since opaque quota allocation invites rent-seeking, and a tariff-rate quota is only as good as the...
- **Police the rules of origin.** Enforce value-addition thresholds strictly so that vehicles or components merely finished in the United Kingdom do not capture the concession, which is the...
- **Convert the export access into actual exports.** The gains in textiles, leather, footwear and gems will not realise themselves; they need standards compliance, logistics improvement and...

A Better Yardstick: The IIP Swaps WPI for PPI as Its Deflator

A statistic is only as honest as the ruler behind it, and when India swaps a worn ruler for a sharper one, the story its factories tell changes even if the factories do not.

- **Institutionalise regular revisions.** Fix a predictable cycle for base-year updates across GDP, CPI, WPI and IIP so no index drifts a decade out of date again, keeping measurement aligned...
- **Complete the WPI-to-PPI transition carefully.** Run the WPI in parallel through the announced window so price-escalation contracts can migrate, then move fully to the PPI framework as the...
- **Invest in statistical capacity.** Strengthen the National Statistical Office with resources, autonomy and modern data pipelines, since credible numbers are a public good that underpins every...
- **Communicate methodology transparently.** Publish clear documentation of base years, deflators and weights so analysts, investors and citizens can trust and interrogate the figures, which is...

A Record Gap: June Trade Deficit Widens on Costlier Energy

A trade gap is not a verdict of failure by itself, but when it widens because the bill for imported energy has jumped, it is a reminder that a country importing most of its oil buys its vulnerability along with its fuel.

- **Hedge the energy exposure.** Diversify crude suppliers, build and draw on strategic petroleum reserves, and accelerate the shift to renewables, green hydrogen and electric mobility, since...
- **Lift export competitiveness.** Deepen trade agreements, ease logistics and compliance costs, and move up the value chain in manufacturing and electronics so exports grow faster and narrow the...
- **Protect the services and remittances cushion.** Sustain the software, business-services and skilled-migration advantages that finance the goods deficit, and negotiate mobility and market...
- **Guard reserves and the rupee.** Maintain an adequate reserves buffer and let the exchange rate absorb shocks without disorderly moves, so a price-driven trade shock does not become a...

Above the Line: June Inflation Breaches the RBI Target and Tests the MPC

A central bank aims at the middle of a band, not merely inside it, so an inflation print that jumps above the 4 per cent target after eighteen quiet months is not a rounding error but a signal the Monetary Policy Committee cannot ignore.

- **Diagnose before deciding.** The MPC should distinguish the transient food component from the stickier energy-and-core passthrough, tightening only if the second is broadening, since a rate...
- **Lean on supply-side management.** Government must use buffer stocks, better cold-chain and storage, and smoother agricultural supply chains to blunt food-price volatility, which is the real...
- **Guard inflation expectations.** Communicate clearly that repeated breaches will not be tolerated, so that households and firms do not build higher inflation into wages and prices, which is...
- **Watch the monsoon and crude.** Track the twin external risks of a weak or uneven monsoon and elevated global oil, and keep the strategic reserve and fiscal buffers ready, so the economy can...

Nine Days of Cushion: India's Thin Oil Reserve and the Case for Depth

Energy security is not measured on the day the tankers arrive but on the day they might not, and a reserve that covers barely a week of imports is a cushion thin enough to feel the floor through it.

- **Accelerate Phase II capacity.** Government must fast-track the Chandikhol reserve and the Padur expansion, and plan further storage, so that emergency cover climbs meaningfully toward...
- **Fill reserves counter-cyclically.** Use periods of soft global prices to buy and store crude cheaply, turning the reserve into both an insurance stock and a value play, which eases the fiscal...
- **Diversify sources and routes.** Deepen supply ties beyond a few Gulf producers and invest in alternative logistics that reduce dependence on the Strait of Hormuz, so a single chokepoint...
- **Bring in commercial and private stocks.** Encourage refiners and private players to hold larger operational reserves and integrate them into a national emergency framework, multiplying the...

Ten-Minute Trade: India's Retail Rules Are Slower Than Its Delivery

A market that can deliver groceries in ten minutes but takes ten years to update its competition rules has let commerce outrun governance, and the widening gap between how Indians shop and how the state regulates shopping is now the...

- **Modernise the e-commerce framework.** Government should replace the patchwork of press notes with a clear, enforceable policy that closes inventory-control workarounds and explicitly covers...
- **Strengthen predatory-pricing scrutiny.** Empower the Competition Commission of India with faster tools and clearer thresholds to act against sustained below-cost pricing before small...
- **Level the field for kiranas.** Support small retailers through digital onboarding, access to the Open Network for Digital Commerce, and credit, so they compete rather than merely survive.
- **Mandate transparency.** Require platforms to disclose ownership links with sellers and the true cost basis of discounts, so regulators and consumers can distinguish efficiency from predation.

The Ethics of the Cargo Manifest: India Bans Imports Made With Forced Labour

A country that writes the conditions of labour into the conditions of trade is saying that a bill of lading carries a moral weight, and that no price is low enough to launder the coercion embedded in a product's making.

- **Build traceability before enforcement bites.** Government must equip customs and the DGFT with supply-chain mapping and third-party audit standards, because a ban without the means to prove...
- **Ease the burden on small importers.** Design a proportionate due-diligence regime with clear certification norms and support for smaller firms, so the measure targets genuine abuse rather...
- **Keep the ethical and strategic tracks distinct.** Communicate the ban as a principled labour-standards commitment tied to India's ILO obligations, so it is not seen purely as a bargaining...
- **Push for multilateral norms.** Work through the ILO and trade forums to build shared, rules-based standards on labour in trade, so that such measures do not fragment into competing unilateral...

The Wholesale Warning: When Producer Prices Outrun the Shop Shelf

When the price a factory pays races ahead of the price a household sees, the gap is not a statistical curiosity but a warning that today's producer cost is tomorrow's shelf price, and a central bank that watches only one of the two indices...

- **Treat wholesale data as early warning.** The RBI and government should monitor the WPI surge as a leading indicator of retail pressure, rather than dismissing it because the formal target...
- **Cushion the energy pass-through.** Manage fuel taxation and buffer measures so that the crude-driven wholesale spike does not translate one-for-one into consumer prices, protecting household...
- **Watch producer margins.** Track corporate margin compression closely, since the point at which firms can no longer absorb input costs is the point at which wholesale inflation becomes retail...
- **Diversify supply chains.** Reduce exposure to single-source commodity shocks by broadening import sources for crude and industrial metals, blunting the volatility that drives the WPI.

From Wholesale to Producer Prices: India Redraws Its Inflation Compass

A price index is not a dry accounting exercise. It is the lens through which a country reads its own economy, and the lens India has used at the wholesale level is a colonial inheritance that no longer matches how value is actually created.

- **Sequence the transition carefully.** Run the WPI and PPI in parallel for a defined overlap so analysts, businesses and policymakers can build back-series and understand the level shift before...
- **Fix the contracts problem early.** Countless commercial agreements carry price-escalation clauses tied to WPI. Issue clear conversion guidance and mapping tables so that switching the...
- **Build the Services PPI with rigour.** Services prices are notoriously hard to measure. Invest in survey design, sampling and quality-adjustment methods so the services component is credible...
- **Communicate the purpose publicly.** Position the PPI as an upgrade in economic literacy for the country, aligned with the IMF standard and national-accounts needs, so that users trust rather...

The Magnet Trap: Why India's Rare Earth Push Must Master Processing, Not Just...

A country can build the factory that stamps out magnets and still be a hostage, because the leverage in rare earths lies not in the last step of assembly but in the chemistry of separation that China has quietly monopolised for a...

- **Invest in separation and hydrometallurgy.** Fund domestic capacity to separate and refine rare earth oxides and build the skilled workforce for it, since this is the stage where dependence...
- **Secure heavy rare earths.** Use KABIL and the National Critical Mineral Mission to acquire and diversify sources of dysprosium and terbium beyond China, including through friendly-country...
- **Sequence the scheme with inputs.** Pair the REPM manufacturing incentives with guaranteed domestic feedstock, so magnet plants are not left dependent on imported material that can be...
- **Build a recycling and substitution ecosystem.** Support recovery of rare earths from end-of-life products and research into magnet designs that reduce heavy rare earth content.

Hold the Line on Trade, Tighten the Belt at Home

A nation negotiates from strength abroad only when its books balance at home. India can hold firm on trade terms with Washington precisely to the extent that its fiscal house is seen to be in order.

- **Protect the glide path.** Treat the FRBM consolidation trajectory as a commitment device, not a soft target, and resist slippage even when a single budget makes deferral tempting.
- **Absorb the Pay Commission credibly.** Plan for the Eighth Pay Commission cost within the medium-term framework, so a foreseeable expenditure does not become an excuse to loosen the deficit...
- **Anchor on debt, not just deficit.** Shift the medium-term conversation toward a falling debt-to-GDP ratio, which better captures sustainability and reassures external partners.
- **Negotiate the BTA on merit.** Hold firm on terms that serve India development and market-access interests, backed by the credibility that fiscal discipline provides, rather than conceding...

Waste to Wealth, Stalled: Why SATAT Has Not Delivered on Compressed Biogas

A scheme that set out to build five thousand biogas plants and turn crop waste and cattle dung into transport fuel has, years later, commissioned barely a hundred, and the gap between that ambition and that arithmetic is the real story of...

- **Anchor demand through the blending mandate.** Government should enforce the Compressed Biogas Blending Obligation firmly so that developers have assured, growing demand, the single change...
- **Fix the feedstock chain.** Build farmer aggregation models, biomass supply networks, and storage so that plants secure steady, affordable feedstock through the year.
- **Ease financing.** Deploy central financial assistance under the National Bioenergy Programme and viability-gap support, and encourage priority-sector lending, to lower the cost of capital for...
- **Guarantee grid access and fair pricing.** Ensure timely pipeline connectivity and remunerative, predictable procurement prices, so that the offtake promise that underpins the scheme is...

Sugar, Exports and the Inflation Calculus India Cannot Ignore

Every time India shuts its export tap to hold down a price at home, it steadies the kitchen shelf and unsettles the field, and the bill for that steadiness is quietly sent to the farmer.

- **Make intervention rules-based, not ad hoc.** Announce a transparent, pre-committed framework linking export limits to observable stock-to-use and price triggers, so that mills and farmers can...
- **Protect the farmer inside the curb.** Since export restrictions squeeze mill cash flow, tie them to mechanisms that keep cane payments current, whether through timely release of buffer-stock...
- **Balance the three claims on cane.** Calibrate the ethanol-blending diversion against food-sugar needs each season, so that fuel policy, consumer prices and farm income are traded off...
- **Prefer stock tools over trade tools.** Use buffer stocks, minimum-stock holding norms and open-market operations as the first line of price stabilisation, reserving export curbs for genuine...

Tourism Is India Most Underused Engine of Jobs and Growth

Few sectors turn a rupee of investment into as many jobs as tourism, and fewer still let a country monetise what it already possesses: its landscape, its history and its faith.

- **Invest in last-mile infrastructure.** Prioritise destination-level roads, sanitation, signage, safety and amenities under Swadesh Darshan and PRASHAD, since the traveller's experience, and...
- **Deepen connectivity and easy entry.** Extend UDAN air links and rail access to secondary destinations, and keep simplifying the e-Visa and arrival experience, so that the friction of getting...
- **Coordinate the Centre and the states.** Treat tourism as a genuinely joint mission, aligning central schemes with state execution and local-body delivery, so that circuits, medical hubs and...
- **Grow within limits.** Build eco and spiritual tourism to sustainable carrying capacities, with waste, crowd and access management, so that scaling the sector protects rather than degrades the...

A Slower Dragon: Why China Growth Problem Is India Trade Test

When the world's manufacturing floor slows down, it does not simply make less; it tries to sell more of what it already made, and that is why China's roughly **4.3 per cent** quarter is India's problem as much as Beijing's.

- **Sharpen the trade shield.** Equip the **DGTR** for faster, data-driven **anti-dumping and safeguard** investigations so surplus Chinese steel, EVs and solar cannot undercut Indian producers.
- **Turn diversification into investment.** Convert the **China-plus-one** moment into hard gains by easing land, power, logistics and approvals for firms relocating manufacturing to India.
- **Protect strategic sectors, use cheap inputs wisely.** Distinguish finished-goods dumping, which must be resisted, from cheaper intermediate inputs that can lower costs for Indian downstream...
- **Reduce dependence, deepen resilience.** Cut the structural **trade deficit** by scaling domestic capacity in electronics, active pharmaceutical ingredients and clean-energy components rather than...

Reading the June GST Numbers: Headline Growth, Hollow Core

A tax collection can rise sharply and still tell a worrying story, because what matters is not how much the state gathered but where the money came from.

- **Report and read the split, always.** Analysts and policymakers should track **domestic GST separately from import GST** and in real terms, so that the composition of revenue, not just its level...
- **Address the consumption softness directly.** If the domestic leg is weak, the policy lever is demand support for mass-market and rural households, through employment, income and targeted...
- **Widen the base and deepen compliance.** Sustain revenue quality by broadening the GST base and tightening compliance through **e-way bill** analytics and data matching, so that buoyancy comes...
- **Use the GST Council for rate rationalisation.** The **GST Council** should continue simplifying and rationalising the rate structure to reduce distortions and support consumption in the segments...

When Banks Lend by Algorithm, Data Becomes the Regulator

When a loan is decided by a model rather than a manager, the character of the borrower matters less than the quality of the data, and a bank that cannot vouch for its data can no longer vouch for its credit.

- **Treat data as a governed asset.** Banks should assign **named ownership** for each data domain, institutionalise **quality checks** and maintain **lineage documentation**, so that every credit-relevant...
- **Supervise the model, not only the loan.** Embed independent **model validation, bias testing and ongoing monitoring** into governance, since an algorithm that is unmonitored will drift, and drift...
- **Support the smaller institutions.** The RBI and industry bodies should provide standards, tooling and phased timelines so that **cooperative banks and NBFCs** can meet the framework without being...
- **Anchor it in consumer trust.** Align data governance with the **FREE-AI** principles and the **Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023**, ensuring fairness, explainability and recourse, so that...

Consolidating the SRVA Framework: The Slow Road to Rupee Internationalisation

A currency does not become international by decree. It becomes international when enough of the world wants to hold it, invoice in it and settle in it because doing so is convenient and safe. The Reserve Bank of India's decision to...

- **Widen the partner base.** Prioritise SRVA arrangements with countries where India runs balanced or surplus trade, so that partners are not left holding rupees they cannot spend, which is the...
- **Deepen recycling avenues.** Broaden the menu of rupee-denominated instruments (g-secs, corporate bonds, project finance) so that surplus rupee balances earn returns and stay in the system...
- **Sequence convertibility carefully.** Advance capital-account opening only in step with fiscal consolidation, credible inflation control and robust reserves, honouring the logic of the...
- **Anchor macro credibility.** Sustain the low-inflation, stable-growth record that ultimately does more for the rupee's global standing than any circular, because trust in the issuer is what...

One PAN, One Registration: Rethinking GST Compliance for Pan-India Firms

The **Goods and Services Tax** was sold to the country as "one nation, one tax." Eight years on, a company selling in fifteen states still keeps fifteen separate registrations, files returns in each and reconciles credit across all of them. A...

- **Pilot with large, low-risk taxpayers.** Begin centralised registration for well-rated, pan-India firms whose supply data is clean, learning operational lessons before any wider rollout.
- **Invest in GSTN attribution.** Strengthen the network's capacity to slice consolidated returns into accurate state-wise revenue, since state confidence hinges entirely on this back-end...
- **Route it through the GST Council.** Build consensus under Article 279A so that states co-own the reform, treating their revenue certainty as a design requirement, not an afterthought.
- **Sequence with return simplification.** Pair centralised registration with simpler, pre-filled returns and faster input-tax-credit settlement, so the compliance dividend is felt across the...

Rural Incomes and the Missing Demand: Reading the NABARD Sentiment Survey

Headline GDP numbers can glow while the village purse stays empty, and the latest NABARD sentiment survey is a warning that India's growth story is running on one engine while the rural half of the economy quietly stalls; demand that is...

- **Lift farm profitability, not just output.** Improve price realisation through better procurement, storage and market access, and cushion input costs so that agrarian terms of trade turn in...
- **Protect and expand rural wages.** Ensure timely, adequate demand-driven wage work (MGNREGA-type) as an automatic income floor during slack seasons and distress years.
- **Build the rural non-farm economy.** Back rural enterprise, food processing, construction and services through credit, skilling and cluster support so incomes do not depend on farming alone.
- **Target income transfers and credit smartly.** Use direct support and affordable NABARD-refinanced credit to relieve stressed households, while monitoring sentiment surveys as an early-warning...

Reviving Textile Leadership: Build Institutions, Not Just Incentives

A country that clothed the world for centuries now holds a shrinking sliver of the global apparel market, and the lesson from the competitors that overtook it is blunt: incentives buy time, but only institutions buy competitiveness.

- **Institutionalise design and skilling.** Fund design schools, common design studios in PM MITRA clusters, and large-scale garment training so India climbs from fabric to fashion.
- **Close the man-made-fibre gap.** Use the PLI scheme to build competitive synthetic and blended-fibre capacity, since global demand has moved beyond pure cotton.
- **Secure market access.** Conclude free-trade agreements with major consuming markets so Indian garments enjoy the tariff access that lifted Vietnam and Bangladesh.
- **Build compliance and financing rails.** Create shared testing, certification and low-cost credit facilities so small firms can meet buyer standards and scale up.

The Missing Jobs for Gen Z

The headline jobless rate can look reassuring while a generation quietly struggles. For India's **Gen Z graduates**, the problem is not simply finding any work, it is finding **quality work**, and the gap between the two is where the real...

- **Create quality formal jobs.** Prioritise labour-intensive manufacturing and services, and use the employment-linked incentive scheme to reward formal hiring, so growth translates into secure...
- **Align skilling to industry.** Reform Skill India and expand apprenticeships so that qualifications map to real demand, closing the gap between what graduates learn and what employers need.
- **Formalise the informal.** Ease the transition of informal enterprises and workers into the formal economy through simpler compliance and social-security portability, raising both security and...
- **Measure job quality, not just quantity.** Track informality, underemployment and graduate outcomes alongside the headline rate, so policy is judged by the security of work created, not merely...

The Q1 FY27 Earnings Rebound: Broad Recovery or a Bank-Led Bounce

The first tranche of India Inc's April to June (Q1) FY27 results has landed with a cheerful headline: for a sample of about **150 companies**, both **net profit growth** and **net sales growth** touched multi-quarter highs, powered by heavyweight...

- **Watch revenue breadth, not headline profit.** Track whether net sales growth spreads beyond banks into consumer, manufacturing and capital-goods firms before declaring a recovery.
- **Let the consumption push work through.** Give the **GST rate rationalisation** time to lift volumes for mass-market goods, and monitor rural and urban demand indicators alongside results.
- **Close the profit-wage gap.** Encourage wage and employment growth so household incomes support consumption, making the recovery self-reinforcing rather than cost-driven.
- **Read nominal versus real carefully.** Discount price effects to judge true volume growth, and avoid mistaking margin expansion or one-off gains for durable demand.

Which Growth Number? Reading FY27 Through the Right Metric

A growth rate without a named metric is a headline, not a fact. Whether India grew fast or merely fast enough in **FY27** depends on whether you read **GDP** or **GVA**, **nominal** or **real** figures, and against which **base year**. The honest question is not...

- **Always name the metric.** Official communication and commentary should state GDP or GVA, nominal or real, and the base year alongside every growth figure, so numbers are not quoted out of...
- **Watch GVA for production, GDP for size.** Use GVA to read the health of sectors and GDP to gauge the economy's overall market value, and explain divergences by the tax-subsidy mix.
- **Make the base-year revision transparent.** Publish the methodology, data sources and back-series for the 2022-23 base so the revision builds credibility rather than suspicion.
- **Strengthen statistical capacity.** Invest in timely, high-quality surveys and administrative data so the NSO can compile robust estimates and reduce the large revisions that erode public...

When a Few Mega Projects Flatter the Capex Numbers

India's private capital expenditure story looks stronger on the surface than it is underneath. A cluster of very large projects, most visibly in **AI compute** and **data centres** and in **power**, is inflating the headline capex figure, while the...

- **Read composition, not just the headline.** Separate lumpy digital-infrastructure and power projects from broad manufacturing capex before judging the strength of the private investment cycle.
- **Revive demand and utilisation.** Support consumption and exports so that **capacity utilisation** rises sustainably, the real trigger for broad-based factory investment.
- **Use public capex to crowd in.** Sustain infrastructure spending and improve logistics and ease of doing business so private manufacturers respond, converting public investment into private...
- **Widen the base of animal spirits.** Reduce policy and cost uncertainty for the median firm, not just the marquee investor, so that investment spreads across sectors rather than clustering in...

Food, Fuel and Forex: The Case for Strategic Buffers

A reserve looks like a cost in calm weather and like salvation in a storm. The prudent state pays the premium before the storm arrives.

- **Size buffers to realistic worst cases.** Calibrate food, fuel and forex reserves to cover credible shocks, avoiding both dangerous thinness and wasteful over-accumulation.
- **Expand and diversify strategic petroleum reserves.** Add storage capacity and diversify crude sourcing so a single choke point or supplier cannot cripple supply.
- **Modernise food-buffer management.** Improve storage, cut spoilage and use scientific buffer norms so the food reserve protects the poor without ballooning carrying costs.
- **Preserve external-sector strength.** Maintain healthy forex cover and prudent debt levels so that capital-flow volatility does not become a balance-of-payments crisis.

Reading Wholesale Inflation Right: When the Squeeze Comes from Costs, Not Demand

Not all inflation is the same disease, and prescribing the same medicine for every fever can make the patient worse. When prices rise because factories, farms and fuel have become dearer to run, raising interest rates to cool demand treats...

- **Diagnose before dosing.** Officially decompose inflation into its cost and demand components so that policy responds to the actual driver rather than to the headline number.
- **Target the cost channels.** Where fuel taxes, freight, port delays or administered input prices are inflating costs, act on them directly to relieve the squeeze at source.
- **Reduce import vulnerability.** Deepen domestic supply of critical inputs and diversify sources so that external price shocks pass through less violently into wholesale costs.
- **Keep the policy mix coherent.** Reserve rate action for genuine demand-pull pressure and pair it with fiscal and supply-side measures when the pressure is structural, so that fighting...

Taxing the Cure: Why 18 Per Cent GST on Medical Research and Training Is...

A tax is a signal as much as a levy: it tells society what to do less of. When the state places its standard rate on medical research and on the training that keeps doctors current, it quietly taxes discovery and competence at the same...

- **Reclassify at the GST Council.** Move medical research services and CME from the standard slab to **zero-rated or concessional** treatment, so the tax stops penalising knowledge creation.
- **Prefer zero-rating over bare exemption.** Where feasible, zero-rate rather than merely exempt, so that institutions can reclaim input taxes and are not left with hidden costs.
- **Ring-fence genuine merit activity.** Define clearly which research and education services qualify, so relief reaches bona fide institutions and conferences without opening loopholes for...
- **Align tax with health policy.** Make the taxation of health-adjacent services consistent with the exemption for healthcare itself, so fiscal and public-health goals reinforce rather than...

The Retail Rush into F&O: Why a Deep Derivatives Market Still Needs Guardrails

A market that lets a farmer lock in next season's price and a fund manager offload risk is a genuine achievement of modern finance. The same market, opened without guardrails to a first-time saver chasing a weekly jackpot, can quietly...

- **Suitability at the gateway.** Introduce a graded access system so that access to the most leveraged, short-dated products depends on demonstrated experience, risk capacity or a simple...
- **Plain, upfront disclosure.** Mandate that trading platforms show, at the point of entry, the real aggregate loss statistics and the trader's own running profit-and-loss, so the odds are...
- **Curb the addictive design.** Limit gamified nudges, streak rewards and one-tap re-entry features that convert investing into compulsive play, and keep the 2024 curbs under regular review.
- **Invest in financial literacy.** Scale up investor-education programmes that explain hedging, leverage and time decay in plain language, so that participation rests on understanding rather...

When the Primary Market Runs Ahead of Profits

India's **primary market** is having a banner year, and the enthusiasm is spilling into every corner of the ecosystem. Companies raised a record of roughly **Rs 1.8 lakh crore** through **Initial Public Offerings (IPOs)** in FY26, and the number of...

- **Anchor valuations to earnings.** Encourage pricing that reflects realistic profitability rather than momentum, so that record issuance rests on companies that can sustain the prices investors...
- **Strengthen disclosure and gatekeeping.** Ensure the **red-herring prospectus** carries clear, risk-forward information and that **SEBI** and **merchant bankers** hold quality standards even as deal...
- **Watch the SME segment closely.** Apply proportionate scrutiny, suitability checks and risk warnings to smaller, thinly analysed issues where retail exposure and volatility are highest.
- **Deepen investor awareness.** Invest in financial literacy so retail participants understand that IPO gains are not guaranteed, reducing the herd behaviour that turns enthusiasm into froth.

Why Premiumisation Alone Cannot Carry Consumption

India's consumption story is increasingly a tale of two markets. At the top, a thin layer of affluent consumers is trading up to premium cars, high-end phones and branded goods, a shift companies celebrate as **premiumisation**. Beneath it...

- **Read volumes, not just values.** Separate **value growth** driven by premium pricing from **volume growth** driven by broad demand before judging the strength of consumption, so the headline does not...
- **Widen purchasing power.** Support employment and income growth across the distribution so that the base of consumers expands, converting into the volumes that make demand durable and job-rich.
- **Revive rural and mass demand.** Strengthen **rural demand** and entry-level segments through incomes and jobs so consumption rests on the whole **K**, not just its upper arm.
- **Target inclusive growth, not just premium markets.** Design policy to lift the bottom and middle of the income distribution, ensuring the consumption engine is broad-based rather than...

Plastic Money, Literally: The RBI Weighs Polymer Banknotes

Even in the age of UPI, India still prints and handles vast quantities of cash. If notes must exist, they should last longer, stay cleaner and be harder to fake, and that is the quiet case for switching from paper to plastic.

- **Pilot before scaling.** Introduce polymer notes in a limited denomination and region, measure durability, counterfeiting and public response, then expand on evidence.
- **Build recyclability in from the start.** Pair the rollout with a dedicated plan to collect and recycle worn polymer notes, so environmental cost does not offset the savings.
- **Communicate for acceptance.** Run public awareness on how to identify and handle polymer notes, protecting vulnerable and less-literate users from confusion and fraud.
- **Situate it in the wider currency strategy.** Treat polymer notes as complementary to the UPI-led shift, cutting the cost of the cash that remains while digital payments carry the growing...

Reading the Engine Room: What the Revamped Core Sector Index Tells Us

When core-sector output grew about **5 per cent** in June 2026, a multi-month high, the number made headlines. Fewer people noticed that the index producing that number had just been rebuilt from the ground up. The **Index of Eight Core...**

- **Communicate methodology transparently.** The Office of the Economic Adviser should publish clear back-series and bridging notes so users can compare old and new readings without being misled...
- **Read growth with the base effect in mind.** Analysts and administrators should always check the comparison period before celebrating or worrying about a single print, distinguishing genuine...
- **Institutionalise periodic rebasing.** Rebasing should happen on a regular, predictable schedule so indices never drift a decade out of date again, keeping the ruler aligned with the economy.
- **Build public data literacy.** Government and educators should treat the ability to interpret official statistics critically as a civic skill, so headlines inform rather than mislead.

The Invisible Cushion: How Services and Remittances Steady India's Books

India runs a large and persistent deficit in the trade of goods, importing far more merchandise than it exports. And yet, in the **January to March 2026 quarter**, the country reported a **current-account surplus of about USD 7.1 billion**. The...

- **Deepen services competitiveness.** Support higher-value services, from research and design to global capability centres, through skilling, data infrastructure and stable regulation, so the...
- **Protect remittance corridors.** Lower the cost of sending money home, safeguard migrant workers' interests abroad and keep formal channels attractive, so this stable inflow endures.
- **Do not ignore the goods gap.** Continue building manufacturing and export capacity so the merchandise deficit narrows over time, reducing reliance on invisibles to balance the books.
- **Diversify the invisible base.** Broaden services beyond a few sectors and geographies so the cushion is resilient to shocks in any single market or skill.

Free Trade Deals Are a Start, Not a Substitute for Reform

A free-trade agreement opens a door. It does not walk your goods through it. India is entering its most ambitious phase of trade diplomacy in a generation, yet the hard truth is that a tariff line falling to zero abroad means little if a...

- **Close the utilisation gap.** Build a simple, digital rules-of-origin and certification system so **MSMEs** can actually claim preferences, backed by export-facilitation cells that hand-hold small...
- **Invest in quality infrastructure.** Expand accredited **testing, standards and certification** labs so Indian goods clear partner **non-tariff measures** without costly re-testing abroad, turning...
- **Compress logistics costs.** Accelerate **PM GatiShakti** and the **National Logistics Policy** to bring freight and dwell times down, since every point shaved off logistics cost is a permanent...
- **Sequence domestic reform with trade opening.** Pair each agreement with behind-the-border reform in land, labour, power and contract enforcement, so tariff liberalisation is matched by the...

GST 2.0: Reading the Two-Slab Reform and What Comes Next

For eight years the argument about the Goods and Services Tax was that it had too many rates. That argument is now over. With **GST 2.0**, the Council has done the hard thing and simplified the structure. The interesting question has shifted...

- **Prove the buoyancy bet.** Track whether the lower rates lift **consumption and compliance** enough to offset the short-term revenue loss, and be ready to fine-tune the 5 and 18 per cent bands if...
- **Rebuild the state safeguard.** With the **compensation cess** gone, design a transparent revenue-sharing or shortfall mechanism through the **GST Council** so that no state is left worse off...
- **Finish the inverted-duty cleanup.** Use the converged rate structure to correct the remaining cases where inputs are taxed above outputs, releasing working capital in sectors such as textiles...
- **Complete the unfinished agenda.** Resolve residual classification disputes, and over time bring items still outside GST, notably **petroleum** products, into the net so the base broadens and the...

The Missing Half of the Milk Story: A Case for Fodder Security

We celebrate the milk without asking what the cow eats. The health of the dairy economy is decided not in the dairy but in the fodder field.

- **Launch a dedicated fodder-security mission.** Create a focused programme with clear targets for green and dry fodder output, distinct from broader livestock schemes, so fodder gets its own...
- **Promote high-yield fodder seed and dual-purpose crops.** Distribute improved fodder varieties, encourage dual-purpose grain-and-fodder cultivation, and bring fodder into the seed-supply and...
- **Build fodder banks and a drought contingency plan.** Establish local fodder banks, silage and hay reserves, and a rapid-response mechanism to move fodder into drought-hit districts before...
- **Restore and manage common grazing land.** Protect and regenerate village pastures and degraded commons through community management, easing the burden on the landless who depend on free...

Filling the Tanks: Private Capital and India's Oil Reserves

> "A nation that imports most of its oil buys not just fuel but insurance, and India is now asking private capital to help pay the premium on its energy security." India plans to expand its emergency oil cushion by building **Strategic...**

- **Retain strategic release control.** Ensure that the decision to draw down the reserve rests unconditionally with the government, insulated from any private partner's commercial preference.
- **Ring-fence strategic from commercial storage.** Clearly separate the emergency stockpile from any leased or traded capacity, so a crisis drawdown is never delayed by commercial contracts.
- **Structure VGF prudently.** Cap the grant at a disciplined share of project cost and tie disbursement to milestones, so public money crowds in private capital without overpaying for it.
- **Move toward the 90-day norm.** Sequence Phase-II and future phases to steadily lift India's import cover closer to the IEA benchmark, coordinating with commercial stocks held by oil...

Paying Small Firms on Time: Mandating TReDS for CPSE Procurement

> "A small firm rarely dies because its product failed. It dies because a large, solvent buyer sat on its invoice for six months. The cheapest industrial policy is simply to pay on time." The Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium...

- **Enforce buyer onboarding.** Make CPSE registration and active use of TReDS a monitored compliance metric, with accountability on the enterprise board, so the mandate is real rather than...
- **Penalise delayed acceptance.** Set firm timelines for buyers to accept or verify uploaded invoices, with interest liability under the MSMED Act, 2006 for those who stall.
- **Widen the mandate gradually.** Extend the same discipline from CPSEs to large private buyers and government departments, since the delayed-payments problem is economy-wide.
- **Ease supplier onboarding.** Simplify registration, integrate Udyam-registered MSMEs automatically, and raise awareness so small firms actually use the platform available to them.

The Labour Codes and the Test of Consultation

A code is only as good as the consultation that shapes its rules, and labour reform that skips the workers reforms nothing durable.

- **Revive genuine tripartism:** convene the rule-making through the Indian Labour Conference and state-level tripartite bodies so employers and unions co-author the rules, restoring the...
- **Set a credible floor wage and enforce it:** peg the national floor wage to a transparent, need-based formula and back it with adequate inspectors and web-based grievance redress, so coverage...
- **Operationalise gig-worker security first:** notify aggregator contribution rates and a portable, Aadhaar-linked benefits account quickly, converting the codes' most progressive promise into a...
- **Guard the federal floor:** the Centre should model rules that states cannot dilute below a baseline, preventing a race to the bottom while allowing local flexibility above the floor.

When the Model Is Wrong: Fixing Accountability for AI in Finance

> "An algorithm can deny a loan, price a risk or flag a fraud in milliseconds, but when it is wrong, a human institution must still own the consequence. The RBI's draft on model risk is really a draft on accountability." As banks and...

- **Anchor accountability at the board.** Keep liability with the regulated entity so that no lender can hide behind a vendor, making the board the ultimate owner of every model deployed.
- **Institutionalise independent validation.** Require a validation function separate from model developers, with authority to reject or retire models, so that no team certifies its own work.
- **Support smaller lenders to comply.** Offer shared validation utilities, standardised toolkits and phased timelines so that cooperative banks and small NBFCs are not priced out of responsible...
- **Make disclosure meaningful.** Ensure customers are told in plain language when AI drives a credit or pricing decision, and give them a route to human review, aligning with the Digital...

The Gatekeeper Problem: India's Digital-Competition Moment

When a market has a **gatekeeper**, the toll is invisible but real: consumers pay in higher prices and lost choice, and rivals pay in denied access. The question every regulator now faces is whether to punish that toll after the fact, or write...

- **Legislate a calibrated ex-ante Bill.** Enact the **Digital Competition Bill** but designate only truly **systemically significant** firms, with thresholds high enough to spare emerging Indian...
- **Strengthen the CCI's digital capacity.** Build a specialised **digital markets unit** with data-science and technical expertise so enforcement is evidence-led and swift, not merely punitive.
- **Target conduct, not size.** Prohibit specific harms, **self-preferencing, anti-steering and non-public data misuse**, rather than penalising scale, so that success in the market is not itself an...
- **Coordinate globally while protecting sovereignty.** Learn from the **DMA and other jurisdictions** and align on principles, while tailoring rules to India's stage of digital development and its...

The Model and the Endowment: Why the Jobs Question Sits Behind the Protests

A country with abundant labour and scarce capital has built an industrial policy that rewards capital intensity. The examination protests are the visible symptom; the mismatch between India's factor endowment and its growth model is the...

- **Restore public provision in education and health.** Reaching the NEP's 6 per cent of GDP for education is the single most direct intervention in employability.
- **Rebalance industrial policy towards labour intensity.** Support for MSMEs, which already generate 40 per cent of exports, buys more employment per rupee than champion-building.
- **Insist on domestic IP creation.** Employment in global capability centres is welcome; ownership of what they produce is what converts jobs into capability.
- **Rebuild examination integrity as an economic measure.** A credential system that cannot be trusted destroys the return on every year of schooling behind it.
- **Treat the protests as information.** The temptation to see conspiracy where none exists, or to attach dark labels to young demonstrators, forfeits the diagnostic value of the moment.

The Next Frontier: Why the Investment Climate Now Depends on States

A national reform can change the law on paper, but the plot of land, the factory licence and the labour inspector all live in a state, which is why the next big gain in India's investment climate will not be won in Delhi, it will be won or...

- **Deepen state-level factor reform.** Prioritise digitised land records, ready industrial land banks, quick land conversion and rational stamp duty, and get states to notify enabling rules...
- **Make single windows genuinely single.** Move states from a directory of forms to true end-to-end, time-bound, deemed-approval clearances, benchmarked transparently through BRAP and B-READY.
- **Sharpen competitive federalism.** Publish granular, credible sub-national investment-climate data so capital can reward reforming states and laggards feel the pressure to catch up.
- **Add the cooperative scaffold.** Use NITI Aayog and the Union to share model rules, build administrative capacity in weaker states, and prevent competition from becoming a race to the bottom...

The Next Price Shock May Begin in the Fodder Field

We watch the grain markets for the next inflation shock. It may instead arrive quietly through the cattle shed, because a hungry cow does not wait for the harvest.

- **Build a fodder early-warning system.** Track district-level fodder and grassland condition alongside rainfall, so the dairy channel is monitored in its own right rather than inferred from...
- **Create and stock fodder banks.** Pre-position silage, hay and feed reserves in deficit-prone milk belts, and enable quick inter-state movement of fodder during a dry year to prevent distress...
- **Launch a green-fodder push.** Promote high-yield forage varieties, dual-purpose crops, azolla and fodder cultivation on degraded and margin land to shrink the structural deficit.
- **Protect the dairy household.** Ready timely support through cooperatives and animal-nutrition schemes so small dairy farmers are not forced to sell cattle, and so a supply dip does not harden...

The Unfinished Agenda: Second-Generation Reforms and Factor Markets

In 1991 India decided what firms could make and sell; the reform it never finished was how firms get the land to build on, the workers to hire and the capital to invest, and until those factor markets are freed, the 1991 promise stays...

- **Free the land market.** Complete land-title digitisation, ready industrial land banks, ease conversion and rationalise stamp duty so acquisition stops being the first and hardest hurdle.
- **Operationalise the Labour Codes.** Get states to notify enabling rules, deliver portable social security, and remove threshold-based incentives that trap firms in smallness.
- **Deepen capital.** Build the corporate-bond market and development finance for patient capital, and pursue disciplined privatisation and disinvestment to reallocate capital productively.
- **Anchor to productivity.** Judge every reform by whether it raises total factor productivity and moves factors to their best use, not merely by whether it adds spending.

Crypto Comes Into the Light: India Operationalises the CARF

India has spent four years taxing virtual digital assets without being able to see them. A flat levy and a withholding tax captured revenue at the point of trade, but the state remained blind to what happened offshore, off-exchange and...

- **Activate exchange relationships early.** The Ministry of Finance should prioritise signing and operationalising bilateral activation arrangements under the CARF multilateral instrument, since...
- **Sequence the compliance burden.** Provide a phased onboarding window and standard technical schemas for smaller Indian platforms, so that the cost of Form 167 reporting does not quietly...
- **Reconsider the loss set-off bar.** The prohibition on setting off virtual digital asset losses, unusual in Indian tax design and without a clear analogue in the treatment of other capital...
- **Integrate the tax and anti-laundering pipelines.** Align RCASP reporting with **PMLA, 2002** obligations and the **FATF Travel Rule**, so that exchanges file once into a shared data architecture...
- **Publish enforcement expectations.** The CBDT should issue clear guidance on penalties for reporting failure under the new Act and on the treatment of good-faith classification errors, to...
- **Keep the CBDC track distinct.** Public communication should carefully separate sovereign digital currency from private crypto-assets, so that regulatory clarity on the **e-rupee** is never read...

From Calories to Nutrients: The Case for Reorienting India's Public Distribution...

India solved the calorie problem and left the nutrient problem standing. Nearly 80 crore people now receive free foodgrain at a cost above Rs 2.3 lakh crore a year, yet close to a third of Indian children remain underweight and more than a...

- **Reform the basket before the beneficiary list.** Extend **fortified rice** distribution across the whole PDS and phase pulses and edible oil into the entitlement for Antyodaya Anna Yojana...
- **Update the entitlement base.** Recompute NFSA coverage on fresh census population and a current household consumption expenditure survey rather than 2011 numbers. Without this, every argument...
- **Build exclusion insurance before any narrowing.** Statutory time-bound grievance redressal, a self-declaration route for the undocumented, and fully portable entitlements under **One Nation One...**
- **Give cash where markets work and food where they do not.** Where retail markets for pulses, eggs and vegetables function well, a nutrition-indexed transfer may outperform physical grain; in...
- **Converge the delivery platforms.** Align PDS reform with **POSHAN Abhiyaan** and Saksham Anganwadi, the mid-day meal scheme and antenatal care, so that the anaemia and stunting money reaches the...
- **Publish nutrition outcomes, not offtake.** The performance metric for the food ministry should shift from tonnes lifted and beneficiaries covered to measured change in anaemia, stunting...

The Pharmacy of the World Meets a Tariff Wall

India sells the United States medicine by the pill and captures very little of the value. Its generic makers fill close to half of all American prescriptions while earning a far smaller share of what Americans spend on drugs, which is...

- **Negotiate at the tariff line, not the sector.** India should seek a carve-out for essential and off-patent generics within the bilateral trade track, arguing affordability and continuity of...
- **Use the two-year window as a deadline, not a reprieve.** Firms and the Department of Pharmaceuticals should treat **August 2028** as the effective planning date, working back through site...
- **Diversify export destinations deliberately.** Accelerate regulatory harmonisation and market-access work in the European Union, Japan, Latin America and Africa, so that no single market again...
- **Deepen the API programme.** Extend and enlarge the **PLI scheme for bulk drugs** beyond its current **Rs 6,940 crore** outlay and its **2027-28** horizon, complete the three **Bulk Drug Parks**, and target...
- **Move up the value chain.** Support complex generics, biosimilars and novel drug delivery systems, where margins are wider and substitution by a tariff-protected domestic producer is far...
- **Protect the quality reputation.** Sustained investment in manufacturing compliance is the cheapest insurance available, because a single major USFDA import alert would do more damage to...

The Third Statute: Section 301 and the Limits of Negotiating With One Partner

When one legal authority for a tariff is struck down and a second lapses by its own terms, and the tariff nonetheless survives under a third statute, the tariff was never really about the statute. India has watched the same additional duty...

- **Close the bilateral trade agreement, but price the risk.** Conclude the first tranche with the United States on terms India can defend on agriculture and dairy, while building in review and...
- **Use the agreements India already has.** The **India-United Kingdom Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA)**, signed in London on 24 July 2025, entered into force on **15 July 2026**, and...
- **Defend the labour-intensive 55 per cent.** Textiles, gems and jewellery, marine products and leather absorb the duty and employ the most people. Targeted measures on working-capital credit...
- **Fix competitiveness, not just market access.** A 10 per cent duty is survivable for an exporter whose logistics, power, credit and compliance costs are competitive, and fatal for one whose...
- **Rebuild the multilateral case with allies.** India should work with like-minded members on Appellate Body restoration, and should reconsider its distance from interim appellate arrangements...
- **Prepare for the second shoe.** The excess-capacity Section 301 investigation is still open and reaches steel, chemicals, solar modules, electronics, semiconductors and transport equipment...

The Real Meaning of Systems: What the E-Commerce FDI Clarification Actually...

A policy label tells you what a rule is called. It does not tell you what the rule actually does. The distance between the two is where most policy analysis goes wrong, and where this clarification rewards a closer look.

- **Cross-reference FDI compliance with existing export documentation,** using customs and GST export-invoicing records to verify that inventory-based FDI benefits are claimed only for genuinely...
- **Publish clear, narrow definitional guidance** on what qualifies as "domestically manufactured" for this exception, to prevent interpretive stretching over time.
- **Periodically audit and report utilisation,** so policymakers and small-retailer associations can verify the ring-fence is holding in practice, not just on paper.
- **Pair the exception with manufacturing-incentive schemes** like PLI, so the export-oriented FDI channel reinforces, rather than operates independently of, India's broader manufacturing...
- **Resist further narrow exceptions without explicit safeguard design,** treating this clarification's ring-fencing approach as the template for any future FDI policy adjustment in sensitive...

The Impossible Trinity Closes In: RBI, the Rupee and the Limits of a Managed Float

A managed float is not a fourth option beyond the Impossible Trinity. It is a way of paying the trinity's cost in smaller, more frequent instalments instead of one large one, and instalments still add up to the full bill.

- **Accelerate energy diversification** away from imported oil, through renewable capacity addition and electric-mobility adoption, to structurally narrow the current account deficit's largest...
- **Deepen domestic capital markets** to reduce reliance on volatile foreign portfolio inflows for financing the deficit.
- **Use the RBI's toolkit for smoothing, not defending a level,** avoiding the temptation to treat any specific exchange-rate level as a target the trinity does not actually permit defending...
- **Build reserve adequacy buffers proactively** during periods of capital inflow, so the defensive toolkit has more room during the next period of outflow pressure.
- **Coordinate fiscal and monetary policy** on the current account deficit, since monetary tools alone cannot address a structural trade-and-energy-dependence problem.

The Moratorium Has Lapsed. India Should Still Not Tax the Wire.

A country that earns its digital-trade surplus by keeping the wire open should not be the first to reach for the tariff, just because the rule that kept the wire open has expired. The rule mattered less than the incentive that made the...

- **Do not impose customs duties on electronic transmissions,** preserving the tariff-free digital trade environment India's GCC and services-export model depends on.
- **Pursue digital-economy revenue through domestic instruments,** applying GST consistently to digital services rather than relying on border tariffs.
- **Engage actively in OECD/BEPS digital-taxation processes,** shaping multilateral rules for taxing multinational digital value in ways aligned with India's interests as both an exporter and a...
- **Signal continued support for a renewed or reformed moratorium** in future WTO negotiations, while working with other digital-services-exporting economies to build the consensus needed for...
- **Monitor and quantify India's digitally delivered services trade balance** transparently, so future policy positions are grounded in India's actual, not assumed, trade interest in this...

Jobless Growth Is the Real Story Behind the Exam-Protest Anxiety

Fixing how a scarce prize is awarded is not the same as making the prize less scarce. India has moved quickly to fix the first problem. The anger in the streets was always, underneath, about the second one.

- **Pursue exam-security reform and employment-generation policy in parallel**, treating both as urgent rather than sequencing employment policy behind exam-integrity fixes.
- **Expand formal-sector job creation directly**, through targeted industrial, services and skilling policy aimed at absorbing the qualified-youth cohort competing for scarce examination-gated...
- **Assess AI's labour-market impact proactively**, developing policy responses to job-market tightening before it compounds current employment scarcity further.
- **Diversify pathways to secure livelihoods** beyond the narrow set of examination-gated professional courses, reducing the concentrated pressure on any single competitive filter.
- **Track youth employment outcomes disaggregated by qualification level**, distinguishing whether unemployment concentrates among the qualified-but-unplaced, which jobless growth specifically...

Why India Abstained on the World's First Gig-Work Treaty

A government that sends delegates to vote for a treaty, and then abstains from adopting it, is not expressing one institutional view. It is expressing two, and the gap between them is where 23.5 million gig workers currently stand.

- **Set a fixed, public timeline** for domestic alignment with Convention 193's core protections, converting conformity-first from an open-ended posture into an accountable sequence.
- **Legislate algorithmic transparency requirements** for platforms operating in India independently of ratification, since this protection does not require treaty adoption to implement...
- **Extend social-security portability** for gig workers through India's existing labour-code framework, building toward Convention-equivalent protection even before formal ratification.
- **Publish periodic progress reports** on domestic alignment, so the conformity-first doctrine remains a transparent, trackable process rather than an unmonitored deferral.
- **Engage employer and worker delegates' assessment directly** in future ratification-timeline decisions, since their vote already reflects a considered view closer to the affected workforce.

Air India's Turnaround Goes Off the Flight Plan

Selling the airline was the easy transaction; rebuilding the airline is the actual project, and three years in, the project is running behind the schedule the transaction's champions implied.

- **Publish independently verified, standardised safety and service-quality metrics** on a regular cadence, rather than relying primarily on the company's self-reported progress narrative.
- **Reset public expectations to a realistic, decade-scale turnaround horizon**, consistent with global airline-privatisation precedents, rather than the implicit shorter timeline of early...
- **Prioritise fleet-modernisation and safety-related capital investment** ahead of brand and marketing spend, given the direct link between ageing assets and both safety scrutiny and...
- **Maintain regulatory oversight intensity** on safety compliance regardless of the airline's private ownership status, avoiding any perception that privatisation reduces safety accountability.
- **Invest deliberately in work-culture and labour-relations remediation**, recognising that legacy organisational culture does not change automatically with a change of ownership and requires...

Apple Shouldn't Judge the CCI for Copy-Pasting

A detective who reads the victim's statement carefully is doing their job; a detective who submits the victim's statement as their own final report is not. Apple's complaint asks which one the CCI actually did, and the honest answer...

- **Publish clear, standardised procedural guidelines** distinguishing legitimate evidentiary reliance on complainant submissions from insufficiently verified adoption of complainant claims.
- **Require investigative reports to explicitly document independent verification steps** taken for contested factual claims, creating a reviewable record beyond the final report's text alone.
- **Preserve the CCI's ability to substantially draw on complainant evidence**, recognising that over-correcting in response to "copy-pasting" accusations would disproportionately burden smaller...
- **Establish an internal or external procedural-fairness review mechanism** for investigations facing bias allegations, providing a structured process rather than leaving the question to be...
- **Distinguish, in any resulting judicial or appellate review, procedural-fairness challenges from substantive challenges to the CCI's underlying competition-law findings**, since conflating the...

Investors Are Finally Reassessing AI Valuations

A stock price correcting after two years of extraordinary gains is not proof the underlying technology was fake; it is proof the price had started answering a different question than "how much cash is this company actually generating."

- **Track AI firms' actual revenue and margin trajectories**, not just valuation multiples, as the key indicator distinguishing a healthy correction from a genuine bubble unwind.
- **Monitor capital-reallocation flows into India specifically**, rather than assuming a global AI reassessment automatically benefits Indian markets without empirical confirmation.
- **Factor data-centre environmental costs into long-term AI infrastructure investment assessments**, treating sustainability as a genuine financial risk factor, not merely a reputational...
- **Develop clearer employment-impact data** on AI deployment across sectors, reducing the uncertainty that currently contributes to valuation volatility.
- **Distinguish individual firm risk from sector-wide technological significance** in any investment or policy response to the correction, avoiding both blanket AI-sector pessimism and...

Power Sector Reform: The Bottleneck Has Moved From Generation to Regulation

India solved the harder engineering problem, generating clean power at scale, and is now stuck on the easier-sounding but institutionally thornier one: getting that power efficiently from wherever it is cheapest to wherever it is needed,...

- **Sequence discom financial-viability reform before dispatch-mechanism reform**, since a financially distressed discom cannot credibly adopt sophisticated market-based dispatch participation.
- **Depoliticise tariff-setting** through stronger regulatory independence, reducing the populist pricing pressure that undermines discom balance sheets.
- **Accelerate MBED implementation** to capture the CERC-estimated \$1.6 billion in annual efficiency savings from national marginal-cost dispatch.
- **Invest in discom-level metering and billing infrastructure** to directly target the commercial-loss component of AT&C losses.
- **Build discom capacity for active system management**, including staff training and IT infrastructure for real-time market participation, as renewable penetration continues to rise.

The Tata Group's RTEF Transactions Have Made Stakeholders Sit Up

A gift to a charity you control is still a gift, but the moment it involves a discount on a pre-IPO stake, "control" and "charity" start needing to be proven separately, not just asserted together.

- **Mandate independent valuation certification** for any asset transfer at a discount to fair market value, involving a promoter-affiliated charitable entity, prior to the transaction's...
- **Standardise enhanced disclosure requirements** specifically for related-party transactions with affiliated charitable trusts, distinct from the general related-party disclosure regime.
- **Require public disclosure of the specific rationale** connecting a discounted transfer to the recipient entity's stated charitable purpose, creating an auditable justification trail.
- **Preserve the legitimacy of promoter-affiliated philanthropy structures** in any resulting regulatory response, avoiding an overcorrection that discourages genuine corporate charitable giving.
- **Subject high-value related-party transactions to periodic, independent governance audits**, providing external verification beyond the company's own disclosure practices.

DOWN TO EARTH

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Human-Wildlife Conflict Is a Crisis of Forest Governance

Escalating human-wildlife conflict reflects failed forest governance and diluted community rights, not animal behaviour; the Forest Rights Act is the answer, not the obstacle.

- **Implement the FRA where it matters.** Recognise individual and Community Forest Resource rights in and around protected areas; reopen and staff FRA cells.
- **Realign the laws.** Harmonise the Indian Forest Act, 1927 and Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 with the FRA so the bureaucracy follows one logic.
- **Protect corridors and compensate fast.** Secure wildlife corridors and deliver quick, fair compensation for crop and life loss to keep communities on side.
- **Make communities partners.** Fund community-led conservation, early-warning systems and shared benefits so residents are stewards, not adversaries.

DOWN TO EARTH

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Many Nations Are Headed the Wrong Way on Climate

New national climate plans barely move the needle and many big emitters are off track, widening the gap between pledges and policy, raising the stakes for equitable, accountable governance.

- **Enforce accountability.** Strengthen transparency, review and the global stocktake so NDCs translate into policy, not slogans.
- **Deliver finance and technology.** Rich nations must meet climate-finance and technology-transfer commitments to enable developing-country transitions.
- **Uphold equity.** Anchor action in CBDR-RC so the burden reflects historical responsibility and capability, protecting the poor's development space.
- **India leads by delivery.** Meet renewable and emissions-intensity targets on the net-zero-by-2070 path, and let credible domestic action carry moral weight abroad.

DOWN TO EARTH

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The Right to Sleep in a Warming India

Rising night-time heat robs India's outdoor and informal workers of rest, making sleep loss a labour-welfare and climate-adaptation failure heat plans must confront.

- **Add night-time thresholds.** Build minimum-temperature triggers and night-relief measures into every Heat Action Plan.
- **Cool the worker's home.** Scale cool roofs and passive-cooling retrofits in informal settlements and labour housing.
- **Guarantee rest under law.** Enforce shaded shelter, water and rest breaks through the occupational-safety code, and shift outdoor work away from the hottest hours.
- **Measure the outcome.** Track sleep, heat illness and productivity so adaptation is judged by the worker's recovery, not just the daytime alert.

BUSINESS STANDARD

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Mercury Rising: Heat Stress on Energy Systems

Europe's June 2026 heatwave forced nuclear and thermal shutdowns, showing heat is now a public-health, economic and infrastructure crisis; India must speed up renewables, cooling and adaptation.

- **Scale clean, water-light power.** Expand solar, wind and storage to cut reliance on water-cooled thermal and nuclear in heatwaves.
- **Harden the grid and cooling.** Invest in resilient transmission, dry and hybrid cooling for thermal plants, and demand-side management for peaks.
- **Prepare people, not just plants.** Strengthen heat-action plans, early warning, cool shelters and worker protection to cut mortality and productivity loss.
- **Make cooling efficient.** Push efficient air-conditioning, passive cooling in buildings and the India Cooling Action Plan to break the heat-power loop.

INDIAN EXPRESS

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India's Cotton Needs Better Soil, Not Just New Seeds

Falling cotton yields stem from degraded soil and poor agronomy, not the absence of new GM seeds; soil regeneration must precede a fresh technology push.

- **Regenerate the soil first:** rebuild organic carbon and nutrients through compost, cover crops and reduced chemical load.
- **Break the monoculture:** promote crop rotation and intercropping to disrupt pest cycles and restore soil fertility.
- **Adopt integrated pest management:** cut insecticide dependence, protect natural enemies and slow resistance in pests like pink bollworm.
- **Use precision agronomy:** soil-health-card-guided nutrition and efficient water use to close the yield gap.
- **Regulate new technology rigorously:** keep the door open to newer transgenic seeds as a complement, cleared by GEAC on sound biosafety evidence, not as a substitute for soil health.

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Air Pollution Needs Political Will, Not the Election Cycle

India's air-pollution response is reactive and seasonal, driven by election timelines; durable clean air needs airshed planning and lasting political will.

- **Move from city-centric to airshed governance.** Plan and act across the whole air mass under NCAP, not city by city.
- **Guarantee multi-year financing.** Fund clean-air action on stable, predictable budgets that outlast a single term.
- **Strengthen monitoring and source apportionment.** Expand real-time monitoring and identify the actual sources to target them precisely.
- **Build cross-state institutions.** Extend CAQM-style coordinated bodies to other airsheds for regional cooperation.
- **Make clean air a year-round metric.** Tie accountability to sustained annual air quality, not seasonal emergency response.

Improving Incentives: Delhi's EV Policy

Delhi's new EV policy sets a bold electric target, but incentives deliver only when subsidies, charging, scrappage and affordability match adoption reality.

- **Build charging ahead of demand.** Close the gap toward the 36,000-point requirement, prioritising public and shared charging for buyers without home access.
- **Protect affordability at the bottom.** Extend support and scrappage benefits to used and lower-income segments, not only the premium car buyer.
- **Phase mandates realistically.** Keep timelines credible and prospective so restrictions follow adoption rather than provoking backlash.
- **Plan the fiscal transition.** Model the revenue loss from falling fuel taxes and taper subsidies for maturing segments while sustaining them for laggards.

India's Booming Exotic Pet Trade

A surging exotic pet trade straddles legal loopholes, smuggling and organised crime, and only enforcing the 2022 CITES-compliant law can close the gaps.

- **Make Schedule IV registration real.** Drive compliance through PARIVESH, audit declarations against seizure data, and penalise non-registration rather than relying on amnesties.
- **Close the non-CITES gap.** Extend oversight to non-CITES exotic species that currently sit in a legal grey zone, and regulate online and encrypted-app marketplaces.
- **Build biosecurity capacity.** Create a post-import disease surveillance system, integrate it with the One Health approach, and adopt a binding invasive-species framework.
- **Resource enforcement and rescue.** Strengthen the WCCB, inter-agency coordination and dedicated rescue infrastructure so seized animals are not left without care.

India's Record Faunal Discoveries

India documented a record 709 new animal species in 2025, a triumph of taxonomy that is also a warning about how much remains undiscovered and at risk.

- **Fund and sustain taxonomy.** Support the Zoological Survey and university taxonomy, reversing the long global decline in trained taxonomists and curatorial capacity.
- **Digitise and open the data.** Maintain and expand digital faunal databases and checklists so discovery translates into accessible conservation knowledge.
- **Pair discovery with protection.** Link newly recorded species and their habitats to protected-area planning, so cataloguing feeds directly into conservation.
- **Build the next generation.** Train young taxonomists and integrate molecular methods, ensuring the pipeline that produced a record year is not itself endangered.

The World Bank Retreats on Climate Finance

The World Bank has dropped its 45 per cent climate-finance target, weakening multilateral commitments and raising the stakes for India's transition finance.

- **Defend the principle and the floor.** India and the Global South should press to preserve CBDR-RC and quantified, predictable concessional finance in multilateral fora.
- **Push MDB reform.** Advance reform of multilateral development banks to expand lending headroom, blended finance and the Baku to Belem roadmap toward 1.3 trillion dollars.
- **Scale domestic transition finance.** Deepen India's sovereign green bonds, carbon markets and blended-finance instruments to reduce reliance on any single external lender.
- **Diversify the finance base.** Broaden partnerships across MDBs, climate funds and private capital so a retreat by one dominant institution does not stall the transition.

A Drying India: Building Water Security

India's per-capita annual water availability has fallen from 5,177 cubic metres in 1951 to about 1,486 today, and is projected to touch roughly 1,367 by 2031. On the Falkenmark scale, the country is already water-stressed and edging toward...

- **Realign incentives:** reform MSP and power subsidies to reward less water-intensive crops in stressed regions; scale up "Per Drop More Crop" and micro-irrigation.
- **Manage aquifers, not just wells:** expand Atal Bhujal's participatory, aquifer-level planning nationally.
- **Complete the JJM 2.0 pivot** to measurable service delivery, with water quality and quantity metrics.
- **Weigh interlinking projects** against ecological costs; prioritise recharge and watershed treatment before large transfers.
- **Prepare for a below-normal monsoon** with contingency cropping advisories and reservoir management.

A European Heatwave That Felt Like Home: Heat, Cities and Active Mobility

> "When a European summer starts to feel like an Indian one, the lesson is not to buy more air conditioners, but to redesign the street so people can walk, cycle and rest without fear of the sun." The record **June 2026 European heatwave...**

- **Design heat into the city.** Expand tree canopy and street shade, mainstream cool roofs, and treat outdoor thermal comfort as a planning standard, not an afterthought.
- **Build for active mobility.** Create shaded, safe walking and cycling networks and adopt compact, 15-minute-city planning so movement is low-carbon and heat-safe.
- **Upgrade Heat Action Plans.** Add night-time (tropical-night) thresholds and active-mobility and shade metrics, so plans protect movement and rest, not just the daytime peak.
- **Run emergency and redesign together.** Keep cooling centres, hydration and alerts for live heatwaves while investing in the long-run urban redesign that prevents them from being lethal.

Europe Must Learn to Live with Heat

Summer 2026 brought a record-breaking heatwave to Europe, a continent long built for cold. The message is stark: even the wealthiest societies must now learn not just to cut emissions but to live with heat that is already locked in. Here...

- Scale up heat-action plans to every vulnerable city and district, with clear early-warning triggers and responsibilities.
- Invest in cool roofs, urban green cover and shaded active-mobility corridors to blunt the urban heat island effect.
- Extend worker protections, altering work hours and mandating rest and hydration during peak heat.
- Resolve the policy debate on notifying heatwaves as a disaster under the Disaster Management Act, 2005, to unlock structured relief.
- Treat extreme heat explicitly as a public-health emergency, integrating it into health-system planning.

DOWN TO EARTH

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The Hidden Cost of Chennai's Data Centre Boom: Water, Power and AI

> "The cloud is not weightless. In a water-scarce city, every query you send has to be cooled, and someone, somewhere, pays for that water and power." Chennai is racing to become India's **AI and data-centre hub**. But AI-grade data...

- **Mandate efficient, non-freshwater cooling.** Require treated or recycled water and water-efficient cooling (dry, seawater, closed-loop) for new data centres, especially in water-scarce zones.
- **Power them with renewables.** Tie data-centre approvals to renewable-energy sourcing so the grid and climate footprint stays manageable.
- **Demand transparency.** Require public reporting of Water Use Effectiveness (WUE) and Power Use Effectiveness (PUE) so citizens can see the real footprint.
- **Plan siting and integration.** Apply strict siting rules in water-stressed cities and fold data-centre demand into municipal water and energy planning rather than approving it in isolation.

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The Next Spillover: Zoonoses, Bundibugyo Ebola and the One Health Test

> "The next pandemic will not announce itself in a hospital; it will slip across the line where humans, animals and forests meet, and we will only catch it if those three worlds are being watched together." A new **Bundibugyo virus Ebola**...

- **Operationalise interoperable surveillance.** Make human, veterinary, wildlife and environmental surveillance share data in real time, so an animal signal triggers a human-health response.
- **Strengthen labs and diagnostics.** Expand the high-security laboratory and BSL-4 network and build rapid-diagnostic and vaccine-platform readiness, as the WHO Bundibugyo listing underlines.
- **Address the ecological drivers.** Regulate wildlife trade and tackle habitat loss and land-use change, since these are the upstream causes of spillover that a health mission alone cannot...
- **Fund One Health as environment-and-development.** Treat the National One Health Mission as a cross-sectoral mandate with sustained funding, not only a health-ministry programme.

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An Early Arrival, A Dry Promise: The 2026 Monsoon's Shadow

The monsoon arrived early and then forgot to rain. An early handshake means little when the season that follows leaves the reservoirs and the farmer waiting.

- **Expand efficient irrigation.** Scale micro-irrigation under "Per Drop More Crop" in PM Krishi Sinchayee Yojana to cut dependence on rainfall.
- **Recharge and store water.** Push watershed development, aquifer recharge under Atal Bhujal Yojana and better reservoir management to buffer dry spells.
- **Diversify crops.** Shift toward less water-intensive crops such as millets and pulses, and promote climate-resilient seed varieties.
- **Ready the safety net.** Prepare contingency plans, timely crop-insurance payouts and buffer-stock releases to protect farmers and contain food inflation.
- **Sharpen forecasting and advisories.** Use IMD's extended forecasts to guide sowing decisions district by district.

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Built Against Cold, Not Heat: Redesigning Buildings for a Warming World

We spend most of our lives indoors, yet our buildings are frozen in the climate of the year they were designed for; a house built to hold warmth becomes an oven when the world heats up, and much of the planet's building stock, India's...

- **Make heat-safety a code objective.** Evolve ECBC and Eco Niwas Samhita from energy-only toward explicit indoor thermal-comfort and heat-safety standards, and widen coverage to homes and...
- **Scale cool roofs.** Mandate high-reflectance roofs in city bye-laws and heat action plans, with subsidised cool-roof programmes for low-income housing.
- **Revive climate-responsive vernacular.** Codify passive design, orientation, shading, ventilation, thermal mass, courtyards, into mainstream construction, not just heritage.
- **Enforce at the municipal last mile.** Build state and city capacity to adopt, inspect and certify code compliance, the weak link today.
- **Retrofit the existing stock.** Fund heat retrofits for public buildings, schools and hospitals, and the poorest housing, where overheating is deadliest.

DOWN TO EARTH

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Cheaper Than Coal: What the Renewables Cost Crossover Means for India

The argument that clean energy is a costly indulgence just lost its last leg; in 2025, most new renewables were simply the cheapest electricity money could buy, and the debate has moved from "can we afford to go green" to "can we build the..."

- **Scale storage aggressively.** Fast-track battery (BESS) and pumped-hydro capacity, and expand round-the-clock and firm-and-dispatchable renewable tenders that bundle generation with storage.
- **Build the wires ahead of the panels.** Deliver the Central Electricity Authority transmission plan for 500 GW on time, solving right-of-way, land and financing early.
- **Make the grid flexible.** Invest in balancing, forecasting, demand response and a stronger national grid to absorb variability and cut curtailment.
- **Lower the cost of capital.** Since renewables are capital-intensive, cheaper long-tenor finance directly lowers clean-power prices; deepen green bonds and blended finance.
- **Localise the supply chain.** Reduce import dependence in modules, cells and batteries through domestic manufacturing so the cost advantage is also strategically secure.

Food in the Fuel Tank: The OECD-FAO Outlook and the Biofuel Dilemma

A decade ago, biofuels were meant to be the bridge to advanced fuels made from waste and grass, not grain. The OECD-FAO Agricultural Outlook 2026-2035 delivers an uncomfortable verdict: through 2035, the biofuel tank will still be filled...

- **Accelerate second-generation biofuels.** Targeted incentives, viability funding and technology support to make cellulosic and residue-based ethanol commercially viable at scale.
- **Diversify feedstock away from food.** Prioritise crop residue, damaged grain, used cooking oil and non-food biomass over prime food and feed crops.
- **Guard water and food security.** Monitor diversion of sugarcane and grain, and avoid mandates that outrun sustainable feedstock supply.
- **Align blending targets with sustainability.** Set blending ambitions to the availability of non-food feedstock, not the other way round.

One Landscape, One Risk: The Case for a Second Home for the Asiatic Lion

A conservation success story can hide a conservation risk. India's Asiatic lions have rebounded to roughly 891 animals, a genuine triumph of protection. Yet every one of them lives in a single landscape in Saurashtra, which means one...

- **Implement the 2013 order in spirit.** Establish at least one genuinely separate second population in a suitable habitat outside the Saurashtra landscape, with a credible prey base and...
- **Adopt a formal metapopulation plan.** Move from single-site protection to a managed network of subpopulations under Project Lion, with defined corridors and disease firewalls.
- **Strengthen disease surveillance.** Routine CDV and other pathogen monitoring, vaccination protocols for domestic dogs and cattle near lion ranges, and rapid-response veterinary capacity.
- **Reduce human-lion conflict outside protected areas.** With 44 per cent of lions outside protected areas, invest in compensation, open-well covering, railway and road mitigation, and community...
- **Resolve the federal impasse cooperatively.** Frame translocation as shared national heritage, not loss of pride, and use centre-mediated cooperation to break the deadlock.

The Cooling Divide: Air Conditioning and Climate Inequality

As Indian summers grow longer and deadlier, the air conditioner is quietly sorting society into two groups: those who can buy their way to a cool room and those who cannot. This cooling divide is a new axis of climate inequality, and it is...

- **Strengthen the India Cooling Action Plan (2019).** Prioritise passive and low-energy cooling and set equity as an explicit goal.
- **Mainstream passive cooling.** Enforce cool roofs, reflective paints, shading and ventilation through the Energy Conservation Building Code, especially in affordable housing.
- **Green and cool cities.** Expand urban tree cover, water bodies and shaded public spaces to counter the heat-island effect.
- **Scale heat-action plans.** Universalise city and district heat-action plans with early warnings, cooling shelters, altered outdoor work hours and protection for outdoor workers.
- **Make efficient cooling affordable and clean.** Tighten appliance star-labelling, phase down high-GWP refrigerants under the Kigali Amendment, and support access to efficient cooling for...
- **Manage peak demand.** Pair rising cooling demand with renewable energy, thermal storage and demand-side management to protect the grid.

When the Chenab Rises: Himalayan Flash Floods and Fragile Infrastructure

When a torrent of mud, boulders and debris buried vehicles inside the premises of a 540 MW hydro project in Kishtwar, it was not just an accident. It was the Himalaya reminding us that we keep building for the mountain we imagine, not the...

- **Climate-proof siting and design.** Mandate updated, forward-looking rainfall and cloudburst scenarios in environmental clearance and design codes for Himalayan projects and highways.
- **Invest in early warning.** Dense automatic weather stations, cloudburst-nowcasting and river-level telemetry to give downstream projects and communities crucial lead time.
- **Stabilise slopes and manage debris.** Bioengineering, sediment traps and controlled reservoir operations to reduce debris-flow damage.
- **Adopt a basin-scale, cumulative-impact view.** Assess hydropower and roads across the whole Chenab basin, not project by project, to avoid stacking risk in one fragile valley.

Awareness Is Not Action: Closing the Belief Gap in Climate Behaviour

> "People do not fail to act on climate because they do not know. They fail because they doubt that acting, alone, changes anything, and they wrongly believe their neighbours do not care." Climate **awareness** in India is nearly universal...

- **Correct the perception gap.** Communicate honestly that most people do want action, so the willing majority stops self-silencing and social norms tip toward action.
- **Design nudges and defaults.** Make climate-friendly choices the default, use social comparison on bills, and build choice architecture that beats moral appeals.
- **Build enabling systems.** Provide the infrastructure, public transport, efficient appliances, waste systems, that lets intention become behaviour, as IPCC AR6 stresses.
- **Scale Mission LiFE meaningfully.** Move from awareness to measurable collective action, while keeping systemic accountability for large emitters central so individual focus does not become...

The Green Invader: Prosopis juliflora and the Aravallis

The Aravallis are dying not from a dramatic blow but from a quiet takeover. A thorny tree brought in to green the barren land now smothers two-thirds of a protected sanctuary, teaching a hard lesson: the cure planted a century ago has...

- **Plan phased eradication.** Remove Prosopis juliflora in stages, sequenced with immediate native replanting to prevent recolonisation and soil erosion.
- **Restore native species.** Rebuild the indigenous Aravalli flora (dhau, khair, ber, indigenous grasses) that support local fauna and recharge groundwater.
- **Protect the corridor.** Strengthen the Northern Aravalli Leopard Wildlife Corridor and integrate restoration with the Aravalli Green Wall initiative and NCR-wide land-use rules against...
- **Build an invasive-species framework.** Adopt early-detection, risk-assessment and management protocols for invasive alien species nationally, and involve local communities in stewardship.

A Lake Under Siege: The NGT, Chandlai and India's Wetland Governance Gap

A 150-year-old lake near Jaipur that draws hundreds of migratory birds is being strangled by encroachment and the untreated effluent of roughly 1,255 unauthorised textile units. When the National Green Tribunal has to order a district...

- **Enforce the Wetlands Rules, 2017.** Complete identification, notification and demarcation of wetlands, and actually prohibit and penalise the listed harmful activities.
- **Fix accountability.** Assign a single lead authority for each wetland with clear responsibility for pollution control, encroachment removal and monitoring, so responsibility does not diffuse.
- **Regularise or relocate polluting clusters.** Bring the Sanganer textile units into compliance with common effluent treatment and zoning, or relocate non-conforming units.
- **Use technology for monitoring.** Deploy remote sensing and periodic audits to track encroachment and effluent, making violations visible early.
- **Leverage community and Ramsar frameworks.** Involve local communities and use Ramsar wise-use principles and management plans to protect wetlands proactively rather than only after NGT orders.

Beyond the Fortress: Rethinking Conservation With Communities, Not Against Them

For over a century, conservation has too often meant drawing a line, putting nature inside it and people outside. This fortress model, inherited from colonial rule and exported across Africa and Asia, promised to save wildlife by keeping...

- **Accelerate CFR recognition.** Fast-track and secure Community Forest Resource rights under the FRA so communities become legally empowered forest managers.
- **Integrate the FRA with conservation planning.** Treat the FRA as a conservation instrument, not an obstacle, and align protected-area management with recognised community rights.
- **Support community capacity.** Provide technical, financial and institutional support to Gram Sabhas for monitoring, regeneration and sustainable use.
- **Reform relocation.** Ensure any relocation from critical wildlife habitats is genuinely informed, consent-based and fairly compensated, in line with the FRA's safeguards.
- **Blend with eco-development.** Combine rights-based conservation with eco-development and benefit-sharing so that living near wildlife becomes an asset, not a burden.

Mumbai's Deluge: You Cannot Engineer Away Water

You cannot engineer away water; you can only make room for it, and every Mumbai monsoon is a bill for the room the city built over.

- **Restore the blue-green network.** Rehabilitate the Mithi river, protect and replant mangroves and wetlands, and free floodplains from encroachment.
- **Adopt water-sensitive urban design.** Mandate permeable surfaces, rooftop and street-level rainwater retention, and sponge-city standards in building norms.
- **Close the regulatory loophole.** Extend wetland protection to CRZ areas and river channels currently excluded by the 2017 Rules, and enforce the NDMA urban-flooding guidelines.
- **Match engineering to the new rainfall.** Complete BRIMSTOWAD and redesign drainage capacity to the intensified cloudburst reality, not to historical averages.

2.8 Million Trees on the Ledger: The Arithmetic of Forest Loss

You can plant a sapling for every tree you fell and still be poorer, because a forest is not a number of trees, it is the decades those trees have already lived.

- **Tighten the clearance filter.** Restore rigorous, independent scrutiny of diversion proposals so that an 80 per cent approval rate reflects merit, not routine.
- **Value forests honestly.** Ensure the net-present-value and compensatory mechanisms fully price mature-forest services, and audit whether afforestation actually survives and functions.
- **Prioritise avoidance and alternatives.** Push projects toward non-forest land and low-impact designs before diversion, following the mitigation hierarchy of avoid, minimise, then compensate.
- **Protect the definition of forest.** Read the Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam so that ecologically significant land stays within the clearance net rather than outside it.

A Banned Poison in Kota's River: When Old Chemicals Kill

A pesticide banned in the 1990s has been confirmed as the poison behind a river's dead crocodiles, a reminder that some poisons do not leave when the law tells them to; they wait in the mud.

- **Trace and stop the source.** Identify how a banned pesticide entered the Chandraloi river, whether from old stocks, illegal use or industrial discharge, and shut it off.
- **Institute long-term monitoring.** Establish routine water and sediment testing in mugger habitats and other sensitive rivers, using apex species as sentinels of contamination.
- **Fix accountability.** Designate a clear lead agency for POP contamination so that confirmed poisoning does not fall into an inter-departmental gap.
- **Honour Stockholm Convention obligations.** Strengthen the disposal of banned-pesticide stockpiles and enforcement against illegal use, in line with India's commitments on persistent organic...

The Red List Grows Longer: Extinction Reaches the Deep and the Dry

Extinction has stopped waiting at the forest edge; the July 2026 Red List finds it in the deepest sea and the driest desert, arriving in places we had barely finished naming.

- **Apply precaution to deep-sea mining.** Treat the early Red List warning on vent molluscs as reason for a cautious, science-led approach before seabed mining scales.
- **Prioritise freshwater conservation.** Extend protection and pollution control to rivers, lakes and wetlands, the habitats the data show are most neglected and most threatened.
- **Deliver 30x30 with quality.** Ensure protected areas under the Global Biodiversity Framework are effective and well-managed, not merely lines on a map.
- **Fund and complete assessments.** Support IUCN and national efforts to assess under-studied groups, since unassessed species cannot be protected.

A Perfect Storm: Wayanad's Slopes and the Cost of Ignoring Warnings

A landslide is rarely a single accident; it is the sum of a fragile slope, a heavy rain and a human decision to build where warnings said not to.

- **Restrain land use in the fragile zones.** Act on the Ecologically Sensitive Area logic of the expert committees, keeping unstable Ghat slopes off-limits to heavy construction and quarrying.
- **Enforce slope-safety engineering.** Mandate proper geotechnical assessment, slope stabilisation and drainage for any permitted works, and halt construction during intense-rainfall alerts.
- **Strengthen early warning and preparedness.** Expand rainfall-triggered landslide warning systems and NDMA-guided evacuation drills so exposed workers and residents are moved before slopes...
- **Make environmental clearance real.** Ensure environmental impact assessment for hill projects is rigorous and honest, not a formality, so fragility is priced into every permission.

When Chillai-Kalan Fails: Warming Winters and Kashmir's Orchards

An apple tree keeps a calendar written in cold, and when Kashmir's winter no longer delivers the chill the trees are built for, an entire economy loses its footing.

- **Adopt climate-resilient varieties.** Promote low-chill and heat-tolerant apple and horticulture varieties suited to warming winters, backed by research and reliable planting material.
- **Bank water for the dry months.** Invest in water harvesting, spring rejuvenation and micro-irrigation to offset declining snowmelt and buffer orchards against drought.
- **Diversify and insure.** Encourage crop diversification and strengthen crop insurance so households are not wholly exposed to a single climate-sensitive crop.
- **Deliver climate-smart advisories.** Provide farmers timely, localised weather and agronomic guidance so planting, spraying and harvest decisions track a shifting climate.

The Ocean Begins at the Drain: India's Marine Plastic Problem

The sea does not manufacture plastic, it only receives what our cities fail to hold, so the ocean's plastic crisis is really a land crisis wearing a marine disguise.

- **Enforce source segregation.** Make separation of wet and dry waste at the household level a firmly implemented norm, backed by municipal capacity to keep the streams apart through collection...
- **Make EPR bite.** Strengthen monitoring, auditing and penalties so that Extended Producer Responsibility targets are genuinely met, and integrate the informal recycling sector that already...
- **Intercept riverine plastic.** Deploy traps and screens at drains and river outfalls to catch waste before it reaches the sea, while treating this as a stopgap, not a substitute for source...
- **Negotiate and align globally.** Engage constructively in the global plastics treaty process and align domestic rules with a full life-cycle approach to plastic.

Water Gained, Forest Lost: The Ken-Betwa Dilemma

Every large dam answers one scarcity by creating another, and the true measure of the Ken-Betwa project is not the water it moves but whether the people and forest it displaces are made whole.

- **Uphold consent and rights.** Ensure the Forest Rights Act consent of affected gram sabhas is genuinely obtained and that individual and community forest rights are settled before further...
- **Deliver full rehabilitation.** Provide fair, timely compensation and resettlement under the LARR Act, with livelihood restoration, not one-time payment alone, for displaced families.
- **Minimise and offset ecological loss.** Reduce the footprint where feasible, invest seriously in habitat management for the Panna Tiger Reserve, and treat compensatory measures as supplements...
- **Strengthen independent review.** Keep environmental and social monitoring transparent and independent through implementation, so trade-offs are tracked and grievances addressed rather than...

The Fifth Crime: Does the World Need a Law Against Ecocide?

International law has learned to name the killing of people and has still not learned to name the killing of the place that keeps them alive.

- **Fix the definition before the label.** Agree an internationally negotiated definition of ecocide with a workable mental element, most plausibly knowledge of a substantial likelihood of severe...
- **Repair the law that already exists.** Amend or reinterpret Article 8(2)(b)(iv) so that the three thresholds are disjunctive rather than cumulative, and clarify the proportionality test, which...
- **Build the domestic layer.** Since the ICC covers only its parties, strengthen national environmental criminal law and corporate liability, including India's own framework under the...
- **Keep equity in the frame.** India should engage with the ecocide debate rather than dismiss it, while insisting that any regime respects common but differentiated responsibilities, applies to...

When the Heatwave Becomes Evidence: Attribution Science and Climate Litigation

For the first time, the heatwave can be cross-examined, and it can name who made it hotter.

- **Give Ranjitsinh statutory content.** Legislate a climate framework law with a binding carbon budget, sectoral targets and an independent statutory advisory body, so that the recognised right...
- **Make heat action plans justiciable.** Convert heat action plans from advisories into statutory instruments with enforceable duties, work-hour rules for outdoor labour, cooling shelters, and...
- **Build public attribution capacity.** Fund the India Meteorological Department and Indian research institutions to run rapid, peer-reviewed attribution for domestic extreme events, since a...
- **Mandate corporate climate disclosure.** Strengthen the disclosure regime so that emissions and transition-risk data are audited and comparable, which is the evidentiary base for both investor...
- **Use the ICJ opinion in international negotiation.** Deploy the 2025 advisory opinion, alongside the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, to press for loss-and-damage...

Living on Credit: Earth Overshoot Day and India's Footprint Paradox

For the rest of the year after late July, humanity is spending nature it has not earned, drawing down the planet's savings, and the date that marks the overdraft is a moral ledger as much as an ecological one.

- **Make the largest footprints shrink most.** Global climate and resource justice require high-consumption nations to lead the correction, so that the ecological space of low-footprint...
- **Scale sustainable consumption and production.** Advance SDG 12 through circular-economy practices, reduced food and material waste, and resource-efficient industry, since overshoot is driven...
- **Mainstream Mission LIFE.** Turn the Lifestyle for Environment idea into everyday behaviour, energy thrift, sustainable diets, reduced waste, so individual choices aggregate into a lower...
- **Rebuild domestic biocapacity.** Restore forests, soils, wetlands and water systems to raise India's own regenerative capacity, narrowing the national ecological deficit even as the...

The Free Pump's Hidden Bill: How Cheap Power Drains India's Aquifers

When the electricity to pump water costs nothing, the water itself is treated as though it costs nothing, and an aquifer that took centuries to fill is emptied in a single generation to meet a subsidy no one meant as a licence to mine.

- **Decouple support from pumping.** Government should replace unlimited free power with direct income or metered support tied to a sustainable quota, so farmers keep their benefit while the...
- **Strengthen participatory management.** Scale the Atal Bhujal Yojana approach of community-led water budgeting, where villages measure their own recharge and extraction and self-regulate...
- **Realign crop incentives.** Shift procurement and support toward less water-intensive crops in over-exploited blocks, and back the shift with market assurance, so that the cropping pattern...
- **Invest in recharge and monitoring.** Expand rainwater harvesting, watershed development and aquifer recharge, and use CGWB category data to target the worst blocks first, so that supply-side...

The Plants the World Forgets: CITES PC28 and the Overlooked Trade

The tiger commands the headlines and the treaty summits, but it is the orchid, the sandalwood log and the sliver of agarwood that move in the largest and quietest volumes, and a convention that watches only the animals is guarding half the...

- **Close the attention and enforcement gap.** Direct scientific capacity and enforcement resources toward high-volume plant and fungal trade in proportion to its scale, so that timber, orchids...
- **Strengthen non-detriment science for plants.** Build the population and trade data needed to make sound non-detriment findings for listed plants, since a certification system is only as good...
- **Pair protection with sustainable livelihoods.** Combine CITES listings with cultivation, certified sustainable harvesting and benefit-sharing under the Biological Diversity Act, 2002, so that...
- **Guard India's flagship traded flora.** Reinforce the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau's action against red sanders and agarwood smuggling and support India's positions at PC28, so that domestic...

The Bee as Barometer: Why Bumblebees Loaded With Heavy Metals Should Alarm Us

When the same flower feeds two bees and only one comes back poisoned, the difference is not the flower but the animal, and that difference turns the bumblebee into a living gauge of how much toxic metal we have pushed into soil and air...

- **Control heavy-metal pollution at source.** Tighten regulation of mining, industrial discharge, vehicular emissions and waste that load soil and air with lead, cadmium, arsenic and mercury.
- **Protect and diversify pollinator habitat.** Conserve wildflowers, hedgerows and nesting sites, and reduce monoculture and pesticide pressure so pollinator populations can recover.
- **Use bees as biomonitors.** Institutionalise pollinator-based monitoring to detect environmental contamination early and cheaply, feeding the data into pollution control.
- **Mainstream pollinators in food policy.** Recognise pollination as critical agricultural infrastructure and integrate pollinator protection into farm subsidy, pesticide and cropping-pattern...

A Below-Normal July: The Monsoon Deficit That Kharif Cannot Ignore

The monsoon does not fail all at once or everywhere alike, and a July that falls short of normal is dangerous precisely because it arrives unevenly, watering one field while starving the next in the very weeks the kharif crop decides its...

- **Ready contingency crop plans.** Government and states should activate district-level contingency plans with short-duration and drought-tolerant seed varieties, so farmers in deficit zones can...
- **Manage reservoirs prudently.** The Central Water Commission and states must calibrate reservoir releases against a possible weak refill, balancing irrigation, drinking water and hydropower...
- **Prepare for the power spike.** Utilities should anticipate higher irrigation-driven demand and constrained hydropower, arranging supply and demand-side measures in advance so a rainfall...
- **Communicate at farmer resolution.** Deliver forecasts and advisories at the district and fortnight level through agricultural extension and mobile channels, so that decisions on sowing, seed...

The Invisible Summer Poison: Why Ground-Level Ozone Now Rivals Delhi's Dust

Delhi has spent a decade fighting the dust it can see, and while it did, a colourless gas cooked up by sunlight has slipped past its defences, because ozone is not emitted by anything and so cannot be filtered, swept or trucked away.

- **Target precursors across the airshed.** Regulate nitrogen oxides and volatile organic compounds together and regionally, since ozone forms and drifts across city boundaries and responds only...
- **Extend air action into summer.** Broaden pollution control plans beyond the winter particulate season to address the summer ozone peak with season-specific measures.
- **Strengthen monitoring and public alerts.** Expand ozone-specific monitoring and issue summer-afternoon health advisories, especially for children, the elderly and those with respiratory...
- **Curb VOC and NOx sources.** Tighten standards on fuel evaporation, solvents, industrial emissions and vehicular exhaust, which are the raw materials of ozone formation.

When the Cold Desert Weeps: Ladakh's Fifth Wet Monsoon and a Warning

A desert that has been dry for millennia because the mountains stole its rain is now, five summers in succession, catching the very monsoon it was built to miss, and a land that never learned to shed water is the least prepared place on...

- **Build GLOF and cloudburst early-warning systems.** Deploy monitoring of glacial lakes and rainfall in vulnerable valleys, with alert mechanisms that give communities time to respond.
- **Adapt infrastructure to a wetter reality.** Redesign roads, buildings and drainage in Ladakh for rainfall and runoff, moving beyond structures built solely for aridity.
- **Climate-proof agriculture and water management.** Support farmers with resilient practices and update meltwater-based irrigation planning for a more erratic water regime.
- **Protect the fragile high-altitude ecology.** Regulate construction and tourism in sensitive zones and integrate climate risk into all development planning for the Union Territory.

The Hinge Plan: China's 15th Five-Year Plan and the Global Climate Math

The single most consequential climate document of this decade may not come from a climate summit at all. It is a domestic planning text: **China's 15th Five-Year Plan**, covering roughly **2026 to 2030**. Because China is the world's largest...

- **Watch the cap, not the rhetoric.** India's negotiators and analysts should judge China's plan by whether it converts intensity targets into an absolute emissions ceiling, because only a cap...
- **Anchor India's case in equity.** India should keep pressing **CBDR-RC**, using its low per-capita and historic emissions to argue that ambition must be matched to responsibility and capability...
- **Make finance the fulcrum.** Ahead of the next **COP**, India should tie its diplomacy to concrete climate finance and technology transfer from historic emitters, since the developing-country...
- **Lead by delivering at home.** India's credibility rises with its own non-fossil capacity build-out and NDC delivery, which converts moral argument into demonstrated action and strengthens its...

A New Era of Indian Ecology Looks to Its Horizons and to the Ground

You cannot conserve a species you have never bothered to name, count or watch through a full season, however sharp your satellite may be.

- **Fund basic ecology as core infrastructure.** Long-term field studies and taxonomy should receive stable, sustained support, because they are the foundation on which every biodiversity target...
- **Train and retain field ecologists.** Institutions like the **WII**, **NCBS** and the survey bodies need clear career pathways for field scientists and taxonomists, so that natural-history expertise...
- **Integrate the horizon with the ground.** Remote-sensing and modelling programmes should be paired with field validation, ensuring that big-data ecology is always calibrated against what is...
- **Embed community knowledge formally.** Conservation planning under the **Biological Diversity Act** framework should systematically incorporate local and traditional ecological knowledge, widening...

Green Walls and Hard Lessons: What China Teaches India About Fighting Deserts

A forest planted for a photograph is not the same as land brought back to life, and China's long war against its deserts teaches India that the difference between the two is measured in decades, native roots and political patience.

- **Restore ecosystems, do not just plant trees.** Anchor the Aravalli Green Wall in **native, drought-adapted species** and grassland recovery, measuring success by soil moisture and biodiversity...
- **Match greening to the water budget.** Prioritise rainfall-fed restoration and watershed works so plantations do not mine the very **groundwater** that keeps drylands alive.
- **Make communities the stewards.** Tie restoration to livelihoods and rights of local and forest-dependent people, since **community ownership** is what keeps trees alive between funding cycles.
- **Guarantee continuity and monitoring.** Fund restoration across decades, not electoral cycles, and track it through **ISRO's Desertification Atlas** to hold the programme to India's...

Best-Ever SDG Rank, Stalled Progress: Reading India in the 2026 SDG Index

A better rank is not the same as a better outcome. India's climb to its best-ever position of about **94th of 167 countries** in the **2026 Sustainable Development Report** is real progress, but the same report shows that only around a third of...

- **Finance the laggards, not the average.** Direct development spending and blended finance toward the specific goals flagged as major challenges, because broad-based schemes lift the composite...
- **Close the data gap.** Many SDG indicators for India rely on dated or proxy data, which weakens both diagnosis and course-correction; strengthening real-time, disaggregated statistics is a...
- **Align the two indices.** Use **NITI Aayog's SDG India Index** to localise the globally flagged weaknesses, so that state-level competitive federalism is pointed squarely at hunger, health, gender...
- **Lead on Global South financing.** India should press the **SDG 17** agenda on financing for development, reformed multilateral lending and concessional capital, positioning itself as a voice for...

Before the Grain: How a Super El Nino Hits Fodder and Feeds Inflation

When policymakers brace for a drought year, they watch the price of rice and wheat. But the first casualty of a failed monsoon is usually not the grain on the plate, it is the grass in the field, and the milk, meat, and eggs that grass...

- **Build fodder banks and reserves ahead of the shock.** Just as the state holds grain buffers, it should hold strategic dry-fodder and feed-block reserves in surplus years, positioned for rapid...
- **Make fodder a named line in drought contingency plans.** District crisis plans should track pasture condition and fodder availability as core indicators, not afterthoughts, triggering...
- **Act on early monsoon and ENSO forecasts.** Use IMD and Ministry of Earth Sciences seasonal outlooks as a pre-positioning trigger, so that seed for quick-growing fodder crops and feed...
- **Read inflation correctly and respond in kind.** Recognise a fodder-driven price rise as **cost-push** and answer it with supply-side measures, fodder logistics, targeted support, and if needed...

Count the Forest, Not the Saplings: Rethinking Mangrove Restoration

A photograph of thousands of mangrove saplings pressed into a mudflat makes for a satisfying press release. Two monsoons later, if the tide never reaches them and the species were wrong for the site, most are dead and the release is...

- **Fund outcomes, not outputs.** Tie disbursement to multi-year survival and biodiversity audits rather than to saplings planted, so agencies are rewarded for forests that live, not photographs...
- **Hydrology first.** Mandate restoration of tidal channels and creek connectivity before any planting, since water flow, not sapling density, determines whether a site can support mangroves at...
- **Native mixes over monocultures.** Require species selection matched to local salinity, elevation and sediment, building biodiverse and resilient stands instead of brittle single-species...
- **Embed community stewardship.** Give coastal communities a durable livelihood stake through fisheries and eco-services, so protection continues long after the funding cycle ends.

Wings Without Borders: Why Migratory Bird Decline Demands Flyway Diplomacy

A bar-tailed godwit can fly from Alaska to New Zealand without stopping, more than **11,000 kilometres** in a single push, yet it cannot survive if the mudflat where it refuels halfway is drained for a port. That single fact captures the...

- **Operationalise the Central Asian Flyway action plan.** Move from a paper commitment to a funded, monitored programme with named nodal wetlands, shared bird-count protocols, and an annual...
- **Protect the stopover network, not just showcase sites.** Prioritise Ramsar designation and legal protection for the specific mudflats and lakes that ringing data show are load-bearing...
- **Build climate adaptation into wetland management.** Maintain water levels through the migration window, secure buffer wetlands that birds can shift to as timing changes, and integrate flyway...
- **Fund and use citizen-science monitoring.** Bird atlases, ringing stations, and platforms that let birdwatchers log sightings turn a scattered public into a continental sensor network, giving...

No Green Without Fair: Sustainability as an Equity Project

A sustainability that asks the poorest to sacrifice first and benefit last will not survive contact with democratic politics. Ecology and equity are routinely treated as rivals, one demanding restraint and the other demanding growth. The...

- **Embed a just transition in every green policy.** Attach reskilling, alternative livelihoods and social protection to every phase-out plan, so no coal town or informal cluster is left to...
- **Make the informal sector visible in climate planning.** Bring waste-pickers, street vendors and small farmers into adaptation programmes with heat-action plans, insurance and worksite...
- **Distribute the benefits, not only the burdens.** Channel clean-energy savings, green employment and cleaner air first to the communities that have borne the greatest environmental harm...
- **Anchor policy in capabilities, not just output.** Judge sustainability measures by whether they expand the real freedoms of the vulnerable, using India's LiFE ethic to shift consumption at...

Clearance Without Expertise: Restructuring India's Environmental Appraisal

An environmental clearance is only as trustworthy as the expertise behind the signature, and a restructuring that reserves barely one of nine seats on the interim appraisal bodies for genuine domain knowledge quietly changes what that...

- **Restore domain expertise to appraisal bodies.** Ensure a clear majority of EAC and SEIAA members are qualified specialists, hydrologists, ecologists, air-quality and biodiversity experts, so...
- **Guarantee independence.** Insulate appraisal committees from the clearance-granting executive and from developers through transparent, arms-length appointment and fixed tenures.
- **Protect, do not compress, public consultation.** Keep public hearings meaningful and time-bound so affected communities and local knowledge shape the decision.
- **Make speed come from capacity, not from cutting scrutiny.** Reduce delays through more staff, better data systems and digital tracking, not by thinning expertise, and strengthen the NGT as a...

Segregation Is Not Recycling: Why EPR Must Build Real Capacity

A citizen who rinses, sorts and colour-codes every plastic wrapper has done everything asked of her. Yet if there is no plant able to turn that clean stream back into usable material, her effort ends in a landfill or an incinerator. The...

- **Ring-fence producer funds for infrastructure.** Direct EPR revenue into a dedicated corpus that builds and modernises recycling plants, so producer money creates physical capacity rather than...
- **Make certificates verifiable.** Tighten CPCB audit with mass-balance checks, independent third-party verification and digital traceability, so a certificate cannot be issued without a...
- **Mandate design-for-recyclability.** Set enforceable standards limiting multi-layer and mixed-polymer packaging, and use eco-modulated fees so that hard-to-recycle formats pay more, shifting...
- **Rank recycling above incineration.** Align EPR targets with the waste hierarchy by capping how much obligation can be met through waste-to-energy, and reward reduction and reuse at source...

The Oceans Are Storing Our Heat

The atmosphere gets the headlines, but the ocean is where the heat is actually going. More than **90 per cent of the excess energy** trapped by greenhouse gases has been stored in the seas, making **ocean heat content** the truest ledger of a...

- **Invest in ocean observation.** Expand float, buoy and satellite networks so ocean heat content and marine heatwaves are monitored as closely as air temperature, giving policy an early-warning...
- **Build coastal adaptation now.** Treat sea-level rise as committed, and design coastal zoning, mangrove restoration and infrastructure for decades of change rather than a single planning...
- **Protect blue carbon and fisheries.** Safeguard mangroves, seagrass and coral through marine protected areas, and manage fisheries for a warmer, more stratified and oxygen-poor ocean.
- **Cut emissions to slow the momentum.** Because the ocean locks in heat for centuries, deep and early emission cuts are the only lever that limits how much heat the sea must ultimately store.

The Year Renewables Pass Coal

A line is about to be crossed that seemed distant only a few years ago: the **International Energy Agency (IEA)** projects that renewable sources will overtake coal in global electricity **generation** in 2026. The milestone is real, but the next...

- **Scale storage aggressively.** Prioritise battery energy storage and pumped hydro so midday solar can be shifted into the evening peak, turning the duck curve from a threat into a manageable...
- **Build a flexible, connected grid.** Strengthen transmission, inter-regional links and demand-response markets so variable generation can be balanced across geography and time.
- **Reform market design for firming.** Reward flexibility, ramping and reliability, not just energy volume, so the services that integrate renewables are properly valued and financed.
- **Lead through the Solar Alliance.** Use the International Solar Alliance to spread storage, grid and integration know-how across the Global South, so the milestone becomes durable everywhere...

Seven of Nine: Living Outside the Safe Operating Space

Earth came with a set of guardrails, nine of them, marking the space in which humanity could safely operate. We have now crossed seven. The question is no longer whether we are pushing the limits, but how fast we can climb back inside them.

- **Fix waste at scale.** Strengthen segregation, recycling, extended producer responsibility for plastics and municipal treatment capacity, since **waste management** is India's biggest state-level...
- **Protect and restore forests.** Curb avoidable forest diversion, enforce compensatory afforestation meaningfully and value forests for their climate and biodiversity services, not just their...
- **Cut nutrient pollution.** Rationalise fertiliser use to reduce **nitrogen and phosphorus** run-off, easing pressure on the biogeochemical-flows and freshwater boundaries.
- **Adopt the boundaries in planning.** Embed the **safe operating space** logic into development and environmental clearances, so that growth is designed to stay within Earth-system limits rather...

Ten Million Hectares Under Weather: Farmland in the Age of Volatility

A farmer no longer fears only the flood or only the drought. In the new climate, the same season can deliver both, and the official numbers are stark: more than ten million hectares of cropland caught in the crossfire of the weather.

- **Mainstream climate-resilient agriculture.** Promote drought and flood-tolerant varieties, staggered sowing and micro-irrigation so that fields can absorb both deficit and excess within the...
- **Strengthen crop insurance delivery.** Make **PMFBY** assessment faster and more accurate through remote sensing and prompt payouts, so the safety net works when farmers actually need it.
- **Invest in preparedness under the DM Act.** Use the **NDMA** framework to shift budgets from relief toward mitigation, early warning and district-level contingency plans keyed to the monsoon...
- **Build water and drainage infrastructure.** Expand storage, watershed development and field drainage so that intense bursts are captured rather than allowed to flood, and dry spells draw on...

The Breathless Blue: Deoxygenation and the Road to Water Bankruptcy

We watch the sea for what rises from it, storms, heat, cyclones, but the deadliest change is what is quietly leaving it. Oxygen is draining out of the water, and a warming, over-fertilised planet is slowly learning to hold its breath.

- **Control nutrients at source.** Regulate fertiliser use, upgrade sewage treatment and curb industrial effluent so that far less **nitrogen and phosphorus** reaches rivers, lakes and coasts.
- **Cut emissions to cool the water.** Since warming drives both lower oxygen and stronger stratification, deep decarbonisation is also an ocean-oxygen policy, not only a temperature policy.
- **Monitor dissolved oxygen systematically.** Build sustained ocean and freshwater oxygen monitoring so that hypoxic zones are detected early and tracked, turning an invisible threat into a...
- **Protect and restore blue carbon and buffers.** Restore mangroves, seagrass and wetlands that filter nutrients and support fisheries, and integrate deoxygenation into water-security and...

Air Pollution Is Killing More Indians Than the Pandemic Did

The pandemic emptied our streets and rewrote our budgets. Air pollution kills many times more Indians every single year, and it does so in near silence, one clogged artery and one scarred lung at a time.

- **Reframe as a public-health mission.** Bring health ministries and epidemiologists to the centre of clean-air policy, and report progress in attributable deaths avoided, not just AQI readings...
- **Shift to airshed governance.** Extend a **CAQM**-style statutory authority beyond the NCR to every major airshed, so upwind and downwind districts act as one unit rather than trading blame.
- **Make NCAP outcome-bound.** Tie NCAP funding to verified, year-round PM2.5 reductions and a credible path toward **WHO** guideline values, not merely to the number of monitors installed.
- **Attack the structural sources.** Prioritise cleaner household fuel, tighter industrial and thermal-plant emission norms, dust control at construction sites, and public transport, since these...

The Dimming Earth: Why a Falling Albedo Should Worry Us

A planet that reflects less of the Sun's light keeps more of its heat. Earth is quietly dimming, and if the clouds that shade us keep thinning, the warming ahead may run hotter than our models promise.

- **Cut emissions deeper and earlier.** If warming may run at the high end of estimates, front-loaded mitigation buys the largest margin of safety at the lowest long-run cost.
- **Sustain Earth-observation systems.** Protect and expand satellite programmes such as **CERES** so the energy imbalance and cloud changes are tracked continuously, since policy needs an unbroken...
- **Invest in cloud and feedback science.** Fund modelling and observation of low-cloud behaviour, the biggest source of uncertainty, so future projections narrow rather than surprise.
- **Plan for the high-sensitivity case.** Build adaptation and net-zero pathways robust to a world that warms faster than the central estimate, rather than betting on the optimistic middle.

When Frozen Ground Thaws: Permafrost and Acidic Streams

We have learned to fear what thawing permafrost releases into the air. It is time to worry about what it releases into the water, because frozen ground is now turning mountain streams acidic and laced with metals.

- **Monitor water, not just carbon.** Set up stream-chemistry monitoring in high-mountain permafrost zones, so acidity and metal loads are tracked alongside greenhouse-gas fluxes.
- **Map Himalayan permafrost.** Build a systematic inventory of mountain permafrost and its mineralogy, since we cannot manage a hazard whose extent we have not measured.
- **Protect downstream communities.** Integrate this contamination risk into Himalayan water-security and public-health planning, especially for villages dependent on headwater streams.
- **Fund cryosphere research.** Support field studies on the acidic-water feedback, the least understood pathway, so mitigation and adaptation rest on evidence rather than assumption.

A Dam on the Siyom: Clean Power, Fragile Frontier and Strategic Waters

An expert panel has cleared the roughly **1,000 MW Naying Hydroelectric Project** on the **Siyom river** in **Shi-Yomi, Arunachal Pradesh**, a run-of-river scheme in one of the most seismically active and strategically sensitive corners of India...

- **Demand rigorous, independent appraisal.** Subject every Himalayan project to exhaustive seismic, landslide and downstream-impact study through a credible, transparent EIA, so clearances rest...
- **Plan at the basin scale.** Assess cumulative effects of multiple dams on the Siang basin together, not one project at a time, so the river's total burden is understood.
- **Secure genuine local consent and rehabilitation.** Ensure affected communities give informed consent and receive fair, timely resettlement and benefit-sharing, treating their rights as...
- **Integrate strategy with safety.** Pursue India's legitimate water-security interests on the Siang while insisting that disaster-grade engineering and ecological safeguards are never traded...

After the Count: Why Rising Tiger Numbers Meet Shrinking Room to Roam

India's tiger story is one of the great conservation successes of our time. From the brink of collapse, the population has climbed to about **3,682** in the 2022 estimate, the large majority of the world's wild tigers. But success has produced...

- **Legally secure tiger corridors.** Identify, notify and protect corridors between reserves from roads, mining and settlement, and build wildlife-friendly crossings where infrastructure is...
- **Invest in coexistence.** Fund early-warning systems, predator-proof livestock enclosures and prompt, fair compensation so communities can live alongside dispersing tigers without ruinous loss.
- **Strengthen conflict response.** Equip and train rapid-response teams to manage straying tigers humanely, reducing both human deaths and retaliatory killings.
- **Share conservation benefits.** Channel eco-tourism revenue and jobs to local communities so they gain from tigers, turning them from adversaries into partners in protection.

The Water We Forget: Why Freshwater Life Is Vanishing Faster Than Any Other

When we picture biodiversity loss, we imagine a shrinking forest or a stranded polar bear. We rarely picture a river. Yet freshwater and coastal ecosystems are collapsing faster than terrestrial ones, and the **Living Planet Index** records...

- **Govern by river basin.** Manage each wetland and river as part of its whole catchment, coordinating abstraction, pollution control and land use rather than protecting isolated sites.
- **Restore environmental flows.** Guarantee that dams and irrigation leave enough water in rivers to sustain aquatic life, treating flow as a right of the ecosystem, not a leftover.
- **Cut pollution at source.** Enforce effluent and sewage treatment across the catchment so wetlands stop absorbing the land's untreated waste, backed by the Wetlands Rules, 2017.
- **Apply the nexus in planning.** Require that decisions on food, energy and cities explicitly assess their impact on water and biodiversity, aligning with the Global Biodiversity Framework's...

E20 and the Consumer: Mileage, Older Engines and the Fine Print

A fuel policy earns public trust not by claiming there are no trade-offs, but by naming them and managing them. India reached its **E20** blending goal ahead of schedule, a genuine achievement in energy security. The task now is to answer...

- **Communicate the trade-off honestly.** Publish clear, vehicle-specific guidance on the expected **mileage drop of 3 to 5 per cent** and on which **older vehicles** need caution, so owners plan rather...
- **Set and enforce material standards.** Mandate E20-compatible components in new vehicles and issue tested advisories for older ones, addressing corrosion and moisture concerns with evidence...
- **Monitor the legacy fleet.** Run a transparent surveillance system for engine wear and failures across older vehicles running E20, and publish the data so the government's...
- **Keep the sustainability ledger honest.** Ensure ethanol continues to draw on surplus feedstock rather than diverting food or straining water, so the energy-security gain is not offset by...

The Amazon Burned Less: What India Can Learn from a Good Year

Forest fires look like acts of nature, but their scale is an act of policy. When the Brazilian Amazon recorded its lowest burned area in four decades, the cause was not luck alone. It was reduced deforestation, better local fire control...

- **Attack the structural driver.** Curb deforestation and unregulated land-use change around forests, since reducing the fuel load is the most durable way to cut fire scale, as Brazil's 2025...
- **Pair detection with rapid response.** Ensure **Forest Survey of India** fire alerts feed directly into equipped, trained ground teams under the **National Action Plan on Forest Fires**, so satellite...
- **Empower communities.** Invest in **community fire management**, including local watchers, controlled early burning and forest-dweller participation, recognising that the people nearest the forest...
- **Strengthen coordination.** Build inter-state and inter-agency coordination for fire seasons, mirroring the basin-wide logic of bodies like **ACTO**, so fires that cross administrative boundaries...

When the Tribunal Has to Keep Prodding: The Enforcement Gap

When a tribunal has to issue the same kind of order year after year, the failure is not in the law. It is in the machinery meant to enforce it. Each fresh set of **National Green Tribunal** directions on river waste and dumpsites is less a...

- **Fund and staff enforcement bodies.** Strengthen pollution control boards and municipal environmental cells with people, funds and technical skill, so the **Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016**...
- **Make monitoring continuous and public.** Install and publish continuous monitoring of river stretches, landfill leachate and ambient air, converting environmental data from an occasional...
- **Fix accountability to a named authority.** Assign clear, single-point responsibility for each dumpsite, river stretch and landfill so the **polluter-pays** principle has an identifiable target...
- **Accelerate legacy-waste remediation.** Scale up **legacy-waste biomining** and scientific closure of old dumpsites on a time-bound plan, backed by dedicated finance, rather than piecemeal action...

Thirsty Mines: Water Risk and the Critical-Minerals Supply Chain

> "The clean-energy transition runs on lithium, cobalt and copper, but pulling them from the earth demands water, and much of that earth is running dry. The minerals of the future have a thirst problem." A new assessment finds that...

- **Make water risk central to siting.** Use tools like the WRI Aqueduct to map water stress and locate or approve mining and processing where water can be shared sustainably, not where it is...
- **Invest in water stewardship.** Mandate recycling, closed-loop water use and reduced freshwater withdrawal in mining and processing, cutting the water footprint of each tonne of mineral.
- **Protect community water rights.** Ensure mining does not deprive farms and towns of water, embedding local consent and equitable sharing into the social licence to operate.
- **Build water-aware mineral security.** For India's National Critical Mineral Mission and KABIL, factor water risk into both domestic mining and overseas asset choices, treating water as a...

Closing Mines the Right Way: AAROH and the Restoration Agenda

> "For a century we measured mining by what we took out of the ground. A mine closed scientifically asks a harder question: what do we put back, and for whom?" The **Ministry of Coal** has released **AAROH**, described as India's first...

- **Scale up scientific closure.** Move from 42 pioneering closures to a systematic programme covering the large legacy of abandoned and ageing mines, backed by adequate funding.
- **Strengthen the escrow and monitoring.** Ensure Mine Closure Plans are properly funded through escrow and independently monitored, so restoration is real rather than a compliance formality.
- **Centre the just transition.** Pair every closure with retraining, alternative livelihoods and social support for coal-dependent workers and districts, not only ecological restoration.
- **Involve communities.** Give affected communities a genuine voice in how closed land is repurposed, from solar farms to plantations, so restoration serves local needs.

No Severe Heatwave, Yet 45 Degrees: The Classification Gap

The record book said the summer was normal. The people sweating through 45 degrees said otherwise. When the official definition and the lived experience disagree, it is worth asking which one the definition is serving.

- **Adopt a heat-index or wet-bulb classification.** Move beyond dry-bulb temperature to a combined heat-humidity measure, and add a warm-night criterion, so the label reflects the strain the...
- **Notify heat as a disaster.** Bring heatwaves formally into the National Disaster Management Act schedule and state disaster lists, so SDRF relief, ex-gratia and compensation apply...
- **Localise thresholds to health, not just climate.** Set district triggers on health outcomes such as hospital admissions and excess mortality, not only on departure from a historical normal...
- **Strengthen surveillance and attribution.** Standardise heat-death certification and near-real-time morbidity tracking, so the true toll is visible and cannot be masked by a definition that...

The Human Hand on Island Life: Rethinking Conservation Baselines

> "We long imagined islands as sealed natural laboratories, their species arranged by wind, water and chance. New evidence says a human hand has been on the scale all along, which changes what we are trying to restore." Recent research...

- **Redefine conservation baselines.** Set restoration targets by ecological function and endemism rather than an imagined pristine past, making goals both honest and achievable.
- **Prioritise invasive-species control.** Treat invasives as the leading present threat to island endemics, funding eradication and biosecurity for territories like the Andaman and Nicobar...
- **Avoid the fatalism trap.** Use the human-imprint insight to guide realistic restoration, not to justify accepting degraded ecosystems as inevitable.
- **Integrate people into conservation.** Since human action shaped these islands, involve local communities in stewardship and design conservation that works with, not against, their presence.

The Heat That Deepens Poverty: When a Hot Day Costs a Wage

A heatwave does not read a bank balance, but it might as well. The same afternoon that costs a salaried office worker a little discomfort costs a daily-wage labourer the whole day's pay.

- **Finance Heat Action Plans properly.** Attach dedicated budgets and a clear disaster-finance line to HAPs, so cities can fund cooling shelters, water points and enforcement rather than relying...
- **Compensate lost work hours.** Extend wage support, paid heat leave or work-guarantee wages (linked to schemes such as MGNREGA) when authorities order outdoor work to stop during extreme heat...
- **Redesign the working day.** Enforce shifted hours, mandatory rest-and-shade breaks and hydration at worksites for construction, farm and kiln labour, with occupational-safety rules that name...
- **Target the most exposed.** Prioritise women, the elderly, children and outdoor informal workers in heat preparedness, and build local data on heat-related income loss so plans are judged by...

Reading the Reservoirs: A 15 Per Cent Deficit and the Water Year Ahead

A reservoir bulletin is a weather forecast for the next twelve months, written in cubic metres. On 23 July 2026 the Central Water Commission recorded 70.432 billion cubic metres of live storage across the 166 reservoirs it monitors, which...

- **Publish an integrated water-stress dashboard.** Merge the IMD's subdivision rainfall departures, the CWC weekly reservoir bulletin and Central Ground Water Board piezometer data into a single...
- **Trigger crop contingency plans by rule, not by discretion.** Pre-notify district-wise alternative crop and short-duration variety plans that activate automatically at defined rainfall and...
- **Reallocate storage in the stressed southern basins by declared priority.** Where reservoirs such as Srisailem, Nagarjuna Sagar and Tungabhadra hold under half their normal water, ring-fence...
- **Convert micro-irrigation from a subsidy scheme into the default.** Accelerate drip and sprinkler coverage in the water-intensive paddy and sugarcane belts of the peninsula, and pair it with...
- **Treat aquifer recharge as infrastructure.** Fund and enforce participatory aquifer management in the over-exploited blocks identified by the Central Ground Water Board, linking recharge...
- **Build for intensity, not just for totals.** With dry spells lengthening and wet spells intensifying, revise reservoir operation rules, spillway design and catchment-area treatment to capture...

The Slope Gives Way: Himachal's Landslides Are a Governance Failure

On 24 July 2026 a hillside came down on the Sansari to Kilad to Thiro to Tandi road near Kadhu Nala in the Udaipur subdivision of Lahaul and Spiti, and thirteen people died, among them a six-month-old infant. The rain was the trigger; the...

- **Make slope-stability appraisal a mandatory pre-condition for hill infrastructure.** No road-widening, hydropower or major construction clearance in Zone IV and V terrain without a...
- **Regulate muck disposal as strictly as the excavation itself.** Contracts must specify engineered, geotechnically approved dumping sites away from drainage lines and slopes, with payment...
- **Enforce carrying-capacity limits for Himalayan towns.** Commission and, crucially, act upon carrying-capacity studies for the major hill settlements of Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand...
- **Build a real-time landslide early warning network.** Combine automatic rain gauges with slope instrumentation, pore-pressure sensors and rainfall-threshold models on the highest-risk...
- **Make the District Disaster Management Authority a regulator, not only a responder.** Under the Disaster Management Act, 2005, give the DDMA a statutory veto over construction approvals in...
- **Recognise slope failure as a climate adaptation problem.** With seasons like 2026 showing longer dry spells punctuated by more intense bursts, revise drainage, culvert and spillway design...

Who Counts as Displaced: The Ken-Betwa Protests and the Arithmetic of...

The dispute at Kupi village is not about whether the Ken-Betwa project should proceed. It is about a definitional question with enormous consequences: is the unit of rehabilitation the household or the adult? On that single choice rests...

- **Publish the hydrology.** A project premised on surplus water must permit that premise to be tested. Ganga-basin sensitivity can be addressed through aggregation, not blanket withholding.
- **Move the cut-off date.** A static eligibility date in a multi-year project systematically excludes newly formed households; indexing it to actual displacement is administratively trivial.
- **Audit the beneficiary lists independently.** Allegations of fake beneficiaries and omitted residents are testable. A third-party social audit resolves them faster than confrontation does.
- **Honour the statutory consent architecture.** The Forest Rights Act, 2006, PESA, 1996 in scheduled areas, and the LARR Act, 2013 with its social impact assessment exist precisely for this...
- **Sequence conservation mitigation.** Compensatory afforestation and tiger-corridor protection should be verified before further felling, not promised after it.

Beyond Compliance: Why India's Draft CAFE III Norms Need Teeth

A fuel-efficiency standard that can be met without a single engine getting more efficient is not a fuel-efficiency standard. It is a fuel-efficiency accounting exercise, and manufacturers are very good at accounting.

- **Introduce a non-fungible minimum EV/hybrid production share** alongside the existing fuel-consumption credit system, modelled on China's Dual Credit Policy.
- **Cap the multiplier effect of super-credits,** so a small number of EV sales cannot offset a disproportionately large volume of inefficient vehicles.
- **Separate ethanol-blending incentives from CAFE compliance,** supporting the E20 programme through its own dedicated policy instruments rather than folding it into fuel-efficiency accounting.
- **Publish an escalating schedule** for the non-fungible obligation, giving manufacturers a predictable multi-year runway to build EV and hybrid manufacturing capacity.
- **Audit credit-trading transactions publicly,** so the market for compliance credits remains transparent and does not become an opaque mechanism for the least-efficient manufacturers to...

Tigers Outside the Lines: What the TOTR Initiative Asks of Indian Conservation

A tiger does not know where a reserve boundary is drawn, and conservation policy that only protects tigers inside that boundary was always, in a sense, protecting a map rather than a species. TOTR is the moment that fiction becomes too...

- **Institutionalise co-management structures** giving Gram Sabhas and FRA rights-holders genuine decision authority in TOTR-covered landscapes, not merely consultative status.
- **Build an independent review mechanism for "problem animal" declarations**, insulating this politically sensitive process from local pressure through transparent, criteria-based review.
- **Fast-track pending FRA claims** in TOTR landscapes, since unresolved claims create legal ambiguity that both conservation planning and community livelihoods suffer from.
- **Ring-fence dedicated, rapid compensation funding** for human-tiger conflict outside reserves, addressing the immediate livelihood cost that erodes community support for coexistence.
- **Publish landscape-level corridor maps publicly**, so affected communities can engage with specific, mapped decisions rather than an opaque planning process.

Neither Blanket Bar Nor Blanket Amnesty: The Supreme Court's "Public Interest"...

Replacing a blank cheque with a cheque that requires a signature and a stated reason is real progress. It is not the same as removing the chequebook, and whether the new signature requirement holds depends entirely on who is allowed to...

- **Press for judicial or statutory specification** of concrete criteria defining "supervening public interest" in the environmental-clearance context, closing the open-texture gap.
- **Require published, reasoned justification** for any future exception granted under the test, creating a reviewable record rather than an opaque administrative decision.
- **Establish an independent review mechanism** for public-interest justifications, reducing the risk of the government marking its own homework on the standard's application.
- **Track exception grants over time** to detect whether the narrower test is actually functioning more restrictively in practice than the old OM, or converging back toward similar outcomes.
- **Distinguish genuinely ambiguous legacy cases from deliberate non-compliance** in any future statutory scheme, ensuring the narrow exception serves its intended purpose without becoming a new...

COP32 in Addis Ababa: Africa's Chance to Arrive With Solutions, Not Just Demands

A pledge made at a summit table is a promise about the future. A coalition built before the summit is evidence the future has already started. COP32's test is whether Africa arrives with the second kind of proof, not just another round of...

- **Advance regional energy integration coalitions** among African nations well before COP32 convenes, so the summit can scale rather than initiate this work.
- **Pre-negotiate climate-risk finance reform proposals** among African stakeholders, arriving with a coordinated position rather than fragmented national asks.
- **Build resilient food and nature-system partnerships** in advance, giving the summit a concrete delivery model to endorse.
- **Sustain diplomatic pressure on major financing nations** throughout the pre-summit period, ensuring preparation translates into negotiating leverage, not just better-organised advocacy.
- **Establish accountability mechanisms tied to the pre-built coalitions**, so post-summit delivery can be tracked against commitments made to already-functioning initiatives, not just against...

Built and Blocked: How Transmission Bottlenecks Are Curtailing India's Renewable...

Building a solar farm and then discovering there is no road wide enough to carry its power to market is not a technology failure; it is a planning failure, and the meter is still running on every curtailed unit of clean electricity while...

- **Mandate synchronised generation-transmission planning at the auction stage**, approving new renewable capacity only where matching transmission capacity is confirmed on a compatible timeline.
- **Deploy grid-scale battery storage at the most congested pooling stations** as a near-term mitigation for existing curtailment, prioritised by curtailment severity data.
- **Accelerate dynamic line rating adoption** on existing high-curtailment transmission corridors to extract additional safe capacity without new construction.
- **Streamline land acquisition and right-of-way clearance processes** specifically for transmission projects, addressing the structural source of the timeline gap.
- **Publish standardised, transparent curtailment-compensation mechanisms** for generators affected by transmission bottlenecks, ensuring the financial risk of planning mismatches does not fall...

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Making the Labour Codes Work

With the four Labour Codes in active enforcement and the 50% wage-floor rule live, success now hinges on real protection, gig inclusion, state rules and undiluted rights.

- **Fund and launch the gig scheme.** Finalise aggregator contribution rates, benefit design and portability so gig recognition becomes real security.
- **Phase the wage-floor rule.** Sequence the 50% rule to protect take-home pay while raising contributions, and prevent structuring to evade it.
- **Harmonise state rules.** Support states to notify coherent, aligned rules so enforcement is even across the country.
- **Build capacity and guard rights.** Invest in inspection and grievance systems, and ensure simplification never dilutes collective bargaining or core protections.

BUSINESS STANDARD

1 Jul · 557

Trust Is a Design Problem

Trust in institutions and official data is infrastructure to be built and audited by design, not a mood; the statistics ministry's data platform shows why.

- **Legislate NSC autonomy.** Give the National Statistical Commission statutory backing, fixed tenures and control over the release calendar, so no single release can be delayed for convenience.
- **Open the method, not just the number.** Publish sampling design, questionnaires and anonymised micro-data by default, making every headline statistic independently reproducible.
- **Build audit trails into the platform by design.** The AI-enabled data platform should log data lineage, revisions and versions, so any user can trace a number to its source and see what...
- **Fix release discipline.** Adhere to a pre-announced advance release calendar, aligned with IMF data dissemination standards, and treat missed or altered releases as accountable events.
- **Protect the pipeline.** Enforce DPDP-consistent consent and security across the data that feeds official statistics, so wider access does not become wider exposure.
- **Insulate the referees.** Preserve and strengthen the operational independence of the RBI and SEBI, and extend the same design logic across regulatory bodies.

THE HINDU

2 Jul · 558

Fixing the Rot: Restoring Integrity to Public Examinations

Serial paper leaks have hollowed out the credibility of India's recruitment exams; statutory enforcement and board reform must restore aspirants' trust.

- **Secure the chain end-to-end:** encrypted, tamper-evident question-paper delivery, GPS-tracked logistics and biometric candidate verification across all boards.
- **Operationalise the NRA:** issue uniform SOPs and a common security standard so that fragmented boards stop being the weak link.
- **Fast-track investigation and trial:** dedicated units and time-bound prosecution so that certainty of punishment, not just its severity, deters offenders.
- **Professionalise recruitment boards:** adequate staffing, technical capacity and autonomy from political interference.
- **Institutionalise transparency:** public grievance redress, published audit of examination processes and rapid disclosure when a compromise is detected.

THE HINDU

2 Jul · 559

The Erosion of India's Grassroots Democracy

Three decades after the 73rd and 74th Amendments, panchayats and municipalities remain starved of the funds, functions and functionaries for real self-rule.

- **Empower State Finance Commissions:** constitute them on time, act on their recommendations and give local bodies predictable, untied finances.
- **Activate the Schedules fully:** devolve the Eleventh and Twelfth Schedule functions with matching funds and staff, not on paper alone.
- **Make functionaries accountable to councils:** create dedicated local cadres or ensure seconded staff report to elected bodies.
- **Build capacity in parallel:** training, digital accounting and audit so that devolution and accountability advance together.
- **Use evidence to drive reform:** deploy the Panchayat Advancement Index and devolution rankings to reward progress and expose laggard states.

THE HINDU

3 Jul · 560

The Right to a Fair Trial at the Crossroads

Prolonged pre-trial detention under stringent bail laws such as the UAPA is turning process into punishment and testing the Article 21 promise of liberty.

- **Anchor Article 21 as the grundnorm.** Reaffirm, ideally through the larger Bench, that no statutory bar can defeat liberty when trial is not realistically near completion.
- **Set outer limits on pre-trial detention.** Frame guidelines linking continued custody to demonstrable trial progress.
- **Fast-track long-pending UAPA trials.** Prioritise cases where the accused has already served years, with day-to-day hearings where feasible.
- **End the inconsistency.** Let the larger Bench lay down a clear, uniform test so outcomes do not vary Bench to Bench.
- **Build capacity.** Expand special courts, prosecutors and forensic support so speedy trial is achievable, not aspirational.

BUSINESS STANDARD

6 Jul · 561

A Law That Waits: Women's Reservation Tied to Delimitation

India has a women's reservation law that everyone celebrates and no woman can yet use. The Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam is on the statute book, but its 33 percent is switched off, waiting on a census and a delimitation that have become...

- **Build a federal bargain on delimitation.** Consider capping total seat changes, or increasing total seats so no state loses in absolute terms, to address southern-state concerns while...
- **Consider decoupling.** Explore constitutional and legislative routes to bring women's reservation into force on the existing seat base, so it need not wait on the delimitation dispute.
- **Conduct the census promptly.** The overdue census is the factual foundation for any credible, transparent delimitation.
- **Use the interim to build the pipeline.** Parties can voluntarily field more women candidates now, so representation grows even before the quota switches on.

The Right to Belong: Citizenship Beyond Documentation

Citizenship is not a document you carry; it is a constitutional relationship between a person and the Republic. The current controversy over the Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls and the status of the passport asks a deeper...

- **Codify inclusion-friendly presumptions.** Where a person is already on the roll and holds multiple ordinary identity documents, the presumption should favour inclusion, with the state bearing...
- **Robust, accessible grievance redress.** Time-bound appeals, free legal aid and door-to-door verification for the elderly, disabled and migrant workers.
- **Delink verification from suspicion.** Roll revision should be framed as administrative hygiene, not a citizenship test, to avoid chilling effects on marginalised communities.
- **Data protection and transparency.** Any documentary data collected must be governed by the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023, with clear limits on retention and use.
- **Public communication.** The ECI and MEA must communicate clearly that revision is about accuracy, not exclusion, to preserve trust in the franchise.

Voting Cannot Remain Merely a Statutory Right

A democracy that lets citizens vote but leaves the right to vote resting on ordinary law has built its house on rented ground. The recurring question of whether the franchise is statutory or constitutional is not academic hair-splitting...

- **Resolve the doctrinal conflict.** A larger Bench should reconcile the "statutory right" line with the fundamental-rights and basic-structure jurisprudence, ideally recognising a substantive...
- **Protect the roll.** Any revision such as the SIR must follow a fair, transparent and non-arbitrary procedure with adequate notice, appeal and the burden placed on the State, not the citizen...
- **Strengthen safeguards.** Preserve ballot secrecy, the right to information about candidates and NOTA as integral, not incidental, features of the franchise.
- **Consider explicit protection.** A clearer constitutional articulation of the right to vote would end the recurring uncertainty and place the franchise beyond the reach of ordinary majorities.

When Defection Returns: The Tenth Schedule Under Stress

A law meant to cure political defection has become an instrument that a Speaker can quietly park in a drawer. Every fresh wave of floor-crossing, the latest in Tamil Nadu, shows the same truth: the Tenth Schedule punishes the small...

- **Set a statutory deadline.** Amend the law to require the adjudicating authority to decide disqualification petitions within a fixed period, say three months, as the Supreme Court has urged.
- **Shift the adjudicator.** Move adjudication away from the Speaker to an independent body, such as the Election Commission or a tribunal headed by a retired judge, to remove partisanship.
- **Reform the exceptions.** Revisit the two-thirds "merger" exception so that engineered bulk defections do not escape disqualification.
- **Restrict the whip.** Limit the whip to votes of confidence and money bills, restoring space for intra-party debate and legislators' independent judgment.

Resign to Escape? The Varma Case and the Limits of Judicial Accountability

When burnt bundles of cash were found at a judge's residence, the country got its clearest test in decades of whether the higher judiciary can be held to account. Justice Yashwant Varma's resignation in April 2026, on the eve of a...

- **Make the inquiry survive resignation.** Amend the Judges (Inquiry) Act so that a duly constituted inquiry can be completed and its findings recorded even after a judge resigns, at least for...
- **Build a permanent accountability body.** Revive a version of the lapsed Judicial Standards and Accountability Bill idea, creating a statutory, independent mechanism to receive complaints and...
- **Attach financial consequences.** Provide that adverse findings can affect post-retirement pension and benefits, so resignation is not a costless exit.
- **Pursue the criminal track in parallel.** Ensure that sanction for prosecution under anti-corruption law is not held hostage to the removal timeline, so that criminal liability is decided on...
- **Give the in-house procedure a statutory footing.** Codify the in-house mechanism to give it transparency, due process and defined outcomes, protecting both the complainant and the judge.

Shoot to Disable: When the State Aims Below the Knee

A state that congratulates itself for shooting suspects below the knee has already conceded the argument it pretends to win, because deterrence bought with extrajudicial force is not order under law, it is order in spite of it.

- **Enforce the PUCL protocol without exception.** Ensure every encounter, fatal or disabling, triggers an FIR, an independent investigation and a magisterial inquiry, with mandatory NHRC...
- **End the spectacle.** Stop official messaging that celebrates injuring suspects, since publicity converts extrajudicial force into a governance brand.
- **Strengthen conviction, not encounters.** Invest in investigation, forensics and prosecution so that deterrence flows from the certainty of lawful punishment.
- **Attach real consequence to violations.** Act on the courts' warning of personal liability so that officers who bypass the guidelines face professional and legal accountability.

The Right to Be Forgotten Meets the Right to Know

The right to be forgotten asks the law to let a person outrun their own record, but open justice asks the law to keep that record in the light, and a mature republic must find the seam between forgetting and knowing rather than choosing...

- **Adopt a proportionality-based test.** Direct courts to weigh the claimant's status, the continuing public interest and the availability of a narrow remedy before ordering any delinking.
- **Prefer de-indexing over erasure.** Where privacy warrants relief, delink from search-engine visibility rather than deleting or masking the judgment on the court's own authoritative record.
- **Clarify the DPDP boundary.** Legislatively or through rules, make explicit that the statutory erasure right does not extend to judicial records, which remain governed by open-justice...
- **Issue judicial guidelines.** Have High Courts frame consistent guidelines so that the right to be forgotten is applied uniformly rather than case by case with divergent outcomes.

Prisoners of Violence: A Sri Lankan Riot and India's Own Jails

A prison is where the state holds a person in its total power, and how it treats that person is the truest measure of how it treats the idea of dignity itself.

- **Decongest through the courts.** Attack overcrowding at its source by speeding trials, expanding legal aid, and empowering undertrial review committees to release those held beyond reason.
- **Reform bail in practice.** Ensure that inability to pay does not decide who stays imprisoned, so that the presumption of innocence means something inside a cell.
- **Build real oversight.** Institute independent prison inspection, functioning grievance systems and custodial monitoring so that violence is detected and deterred, not hidden.
- **Implement the 2023 framework.** Move states from confinement to correction by operationalising the Model Prisons and Correctional Services Act, 2023, with rehabilitation, skilling and...

A Report That Outlives a Resignation: Judging the Judges

A judge is trusted to hold everyone else to account, which is exactly why the process that holds a judge to account must be seen to be both fair and unflinching.

- **Codify the in-house procedure.** Give the judiciary's internal inquiry mechanism a clear statutory or rule-based footing so that its steps, timelines and disclosure norms are known in advance...
- **Clarify the post-resignation path.** Settle in law what follows when a judge resigns during an inquiry, including whether findings affect pension or future office, so exit cannot be used to...
- **Strengthen a standing complaints mechanism.** Consider a credible, independent body to receive and screen complaints against judges, insulated from both executive control and internal...
- **Protect independence throughout.** Ensure any reform keeps the high removal threshold and peer-led first response, so accountability is deepened without opening the bench to political...

Rolls and the Displaced: Revising Manipur's Electoral List

The right to vote is only as real as the name on the roll, and in a place where thousands have lost their homes and their papers, revising that roll is an act of either inclusion or erasure.

- **Enable proof, do not just demand it.** Accept alternative and camp-verified documentation for displaced persons so that lost papers do not mean lost votes.
- **Take enrolment to the camps.** Conduct special drives in relief camps and among the displaced, treating access as the commission's responsibility rather than the voter's burden.
- **Guard both goals transparently.** Publish the additions and deletions, allow easy appeals, and let observers verify that neither fraud nor exclusion is quietly winning.
- **Keep the process neutral and trusted.** In a polity scarred by conflict, the credibility of the roll depends on being seen to favour neither community, which means consistent, published...

Ban the Design, Not the Child: Regulating Addictive Platforms

A child does not become safe when you throw them out of the room; they become safe when you redesign the room so it stops working against them.

- **Regulate the addictive architecture.** Set enforceable standards on engagement-maximising features for accounts used by minors, so the design itself carries the safety duty rather than the...
- **Enforce intermediary due diligence.** Make safe harbour under Section 79 genuinely conditional on compliance with the IT Rules, 2021, with meaningful penalties for platforms that fail.
- **Operationalise the DPDP children's provisions.** Implement verifiable parental consent and the bar on tracking and targeted advertising to children through privacy-preserving age assurance...
- **Build digital literacy, not walls.** Invest in age-appropriate design guidance, school-level digital literacy and grievance redress so children learn safe use rather than being pushed to...

When Graft Stops Shocking: The Quiet Death of Outrage

The gravest danger of corruption is not that it happens, but that a point is reached where it no longer surprises anyone, and a society that has stopped being shocked has quietly stopped holding power to account.

- **Strengthen institutional independence.** Insulate the CAG, CVC, Lokpal and investigative agencies from perceptions of partisan use, so their findings are trusted across the political spectrum.
- **Make enforcement visibly even-handed.** Pursue corruption regardless of who is implicated, because selectivity is what converts citizen concern into cynicism.
- **Reinforce transparency tools.** Protect the Right to Information regime, whistleblower safeguards and open data, which lower the cost of exposure and keep facts in public view.
- **Rebuild the ethical baseline.** Through civic education, a responsible press and public discourse, restore the expectation that probity is the norm and graft is shameful, not routine.

An Undefined Word: The FCRA Amendment and Civil Society Space

A law that punishes conduct it never defines does not regulate behaviour; it regulates courage, and the first thing it takes away is the willingness to try.

- **Define the prohibited conduct.** Replace the bare term "proselytisation" with the constitutionally settled formulation, conversion effected by force, fraud, coercion or inducement, so that...
- **Route asset consequences through adjudication.** Permit vesting or takeover of assets only after a reasoned order by an independent adjudicating authority, following notice and hearing, with...
- **Make renewal timelines binding on the regulator.** Prescribe outer limits within which registration and renewal applications must be decided, with reasons recorded for refusal, so that...
- **Separate the compliance case from the ideological case.** Enforce the existing FCRA rigorously against genuine financial violation, diversion and opacity, using audit and prosecution, so that...

Suspension, Not Removal: Rethinking the 130th Amendment

An arrest is an allegation wearing the clothes of a verdict, and a Constitution that cannot tell the two apart will eventually punish the innocent to reassure the impatient.

- **Keep the consequence reversible and time-bound.** Adopt the Committee's suspension model, with automatic restoration on acquittal, discharge, or failure of the prosecution to progress within...
- **Insert judicial oversight at the trigger.** Require confirmation by a constitutional court or a designated bench before suspension takes effect, so that the trigger is not purely mechanical...
- **Insulate the process from agency capture.** Pair any such provision with reforms that strengthen the independence and accountability of central investigating agencies, so that the power to...
- **Prefer convention to compulsion.** Strengthen the constitutional convention that a Minister in prolonged custody steps aside voluntarily, backed by codes of conduct, so that probity is...

AI in the Courtroom: Why the Judge Must Stay in the Loop

A machine may hand the judge the file, carry the record and translate the argument, but it must never be allowed to decide, because a judgment is an act of reason for which only a human can be held answerable.

- **Codify the assistive-adjudicatory line in binding rules.** Convert the draft framework into enforceable practice directions that name the permitted assistive tasks and expressly prohibit AI...
- **Mandate human verification of every citation.** Require that any case law surfaced by an AI research tool be independently confirmed against the official reporter before it enters an order...
- **Audit for bias and demand explainability.** Subject any model used in the justice system to bias testing on historical judgments and require that its outputs be explainable, rejecting opaque...
- **Protect court data under the DPDP framework.** Apply the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 rigorously to court records processed by AI, with data minimisation, access controls and a...

Justice on Vacation: Reforming Court Calendars in a Sea of Pendency

A right that arrives after the litigant has died is not a right that was delivered, and a court that closes for weeks while the docket grows is answerable to the Constitution it serves, not to a nineteenth-century calendar.

- **Stagger judicial leave instead of closing the court.** Move to rotating vacations so the institution stays open year-round, adding working days without denying any judge rest, as...
- **Make appointments time-bound.** Fix outer limits for the Collegium to recommend and the executive to clear names, and publish reasons for delay, so that vacancies stop being the silent cause...
- **Attack the undertrial backlog first.** Expand Fast Track Special Courts, enforce Section 436A releases for those who have served part of the maximum sentence, and use plea bargaining and Lok...
- **Institutionalise alternative dispute resolution.** Push mediation, arbitration and Gram Nyayalayas as the first resort for civil and commercial disputes, and adopt a disciplined government...

Fair Before Final: Why Citizenship Cannot Be Decided by a Mechanical Order

When the highest court tells a High Court that stripping a person of citizenship demands a reasoned order and not a rubber stamp, it is defending a principle far larger than any single case, that in a constitutional republic the state must...

- **Insist on reasoned tribunal orders.** Tribunals should record evidence-based findings that engage each material document, so that appellate review is meaningful and arbitrariness is checked...
- **Strengthen procedural safeguards.** Ensure adequate notice, legal aid, and translation support, since many appellants are poor and documentary gaps often reflect poverty rather than foreign...
- **Guard against irreversible harm.** Retain interim protection from coercive action until a determination attains finality, so that a person is never rendered stateless on an order later found...
- **Standardise appellate scrutiny.** High Courts hearing tribunal appeals should independently test the evidence rather than affirm summarily, preserving the two-tier protection the system is...

Guarding the Gatekeepers: Article 317 and the Independence of Public Service...

A Public Service Commission is the gatekeeper of the merit on which the entire administrative state rests, and the Constitution guards it with a removal process so exacting that even a credible allegation of nepotism must travel to the...

- **Let the constitutional process run.** The Article 317 route, suspension, presidential reference, and Supreme Court inquiry, should be allowed to proceed without prejudgement, since due...
- **Codify conflict-of-interest rules.** PSCs should adopt binding recusal norms so that members with a personal stake in any recruitment step entirely aside, closing the gap that allegations...
- **Strengthen recruitment transparency.** Publish selection criteria, marks, and processes to deter manipulation and to restore confidence shaken by recruitment scams across states.
- **Insulate appointments to PSCs.** Ensure that appointments of chairpersons and members are made on merit and integrity, since the strength of the removal shield makes the quality of the...

The Cracks in the Foundation: UMANG and the Security of Digital Public...

Digital Public Infrastructure earns citizen trust by promising that convenience will not cost them their privacy, and a single unpatched flaw that exposes the Aadhaar and provident-fund details of millions is not a technical footnote but a...

- **Mandate security-by-design for DPI.** Government should require encryption at rest, least-privilege access, and independent security audits before any service is onboarded to a shared...
- **Operationalise DPDP breach accountability.** Empower the Data Protection Board to hold government platforms to the same fiduciary and breach-notification standards as private entities...
- **Institutionalise responsible disclosure.** Create clear bug-bounty and coordinated-disclosure channels through CERT-In so that researchers are partners in defence rather than accidental...
- **Audit the whole stack, not the app.** Since the flaw lay in the architecture, security reviews must cover the underlying data flows and integrations, not just the front-end service.

One Nation One Election Will Not Fix What Is Actually Broken

A country does not govern better because it votes less often; it governs better when the people it elects are answerable more often.

- **Diagnose before legislating.** Anchor any reform in the actual drivers of governance failure, defection, opaque finance and criminalisation, rather than treating the election calendar as the...
- **Protect the federal clock.** If synchronisation proceeds, build strong safeguards against the misuse of Article 356 to preserve the cycle, and reconsider by-mid-term truncation so that a...
- **Build consent, not just a majority.** A change that reshapes the working of federalism should be carried on broad cross-party agreement and genuine ratification by the states, consistent with...
- **Strengthen the machinery and the guardrails.** Expand the Election Commission's logistical capacity for large synchronised polls, and pair any move with independent scrutiny of coattail...

Statehood for Jammu and Kashmir Cannot Wait Forever

A promise without a date is a promise that can be kept forever in the future and never in the present.

- **Announce a defined roadmap.** The Union should convert the recorded assurance into a public timeline for restoring statehood, so that "as soon as possible" acquires a meaning that can be...
- **Sequence the transfer of powers.** Even ahead of full statehood, the elected Assembly's competence can be progressively widened, aligning practice with the transitional promise rather than...
- **Use the Article 3 route transparently.** Restoration is a parliamentary act, so the government should bring the enabling legislation in a planned, deliberative manner rather than leaving the...
- **Keep security and statehood on separate tracks.** Continued vigilance against cross-border terrorism, where India's stand is one of zero tolerance, does not require the suspension of...

One Person, One Vote, One Anxiety: Delimitation and the Federal Balance

Democracy promises that every vote counts equally, but delimitation asks whether every state should count equally too.

- **Build political consensus before constitutional change.** A reallocation of representation touches the federal core and should proceed through wide all-party and inter-state consultation, not...
- **Consider safeguards that protect federal balance.** Options discussed by scholars include capping any state's relative loss, or strengthening the role of the states' chamber, so no region is...
- **Separate House expansion from reallocation.** Enlarging the House to improve the MP-to-citizen ratio can be considered on its own merits, distinct from the contentious question of...
- **Communicate the constitutional timeline honestly.** Clarify that this flows from the lapse of the 84th Amendment freeze and is distinct from the 130th Amendment, to prevent misinformation...

The Fasting Body: Dissent, Dignity and the State's Duty to Preserve Life

When a citizen refuses food to be heard, the State must decide whether to respect the fast or override the body, and both choices carry a moral cost.

- **Prioritise dialogue and grievance redress.** The first duty of the State facing a hunger strike is to hear and address the underlying grievance, treating the fast as a signal of institutional...
- **Adopt a graded medical protocol.** Keep the faster under continuous, consensual medical monitoring, intervening against will only when the person genuinely loses decision-making capacity, and...
- **Reject routine force-feeding.** Move away from reflexive coercive feeding of competent adults, which violates dignity, and align practice with the ethical consensus reflected in the Mental...
- **Codify clear, humane guidelines.** Frame transparent standards for authorities and doctors on capacity assessment, consent and intervention thresholds, so decisions are principled rather than...

When the Auditor Reads the Welfare Bill: CAG, Ladki Bahin and the Freebie Question

A cash transfer that wins an election and an audit that questions how it was paid for are not opposites. They are two halves of the same democracy, and the **Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG)** report on Maharashtra's **Majhi Ladki Bahin...**

- **Legislate before you spend.** Route cost overruns through **supplementary grants under Article 205**, not quiet reappropriation, so the House retains real control of the purse.
- **Fix targeting, not just gatekeeping.** Pair e-KYC with an **assisted-verification and grievance-redressal** layer so genuine beneficiaries are recovered rather than dropped, shrinking exclusion...
- **Anchor to a fiscal rule.** Cap recurring transfer schemes as a disclosed share of revenue receipts within the state **FRBM** framework, and publish an annual sustainability statement.
- **Distinguish welfare from vote-buying transparently.** Adopt the spirit of the **Supreme Court's Subramaniam Balaji** observations by publishing cost, coverage and outcome data, letting citizens...

Mistakes Were Made: How the Passive Voice Erodes Democratic Accountability

"Mistakes were made." "It happens." "Lapses have been noted." These are the sentences a democracy reaches for when it wants the comfort of remorse without the cost of responsibility. The passive voice is not a grammatical habit; it is a...

- **Write accountability in the active voice.** Require inquiry reports and official communications to name the decisions and the decision-makers, replacing "lapses occurred" with "who decided..."
- **Strengthen answerability mechanisms.** Use the **RTI Act**, **Citizens' Charters** and the **Sevottam** framework to make public explanation a routine obligation, not a favour, with time-bound responses.
- **Institutionalise the 2nd ARC's ethics agenda.** Adopt clear codes of ethics, protection for those who flag risks, and consequence management so that responsibility attaches to named offices.
- **Separate systemic reform from personal accountability.** Fix the process and name the person, since treating every failure as a faceless "systemic gap" is itself a way of protecting the...

Digital Justice: Why Speed Must Walk With Safeguards

A criminal trial is only as trustworthy as the weakest link in its chain of evidence. India has spent two years rebuilding that chain in code and cable rather than paper, and the promise is real: fewer lost files, tamper-evident exhibits...

- **Legislate a criminal-justice data framework.** Operationalise the Digital Personal Data Protection regime for law-enforcement data with clear retention limits, purpose limitation and...
- **Make the chain of custody cryptographic.** Mandate hash-based integrity verification and immutable audit logs for every digital exhibit in eSakshya and CCTNS, so any tampering is detectable...
- **Fund forensic capacity before mandating forensic evidence.** Expand forensic science laboratories, staff and turnaround time so the seven-year forensic mandate accelerates rather than clogs...
- **Guarantee defence access and independent audit.** Ensure the accused can inspect and challenge digital evidence, and empower an independent body to audit the criminal justice databases for...

Removal Without an Office: Impeaching a Judge Who Has Resigned

The Constitution gives Parliament a formidable but narrow power: to remove a sitting judge for **proved misbehaviour or incapacity**. It is a scalpel meant for a single purpose, which is to take away a judicial office from a person unfit to...

- **Recognise the limit of removal.** Accept that impeachment is office-specific under **Article 124(4)** and **217**, and avoid symbolic proceedings against a resigned judge that yield no constitutional...
- **Strengthen the in-house mechanism.** Give the judiciary's internal inquiry process statutory backing, defined timelines and transparent findings, so accountability does not hinge on whether...
- **Pursue the ordinary law.** Where an alleged act is a criminal offence, ensure a fair, independent investigation proceeds on its own track, since resignation does not confer immunity from...
- **Attach consequences to conduct, not office.** Provide, through law, for forfeiture of post-retirement benefits and disqualification from certain post-retirement roles where an in-house or...

Reclaim the Footpath: Walking as a Constitutional Right

A city that cannot be walked safely has quietly decided that some of its citizens do not matter. When a pedestrian steps off a broken footpath into fast traffic because a vendor cart, a parked car and an open drain have swallowed the...

- **Design for the walker first.** Adopt binding street-design guidelines that mandate continuous, obstruction-free footpaths of adequate width, safe crossings and traffic-calming, with the...
- **Integrate vendors, do not evict them.** Complete Street Vendors Act surveys, notify vending zones and constitute Town Vending Committees so that hawking is designed into the street through...
- **Fund and empower municipalities.** Tie non-motorised transport funding under the Smart Cities and urban mission framework to measurable walkability outcomes, and give urban local bodies the...
- **Make safety measurable and accountable.** Publish ward-level pedestrian crash data, set a target for reducing pedestrian and cyclist deaths, and treat unsafe streets as an actionable failure...

Reforming the Anti-Defection Law to Protect the Voter Mandate

A law written to stop legislators from selling their loyalty has become a tool that too often protects the very defections it was meant to punish, and the fix lies less in new grounds for disqualification than in who decides, and how...

- **Set a hard deadline.** Require the adjudicating authority to decide defection petitions within a fixed period, such as three months, with the case deemed decided or referred upward if the...
- **Move adjudication to a neutral forum.** Shift the power from the **Speaker** to an independent tribunal headed by a retired judge, insulating the decision from the ruling party.
- **Close the engineered-defection route.** Tighten the two-thirds **merger** test and disqualify resign-and-recontest tactics from holding office for the remainder of the term.
- **Raise the cost of defection.** Bar disqualified members from ministerial office until fresh election, so that switching sides no longer buys instant reward.

The Test of the Monsoon Session: Scrutiny Over Speed

A Parliament that passes many bills quickly can look productive and still be failing. The true measure of a legislature is not the length of its statute output but the depth of its scrutiny: the questions asked, the committees consulted...

- **Refer consequential bills to committee.** Restore the convention that major legislation, such as tax, judiciary-strength and foreign-funding bills, is examined by a Standing Committee before...
- **Protect and expand sitting days.** Fix a minimum number of annual sitting days so that a heavy agenda is met with adequate time rather than compressed debate, honouring the spirit of Article...
- **Make disruption costly and debate the norm.** Both government and opposition should commit to protecting Question Hour and floor debate, treating orderly scrutiny, not walkouts, as the...
- **Publish scrutiny metrics, not just output.** Report hours of debate, committee referrals and disruption alongside bills passed, so that the public and the House judge a session by the quality...

Panchayats Need Real Money, Not Just Real Elections

India held its rural self-government experiment to a high constitutional standard when it enacted the **73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992**, giving **Panchayati Raj Institutions** a permanent place in the constitutional order. More than...

- **Shift the balance toward untied funds.** Route a larger share of transfers as formula-based, untied grants so the **Gram Sabha** and elected council can set local priorities rather than merely...
- **Empower State Finance Commissions.** Constitute them on time under **Article 243-I**, staff them properly, and make the tabling and acceptance of their recommendations a firm statutory obligation...
- **Mobilise own-source revenue.** Build panchayat capacity to levy and collect property taxes, user charges and local fees, giving rural bodies a revenue base they control rather than total...
- **Transfer functionaries, not just functions.** Place dedicated technical and administrative staff under panchayat control so that devolved subjects in the **Eleventh Schedule** can actually be...

The Case for Truth and Reconciliation in Punjab

A society cannot bury a wound and call it healing. Punjab needs to be allowed to remember, so that it can finally move on.

- **Centre the victims.** Any mechanism must be built around the testimony, dignity and recognition of those who suffered on all sides, not around political point-scoring.
- **Operate within the Constitution and the rule of law.** A truth body should complement the courts and preserve accountability for grave crimes, never function as a blanket amnesty.
- **Ensure credible, non-partisan leadership.** The legitimacy of the process depends on a widely trusted, impartial chair and a transparent, time-bound mandate.
- **Tie truth to repair and memory.** Pair documented findings with reparation where warranted and with shared memorialisation, so that acknowledgement translates into durable closure and...

A Checklist for a New-Age Courtroom

A new-age courtroom is not a screen bolted onto an old process. It is a redesigned institution in which technology, judge strength and dispute resolution work together so that justice is faster, cheaper and reachable.

- **Redesign the process first.** Institutionalise structured case management with differentiated tracks, firm adjournment limits and judicial control of case pace so that digitisation...
- **Close the capacity gap.** Fill subordinate judiciary **vacancies** on a time-bound calendar and raise the **judge-to-population ratio** toward recommended levels, since throughput ultimately depends...
- **Mainstream alternative dispute resolution.** Strengthen referral to **Lok Adalats**, operationalise the **Mediation Act, 2023**, and revive **Gram Nyayalayas** so a large share of disputes settle before...
- **Design for the litigant.** Make interfaces usable by persons with disabilities, provide vernacular access and legal aid under **Article 39A**, so that access to justice is real for the poorest...

Beyond the Bad Apple: Corruption as a Failure of the System

Corruption is rarely the failure of a single dishonest official. It is the predictable output of a system where the honest are unprotected, the powerful are unaccountable, and the paper trail can quietly disappear.

- **Make enforcement swift and certain.** Fast-track corruption trials, strengthen the Lokpal and CVC's independence, and ensure sanction requirements do not become shields for the powerful.
- **Operationalise whistle-blower protection.** Fully implement the Whistle Blowers Protection Act with real anonymity, anti-retaliation guarantees and a credible grievance channel.
- **Defend transparency law.** Protect the RTI Act's independence and timelines, and ensure CAG findings feed promptly into accountability, not archives.
- **Design out discretion.** Cut arbitrary discretion through digital, rule-bound processes and e-governance, following the Second ARC's emphasis on institutional reform over moral exhortation.

The Right to Protest and Its Reasonable Limits

A democracy is tested not by how it treats convenient speech but by how it handles inconvenient assembly. The right to protest and the duty to keep public order are both constitutional, and the art of governance is holding them in...

- **Regulate manner, not the right itself.** The State should manage the **time, place and manner** of protest through narrow, reasoned orders, not extinguish assembly with blanket prohibitions.
- **Use prohibitory powers sparingly.** Invoke **Section 163 of the BNSS** only on a genuine, recorded apprehension of danger, with clear reasons and defined limits, so the exception does not swallow...
- **Apply proportionality by default.** Require authorities to choose the **least restrictive** measure that secures public order, and to justify why a lighter option would not work.
- **Protect the peaceful, isolate the violent.** Distinguish sharply between peaceful protesters, who retain full constitutional protection, and those who resort to violence, so that order is...

Restoring Trust: Exam Integrity and the Reform of India's Testing System

For a student who has studied for years, a leaked question paper is not a headline but a robbery. Each fresh scandal around **NEET** and other national tests corrodes something a democracy cannot easily rebuild, the belief that merit is fairly...

- **Restructure the NTA.** Implement the Radhakrishnan Committee's recommendations to professionalise the agency, build permanent capacity and fix clear lines of accountability.
- **Harden the process.** Adopt encrypted, on-demand question-paper transmission, district-level custody, biometric verification and randomised centre allocation to prevent leaks at source.
- **Enforce the 2024 Act.** Ensure swift, visible prosecution of organised cheating networks so that deterrence becomes real rather than notional.
- **Guarantee transparency.** Provide robust grievance redress, timely disclosure and independent audit so that aspirants can trust the fairness of every result.

When the Signal Dies: Internet Shutdowns and the Rule of Law

A shutdown is not the absence of governance; it is a governance decision, and every such decision must answer to the law that authorised it.

- **Publish every order by default.** No suspension should take effect unless the reasoned order is placed in the public domain, so that citizens and courts can test it in real time.
- **Prefer targeted action over blanket blackouts.** Mandate that authorities first attempt account-level or platform-level measures and localised, short-duration suspensions before any...
- **Strengthen the review committee.** Include an independent member outside the executive, impose tight timelines, and require the committee to record whether the least-restrictive-means test...
- **Legislate a sunset and reporting duty.** Cap the duration of any single order tightly, require fresh justification for renewal, and mandate an annual public report on the number, duration and...

Do Not Hold the Women's Quota Hostage to Delimitation

A right written into the Constitution but scheduled for a date no one can name is a promise with the delivery clause left blank.

- **Decouple the quota from delimitation:** amend or interpret the implementation clause so the one-third reservation applies to existing seats through a transparent rotation, without waiting for...
- **Borrow the panchayat mechanism:** adopt the tested rotation model of the 73rd and 74th Amendments, which has delivered women's representation at the local level for three decades without any...
- **Fix a firm commencement date:** set a clear, near-term date for the reservation to take effect, converting an open-ended promise into an enforceable timeline.
- **Complete the census and delimitation on their own track:** proceed with the census and delimitation for their proper purpose of seat distribution, but do not let their timing gate the women's...

Fast-Track Courts Are Only as Fast as Their Judges

A court cannot outrun its own vacancies. Rename a courtroom fast-track and you change the signboard, not the speed, unless you also give it judges, forensics and a workable calendar.

- **Fill judicial vacancies and raise the ratio:** create fast-track courts only with sanctioned additional judges, prosecutors and staff, so capacity genuinely rises instead of being relabelled.
- **Strengthen the forensic and investigation chain:** expand and modernise forensic science laboratories and train investigators, because a trial can move no faster than the evidence reaching it.
- **Reform procedure to curb delay:** enforce limits on adjournments, use day-to-day hearings as designed, and adopt digital case management and e-filing to compress dead time.
- **Give fast-track courts a statutory footing:** enact a clear framework defining their mandate, assured funding and continuity, so they do not lapse with a scheme's budget cycle.

Rounding Up the Usual Suspects: NEET, the NTA and the Cost of Centralisation

Every examination crisis in recent years has ended the same way: an officer is moved, a law is promised, and the architecture that produced the failure survives intact. The removal of the higher education secretary, followed by the...

- **Separate standard-setting from test conduct.** A national body can define syllabus, difficulty and equating while States conduct examinations under audit.
- **Bring execution in-house or make vendors liable.** Outsourcing without enforceable accountability is the proximate cause of most failures.
- **Expand supply.** Paper leaks are a symptom of scarcity; 139,000 seats for 2.2 million aspirants guarantees desperate behaviour regardless of enforcement.
- **Resist the reflex of a fresh statute.** A standalone anti-cheating law adds little where the general criminal law already applies; institutional redesign is harder and more useful.
- **Treat the States as partners.** Concurrent-List subjects were meant for cooperation, not displacement.

Trained Abroad, Read at Home: AI, Copyright and the Jurisdiction Gap

When the machine is trained on servers abroad, the copyrighted text is Indian, the harm is felt in India, and yet the firm can plausibly say the act of copying never happened in India at all, which is the exact seam where the reach of...

- **Legislate a text and data mining exception.** Give India a purpose-built rule for AI training, with a rights-holder opt-out and licensing mechanism, rather than forcing judges to bend Section...
- **Adopt an effects-based jurisdiction rule.** Clarify by statute that Indian copyright and regulatory law attaches to foreign AI activity when its effects and commercial benefit land in India.
- **Build a licensing market for training data.** Encourage collective licensing so that news publishers and creators can be paid for training use, turning a zero-sum dispute into a market.
- **Fix intermediary and output liability.** Align Section 79 safe harbour with AI output, distinguishing hosting third-party content from generating it, so responsibility is clear when a model...

Who Guards the Guardians: The Custodians of the Constitution

A Constitution is only ink until someone chooses to defend it. The document does not enforce itself; it survives because a chain of guardians, and finally an alert citizenry, refuse to let it lapse into a dead letter.

- **Protect institutional autonomy.** Secure the independence, funding and appointment integrity of the ECI, CAG, CIC and statutory commissions, so the guardians of the system cannot be quietly...
- **Cultivate constitutional morality.** Strengthen civic and constitutional literacy in education and public life, so respect for the document's spirit becomes a shared habit rather than a...
- **Keep transparency alive.** Safeguard the Right to Information, a free press and open institutions, since an informed citizenry can only guard what it can actually see.
- **Balance, do not centralise.** Preserve the friction of checks and balances rather than seeking a single all-powerful custodian, because the Constitution is safest when guardianship is shared...

Is the Deal Still Good: The Examination Protests as a Referendum on Trust

The crowds were asking one question, and it was not about a minister. Nationalising examinations nationalises the trauma when papers leak, and what began as a grievance about integrity became a referendum on whether the system can be...

- **Institutionalise the accountability that was conceded.** A resignation extracted by protest is a precedent only if it becomes a norm applied without protest.
- **Close the specific grievances.** Compensation to bereaved families and withdrawal of cases against students are cheap, quick and directly restorative of trust.
- **Retire the coercive playbook.** Internet suspension and water cannon against a networked, filmed movement now generate more legitimacy cost than order benefit.
- **Resist the conspiracy reflex.** Attributing a domestic grievance to outside instigation forfeits the diagnostic information the protest carries.
- **Keep the compact visible after the streets are quiet.** Parliament resumes and ministers rotate; the unwritten contract is what has to be maintained between crises.

Isotopes of the Body Politic: What Student Movements Have Always Signalled

Students function as radioactive tracers in the body politic. They carry no baggage, hold no stake in the settled order and have no incentive to misreport the condition of the state. When they light up, the malignancy is real, and the...

- **Fix the certification function first.** An examination system that cannot guarantee integrity destroys the legitimacy of every credential it issues.
- **Fill sanctioned posts.** The coexistence of unemployment and vacancy is an administrative failure, not an economic one, and it is the most quickly remediable grievance on the list.
- **Treat protest as diagnosis.** Force applied to a leaderless, filmed, networked movement produces images that outlast the policy dispute.
- **Restore the compact explicitly.** Compensation to bereaved families and withdrawal of cases against students cost little and signal that the state distinguishes dissent from disorder.

Code as Contraband: When the State Takes Down an Architecture, Not a Post

Every takedown until now has been about a message. This one is about a mechanism. Directing GitHub to disable BitChat's repositories, the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre named no unlawful post; it named an architecture that cannot...

- **Route architecture-level action through Section 69A.** If the State genuinely believes an application must be restricted, the direction should travel through the provision that carries...
- **Set a statutory standard for code takedowns.** Amend the IT Rules to require a judicial order before source code repositories are disabled, with notice to the developer and an opportunity to...
- **Publish orders and aggregate transparency data.** Extend the Anuradha Bhasin publication principle to Section 79(3)(b) notices, with periodic reporting by I4C on the volume of notices, the...
- **Discipline shutdowns to reduce demand for shutdown-proof tools.** Strict compliance with the suspension rules, including publication, reasoned orders, duration limits and review committee...
- **Invest in lawful capability rather than prohibition.** Strengthen metadata analysis, device-level forensics, digital evidence handling and trained cyber investigation capacity within I4C and...
- **Create independent oversight for digital orders.** A statutory appellate authority outside the issuing executive, with the power to review blocking and takedown directions, would close the...

Law That Cannot Be Found: The Case for Open Legal Publishing

A law that citizens cannot reliably find is a law that governs by surprise. India tells every citizen that ignorance of the law is no excuse, yet it publishes that law as scanned PDFs, dated gazette notifications and departmental circulars...

- **Legislate a duty to publish in structured form.** Amend the framework governing official publication so that every Act, rule and notification must be issued in an open, machine-readable...
- **Build point-in-time consolidation into India Code.** Fund the Legislative Department to maintain amended-as-of-date texts with visible amendment trails, so that a reader can retrieve the law...
- **Adopt an open standard and stable citation.** Use **Akoma Ntoso** or an equivalent open XML vocabulary, and assign every provision a permanent identifier so that citations in judgments, contracts...
- **Bring subordinate legislation into the same system.** Require every ministry and statutory regulator to publish rules, regulations and circulars into a single indexed repository, and give the...
- **Open the data, do not sell it.** Publish through a free application programming interface, consistent with the proactive disclosure obligation in **Section 4 of the Right to Information Act**...
- **Extend to languages and states.** Fund authoritative translations beyond English and Hindi, and offer a shared technical platform to state governments, so that the quality of a citizen's...

Responsibility Without Fault: What Ministerial Accountability Owes the Citizen

In November 1956 a Railway Minister resigned after a derailment he had not caused, because he held ultimate authority over the system that failed. In July 2026 an Education Minister resigned after an examination collapse, but only after a...

- **Codify answerability without codifying resignation.** A statutory or House-adopted code requiring a minister to make a statement to Parliament within a fixed period of any major failure in...
- **Separate operational from political accountability in law.** Examination and regulatory bodies should carry named statutory officers with defined statutory duties, so that operational failure...
- **Give the testing agency a statutory foundation.** A body whose decisions determine the life chances of more than 20 lakh candidates should rest on its own statute, with defined duties...
- **Make communication restrictions verifiably proportionate.** Every suspension order under the Telecommunications (Temporary Suspension of Services) Rules, 2024 should be published with...
- **Adopt and publish crowd-management standard operating procedures.** Clear rules on permissible force, the equipment that may be deployed, mandatory medical presence, the treatment of detained...
- **Designate and equip usable protest spaces.** *Amit Sahni* requires designated areas; the State's corresponding obligation is to designate spaces that are genuinely visible and accessible rather...
- **Deliver the remedy the grievance was about.** Compensation for those harmed and a credible, audited redesign of examination security are what convert an episode of protest into institutional...

Youth at the Vanguard: What a Leaderless Agitation Revealed About Indian Democracy

On July 25, 2026 the Union Education Minister resigned after weeks of youth agitation that no political party had called and no recognised leader fronted. The Hindu's leader of July 27, 2026, titled "Youth at the vanguard", argues this was...

- **Fix the statute before the personnel.** The Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024 punishes leaks after they occur, with three to five years and fines up to Rs 10 lakh for...
- **Give examination bodies a statutory identity and published accountability standards.** An agency conducting examinations for more than 20 lakh candidates should carry defined performance...
- **Legislate a candidate grievance remedy.** A fast, low-cost tribunal or ombudsman route for examination disputes would move contestation from the street into an adjudicative forum, which is...
- **Restore the legislative wire.** Departmentally related standing committee scrutiny of examination bodies, with time-bound action-taken reports laid before the House, is the cheapest available...
- **Codify proportionality in crowd management.** Published standard operating procedures for large protests, covering permissible force, permitted equipment, medical presence, communication...
- **Address the grievance beneath the grievance.** The underlying anxiety is employment, not examinations alone. Expanding formal-sector absorption is the only structural answer to a movement...

The Diarchy That Would Not End: J&K, Statehood, and the Cost of Delay

A legislature that cannot answer for policing, and a police force that cannot be judged at the ballot box, is not federalism in transition. It is federalism suspended.

- **Publish a phased roadmap** linking statehood restoration to specific, publicly verifiable security indicators (incident counts, infiltration attempts, stone-pelting incidents), with a defined...
- **Transfer subjects incrementally** rather than as a single police-and-land handover, starting with land administration where the security case is weaker, while public order transitions last.
- **Institutionalise a Centre-State security review mechanism** with the elected government represented, so that the normalcy assessment is not purely a Union determination.
- **Legislate rather than merely announce.** Statehood requires a fresh Act of Parliament amending the Reorganisation Act; a political commitment without an introduced Bill has no binding force...
- **Extend the same clarity to Ladakh,** whose Union Territory-without-legislature status raises a parallel but distinct set of representation questions the roadmap should address alongside Jammu...

Fire, Fragmentation and the Unfinished 74th Amendment

A fire code that exists in a state government manual but answers to no one a citizen can vote out is not really a fire code. It is a document that becomes evidence only after the tragedy it was written to prevent.

- **Formally devolve fire services** to municipal bodies as functional responsibility, not merely a listed Twelfth Schedule possibility, with clear timelines for states that have not yet done so.
- **Ring-fence State Finance Commission allocations** specifically for fire-safety capacity, equipment and training, so devolution is not unfunded.
- **Mandate integrated single-window accountability** for building approval, fire inspection and occupancy certification, closing the jurisdictional fragmentation that currently lets...
- **Publish public compliance dashboards** at the municipal level, giving citizens and elected councillors visibility into inspection status and violation records.
- **Build technical cadre-sharing arrangements** between smaller municipal bodies, so capacity constraints in individual towns do not become a permanent argument against devolution.

From Case Law to Statute: Codifying a Legal Shield for Protestors

A right that must be re-proven in court every time it is violated is a right in name more than in practice. The judiciary has said, repeatedly and consistently, what the state may not do to peaceful protestors. What remains is turning that...

- **Codify the core protections established through case law,** ex-ante justification requirements, proportionality standards and custodial safeguards, into a clear protest-rights statute.
- **Require documented, reviewable justification** from the state before imposing any restriction on a planned protest, shifting the practical burden onto the state at the point of decision.
- **Preserve judicial review** as a continuing check on both the state's justifications under the statute and any future legislative attempt to narrow its protections.
- **Build in periodic legislative review** of the statute's protections, allowing expansion to cover emerging forms of protest and restriction as they arise.
- **Train police and administrative authorities** on the codified standard directly, reducing reliance on after-the-fact judicial correction as the primary enforcement mechanism.

Have Fast-Track Courts Delivered on the Promise of Speedy Justice?

A fast lane built by removing a lane from the highway does not increase the highway's capacity; it just changes whose commute gets shorter and whose gets longer.

- **Pair any new FTSC category announcement with a published judicial-strength expansion plan,** distinguishing net new capacity from reassigned capacity, so the trade-off is transparent.
- **Publish comparative pendency-reduction data** for FTSC categories versus the general docket, to track whether reallocation is producing a hidden slowdown elsewhere.
- **Prioritise structural judicial capacity expansion,** recruitment, infrastructure, digitisation, as the primary lever for reducing the 4.8-crore aggregate pendency, treating FTSCs as a...
- **Establish clear, published criteria for FTSC-eligible case categories,** preventing ad hoc political responsiveness from determining which categories receive fast-track status.
- **Sunset-review each FTSC category periodically,** assessing whether continued fast-track designation remains justified as case volumes and public-interest urgency evolve.

INDIAN EXPRESS

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Healing the Healers: Doctor Safety and Workforce Welfare

On National Doctors' Day, recurring violence against healthcare workers and workforce strain demand a central protection law, better conditions and attention to doctors' mental health.

- **Enact a central protection law.** A single nationwide statute declaring hospitals safe zones, with clear penalties and fast processing.
- **Secure the workplace.** Improve hospital security, CCTV, controlled access and responsive grievance-redress for staff and families alike.
- **Fix the workload.** Cap unsafe duty hours, raise and better distribute staffing, and ease patient loads that drive burnout.
- **Care for mental health.** Build counselling and support into medical training and practice, especially for resident doctors.

THE HINDU

1 Jul · 614

NEP's Three-Language Formula and the Status of English

The row over a compulsory third language from Class 6 stems from an unresolved contradiction in NEP 2020 over the place of English in Indian schooling.

- **Name the contradiction.** Officially reconcile English's acknowledged role with its curricular status rather than papering over it.
- **Secure English while promoting Indian languages.** Design the formula so both aims are met, not traded off.
- **Keep it flexible.** Prefer voluntary and locally responsive implementation over rigid mandates, respecting state sensitivities.
- **Centre the learner.** Judge every rule by whether it widens or narrows opportunity for the disadvantaged.

THE HINDU

3 Jul · 615

A Shot at Life: Mandsaur's HPV Vaccination Model

With India carrying nearly a quarter of the world's cervical-cancer burden, Mandsaur's data-driven, community-led drive turned a health scheme into a movement.

- **Scale the template through the national drive.** Embed data-driven targeting and convergence in the countrywide HPV rollout.
- **Build integrated eligibility databases.** Ensure every adolescent girl is identified, reached and followed up.
- **Invest in behaviour-change communication.** Use survivors, local champions and counselling to convert availability into demand.
- **Pair vaccination with screening.** Combine primary prevention with screening and treatment to move toward elimination.
- **Sustain the enablers.** Secure financing, cold-chain capacity and health-worker training so success is durable, not episodic.

THE HINDU

4 Jul · 616

Counting Cancer: The Case for National Notification

A country that cannot count its cancers cannot plan against them. India records an estimated 13.9 lakh new cancer cases (2020), yet it has no national law requiring every diagnosis to be reported, leaving the true burden invisible to the...

- Enact a national framework for cancer notification built on cooperative federalism, so states implement a common standard rather than each reinventing the wheel.
- Build the real-time digital registry incrementally, integrating existing PBCRs and HBCRs and prioritising under-covered states like UP and Bihar.
- Address privacy through the DPDP framework: mandatory reporting must be paired with strict data-protection safeguards.
- Link notification data directly to the day-care cancer centre rollout and NP-NCD screening so counting translates into care.

DOWN TO EARTH

5 Jul · 617

Hunger on the Move: Income Shocks, Migration and Portable Safety Nets

A safety net that stops at the state border is no net at all for the worker who crosses that border to survive; India's food-security architecture was built for people who stay put, in an economy that increasingly forces them to move.

- **Universalise enrolment, then port it.** Move toward saturation NFSA coverage and update quotas beyond 2011 Census data so ONORC has someone to serve; make Aadhaar-seeded cards fully portable...
- **Harden the last mile.** Fix e-PoS reliability and connectivity, and keep manual/override fallbacks so biometric failure never means an empty plate.
- **Extend the wage floor to migrants.** Pilot an urban employment guarantee and make MGNREGA works accessible at destination for those who need them.
- **Track and register migrants.** Operationalise a national migrant-worker database and inter-state coordination so entitlements, health and nutrition follow the worker.
- **Nutrition, not just calories.** Widen the portable basket beyond grain to pulses, oils and fortified foods to address the quality dimension of food insecurity.

THE HINDU

5 Jul · 618

She Farms, She Owns Nothing: Recognising the Woman Farmer

Indian agriculture increasingly runs on women's hands and rarely on women's names. A law that hands them a certificate, not just a hoe, changes who the state can finally see.

- **Scale the certificate model.** Encourage other states to adopt recognition-based identification of farmers so welfare follows the tiller, not the title.
- **Push joint and individual land titling.** Combine recognition with real ownership reform, including effective enforcement of the 2005 succession law and joint-titling incentives.
- **Fix the databases.** Build a verified women-farmer database (as the Maharashtra fund envisages) linked to PM-KISAN, KCC and PMFBY so recognition automatically unlocks benefits.
- **Strengthen collectives.** Route credit and markets through women's self-help groups and Farmer Producer Organisations to give landless women bargaining power.
- **Budget for it.** Use gender-responsive budgeting to fund extension, credit and training tailored to women farmers, advancing SDG 5.

A Crisis of Care: Building India's Care Economy

Every economy runs on a hidden subsidy: the unpaid work of feeding children, nursing the sick and caring for the ageing, done overwhelmingly by women. India's Time Use Survey makes the imbalance stark. Until this care work is recognised...

- **Universalise childcare.** Expand the Palna Scheme, enforce the creche mandate, and extend coverage to informal and gig workers.
- **Draft an integrated national senior-care policy.** Act on NITI Aayog's 2024 recommendation with home-care, geriatric health and financial-security components.
- **Formalise care workers.** ASHA and Anganwadi workers remain "volunteers" rather than formal employees; regularisation with fair wages is overdue. The Union Budget 2026-27 proposed training...
- **Redistribute care.** Promote paternity and parental leave, flexible work and public awareness to shift care norms.
- **Invest counter-cyclically.** Treat care as infrastructure; even 2 per cent of GDP invested could create millions of predominantly female jobs.

The Right to Walk and the City

Every Indian city has planned lovingly for the car and forgotten the person on foot. When the Supreme Court held that walking safely on a footpath is a fundamental right, it did more than settle a legal point; it named the most basic user...

- **Legislate a pedestrian-safety framework.** Enact a national pedestrian law and mandatory street-design standards for continuous, obstruction-free, accessible footpaths.
- **Budget for walking and cycling.** Ring-fence a share of urban transport budgets for non-motorised transport, not just roads and flyovers.
- **Fix accountability.** Hold municipal bodies and development authorities answerable, with grievance-redress and audit of footpath quality, as the Court directed.
- **Design for the vulnerable.** Adopt universal-design norms so footpaths serve children, the elderly and persons with disabilities, integrating walking with public transport for last-mile...

Childcare as Public Infrastructure

A creche is not a perk an employer offers; it is infrastructure a child depends on, and infrastructure without inspection is just a promise waiting to fail.

- **Create a licensing and inspection regime.** Require every daycare, public or private, to be registered, licensed and routinely inspected by a designated authority.
- **Make the 2024 standards binding.** Convert the National Minimum Standards for Creches from advisory to enforceable, with CCTV, staff background checks and the prescribed staffing ratios...
- **Build accountability into the chain.** Mandate grievance mechanisms, audits and clear liability for operators and the establishments that host them.
- **Fund and expand public provision.** Scale Palna Anganwadi-cum-Creches so safe, affordable care exists at the demand level, supporting women's labour-force participation.

Engineered for the Wrong Era: Why India's Technical Education Needs an AI Reset

India graduates more than a million engineers a year, yet study after study finds that a large share cannot be hired for the very technical roles their degrees promise. In an economy being reshaped by artificial intelligence, the gap...

- **Reset pedagogy toward applied learning.** Rebuild curricula around projects, real datasets, design and problem-solving, and integrate AI literacy and AI-assisted learning across disciplines...
- **Invest in faculty and research.** Fund faculty development, industry sabbaticals and research so that teaching keeps pace with technology, as NEP 2020 envisages.
- **Institutionalise industry linkage.** Make structured internships, live projects and employer-co-designed courses standard across the system, not just at elite institutions.
- **Enable lifelong, stackable skilling.** Use the credit framework and Academic Bank of Credits so graduates can reskill continuously as AI reshapes roles.
- **Rationalise capacity around quality.** Consolidate or upgrade underperforming institutions so that expansion does not keep producing unemployable degrees.

Income and Health: A Two-Way Street for Women

Income and health are not two separate women's issues; they are the same street running in both directions, and policy that treats them apart wastes both.

- **Budget for women's health explicitly.** Expand gender budgeting so maternal, reproductive, anaemia and NCD care are funded to match women's real burden, and move public health spending toward...
- **Pair inclusion with health.** Bundle self-help-group and financial-inclusion programmes with health check-ups, anaemia screening and insurance awareness.
- **Redistribute the care burden.** Invest in creches, elder care and Anganwadi-cum-creches so the 7.5 hours of daily unpaid work does not remain a tax on women's employment.
- **Strengthen the frontline.** Adequately train, pay and equip ASHA and Anganwadi workers, the human interface of women's primary care.

Checkbox Caste: The Design Problem of Counting Jati

Counting caste is not the hard part; designing the count so that the numbers serve justice rather than merely sorting people into permanent boxes is where Census 2027 will succeed or fail.

- **Build a pre-validated jati directory.** Prepare a standardised, state-wise classification with mapping to administrative categories before enumeration, avoiding the open-text chaos of 2011.
- **Train enumerators and use digital validation.** Leverage the census's digital, self-enumeration and dropdown features to constrain and clean entries at the point of collection.
- **Anchor the count to a welfare purpose.** Publicly link the caste data to specific targeting of education, employment and welfare so the exercise is evidence-driven, not identity-driven.
- **Release aggregated, safeguarded outputs.** Publish purpose-relevant tables with privacy safeguards rather than a raw caste roll that invites competitive mobilisation.

The Vaccine on the Plate: Feeding India Out of Tuberculosis

India has been hunting for a tuberculosis vaccine for a century while the most effective one sat on the plate, unclaimed, in the form of enough food to eat.

- **Treat nutrition as primary prevention.** Position food support at the centre of the TB strategy, not as an adjunct, given the RATIONS evidence on incidence.
- **Make the transfer adequate and prompt.** Ensure the Ni-kshay Poshan Yojana amount buys real nutrition and reaches patients without delay; index it to food costs.
- **Cover the household.** Extend nutrition support systematically to contacts, whom the trial showed benefit, through the Ni-kshay Mitra food-basket route.
- **Integrate with food-security schemes.** Link TB nutrition to the PDS, POSHAN Abhiyaan and school-feeding programmes so support is layered, not isolated.

Counting the People Who Move: Census 2027 and Migration

A person who is counted where they sleep but not where they work becomes invisible to both places, and a nation that cannot see its migrants cannot plan for them.

- **Redesign the migration questionnaire.** Add questions that capture short-term, seasonal and multiple residence so that circular migrants are recorded where they live and work, not only where...
- **Link data to portable welfare.** Use the count to strengthen portability schemes so that ration, health and other entitlements travel with the worker across state lines.
- **Exploit the digital platform well.** Use mobile and self-enumeration to reach migrants at destinations, while safeguarding privacy and preventing exclusion of those without devices.
- **Plan cities on real numbers.** Feed improved migration data into urban housing, water, sanitation and transport planning so destination cities build for the population they actually host.

Almost Everyone: The WHO Cancer Report and India's NCD Burden

When a disease is projected to touch almost everyone, whether as patient or caregiver, it stops being a medical category and becomes a test of whether a health system can hold.

- **Scale up screening.** Expand population-based screening for common cancers so more cases are caught early, when treatment is cheaper and survival higher.
- **Invest in prevention.** Strengthen tobacco control, vaccination and risk-factor reduction under the National Programme for Non-Communicable Diseases, since prevention is the cheapest cure.
- **Protect families financially.** Deepen public insurance and subsidise diagnostics and cancer drugs to blunt the financial toxicity that turns illness into destitution.
- **Build capacity and reach.** Expand oncology infrastructure, trained personnel and palliative care, and take services to underserved districts to narrow the inequality in access.

Enrolled but Underserved: What the AISHE Numbers Hide

Getting a student through the college gate is an achievement of access; getting them out with a real education is an achievement of quality, and the two are not the same thing.

- **Fill the faculty gap.** Prioritise time-bound recruitment against sanctioned vacancies, especially in state universities and colleges, so rising enrolment is matched by teaching capacity.
- **Shift the metric to outcomes.** Track learning outcomes, employability and research output alongside GER, so quality drives policy rather than seat numbers alone.
- **Target the equity gaps.** Direct resources to lagging regions, disadvantaged social groups and under-represented disciplines so gender and social parity become real, not merely averaged.
- **Invest in research and autonomy.** Fund research and grant genuine institutional autonomy so that the push toward the NEP 2020 target of 50 per cent GER by 2035 raises capability, not just...

The Protection Gap: Aid Cuts and Women in Crisis Zones

When the money that keeps a shelter open disappears, the woman fleeing violence does not disappear with it; she is simply left with nowhere to go.

- **Ring-fence protection funding.** Shield gender-based-violence, maternal-health and safe-space services from cuts, treating them as life-saving essentials rather than discretionary programmes.
- **Fund local women-led organisations directly.** Channel resources to the frontline groups that are trusted, effective and cheap, and keep them solvent through pooled and flexible financing.
- **Diversify humanitarian finance.** Broaden the donor base and build pooled emergency funds so protection does not collapse when a few large donors retreat.
- **Hold the line on SDG 5.** Keep gender equality central in humanitarian response and development finance, tracking the protection gap so backsliding is visible and reversible.

From 365 to 52: A Weekly Insulin and the Access Test

A medical breakthrough is only as good as the distance it can travel, and the true measure of the once-weekly insulin is not the science in the vial but how far it reaches into a country of a hundred million diabetics.

- **Turn the launch into access.** Build distribution, cold chain and prescriber awareness so the once-weekly insulin reaches public facilities and smaller towns, not only private metro clinics.
- **Protect affordability.** Use public procurement, price monitoring and inclusion in public health provision to keep the therapy affordable against India's high out-of-pocket health spending.
- **Strengthen the NCD response.** Invest in prevention, screening and early detection so the diabetes burden slows, rather than relying on better treatment to manage an ever-growing caseload.
- **Reward and diffuse innovation.** Maintain a regulatory and pricing environment that encourages such innovations to reach India early while ensuring they diffuse across the whole population.

The City That Uses and Erases: Labour at the Urban Margin

A city is built by the hands it refuses to house, and the distance between where the worker labours and where the worker is allowed to live is the true map of urban inequality.

- **Plan for the worker, not around them.** Make affordable housing, basic services and secure tenure for informal and migrant workers a built-in objective of urban planning rather than an...
- **Provide housing near work.** Expand affordable rental and worker housing close to worksites and transit, so inclusion in the city does not depend on ownership the poor can never afford.
- **Make entitlements portable.** Use e-Shram registration and portable welfare so that a worker's rights and benefits travel with them across cities rather than lapsing on migration.
- **Restore visibility and voice.** Recognise informal workers as legitimate residents, protect vendors and settlements from arbitrary displacement, and enable the collective organisation through...

The City That Was Not Built for Her: Women and Urban Work

A woman weighs the cost of every journey to work in ways a man rarely does, and until the city stops charging her that hidden tax, her education will keep outrunning her employment.

- **Plan cities for safety.** Design well-lit streets, safe public spaces, functional toilets and secure transit stops, and treat women's safety audits as a routine input to urban planning.
- **Build gender-responsive transport.** Make public transport frequent, affordable, well-connected and safe, since mobility is the precondition for reaching a job at all.
- **Redistribute the care burden.** Combine accessible childcare and eldercare with policies, including paternity provisions and flexible work, that stop treating care as women's work alone.
- **Reform the workplace.** Enforce anti-harassment law, support flexible and hybrid arrangements, and design offices and industrial zones with women workers in mind.

Neither Village Nor City: The Peri-Urban Blind Spot in India's Planning

India's fastest-growing settlements are governed by a rulebook written for the place they used to be.

- **Make reclassification automatic, not discretionary.** Provide by state law that a settlement meeting the census-town criteria for two consecutive Census cycles is notified as a statutory...
- **Create a statutory peri-urban planning category.** Recognise the urban fringe in town and country planning law, extend building bye-laws and layout approvals to it, and prohibit construction...
- **Make the Metropolitan Planning Committee work.** Operationalise Articles 243ZD and 243ZE so that the city-region, and not merely the municipal core, is the planning unit for water...
- **Fund settlements, not categories.** Open a peri-urban window under AMRUT and the Swachh Bharat Mission that a gram panchayat may access, and permit Jal Jeevan Mission designs to be built to...
- **Regulate groundwater at the fringe.** Extend Atal Bhujal Yojana-style participatory management and abstraction registration to peri-urban aquifers, and mandate recharge and faecal sludge...
- **Build panchayat capacity in the interim.** Second engineering and planning staff to fringe panchayats and pool them at the block level, because a settlement cannot wait for its notification...

One Regulator, Many Doubts: The VBSA Bill and Institutional Autonomy

When the institutions that regulation was meant to help are the first to ask to be excused from it, the problem is rarely their arrogance and usually the design of the regulation.

- **Insulate the Commission's leadership.** Appoint the chairperson and members through an independent, multi-stakeholder search-cum-selection committee with State and academic representation, so...
- **Separate funding from regulation.** Deliver the NEP's vertical separation in law, so that the body which disburses grants cannot also inspect, penalise and supersede, and the conflict of...
- **Codify graded autonomy instead of exemption.** Write statutory autonomy for institutions meeting transparent performance and accreditation benchmarks, so that the IITs and IIMs do not need to...
- **Respect the federal balance.** Confine the Commission to coordination and standard-setting under Entry 66, leave institutional governance to the States and their universities, and build a...

The Monsoon Killer We Do Not Plan For: Snakebite and Disaster Preparedness

A disaster that arrives on schedule every single year is not a disaster; it is a decision.

- **Put snakebite in the State Disaster Management Plan.** Direct every SDMA to include snakebite as a recognised seasonal hazard with a pre-monsoon action calendar, mirroring the flood...
- **Audit and stock antivenom at the PHC, before the monsoon.** Make in-date polyvalent ASV, adrenaline and a written anaphylaxis protocol a mandatory pre-monsoon checklist item at every PHC and...
- **Train the first responder, and the first prescriber.** Certify community-level responders in immobilise-and-transport first aid, actively unteaching tourniquets and incision, and train PHC...
- **Fix the antivenom itself.** Fund region-specific venom sourcing, expand venom banks beyond a single geography, and back Indian research into recombinant and monoclonal antivenoms.
- **Make the notification real.** Enforce snakebite notification down to the sub-centre, publish district-level incidence, and use it to target stocking, since a disease that is not counted is...
- **Standardise compensation and rehabilitation.** Provide uniform ex gratia and disability rehabilitation across states, recognising that a surviving amputee has lost a livelihood, not merely a...

The Price of Independent Inquiry: CSDS, Funding and Academic Freedom

A democracy that funds only the research it expects to agree with has not funded research at all; it has funded a mirror.

- **Separate audit from content, in writing.** Codify an ICSSR procedure under which financial and administrative compliance is examined by an independent audit process with a right of hearing...
- **Move to multi-year block grants.** Replace annually renewable, salary-linked discretionary grants with five-year block funding and endowed chairs, so that survival is not re-decided every...
- **Create a funded social science window in ANRF.** Reserve a defined share of the Anusandhan National Research Foundation for the social sciences and humanities, with peer review by scholars in...
- **Diversify the funding base.** Enable university endowments, philanthropic and CSR support for independent research, with transparent disclosure norms, so that no single channel holds a veto.
- **Hold scholarship to its own standards.** Institutions must maintain clean books, publish methodology and data, and correct errors swiftly and publicly; independence is claimed most credibly...

Living With Difference: Secularism as Everyday Practice

India is not secular chiefly because a document says so, it is secular because millions of ordinary people, in markets and neighbourhoods and workplaces, have quietly agreed to live next to difference, and it is that agreement, not the...

- **Defend the civic layer, not only the legal one.** Recognise that social cohesion is sustained by everyday coexistence, and protect the shared public spaces, schools, markets and...
- **Teach the composite culture.** Use education, in the spirit of Article 51A, to transmit the shared inheritance of language, art and festival across communities, so that plurality is...
- **Hold the constitutional line on equal citizenship.** Uphold Articles 25 to 28 and the guarantee of non-discrimination without fear or favour, so that no community's rights depend on its...
- **Answer panic with fraternity and empathy.** Meet the politics of communal fear with the constitutional value of fraternity and the ethical virtue of empathy, insisting that a fellow citizen's...

One Day Is Not Four Years: Barring Entrance Ranks From Placement Resumes

The rank that opened the gate should not also be the badge you wear at the exit, because a number earned in one three-hour examination cannot describe what a person became over the four years that followed.

- **Make the in-course record the primary signal.** Ensure transcripts, capstone projects, internships and verified portfolios, rather than an admission rank, are what recruiters see first, so...
- **Deepen continuous, competency-based assessment.** Implement the NEP 2020 vision of learning outcomes and criterion-referenced evaluation across institutions, so a degree certifies...
- **Cool the coaching arms race.** Reduce the singular weight of one entrance test through broader eligibility bands and multiple assessment inputs, easing the adolescent pressure and the equity...
- **Educate employers on what predicts performance.** Encourage recruiters to value structured assessments of applied skill and behaviour over legacy rank-worship, since evidence links on-the-job...

The Price of Water: Equity Before Cost Recovery

You can put a price on water, but you cannot put a price on the first bucket a household needs to stay alive, and any pricing system that forgets this difference stops being economics and becomes exclusion.

- **Guarantee a lifeline block to every household.** Fix an essential daily quantum of water per person and supply it free or at a nominal charge, so that the right to water is met before any...
- **Adopt increasing block tariffs with commercial cross-subsidy.** Price consumption in rising slabs and set commercial and industrial tariffs above domestic ones, so that the utility recovers...
- **Strengthen participatory governance.** Empower Water User Associations and urban local bodies to manage distribution, set local tariffs within a State framework and improve collection, so...
- **Attack the leak before the tariff.** Reduce non-revenue water through metering, leak repair and the elimination of unbilled connections, so that cost recovery comes first from stopping waste...

When Heat Empties the Classroom: A Child-Rights Reading of the 2026 Summer

We count the summer's dead and its hospital admissions, but not its empty desks, and the child who misses a month of school to the heat carries a loss that no thermometer records and no relief camp repairs.

- **Bring schools into Heat Action Plans.** Require every State and district Heat Action Plan to cover school infrastructure, timings and safety, so that the child's classroom is planned for...
- **Build heat-resilient school infrastructure.** Invest in cool roofs, ventilation, shade, fans and reliable drinking water in government schools, targeting first the tin-roofed classrooms where...
- **Adapt the academic calendar to the climate.** Adjust school hours and vacation schedules to avoid peak-heat periods, with morning shifts and flexible calendars, so that learning is not simply...
- **Measure and protect the right to learn.** Track heat-related absence and learning loss as an education indicator, and treat it as an equity obligation under Article 21A and the RTE Act, 2009...

Above the Line: India's Road Deaths Are a Policy Failure, Not Fate

A country that would treat 1.77 lakh deaths from any disease as a national emergency has learned to shrug at the same number on its roads, and that shrug, the belief that carnage is the price of mobility, is the deadliest policy of all.

- **Enforce the law that exists.** Scale automated speed and helmet-seatbelt enforcement and impose penalties consistently, because over-speeding drives the majority of deaths and is the fastest...
- **Empower the National Road Safety Board.** Give the Board the mandate and resources to set binding safety standards, audit road design and fix black spots, so that engineering failures are...
- **Build the golden-hour system.** Strengthen the trauma-care network, ambulance response and Good Samaritan awareness, so that survivable crashes stop becoming fatalities in the first critical...
- **Make it a Union-state mission.** Align Parliament's standard-setting with state-level enforcement and engineering through a time-bound, target-driven plan anchored to India's Brasilia...

Beyond the Pay Cheque: Why Women's Empowerment Must Be Measured in Assets

A woman may earn a wage and still own nothing, and a society that measures her empowerment only by whether she works will keep missing the quieter, more durable inequality of who holds the land, the house and the savings when the earning...

- **Enforce inheritance rights in practice.** Government and civil society must spread awareness of daughters' equal coparcenary rights under the 2005 Act and support women who face family...
- **Mandate joint titling.** Land and housing schemes should register property in the joint names of spouses or in the woman's name, as several state housing and land-record programmes have begun...
- **Build financial assets in women's names.** Expand accounts, savings instruments and credit that women control directly, so that the household's investable surplus is not held entirely by male...
- **Measure what matters.** Statistical agencies should collect and publish gender-disaggregated data on the ownership of land, housing and financial assets, so that empowerment is tracked in...
- **Link assets to enterprise.** Pair asset ownership with access to formal credit and markets, so that a title in a woman's name becomes collateral for an enterprise and a genuine engine of...

The Price of a Parking Space: Why Free Parking Is Not Free

A parking space is not a hole in the ground where a car happens to rest; it is a slab of some of the most valuable land in the country, and when a city gives it away for nothing it is quietly subsidising the private car while charging the...

- **Price parking by demand.** Cities should set on-street parking charges high enough that a fraction of spaces stays open at peak times, ending the wasteful circling for a spot and making...
- **Ring-fence the revenue.** Parking income should be dedicated by law to footpaths, cycle tracks, street lighting and public transport in the same area, so that residents see a visible return...
- **Relax minimum-parking mandates.** Building bye-laws should drop rigid minimum-parking requirements and move towards maximums, so that housing is not forced to bundle in costly parking that...
- **Anchor it in mobility plans.** Parking pricing must sit inside each city's Comprehensive Mobility Plan and a transit-oriented development strategy, concentrating homes and jobs near mass...
- **Protect equity and enforcement.** Reserve affordable access for essential users, invest in reliable buses and safe walking first, and enforce pricing with technology so that the poorest, who...

The Classroom Goes Live: Teacher-Influencers and the Child Behind the Camera

A teacher's authority over a child rests on a boundary of trust, and the moment the classroom becomes content and the child becomes footage, that boundary is not blurred by accident but dissolved for an audience the child never agreed to...

- **Codify digital conduct for teachers.** Education authorities should issue clear rules barring the broadcast of identifiable students and the monetisation of classroom content, embedding...
- **Enforce DPDP consent standards.** Treat schools and teachers who process children's data as fiduciaries bound by verifiable parental consent and the prohibition on targeting children, with...
- **Build safeguarding literacy.** Train teachers and parents to recognise grooming risks and the permanence of a child's digital footprint, so that consent, where given, is genuinely informed.
- **Centre the child's interest.** Adopt a best-interest-of-the-child test for any classroom content, so that a child's privacy and safety, not an adult's reach, decide what is shared.

The Restless Vote: How a New Political Generation Is Rewriting Accountability

A generation that grew up with a smartphone in one hand and an election in the other is no longer waiting to be mobilised by parties, and that quiet inversion, where the voter organises the leader rather than the leader organising the...

- **Build media and civic literacy early.** Governments and educational institutions should embed critical media literacy in school and college curricula so that young voters can distinguish...
- **Widen representation.** Parties should consciously field younger and more diverse candidates, narrowing the gap between the age of the electorate and the age of the elected.
- **Regulate misinformation without throttling speech.** Strengthen platform accountability for coordinated disinformation and deepfakes while protecting legitimate dissent and free expression.
- **Rebuild institutional trust.** Restore faith in the legislature, the Election Commission and public institutions through transparency and responsiveness, since accountability from below works...

Full Classrooms, Empty Slates: The Gap Between Schooling and Learning

Getting every child into a classroom was the achievement of one generation. Getting every child to actually read and reckon is the unfinished task of this one, and enrolment figures quietly conceal how far we still are from it.

- **Make FLN the single organising goal.** Align **Samagra Shiksha** funds, timetables and teacher effort behind **NIPUN Bharat**, so early-grade reading and arithmetic become the measured priority...
- **Invest in teacher capacity.** Outcomes track instruction quality; strengthen pre-service and in-service training, and free teachers from non-teaching burdens so class time is real learning...
- **Reform assessment to measure learning.** Move official metrics beyond enrolment and attendance toward regular, low-stakes learning assessments of the **ASER** type, and use the **Performance**...
- **Rebuild trust in government schools.** Improve visible learning results so families are not pushed toward costly private options, keeping public education both universal and credible.

Korku Adivasis and the Unfinished Promise of the Forest Rights Act

A land title in a single farmer's name is progress. A forest in the collective care of a **Gram Sabha** is transformation. When **Korku Adivasi** communities across the forest-dependent villages of the **Melghat** belt in Maharashtra and the adjoining...

- **Prioritise CFR recognition.** Set time-bound targets for processing Community Forest Resource claims, backed by dedicated staff and mapping support, so the Act's core provision stops lagging...
- **Empower Gram Sabhas genuinely.** Align FRA implementation with **PESA** and the **Fifth Schedule** so that the Gram Sabha's verifying authority is real, not ceremonial.
- **Enforce boundaries fairly.** Act decisively against outside encroachment while protecting recognised community forest boundaries, restoring the Act's protective logic.
- **Build capacity and awareness.** Support Korku and other communities with legal literacy, documentation help and convergence with livelihood and minor-forest-produce programmes.

Operation Toofan and Why Fighting Drugs Needs More Than Policing

A raid seizes a consignment; a headline follows. But the young user in a coastal town is back on the same street the next week. Kerala's **Operation Toofan** is a reminder that you cannot arrest your way out of a public-health crisis, and that...

- **Institutionalise the integrated model.** Make every enforcement drive trigger a parallel treatment and outreach surge, so that a seizure is automatically linked to referral pathways for users...
- **Fund demand reduction to match supply reduction.** Expand Vimukthi de-addiction capacity, train counsellors and guarantee follow-up, treating relapse as a clinical event rather than a...
- **Decriminalise the user, target the trafficker.** Use the NDPS Act's provisions to divert first-time and dependent users toward treatment while reserving the full weight of enforcement for the...
- **Make prevention campus-first.** Embed sustained, non-sensational drug-awareness modules in schools and colleges under **Nasha Mukh Bharat**, with parental and peer involvement, because the...

Renewing School Education Means Fixing Learning, Not Just Structures

We keep redrawing the organisation chart of Indian education and calling it reform. But a child who cannot read a Class 2 text in Class 5 does not need a new board or a renamed syllabus. She needs a teacher in the room and an assessment...

- **Make outcomes the metric.** Judge every reform by movement in reading and numeracy levels rather than by structural change, using PARAKH and independent surveys like ASER as the yardstick.
- **Treat teacher vacancies as an emergency.** Fill sanctioned posts, cut non-teaching duties and invest heavily in in-service training so that the competency framework meets a capable adult in...
- **Align assessment with learning.** Redesign board and school examinations under PARAKH to reward understanding and application, because assessment silently dictates how teachers teach.
- **Strengthen the school to shrink coaching.** Rebuild parental trust in public and low-cost schooling through FLN under NIPUN Bharat, so that dependence on the coaching market falls of its own...

What Young India Wants: Reading the Fertility Story as Agency

When a young couple in India today says they will have one child, or none, the loudest response is alarm about a shrinking nation. But listen to what they are actually saying and a different story emerges. They are not rejecting family...

- **Invest in affordable childcare and caregiving support.** Universal, quality childcare and eldercare directly lower the private cost of raising a child and let both parents stay in paid work...
- **Build economic security for the young.** Stable jobs, affordable housing and predictable incomes let young couples plan families with confidence, closing the gap between desired and actual...
- **Make caregiving gender-equal.** Paternity leave, workplace flexibility and a cultural shift that treats parenting as shared work reduce the disproportionate burden on women and remove a key...
- **Prepare for ageing without coercion.** Strengthen pensions, health systems and productivity to manage an ageing population, while firmly rejecting any pro-natalist policy that pressures...

Where Climate, Nature and Childhood Meet

A child's health is written partly in the climate she is born into and the ecosystems around her. When both the climate destabilises and biodiversity collapses at once, the youngest pay first, and the case for treating these crises as a...

- **Mainstream planetary health.** Write climate and biodiversity into child-health and nutrition programmes so that heat, pollution and ecosystem decline are treated as health determinants, not...
- **Protect the first 1,000 days.** Shield maternal and infant nutrition from climate and ecosystem shocks through resilient food systems, dietary diversity and safety nets targeted at the...
- **Operationalise One Health.** Build surveillance that links human, animal and ecosystem health, so shifting vector-borne and zoonotic risks are detected and contained before they reach...
- **Align environment and health governance.** Coordinate the commitments under the CBD and WHO frameworks at national and local level, ensuring conservation and public health reinforce rather...

Patents Should Not Put Cancer Care Out of Reach

A patent is a bargain with society, not a licence to price the dying out of treatment.

- **Use Section 3(d) rigorously.** Patent examiners should hold applicants to the enhanced-efficacy standard, so that only genuinely novel molecules earn a monopoly and recycled ones do not.
- **Keep compulsory licensing credible and rule-bound.** Apply Section 84 on clear statutory grounds of affordability and working, with transparent royalty-setting, so it is a predictable...
- **Strengthen the generics ecosystem.** Support quality-assured domestic manufacturing and voluntary licensing pools so that cheaper versions reach patients quickly once a licence is granted.
- **Invest in public procurement and price negotiation.** Bulk purchasing, patient-assistance tie-ups and inclusion of essential cancer drugs in public schemes can lower effective prices without...

Atmanirbhar Philanthropy: When Domestic Giving Outgrows Foreign Funds

India's giving economy has quietly crossed a threshold: home-grown philanthropy now funds far more of the country's social sector than foreign money ever did, and the policy question has shifted from how to police foreign funds to how to...

- **Legislate risk-based FCRA oversight.** Use the **FCRA Amendment Bill** to replace blanket suspicion with proportionate, category-based scrutiny, faster approvals for clean actors, and clear...
- **Strengthen domestic-giving incentives.** Simplify **Section 80G** claims, widen eligible **CSR** causes under **Section 135**, and reward transparent long-term giving over one-off spends.
- **Cut compliance friction for small non-profits.** Build a single digital window for registration, reporting and audit so that mission-driven organisations spend on impact, not paperwork.
- **Build a culture of accountable giving.** Publish anonymised data on flows and outcomes, and recognise credible philanthropy so that public trust in the sector deepens.

The Shrinking Share of Education in the Budget

A country cannot legislate ambition and underfund it at the same time. Education keeps being named the priority in policy while its share of the budget quietly shrinks, and that contradiction is the real story of Indian schooling.

- **Raise the quantum on a credible path.** Both the Centre and the states should commit to a time-bound glide path toward the **6 per cent of GDP** benchmark rather than treating it as a permanently...
- **Target the foundational years.** Protect and expand funding for **NIPUN Bharat** and early grades, where every rupee has the highest long-run return in learning outcomes.
- **Correct the federal imbalance.** Use central transfers and **Samagra Shiksha** design to route more resources to demographically heavy, fiscally weak states so equity does not depend on a state's...
- **Tie money to outcomes.** Link incremental spending to measurable learning indicators and school infrastructure norms so that higher outlays translate into better schooling, not just larger...

A Shot Against Dengue: Approval Is Only the First Step

A vaccine cleared for sale is a scientific milestone. A vaccine that reaches the people who need it, safely and affordably, is a public-health achievement. The two are not the same.

- **Set an equitable pricing and financing plan.** Negotiate affordable pricing and consider public financing for high-burden groups, so that access is not decided by ability to pay.
- **Sequence the rollout on evidence.** Prioritise age groups and high-transmission areas where the vaccine's benefit is clearest, and phase deployment with clear guidance to health workers.
- **Sustain vector control and surveillance.** Reaffirm that source reduction, larval control and case surveillance continue undiminished, and build robust tracking of both cases and adverse...
- **Back indigenous vaccines and cold-chain capacity.** Support domestic dengue-vaccine candidates to expand supply and lower cost, and invest in the cold chain and last-mile delivery that any...

The Silent Pandemic: India and the Fight Against Antimicrobial Resistance

The next pandemic may not announce itself with a novel virus. It may arrive quietly, as a routine infection that no longer responds to any antibiotic. **Antimicrobial resistance (AMR)** is that slow emergency, and India, with its heavy overuse...

- **Enforce stewardship.** Make hospital antibiotic stewardship programmes and the AWaRe target operational, auditing prescriptions and steering use back toward Access drugs.
- **Invest in diagnostics.** Roll out rapid, affordable point-of-care tests so clinicians can prescribe narrowly and confidently instead of defensively.
- **Tighten enforcement.** Implement Schedule H1 and the Red Line campaign seriously, curbing over-the-counter sale and cracking down on unregulated pharmacy dispensing.
- **Operationalise One Health.** Integrate human, animal and environmental surveillance under the National Action Plan, and phase out non-therapeutic antibiotic use in livestock.

Clearing Footpaths Lawfully: The Street Vendors Act and Due Process

Every city periodically decides to reclaim its pavements, and every time the bulldozers and eviction notices arrive first while the law arrives late, if at all. Yet Parliament has already written the rulebook for exactly this conflict. The...

- **Complete surveys and issue certificates.** Cities must finish the mandated vendor survey and issue **certificates of vending** before any drive, so that regulation rests on data and legal...
- **Make Town Vending Committees function.** Constitute and empower **TVCs** with genuine, elected vendor representation and the required share of women, and route all vending-zone decisions through...
- **Plan vending and no-vending zones.** Demarcate space through a transparent plan that protects both pedestrian corridors and designated vending areas, replacing ad hoc clearance with...
- **Rehabilitate, do not merely evict.** Where relocation is unavoidable, provide **alternative vending sites** and due notice, ensuring that the pursuit of walkability does not destroy the...

When the Heat Rises: Making Climate Policy Age-Sensitive for the Elderly

A heatwave does not fall equally on a population. It settles hardest on the frail, the isolated and the poor, and increasingly in India that means the old. As the country ages and the thermometer climbs, the question is no longer whether...

- **Name the elderly in every Heat Action Plan.** HAPs at State and city level must list older persons as a designated high-risk group, map where they cluster, and trigger active outreach...
- **Build age-disaggregated vulnerability data.** Disaster and health authorities should record age in relief rolls, heat-related admissions and mortality audits, creating the evidence base that...
- **Make relief and schemes reach the doorstep.** Convert entitlements under the Maintenance Act, NPHCE and pensions into doorstep and community-anchored delivery, with simplified access that...
- **Strengthen community and geriatric care.** Invest in local self-help networks, ASHA and volunteer-led welfare visits during heat spells, and expand geriatric services at the primary health...

Counting Her In: Female Work Participation as India's Growth Multiplier

A nation cannot walk to prosperity on one leg. India's female labour force participation has risen fast on paper, yet the deeper question is not how many women are counted as working, but **how many are earning, secure and free to choose...**

- **Build the care economy as infrastructure.** Public and workplace **childcare and eldercare** free women's time. Recognising care as economic infrastructure, and investing in creches and...
- **Make mobility and workplaces safe.** Safe public transport, well-lit last-mile connectivity, and enforced workplace-harassment protections address the single largest silent barrier to urban...
- **Skill for demand, not for certificates.** Align skilling and apprenticeship, including under **PMKVY and self-help-group federations**, to sectors that are actually hiring women, from care and...
- **Leverage what works and pay for it.** **MGNREGA** already draws crores of rural women into wage work with guaranteed parity; **SHG-based livelihoods** under DAY-NRLM build savings and enterprise...

Distress in the Fields: Why the Feminisation of Agriculture Is Not Empowerment

A rising number of women in the fields looks like empowerment on a chart, but when a woman does more farm work without owning the land, holding the credit card or drawing the income, what has risen is not her status, only her burden.

- **Title the land jointly.** Push joint and individual land titling for women, and let digital land records recognise women cultivators, so ownership begins to track the work they already do.
- **Delink credit from sole ownership.** Extend Kisan Credit Cards, crop insurance and MSP access to women cultivators through tenancy certificates, self-help-group guarantees and recognition of...
- **Institutionalise the Mahila Kisan.** Scale up MKSP-style livelihood support, women's producer organisations and extension services designed for women farmers rather than treating them as...
- **Create the non-farm ladder.** Since distress feminisation is driven by the absence of alternatives, expand rural non-farm employment and skilling so that farming becomes a choice, not a...

A Fresh Slate: Why Exam Integrity Needs Institutions, Not Resignations

A resignation is an answer to public anger, not to a systems failure. On 25 July 2026 Dharmendra Pradhan left the Ministry of Education and the Union government committed to withdrawing cases against student protestors; the streets...

- **Give the NTA statutory backing.** Convert the society into a statutory authority with a defined mandate, an assured budget, a permanent professional cadre in place of contractual staff, and a...
- **Nationalise the high-risk links.** Move examinations decisively into government-owned centres, beginning with the Kendriya Vidyalaya and Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya network as the...
- **Make computer-based testing genuinely secure.** A computer-based NEET from 2027 helps only if it is paired with large calibrated randomised item banks, item-response-theory-based scoring and...
- **Fix detection, not just punishment.** Mandate real-time anomaly analytics on response patterns and score distributions, a protected whistle-blower channel with time-bound action, and a legal...
- **Protect the candidate caught in the middle.** Amend the 2024 Act to insert an express saving clause distinguishing candidates affected by a leak from those who engineered it, so that relief...
- **Create an independent Examination Ombudsman and close the loop on the task force.** Separate conduct from audit through an external body empowered to inspect centres unannounced, blacklist...

AI's Next Test: Reaching India's Informal Women Worker

A productivity revolution that only reaches the workforce already inside the formal economy is not a productivity revolution. It is a widening of the gap between the workforce that was already winning and the workforce that was not.

- **Mandate gender impact assessments for major AI Mission investments,** evaluating projected reach across formal and informal workforce segments before funding approval.
- **Embed AI-literacy modules within the National Rural Livelihood Mission's self-help group curriculum,** leveraging existing reach rather than building parallel programmes.
- **Adopt gender-responsive budgeting for AI-linked schemes,** tracking allocation and outcome data disaggregated by gender and formality of employment.
- **Subsidise device and connectivity access for women in informal-sector livelihood programmes,** addressing the baseline digital-divide barrier directly.
- **Set measurable inclusion targets** for India's AI Mission, alongside its compute and innovation targets, so workforce inclusion is tracked with the same rigour as technical capability.

Streaming Without Barriers: Why the 2029 Accessibility Runway Is Too Long

A regulation that gives an industry thirty-six months to do something it could do in three is not really a floor. It is a schedule for how slowly the floor may be approached, and platforms that treat the schedule as the target have misread...

- **Move well ahead of the February 2029 deadline,** treating the 36-month window as a ceiling on how long compliance may take, not a schedule to fill.
- **Extend accessibility beyond the guidelines' current minimum,** adding features and catalogue coverage beyond the one-feature-per-impairment, new-content-only floor the guidelines currently...
- **Publish accessibility metadata transparently,** so viewers can filter and platforms can be benchmarked against each other, creating a visible competitive incentive to outpace the mandated...
- **Involve disability-rights organisations in monitoring compliance,** ensuring the guidelines' implementation reflects actual usability, not just technical checkbox compliance.
- **Extend the same logic to regional-language content,** where accessibility gaps often compound with language-access gaps for a doubly underserved audience.

A Vaccine Priced Out of Reach Is Not a Public Health Solution

A vaccine that only the people who can already afford good healthcare can access does not fight an epidemic. It adds one more advantage to a population that already has several, while the disease continues circulating everywhere else.

- **Pursue tiered or subsidised public-sector procurement,** extending vaccine access to high-risk, lower-income populations rather than leaving distribution purely to private out-of-pocket...
- **Maintain and strengthen vector-control investment** as the primary population-level intervention, not a secondary measure superseded by vaccine availability.
- **Target vaccine subsidy geographically** toward areas with documented high dengue incidence and low healthcare-access capacity.
- **Track post-approval access data disaggregated by income,** to measure whether the vaccine is actually reaching at-risk populations or concentrating among those who would have had lower...
- **Communicate clearly that vaccine availability does not replace household and community-level vector-control practices,** avoiding a false sense of population-level protection.

Beyond the Prescription Pad: India's Antibiotic Resistance Problem Is Systemic

A prescription pad is the last, most visible link in a much longer chain of antibiotic misuse. Fixing the last link while leaving the rest of the chain untouched changes what gets written down, not what actually happens at the counter.

- **Enforce Schedule H1 prescription requirements at the pharmacy level** through regular inspection and penalties for non-compliant OTC antibiotic sales, closing the largest documented leakage...
- **Expand primary healthcare access** in underserved areas, reducing the structural incentive toward self-medication as a substitute for formal consultation.
- **Run direct public-awareness campaigns** targeting patient expectations around antibiotic prescriptions, reducing the demand-side pressure on doctors.
- **Maintain and strengthen prescriber-side guidelines** as one component of a broader strategy, not as the primary or sole intervention.
- **Track AMR outcomes disaggregated by intervention type,** so policymakers can see which lever, prescriber reform, pharmacy enforcement or access expansion, is actually driving improvement...

Building a Universal Social Safety Net for India's Informal Workforce

A safety net that requires you to fill out a form to fall into it is not really a net; it is a form, and forms are precisely the thing precarious work leaves people no time to fill out.

- **Pilot auto-enrolment for a defined, high-need category first**, such as construction workers or platform-based gig workers, using existing e-Shram and Aadhaar data, before universal rollout.
- **Build privacy-preserving data-sharing protocols** between e-Shram, Aadhaar, ONORC and Ayushman Bharat, with clear purpose limitation to prevent function creep beyond social security delivery.
- **Model the fiscal exposure of near-universal auto-enrolment** transparently before committing to full-scale integration, to avoid an unfunded mandate.
- **Design fraud-prevention mechanisms that do not reintroduce registration friction**, such as algorithmic anomaly detection rather than upfront documentary burden on the worker.
- **Publish coverage-gap data regularly**, comparing formally eligible workers against those receiving actual benefits, to keep the reform's real-world effectiveness, not just its legal scope...

THE HINDU

1 Jul · 667

India's Israel Habit Meets West Asian Realities

India's deepening tilt toward Israel has hardened into reflex; amid Gaza and Israel-Iran tension, India must shape regional strategy, not just follow it.

- **Re-open every channel.** Restore working de-hyphenation so Israel, Palestine, Iran and the Gulf are each engaged on their own logic.
- **Voice the official line audibly.** Pair the Israel partnership with visible support for a two-state solution and Gaza humanitarian relief.
- **Protect the Iran and Gulf assets.** Insulate Chabahar, the INSTC and Gulf labour ties from the swings of the conflict.
- **Offer India as a bridge.** Use India's cross-camp credibility to push verifiable de-escalation rather than reacting after the fact.

INDIAN EXPRESS

1 Jul · 668

Recalibrating India's West Asia Policy

Gaza and regional instability expose the limits of an Israel-centric approach; India needs a balanced, pragmatic policy across Israel, Palestine, Iran and the Gulf.

- **Sustain, do not centre, the Israel tie.** Keep the partnership inside an autonomy-first framework rather than as the organising principle.
- **Voice humanitarian concern.** Reaffirm the two-state solution and support relief for Gaza in word and deed.
- **Insulate Iran and the Gulf.** Protect Chabahar, the INSTC and Gulf labour ties from the conflict's swings.
- **Offer to mediate.** Use India's cross-camp credibility to push verifiable de-escalation.

INDIAN EXPRESS

1 Jul · 669

The Indo-Pacific Is Here to Stay

Prompted by Japan's PM visit, the Indo-Pacific is now a structural reality of Asian geography and power, not merely an American construct India can outlast.

- **Institutionalise the partnerships.** Deepen the Quad and bilateral ties with Japan, Australia and ASEAN so cooperation is routine, not episodic.
- **Build maritime capability.** Invest in domain awareness, presence and interoperability to make security self-sustaining.
- **Lead with India's own vision.** Anchor the effort in SAGAR and MAHASAGAR, a free, open and inclusive region rather than a bloc.
- **Keep strategic autonomy.** Cooperate widely without being tied to any single power's agenda.

INDIAN EXPRESS

2 Jul · 670

As US and China Compete, India Must Be Transactional With Both

With Washington and Beijing contesting South Asia, India should avoid rigid alignment and extract concrete gains from both, guarding its strategic autonomy.

- **Set explicit red lines:** make sovereignty and territorial integrity non-negotiable in every engagement, consistent with India's official stand.
- **Bargain issue by issue:** extract specific gains, technology, trade access, defence, capital, from each power without blanket alignment.
- **Deepen issue-based coalitions:** use the Quad and similar groupings for concrete cooperation while retaining decisional freedom.
- **Reinforce neighbourhood-first:** invest in South Asian partners so great-power rivalry does not hollow out India's periphery.
- **Build indigenous strength:** grow defence, technology and manufacturing capability so India's transactional choices are backed by real leverage.

INDIAN EXPRESS

3 Jul · 671

As the US Reshapes Asia Strategy, India Must Rewire Regional Leadership

Washington's recalibration in Asia risks reducing India to an aligned junior partner, so India must rewire its regional leadership to keep strategic autonomy.

- **Lead the neighbourhood by delivery.** Outcompete rivals on connectivity, development partnerships and reliability so regional leadership is earned.
- **Diversify partnerships.** Balance the Quad, Europe, ASEAN, West Asia and the Global South so no single power is indispensable.
- **Invest in indigenous capability.** Build defence, technology and manufacturing depth so autonomy has material backing.
- **Engage the US as a partner among many.** Deepen trade and technology ties while refusing subordination.
- **Hold territorial and strategic red lines.** Maintain India's official position on Aksai Chin, Arunachal Pradesh and PoK, and manage the LAC firmly.

INDIAN EXPRESS

4 Jul · 672

At 250, Can America Still Reinvent Itself?

On 4 July 2026 the United States turns 250. The Semiquincentennial arrives at a moment of institutional stress, yet the deeper question for the world, and for India, is whether the American system's capacity to self-correct, from judicial...

- India should conclude the BTA on balanced terms while diversifying export markets to reduce single-partner dependence.
- Deepen COMPACT and TRUST cooperation in critical and emerging technologies, where interests align most durably.
- Manage the H-1B mobility shock by strengthening domestic tech ecosystems and negotiating on services access.
- Fill multilateral gaps left by US exits (Paris, WHO) through plurilateral and Global-South leadership, consistent with strategic autonomy.

THE HINDU

4 Jul · 673

The Iran Conundrum and the Balancing of India

The collapse of the Iran nuclear deal and two rounds of conflict over Iran's nuclear sites have turned West Asia into a test of India's strategic autonomy. With over 90 per cent crude import dependence, a Gulf diaspora of about 8.9 million...

- Diplomatically insulate Chabahar by seeking a renewed, project-specific carve-out and pressing for INSTC's Rasht-Astara link.
- Continue energy diversification so no single chokepoint can hold Indian supply hostage.
- Maintain evacuation readiness for the Gulf diaspora, building on Operation Sindhu's lessons.
- Hold the line on strategic autonomy: engage all parties, sign onto no bloc's condemnation, and champion diplomacy.

Why There Is No Track-2 with Pakistan

India's position is settled and consistent: terrorism and talks cannot go together. Until Pakistan verifiably ends cross-border terrorism, there is no space for composite dialogue and little domestic legitimacy for Track-2 back-channels...

- Maintain the consistent, principled position that terrorism and talks cannot proceed together.
- Keep engagement strictly bilateral, in line with the Shimla Agreement, and reject third-party mediation.
- Reserve any resumption of dialogue for a demonstrable, verifiable end to cross-border terrorism.
- Continue firm counter-terrorism and border management while keeping diplomatic channels dormant rather than permanently closed, so genuine change can be met.

Nickel Diplomacy: India, Indonesia and the Critical-Minerals Race

The energy transition is also a minerals transition, and whoever secures nickel, cobalt and lithium secures the batteries of the future. Prime Minister Modi's visit to Jakarta places India at the door of the world's largest nickel...

- **Pursue joint processing ventures.** Move beyond raw-ore imports to India-Indonesia refining and battery-material joint ventures, using KABIL and private partners.
- **Operationalise the Critical Mineral Mission.** Fund overseas asset acquisition, strategic stockpiles and domestic recycling to reduce import dependence.
- **Anchor in Act East.** Deepen the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership across defence, maritime security and connectivity, giving minerals cooperation strategic depth.
- **Diversify the portfolio.** Complement Indonesia with Australia, Africa and Latin America to avoid a new single-source dependency.
- **Invest in recycling and substitutes.** Build urban-mining and battery-recycling capacity and support research into nickel-lean chemistries for long-term resilience.

Spanning Two Oceans: The India-Japan Partnership as a China-Resilient Axis

> "The partnership that Abe once called a confluence of two seas has become a confluence of two supply chains, two navies and two technology bases, an axis built to be resilient when great-power coercion strikes." When Japanese Prime...

- **Convert pledges into disbursed capital.** Turn the 10 trillion yen target and MoUs into completed projects, including the Mumbai-Ahmedabad high-speed rail, targeted for commercial operations...
- **Deepen defence co-development.** Scale beyond the UNICORN mast into joint production of sensors, unmanned systems and naval maintenance, and hold the next 2+2 on schedule.
- **Operationalise supply-chain resilience.** Make the semiconductor and critical-minerals cooperation deliver real diversification away from Chinese processing.
- **Keep the Indo-Pacific inclusive.** Anchor the axis in a rules-based, open order under MAHASAGAR, IPOI and the updated FOIP, opposing coercion without building a narrow containment coalition.

The Quad's Future in a Shifting Indo-Pacific

A change of name is not a change of geography. Washington may have relabelled its Pacific Command, but the Indian Ocean's sea lanes, the Malacca chokepoint and China's naval reach have not moved. For India, the Quad's value lies less in...

- **Judge by delivery.** Push the Quad to convert declarations into operational public goods: maritime domain awareness, resilient supply chains, undersea cables and disaster response for the...
- **Lead the maritime agenda.** Anchor IPMSC in the Indian Ocean, where India's stakes and capabilities are greatest, and integrate it with SAGAR and IORA.
- **Preserve strategic autonomy.** Keep the Quad non-treaty and issue-based, avoiding framing that turns it into a bloc, so India retains flexibility with all partners.
- **Build own capacity.** Continue strengthening the Indian Navy, information-fusion centres and indigenous surveillance so that India's security does not depend on any single partner's rhetoric...

A G Minus 2 Strategy for the Indo-Pacific

The safest place to stand in a great-power storm is not behind one giant, but shoulder to shoulder with your fellow middle powers, and that is the logic of a G minus two.

- **Thicken the minilateral lattice.** Deepen the Quad, SCRI and issue-based coalitions so cooperation does not depend on great-power consent.
- **Reinforce ASEAN centrality.** Support the AOIP and ASEAN-led mechanisms as the inclusive core rather than bypassing them.
- **Operationalise MAHASAGAR and IPOI.** Convert the doctrine into concrete maritime security, capacity-building and blue-economy projects across the region.
- **Prioritise supply-chain resilience.** Use IPEF pillars and SCRI to cut single-country dependence in critical goods.

Beyond the Three Cs: The New India-Australia Lexicon

The old shorthand for India and Australia was cricket, curry and Commonwealth; the new lexicon is critical minerals, clean energy and the Quad, and that shift is the whole story.

- **Close the CECA.** Convert the ECTA into the fuller Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement to lock in market access and investment.
- **Institutionalise minerals supply.** Turn the critical-minerals partnership into long-term offtake and processing tie-ups so India secures inputs, not just promises.
- **Deepen defence interoperability.** Build on the logistics arrangement and joint exercises to give Quad coordination practical teeth.
- **Grow the education and mobility corridor.** Expand on GIFT City campuses and the MATES scheme with mutual recognition of qualifications.

Diplomacy From the States Up: India, Japan and a Bihar Opening

Diplomacy no longer flows only from capital to capital; when a state learns to court a partner on its own account, a landlocked province can borrow the sea.

- **Build a credible investment-promotion machine.** Bihar needs a professional single-window agency that can prepare bankable projects and shepherd them through land and clearances.
- **Prioritise corridor connectivity.** Focus JICA-type finance on the roads, rail and river infrastructure that link Bihar to the eastern and Act East corridors.
- **Match skilling to investor needs.** Align industrial training institutes and skilling missions with the specific manufacturing and food-processing sectors partners want.
- **Practise disciplined paradiplomacy.** Court investors actively, but within the Union's foreign-policy frame, with policy stability that reassures patient capital.

The 5 Per Cent Alliance: When Security Becomes a Sales Pitch

An alliance that must be paid for in dollars and arms orders is no longer a promise of protection; it is a subscription, and every renewal invites a higher price.

- **Anchor policy in strategic autonomy.** India should read the episode as confirmation that autonomy, not alignment, best protects a rising power's freedom of action across a volatile...
- **Deepen defence indigenisation.** Accelerate Atmanirbhar Bharat in defence, the positive-indigenisation lists, and domestic design capacity so that capability does not hinge on any external...
- **Diversify supply relationships.** Where imports are unavoidable, spread them across suppliers to avoid the leverage that single-source dependence hands to a seller.
- **Invest in coalitions of convenience.** Prefer issue-based partnerships, Quad, bilateral technology pacts, over binding alliances that can turn transactional under a changed government.

The New Largest: India-Born Australians and Soft Power

A diaspora is a country's living embassy, and when India-born residents become the single largest overseas-born group in Australia, India gains not just numbers abroad but a new instrument of influence.

- **Engage the diaspora deliberately.** Treat the community as a strategic partner through consular support, alumni and professional networks, and cultural programming, converting numbers into...
- **Deepen mobility with safeguards.** Build on migration and mobility arrangements while protecting migrant workers and students from exploitation, so growth strengthens rather than strains the...
- **Invest in integration and belonging.** Encourage a diaspora that participates fully in Australian civic life, which is the surest defence against backlash and the best carrier of goodwill.
- **Guard against reverse harms.** Manage brain drain by keeping ties two-way, drawing skills, capital and knowledge back to India through returnee and collaboration schemes.

The Vanishing Value of Conquest: Why Seizing Land No Longer Pays

The old prize of war, a redrawn map, has quietly become a trap, because in an interconnected world the country that grabs land often ends up holding a liability while its rivals win the future without firing a shot.

- **Broaden the security doctrine.** Treat economic, technological and informational security as core national-security concerns alongside the land and maritime borders, not as afterthoughts.
- **Build resilience in critical sectors.** Reduce dependence in semiconductors, critical minerals, energy and pharmaceuticals so that supply-chain coercion has less purchase on India.
- **Invest in cyber and information defence.** Strengthen capabilities against cyber intrusion and organised disinformation, which are the new instruments of pressure.
- **Defend the rules-based order.** Champion the United Nations Charter norms of sovereignty and non-acquisition of territory by force, while building coalitions that raise the cost of grey-zone...

Barrels and Sovereignty: India, Russian Crude and the Limits of Pressure

A nation that imports more than four of every five barrels it burns cannot outsource the question of where those barrels come from, and India's answer has been steady: energy sourcing is a sovereign decision made for its own consumers.

- **Hold the line on sovereign sourcing.** Continue to state and act on the principle that India decides its own energy sources in its national interest, engaging partners diplomatically while...
- **Deepen supplier diversification.** Keep the import basket broad across West Asia, the Americas, Africa and Russia, so that no single sanctions regime or supply shock can be weaponised against...
- **Strengthen strategic reserves and buffers.** Expand strategic petroleum reserve capacity and commercial storage so India can absorb a supply or price shock, including any disruption around...
- **Accelerate the structural exit from import dependence.** Push renewable generation, green hydrogen, ethanol blending and electric mobility so that over the long horizon the 85 per cent...

Above the Line: The Case for Anticipatory Statecraft

A state that only responds to events has already surrendered the initiative to whoever created them, so the real measure of a great power is not how well it manages crises but how few it is surprised by.

- **Invest in the machinery of foresight.** Strengthen the National Security Council Secretariat and the MEA's Policy Planning Division with dedicated long-range planning cells, so that thinking...
- **Fund the knowledge base.** Build deep area-studies expertise and a well-resourced think-tank ecosystem on the regions and technologies India cannot afford to misread, since foresight is only...
- **Institutionalise scenario planning.** Make structured horizon-scanning and multi-scenario exercises a routine input into decision-making, so that policy is stress-tested against several...
- **Professionalise and expand the cadre.** Grow and specialise the diplomatic and analytic workforce, because a small service stretched thin will always default to reaction, however talented it...

Above the Line: The Indo-Pacific Needs Economics, Not Only Warships

A maritime order is not held together by fleets alone but by the flow of goods, capital and infrastructure that give smaller states a stake in keeping it open, so an Indo-Pacific strategy that speaks only the language of security is...

- **Finish the connectivity backlog.** Prioritise completion of the India-Myanmar-Thailand trilateral highway, the Kaladan transit project and allied links, because unfinished corridors are the...
- **Deepen trade integration.** Pursue and upgrade trade agreements across the region so that market access, not just security cooperation, anchors partnerships, while protecting sensitive...
- **Scale development diplomacy.** Expand lines of credit, capacity-building and the export of digital public infrastructure, offering partners a distinct, transparent alternative in...
- **Keep ASEAN at the centre.** Align India's initiatives with the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific and the IPOI pillars, so that the region reads India as a partner in development, not a party...

Acting East, Not Just Looking: Reviving India's Southeast Asian Ambition

Thirty-five years after India first turned its gaze eastward, the policy still risks being a compass without a road, rich in summits and declarations yet thin on the highways, trade deals and factories that would make the eastward tilt...

- **Finish the connectivity spine.** Prioritise completion of the Trilateral Highway and Kaladan project, using alternative routing and financing to work around Myanmar's instability rather than...
- **Rebalance AITIGA.** Use the trade agreement review to correct the deficit, tighten rules of origin and secure market access for Indian services, turning trade into a two-way benefit.
- **Scale defence diplomacy.** Build on BrahMos exports with training, maintenance ecosystems and joint production offers that make India a durable defence partner across Southeast Asia.
- **Anchor the Northeast.** Integrate India's Northeast into Act East as the launchpad it is meant to be, with border infrastructure, trade facilitation and people-to-people links.

Buying Is Not Building: The Technology Gap in India-US Defence Ties

A partnership measured in the number of aircraft and rifles bought is a customer relationship, and India's search for a defence future it can call its own begins the day the metric shifts from what it purchases to what it is allowed to...

- **Negotiate for control, not just content.** Government should press for source code, design authority, and upgrade rights in transfer deals, since a platform India cannot modify independently...
- **Invest patiently in indigenous engines.** Sustain funding for domestic jet-engine research so that reliance on any single foreign supplier becomes a choice rather than a necessity.
- **Operationalise iCET on defence.** Convert the critical-technology dialogue into concrete co-development projects with clear IP-sharing terms, rather than letting it remain a forum of intent.
- **Strengthen the domestic industrial base.** Deepen the private-sector and HAL-DRDO-ADA ecosystem so that transferred technology is absorbed and built upon, not merely assembled.

Australian Uranium and the Next Phase of India Nuclear Energy

A reactor is only as reliable as the fuel it can count on, and for India the arrival of Australian uranium is less a shipment than a signal that a decades-long isolation has finally been left behind.

- **Widen and deepen the supplier base.** Build long-term uranium contracts with Australia alongside Kazakhstan and Canada so that no single source can hold the reactor fleet hostage, and pair...
- **Protect the indigenous cycle.** Use imported natural uranium deliberately to free domestic reserves for plutonium breeding, keeping the second and third stages of the Bhabha design on track...
- **Scale capacity with credibility intact.** Pursue the large expansion toward the 2047 ambition while maintaining rigorous IAEA safeguards on the civil fleet and the clear civil-military...
- **Integrate nuclear into the clean-energy plan.** Position firm nuclear power explicitly as the round-the-clock complement to solar and wind in India's decarbonisation pathway, with regulatory...

Building a Durable India and Australia Partnership

Two democracies on either side of the Indian Ocean have discovered that their futures point the same way, and the challenge now is to build the machinery that keeps them pointed there.

- **Conclude the CECA.** Moving from the interim ECTA to the comprehensive agreement would deepen integration across goods, services and investment, and signal that the economic relationship is...
- **Build a resilient minerals supply chain.** India and Australia should institutionalise their **critical minerals** partnership into stable, long-term supply and processing arrangements...
- **Deepen defence interoperability.** Regularising the **2+2 dialogue** and expanding exercises such as **AUSTRAHIND**, along with logistics and maritime-domain cooperation, would strengthen the...
- **Invest in the human bridge.** Expanding education links, university campuses and skilled mobility builds a constituency for the relationship in both societies, giving it a foundation that no...

The Crisis at the Heart of Nuclear Non-Proliferation

On July 16, 1945, a desert in New Mexico lit up brighter than the noon sun, and the world has been trying, ever since, to build a rulebook that the powerful will actually obey.

- **Make Article VI time-bound.** The recognised powers must convert an open-ended disarmament promise into a schedule with verifiable milestones, so the treaty's fairest clause stops being its...
- **Reward behaviour, not birthdays.** Global regimes should extend legitimacy on the basis of demonstrated non-proliferation conduct, which strengthens the case for India's inclusion in the **NSG**...
- **Revive the disarmament vision.** The **Rajiv Gandhi Action Plan of 1988** offers a ready template for a phased, universal and non-discriminatory road to zero, and India should keep pressing it in...
- **Strengthen verification and peaceful use.** Empower the **IAEA** with resources and access so that the peaceful-use pillar expands safely, keeping energy access from becoming a proliferation risk.

Secondary Tariffs and the Price of Strategic Autonomy

A tariff aimed at Moscow that lands on New Delhi is not a sanction on Russia; it is a bill presented to India for the crime of buying oil in its own national interest.

- **Defend the principle without picking a fight.** India should restate clearly that its energy sourcing is a sovereign decision guided by **national interest and consumer welfare**, and that...
- **Accelerate genuine diversification.** Deepen long-term supply contracts with **West Asia, the United States, Africa and Latin America**, expand the **strategic petroleum reserve**, and invest in...
- **Ring-fence the wider relationship.** Insulate defence, technology and trade cooperation with the United States from the oil dispute through sustained diplomatic engagement, so that a single...
- **Invest in the structural exit.** The durable answer to import dependence is to reduce it: scale renewables, biofuels, green hydrogen and electric mobility, because every barrel India does not...

The Cost of Hubris: American Overreach and a More Dangerous World

Overwhelming power that keeps failing to deliver its promised outcomes does not reassure the world; it teaches every other state that the old order is negotiable, and disorder is the tuition.

- **Double down on strategic autonomy.** India should treat autonomy as an asset to be actively managed, deepening partnerships where interests align while refusing exclusive alignment, so that...
- **Use minilaterals as instruments, not identities.** Engage the **Quad, I2U2, BRICS and the SCO** as issue-based coalitions, drawing security, technology and economic benefit from each without...
- **Invest in self-reliance where it counts.** Reduce strategic vulnerability by building capacity in **defence, energy, technology and critical supply chains**, because in a coercive world the...
- **Champion a reformed, workable order.** India should press for **United Nations Security Council reform** and for norms that reflect a multipolar reality, positioning itself as a builder of a more...

India's Energy Security and Strategic Autonomy in a Restless West Asia

Every time the waters off the **Strait of Hormuz** grow tense, an anxiety travels quietly to Indian ports, refineries and petrol pumps. India does not own the crisis in West Asia, but it owns the consequences. Its task is neither to take sides...

- **Deepen supply diversification.** Continue widening the crude basket across regions and lock in long-term contracts, so that no single supplier or chokepoint can dictate terms during a crisis.
- **Expand strategic reserves and refining flexibility.** Enlarge Strategic Petroleum Reserve capacity toward international benchmarks and sustain the ability to refine varied crude grades...
- **Accelerate connectivity alternatives.** Advance IMEC and Gulf partnerships to reduce dependence on any single shipping route, while safeguarding the interests and safety of the Gulf diaspora.
- **Hold the balanced diplomatic line.** Maintain India's official posture of dialogue, de-escalation and respect for freedom of navigation, using multi-alignment to preserve strategic autonomy...

From Frameworks to Delivery: The India-US Defence Technology Gap

A signing ceremony is not a shipment. India and the United States have never had more defence-technology frameworks on paper, from **iCET** to **INDUS-X** to the **F414 engine deal**, yet the gap between the announcement and the delivered gearbox...

- **Contract for transfer, not assembly.** Make depth of technology transfer, source-code access and indigenous content the enforceable metrics in every deal, with penalties for shortfall, so...
- **De-risk the pipeline.** Work with Washington to streamline export licensing and expand the general-authorisation categories for trusted Indian firms, converting political intent into...
- **Keep sourcing diversified.** Sustain Russian, French and indigenous lines alongside US cooperation so that no single partner can constrain India's readiness or autonomy.
- **Invest in absorption.** Fund test facilities, metallurgy and a skilled defence-manufacturing workforce, and deepen the private sector and DRDO so transferred technology can be produced...

The Case for Updating the Indus Waters Treaty

A treaty signed in 1960 was built for the hydrology and politics of 1960. Sixty-six years later, glaciers are retreating, monsoons are erratic, storage needs have grown, and a neighbour continues to export terrorism across the border...

- **Modernise, do not merely restore.** Use the abeyance as leverage to seek a renegotiated framework that incorporates climate-era hydrology, joint flood management and updated storage...
- **Fully utilise lawful entitlements.** Accelerate eastern-river infrastructure and permitted run-of-the-river projects on the western rivers so India realises its full treaty share for J&K...
- **Hold the security line.** Maintain the official position that normalisation is contingent on a verifiable end to cross-border terrorism, and that Jammu and Kashmir is an integral part of...
- **Keep the technical channel professional.** Preserve institutional expertise and data capacity in the Permanent Indus Commission so that, when talks resume, India negotiates from technical...

India and Canada Reset: Critical Minerals, Technology and Firm Red Lines

A relationship that fell to its lowest point in a generation is being rebuilt not on sentiment but on shared interest, and the test of the reset is whether both capitals can separate genuine cooperation from the non-negotiable question of...

- **Institutionalise the critical-minerals track.** Sign a government-backed minerals partnership with offtake and processing tie-ups so that lithium, nickel, cobalt and rare-earth cooperation...
- **Close CEPA on realistic terms.** Revive and conclude the **Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement** in phases, locking in predictable market access for goods, services and mobility.
- **Secure the security floor.** Insist, through law-enforcement and intelligence channels, that Canada acts against violent anti-India extremism, and keep this delinked from trade so cooperation...
- **Protect the human bridge.** Restore full consular and visa capacity and safeguard Indian students and professionals, because the diaspora is the relationship's most resilient asset.

The Modi Australia Visit: Anchoring a Core Indo-Pacific Partnership

Prime Minister Narendra **Modi's July 2026 visit to Australia** was less a courtesy call than a consolidation. It converted a warming relationship into a working one, with concrete steps on **defence and maritime security, critical minerals...**

- **Operationalise the minerals partnership.** Move from intent to firm offtake, joint ventures and processing links so **critical-minerals** cooperation becomes a durable supply-chain pillar.
- **Deepen defence interoperability.** Institutionalise AUSTRAHIND, Malabar and maritime domain awareness, and expand logistics and technology cooperation to give the partnership military...
- **Close the CECA.** Convert ECTA momentum into a comprehensive trade and investment agreement that widens market access and anchors the economic relationship.
- **Broaden the human bridge.** Expand education, mobility and clean-energy collaboration so the partnership rests on people and technology, not security alone.

Chabahar and the INSTC: Guarding India's Connectivity Lifeline

A port is never only a port. **Chabahar**, on Iran's coast facing the **Gulf of Oman**, is India's bet that geography can be rewritten so that trade to Central Asia no longer has to ask Pakistan's permission. That bet is now clouded by **US...**

- **De-risk the finance.** Build rupee-rial and alternative payment channels, and pursue durable, written sanctions carve-outs so banks and insurers can participate without fear.
- **Finish the inland links.** Prioritise the Chabahar-Zahedan rail connection and coordinate with Central Asian states on customs, standards and last-mile roads so cargo actually flows.
- **Deepen the coalition.** Work the INSTC with Russia, Iran and the Central Asian republics as a shared project, spreading risk and building constituencies that raise the cost of disruption.
- **Keep Washington informed.** Frame Chabahar consistently as a stabilising, connectivity and humanitarian project for Afghanistan and the region, preserving the goodwill that has underpinned...

Guarding the Narrows: India and the Bab el-Mandeb Chokepoint

A strait barely twenty miles wide can decide the price of oil in a landlocked district of India. The Bab el-Mandeb is that strait, and India can no longer treat its security as someone else's problem.

- **Sustain calibrated naval presence.** Keep Operation Sankalp deployments protecting merchant traffic and seafarers, signalling reliability without political entanglement in West Asia's...
- **Deepen maritime-domain awareness.** Strengthen the IFC-IOR's information-sharing links so threats to shipping are detected early and shared with partner navies.
- **Coordinate, do not enlist blindly.** Work selectively with the Combined Maritime Forces and Indian Ocean littoral states under the SAGAR vision, preserving strategic autonomy.
- **Build resilience at home.** Diversify shipping routes, insurance and energy sourcing so a single chokepoint cannot dictate India's import bill.

Europe Rearms, and India's Case for Self-Reliance Sharpens

When the world's biggest buyers start hoarding weapons, a country that makes its own decides its own security, and one that imports waits in someone else's queue.

- **Deepen design-led indigenisation:** move beyond licensed assembly to owning the intellectual property and production of critical systems, so that indigenisation lists translate into genuine...
- **Scale the private defence ecosystem:** use the defence corridors, assured order books and a stable procurement calendar to give private firms and MSMEs the confidence to invest in...
- **Build strategic stockpiles and spares:** insulate readiness from global supply shocks by holding buffers of munitions and critical components while domestic lines ramp up.
- **Diversify residual imports and co-develop:** spread remaining purchases across partners and pursue joint development and technology transfer, keeping strategic autonomy intact while...

Three Lessons from 1991 for an Age of Shocks

1991 was not just an economic rescue; it was a lesson in how a nation converts a shock into a strategy. Three of those lessons, reform as statecraft, diversified partners and domestic strength, are the compass for India in today's age of...

- **Keep reforming at home.** Sustain the domestic reform momentum, in manufacturing, trade and technology, because **economic strength** is the true source of foreign-policy autonomy.
- **Deepen the partner portfolio.** Continue **multi-alignment**, engaging the United States, Russia, the European Union, the Gulf and East Asia simultaneously so that no single rupture can dictate...
- **Institutionalise anticipation.** Build **scenario-based diplomacy** that war-games tariff shocks, chokepoint disruptions and technology restrictions in advance, converting surprise into...
- **Guard interest-first autonomy.** Frame every partnership around India's national interest rather than bloc loyalty, preserving the freedom of action that 1991 first made possible.

Look Seaward: Protecting the Indians Who Crew the World's Ships

India talks of becoming a maritime power, but power at sea is not only about warships and ports. It is also about the **lakhs of Indians who crew the world's merchant fleet**, and whether their own country can reach them when they are...

- **Create a dedicated seafarer-protection cell.** A standing unit linking the Ministries of **External Affairs, Ports/Shipping and Labour** should track abandonment cases in real time and trigger...
- **Wield MLC 2006 and port-State control.** India should press **flag States and insurers** through the IMO/ILO mechanisms and use its own **port-State control** to detain non-compliant vessels, making...
- **Codify a conflict-zone consular protocol.** Pre-agreed procedures with **navy escort, insurance and evacuation** rights for crews in high-risk corridors would convert ad-hoc rescues into reliable...
- **Embed crews in MAHASAGAR diplomacy.** India should champion a **stronger global abandonment-recovery regime** and seafarer welfare at the IMO, turning its position as a top crew supplier into...

The Ten Per Cent Edge: India, US Tariffs and Export Competitiveness

A few percentage points of tariff advantage over a rival exporter can decide whose factory gets the order, but a tariff edge granted by another country's policy can be withdrawn by that same policy, which is why the only durable advantage...

- **Bank the edge, do not bet on it.** Use the current tariff advantage to win orders and scale capacity now, while treating the rate itself as temporary and revisable.
- **Fix competitiveness at home.** Cut logistics costs, ready industrial land, and ease factor markets so Indian exports beat Vietnam and ASEAN on fundamentals, not just on tariffs.
- **Diversify the export map.** Deepen FTAs and market access across the EU, Gulf, ASEAN and Africa so no single partner's tariff decision can swing India's export fortunes.
- **Negotiate from principle.** Pursue the BTA while defending strategic autonomy and sensitive sectors such as agriculture and dairy, and press for a return to predictable, rules-based trade.

The Missing Clause: What the Saudi-US Nuclear Deal Leaves Out

A nuclear agreement is defined less by what it permits than by what it declines to prohibit. The civil nuclear cooperation agreement signed by the United States and Saudi Arabia on July 22, 2026 contains no enrichment renunciation and no...

- **Publish the text.** The full agreement is not public. Non-proliferation assessment cannot proceed on media summaries.
- **Attach the Additional Protocol.** Verification designed only for declared material is verification designed for the easy case.
- **Preserve supplier consistency.** Differential conditions for comparable states erode the legitimacy of the entire supplier regime and invite exactly the reciprocity claims Iran is now making.
- **For India,** the practical exposure is **IMEC**, the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor announced in 2023, which requires Saudi Arabia and Israel to cooperate. Linking nuclear cooperation...

The Democracy Quotient: Why India's Middle Power Moment Begins at Home

Great powers dictate; middle powers can only convene. Convening is a moral transaction as much as a material one, because states join a coalition led by a country whose institutions they can predict. A Mint column of 27 July 2026 by...

- **Build the measurement India wants to be judged by.** Rather than only contesting V-Dem, Freedom House and the EIU, fund a transparent, methodologically published index of institutional...
- **Institutionalise grievance channels so that protest is not the only channel.** The column's specific charge is that students, farmers and sportspersons had to take to the streets. Statutory...
- **Convert convening into treaty-backed capacity.** Follow the ISA template: a signed framework agreement, a permanent secretariat and a dedicated finance window. Summits create goodwill; treaty...
- **Anchor the middle power coalition in issues, not ideology.** Given how ideologically scattered middle powers are, the workable coalitions are issue-specific: critical mineral supply chain...
- **Treat judicial and legislative capacity as a foreign policy investment.** Judicial vacancies, parliamentary sitting days and the disposal record of information commissions are conventionally...
- **Pair vishwabandhu with verifiable delivery.** Publish outcome data on India's Global South commitments, including vaccine supply, credit lines, capacity-building slots and disaster response...

The Strength to Walk Straight: India Between an Assertive Beijing and an...

"We do not have to 'tilt' either way. We must, instead, develop the strength to walk straight." That closing sentence carries the whole argument of Shashi Tharoor's column in The Hindu of 27 July 2026. The piece rejects two counsels of...

- **Separate stabilisation from surrender.** Restore flights, visas and diplomatic bandwidth with China, because managed rivalry is safer than unmanaged rivalry, but keep Press Note 3 and the...
- **Attack the chokepoints, not the trade balance.** Concentrate scarce capital on the inputs where a single supplier can halt Indian production, using the National Critical Mineral Mission, the...
- **Diversify the export map.** Use the India-United Kingdom Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA), in force since 15 July 2026, and push the India-European Union agreement signed on...
- **Fund deterrence, not declarations.** Sustain border infrastructure, surveillance and integrated capability in Ladakh and the eastern sector, because the column's central claim, that Beijing...
- **Be honest about the transition cost.** Manufacturing built under protection raises prices before it lowers them, so the political case must be made openly, with sunset clauses and...
- **Keep the American relationship without leaning on it.** Deepen technology, defence and trade cooperation with Washington while negotiating the Section 301 duty and the bilateral trade...

Water in Abeyance: India's Plans on the Western Rivers and Pakistan's Protest at...

The Indus Waters Treaty survived the wars of 1965, 1971 and 1999, which is why India's decision to hold it in abeyance is a signal rather than a plumbing decision. New Delhi's position is that a treaty premised on goodwill cannot operate...

- **Keep the position legal, not rhetorical.** India should continue to anchor abeyance in Article XII(3) review and in the doctrine of fundamentally changed circumstances, and avoid any framing...
- **Build what the Treaty already allowed.** The most defensible response is to complete the storage, pondage and irrigation entitlements India held for six decades and never used, since...
- **Sequence the projects honestly.** Prioritise Tulbul, Ujh and canal desilting, which are near-term, lower-cost and lower-controversy, ahead of the 113 km inter-basin link, which needs full...
- **Protect the flood-warning channel.** Even in abeyance, India should consider a humanitarian mechanism for extreme-flood warning, which costs nothing strategically and forecloses the charge...
- **Prepare for renegotiation, not just suspension.** The endgame India has articulated is a modified treaty reflecting climate change, glacial retreat, clean-energy needs and demographic change...
- **Invest in basin data of its own.** Strengthen glaciological, snowmelt, sediment and gauge networks in the upper Indus, so that Indian planning does not depend on data-sharing that has now...

A Reset, Not a Rupture: Reading Tarique Rahman's First Foreign Tour

A neighbour who visits other capitals first has not necessarily stopped needing you. It has started reminding you, and itself, that it has other options. The correct response is to compete for the relationship, not to resent that it now...

- **Engage the substantive agenda on its own timeline**, keeping the Ganga Treaty renewal, trade and connectivity talks insulated from symbolic diplomatic fluctuations.
- **Compete rather than resent**, offering Bangladesh concrete value, investment, connectivity, market access, that makes close India ties an attractive choice rather than an assumed default.
- **Maintain working-level continuity** through bureaucratic and technical channels even where leadership-level engagement is less frequent, since technical relationships are more resilient to...
- **Avoid public overreaction** to diplomatic symbolism, since visible Indian anxiety about being bypassed can itself become a domestic Bangladeshi talking point reinforcing the narrative of...
- **Invest in track-two and people-to-people ties**, trade, education, cultural exchange, that persist across changes of government and provide ballast against purely government-to-government...

Beyond National Interest: Ethics and Emotions in World Politics

Power without legitimacy can win a single round. It cannot win the next one on the same terms, because the next round is played among actors who remember how the last one was won.

- **Integrate legitimacy assessment into strategic planning**, treating anticipated reputational and moral cost as a standing input into foreign-policy decisions, not an afterthought.
- **Invest in normative and civilisational diplomatic frameworks**, building on approaches like Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam that create durable partnership beyond narrow transactional alignment.
- **Distinguish short-term tactical wins from durable strategic position** in foreign-policy evaluation, explicitly tracking whether an apparent gain is eroding the legitimacy needed to sustain...
- **Support multilateral forums and norms** that reward legitimacy-building behaviour, since a rules-based order gives moral legitimacy more concrete strategic payoff than a purely bilateral...
- **Communicate ethical positions consistently across contexts**, since selective moral invocation, applied in one case but not a comparable one, itself erodes the legitimacy the approach is...

Beyond Renewal: Reimagining the Ganga Waters Treaty With Bangladesh

A treaty that only survives because no one has looked at it closely in thirty years is not evidence of a good design. It is evidence that no one has yet needed it to fail.

- **Commission a joint hydrological review** through the Joint Rivers Commission, using updated flow, sedimentation and abstraction data, before political-level terms are finalised.
- **Decouple the technical and political tracks**, letting engineers and water-resource officials narrow options first, with leadership sign-off reserved for final terms.
- **Build in adaptive review clauses**, shorter interim reviews within a longer treaty term, so future flow variability does not require waiting another thirty years for recalibration.
- **Address upstream abstraction transparently** on the Indian side, since a renewal that ignores India's own changed water demand invites the same "static formula" critique it seeks to avoid.
- **Link the renewal to broader river cooperation**, including flood forecasting and joint disaster response, so the treaty is renewed as part of a wider cooperative framework rather than a...

SHANTI and the Bay of Bengal: India's Evolving Maritime Security Doctrine

A doctrine is a promise about how a country will behave under pressure, not a poem about how it would like to be seen. SHANTI will mean something the day it changes a decision in the Bay of Bengal, not the day it is announced.

- **Track BIMSTEC-level commitments over the next 12 months** as the concrete benchmark for whether SHANTI is substantively operationalised, not just the doctrine's launch language.
- **Institutionalise joint maritime domain awareness sharing** among BIMSTEC members as an early, verifiable proof point.
- **Establish a recurring, multilateral BIMSTEC maritime exercise calendar** covering anti-piracy, disaster response and search-and-rescue cooperation.
- **Publish an annual doctrine implementation review**, comparing SHANTI's stated commitments against actual joint activities conducted, to keep the doctrine accountable to its own language.
- **Extend proven Bay of Bengal cooperative mechanisms cautiously** to wider Indo-Pacific engagement only after they demonstrate sustained functioning, rather than announcing wider application...

Forced Labour Farce: The Trouble With Punishing India for Someone Else's Supply...

A tariff that falls on an entire economy for a practice occurring in a specific, undocumented corner of its supply chain is not a remedy calibrated to the problem. It is a lever calibrated to the negotiation.

- **Press for evidence-specific measures** rather than broad economy-wide tariffs, at the WTO and in bilateral forums, distinguishing verified forced-labour links from general trade leverage.
- **Invest independently in supply-chain traceability**, particularly in textile, seafood and mineral-extraction sectors, so India's own oversight capacity does not depend on external tariff...
- **Support a multilateral verification mechanism** for forced-labour claims, reducing the scope for any single country to define and apply the standard unilaterally.
- **Separate the bilateral trade agreement track from the forced-labour tariff track** in India's own negotiating posture, avoiding the appearance that trade concessions are being exchanged for...
- **Document and publicise India's own reform steps** on their independent merits, so genuine Foreign Trade Policy improvements are not read solely as responses to external pressure.

THE HINDU

1 Jul · 714

Reimagining Sovereign AI for India's Strategic Future

India must reconcile short-term reliance on foreign AI with long-term technological sovereignty through coordinated industrial and diplomatic policy.

- **Scale and price public compute.** Expand the GPU pool and keep access affordable to broaden the developer base.
- **Own the data and language layer.** Build high-quality Indian-language datasets and domain foundation models where India's advantage is real.
- **Diversify chip supply.** Spread sourcing across trusted geographies and invest selectively in packaging and design, not just leading-edge fabs.
- **Make AI diplomacy explicit.** Build partner coalitions so any cut-off is costly for the party imposing it.

THE HINDU

2 Jul · 715

The Case for India's Coal Chemistry Capability

Converting coal into methanol, DME and chemicals via gasification can cut import bills and build strategic energy resilience, if backed by indigenous science.

- **Pair gasification with carbon capture and storage:** make CCS integral to new projects to keep coal chemistry consistent with climate goals.
- **Design for water efficiency:** prioritise low-water gasifier technologies and siting in coal regions with adequate, sustainable water.
- **Invest in indigenous R&D:** develop domestic catalysts, gasifier designs and process engineering to avoid technology import dependence.
- **Target high-import products first:** focus on methanol, DME and ammonia where import substitution delivers the largest strategic gain.
- **Set a transition horizon:** align coal chemistry with the net-zero-by-2070 pathway and green-hydrogen scale-up so assets are not stranded.

INDIAN EXPRESS

3 Jul · 716

US Gatekeeping of AI Will Only Speed Diffusion

American export controls on advanced AI are likelier to accelerate global diffusion than contain it, making indigenous capacity India's real hedge.

- **Scale and price public compute.** Expand the IndiaAI GPU pool and keep GPU-hour access affordable to widen the developer and research base.
- **Back the chip mission with patience.** Sustain the India Semiconductor Mission through the Dholera fab and packaging, targeting selective self-sufficiency rather than instant full-stack...
- **Own the talent and data layer.** Build Indian-language datasets, domain models and a deep AI talent pipeline where India's advantage is real and near-term.
- **Diversify chip supply across trusted partners.** Spread sourcing so any single cut-off is costly for the party imposing it, converting a vulnerability into a shared interest.

THE HINDU

3 Jul · 717

When AI Hallucinates Case Law

The Supreme Court set aside an order built on AI-fabricated precedents, calling the intrusion catastrophic and forcing courts to define responsible AI use.

- **Frame a clear policy.** Let the Bar Council and judiciary jointly define permissible AI use, approved tools and red lines.
- **Mandate verification.** Require every AI-assisted citation to be checked against primary sources before it enters any filing or order.
- **Insist on auditable tools.** Prefer approved, legally trained, traceable systems over open consumer chatbots for legal work.
- **Require disclosure.** Make lawyers declare AI assistance so courts can calibrate scrutiny.
- **Penalise fabrication and build literacy.** Treat fake authority as misconduct, and train judges and lawyers to understand hallucination and its limits.

INDIAN EXPRESS

4 Jul · 718

AI Has Upgraded the Fraudster

Artificial intelligence has not invented fraud, it has industrialised it. From "digital arrest" scams that cost Indians Rs 1,935.51 crore in 2024 to deepfakes cloning Ratan Tata and N.R. Narayana Murthy, the fraudster has been upgraded...

- Enforce deepfake labelling rigorously and build detection into platforms by default, not as an afterthought.
- Operationalise RBI's transaction-delay and whitelisting safeguards while balancing user convenience.
- Expand citizen awareness of 1930, Chakshu and the "no arrest by video call" rule, especially among the elderly.
- Strengthen the IndiaAI Safety Institute as the standards body for trusted AI, and ensure DPDP enforcement begins on schedule.
- Improve cross-border cooperation, since much of the fraud infrastructure operates from outside India.

BUSINESS STANDARD

5 Jul · 719

AI's Hidden Footprint: Planning Power and Water for the Data-Centre Age

Every ChatGPT query and AI image hides a physical cost in megawatt-hours and litres of water; the cloud is not weightless, and India cannot chase an AI future without a matching plan for the power and water it drinks.

- **Match compute with clean firm power.** Tie data-centre expansion to renewables plus storage and round-the-clock (RTC) clean-energy contracts, so new AI load does not lock in new coal.
- **Mandate water-frugal cooling.** Incentivise closed-loop, air-cooled, liquid and immersion cooling; require treated/recycled water and set a Water Usage Effectiveness (WUE) benchmark, not just...
- **Site by resource, not just real estate.** Steer new clusters toward water-secure, renewable-rich zones through the data-centre policy and state incentives.
- **Disclose and audit.** Require transparent reporting of energy and water use, so the footprint is measured before it is managed.
- **Fund efficiency R&D.** Back indigenous chip efficiency, waste-heat reuse and grid-optimising AI to bend the demand curve.

Cables Under the Sea: India's Fight for Digital Sovereignty

The internet does not live in the cloud; it lives on the seabed. The nation that owns, protects and lands the cables owns the future of its own data.

- **Build and diversify landing stations.** Act on TRAI's 2023 recommendations so India lands many cables at many coastal points, removing single points of failure and capturing transit revenue.
- **Legislate cable protection.** Domesticating UNCLOS Article 113 with criminal penalties for damaging cables, and designate cables as critical information infrastructure.
- **Create a repair and resilience capacity.** Invest in cable-repair ships and maintenance agreements so cuts are fixed in days, not months.
- **Complete the DPDP architecture.** Notify the categories of restricted data with clarity, balancing sovereignty against the cost to legitimate cross-border business.
- **Join protection coalitions.** Work with the International Cable Protection Committee and partner navies to monitor and safeguard cables through Indian waters and chokepoints.

From Packaging to Fabrication: India's Semiconductor Ascent

India has decided to enter the chip business through the back door of the factory, not the front. The new packaging plant at Sanand will not etch a single transistor, yet it is exactly the right first step: you learn to assemble and test...

- **Deepen the back end.** Expand OSAT/ATMP capacity and localise supporting materials, chemicals and specialty gases to build a genuine ecosystem, not isolated plants.
- **Sequence toward fabrication.** Use back-end learning to prepare for fabs, ensuring assured power, ultra-pure water and lithography access before committing the largest capital.
- **Invest in talent.** Scale semiconductor design, process-engineering and technician training through academia-industry partnerships to overcome the skills bottleneck.
- **Secure the supply chain.** Diversify sources of wafers, equipment and critical inputs, and use trade and technology partnerships (Japan, US, Taiwan) to reduce chokepoints.

Editing the Rulebook: Regulating India's Frontier Biotech

Medicine that rewrites a patient's genes cannot be regulated with a rulebook written for pills. India has just started rewriting the rulebook to match the science.

- **Build specialised regulatory capacity.** Train CDSCO reviewers in advanced-therapy science and create fast, risk-proportionate approval tracks for well-characterised therapies.
- **Keep the ethical red lines bright.** Maintain the ban on germline editing and enforce strict biosafety and consent norms for xenotransplantation.
- **Coordinate the many regulators.** Align CDSCO with the biosafety bodies (RCGM, GEAC, IBSC) and institutional ethics committees so innovators face one coherent system, not overlapping windows.
- **Tackle access and cost.** Support indigenous, affordable therapies like NexCAR19 so cutting-edge cures do not remain the preserve of the wealthy.
- **Update rules continuously.** Treat the framework as living, revising it as gene editing and xenotransplantation evolve.

Looking Beyond Generics: Why AMR Is Rewriting India's Pharma Challenge

> "For decades India answered the world's medical needs by making old drugs cheaply. Antimicrobial resistance is asking a harder question: can it make new ones?" On **June 1, 2026**, the US FDA approved **Zaynich (cefepime-zidebactam)**, an...

- **Implement NAP-AMR 2.0 fully.** Use its NITI Aayog oversight and One Health design to enforce time-bound, budgeted accountability across ministries.
- **Strengthen stewardship and Schedule H1.** Curb over-the-counter antibiotic sales, enforce the Red Line, and improve diagnostics so antibiotics are used correctly.
- **Fix the innovation economics.** Adopt pull incentives, subscription or delinked-payment models like the UK's, and partner with bodies such as GARDP to fund novel antibiotics that must be...
- **Raise pharma R&D intensity.** Support translational research, public-private discovery and value-chain movement so more new chemical entities emerge from India, not just generics.

AI Governance and a Voice for the Global South

The real fault line in artificial intelligence is not between machines and humans but between the handful of economies that own the compute and the many that supply the data. India's task is to make sure the Global South is a shaper of AI...

- **Close the capability gap.** Scale the IndiaAI Mission's compute, indigenous chip efforts and domestic foundation models to reduce dependence on foreign providers over time.
- **Export the DPI template.** Offer open, interoperable, public-interest AI building blocks to Global South partners as a shared alternative to proprietary stacks.
- **Champion inclusive global rules.** Push, through the G20, the Global South platform and UN processes, for AI governance norms that reflect developmental realities, data sovereignty and...
- **Anchor governance in public purpose.** Legislate for user safety, transparency and accountability in high-impact AI uses while keeping innovation space open, avoiding both regulatory capture...

Ranking the Next Pandemic: A Virus Catalogue and India's Preparedness

The lesson of the last pandemic was that the world reacted late because it did not know where to look. A new catalogue that ranks every recognised human-infective RNA virus by its potential to spark the next pandemic is an attempt to fix...

- **Invest in genomic and virome surveillance.** Expand sequencing capacity and wastewater and wildlife surveillance so India can detect novel and high-risk viruses early.
- **Operationalise One Health.** Integrate human, animal and environmental health surveillance under a single coordinated framework, with data-sharing across ministries.
- **Prioritise by transmission traits.** Use risk-ranking to focus resources on virus families with the traits most likely to cause pandemics, at the interfaces where spillover occurs.
- **Strengthen laboratory and epidemiological capacity.** Build a trained public-health workforce and a network of biosafety-capable labs so a risk map can be acted upon.
- **Support global data-sharing.** Back open, timely sharing of pathogen data and sequences, since pandemic prevention is a global public good.

Instruments of Independence: Why Indian Science Must Build Its Own Tools

A nation that must import the instrument to measure its own monsoon is a nation researching on borrowed eyes, and no amount of scientific talent fully compensates for not owning the tools that do the seeing.

- **Make indigenous instrumentation a funded mission.** Have the ANRF create dedicated programmes for designing, prototyping and scaling scientific instruments, with milestones and long-horizon...
- **Reform grant rules to reward building.** Allow and incentivise research grants to fund in-house instrument development rather than defaulting to imported procurement.
- **Link academia to manufacturing.** Build consortia connecting national labs, universities and precision-engineering firms so prototypes reach the market.
- **Prioritise strategic and India-specific instruments.** Focus first on hardware for climate, cryosphere and other domains where customisation and autonomy matter most, aligning with the Mega...

The Reusable Rocket Gap: What China's Space Test Means for India

The rocket that lands itself does not just come home, it changes the arithmetic of every launch that follows, and a nation that masters that arithmetic buys space at a discount its rivals must pay full price for.

- **Accelerate the reusable-launch roadmap.** Build on the Pushpak landing demonstrations to field an operational reusable launcher on a firm timeline, since cost-to-orbit is the variable that...
- **Deepen the private space economy.** Use IN-SPaCE and NewSpace India Limited to draw private capital and firms into launch, manufacturing and services, so that national capability rests on a...
- **Invest in space situational awareness.** Expand tracking and cataloguing capacity through Project NETRA and allied assets, so that India can monitor the orbital environment, protect its own...
- **Frame the response as capability, not symmetry.** Set India's benchmarks by its own strategic needs, communications, navigation, imaging and secure regeneration, rather than by mirroring a...

From CO2 to Chemicals: Carbon Capture Is Real, and It Is Not a Licence to Emit

Carbon capture is a mop, and a good one. The trouble begins the moment a country decides that owning a mop is a reason to leave the tap running.

- **Price the carbon so capture pays for itself.** Operationalise the Carbon Credit Trading Scheme with a meaningful compliance price and tight sectoral intensity targets, because no capture...
- **Ring-fence CCUS to the hard-to-abate.** Restrict public support and carbon-market recognition to cement, steel, refining and chemicals, and explicitly bar the use of CCUS promises to justify...
- **Legislate a storage and liability regime.** India has no framework governing CO2 injection, pore-space rights, monitoring or long-term liability for leakage. Without one, storage cannot be...
- **Set a durability standard for utilisation credits.** Award carbon credits under CCTS only in proportion to the residence time of the carbon in the product, so that mineralisation and durable...
- **Fund the cost curve honestly.** Support pilots, this one included, through viability gap funding and public procurement of low-carbon cement and steel, while publishing verified capture rates...

Breeding Ambition: Why India's Nuclear Leap Should Ride Proven Indigenous...

A nation that has waited two decades for its fast breeder reactor to go critical has learned patience the hard way, and that patience is precisely the asset it must protect as it decides whether to build its nuclear future on technology it...

- **Anchor the 2047 target on proven reactors.** Government should scale the fleet of indigenous heavy water reactors and commission more breeders on the Kalpakkam template, treating imports as a...
- **Prove SMRs before betting on them.** Fund the Bharat Small Reactors demonstration rigorously, but do not fold unproven modular capacity into headline targets until at least one design...
- **Resolve the liability logjam.** Revisit the operation of the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act so that genuine partnerships proceed, without surrendering the supplier-accountability...
- **Invest in the thorium bridge.** Accelerate research and fuel-fabrication capacity for Stage III, since thorium utilisation is the ultimate payoff that justifies the patience the programme has...

India's AI Edge Lies in Deployment, Not in Building the Next Frontier Model

A country that cannot build the fastest engine can still win the race, if it is the only one that has already laid the road.

- **Fund deployment, not just compute.** Reorient a defined share of the IndiaAI Mission toward mission-mode application programmes in welfare targeting, tax intelligence, grievance redress and...
- **Mandate interoperability by default.** Require every AI system procured by a ministry to consume and expose open DPI-standard APIs, barring closed vendor silos that would fragment the commons...
- **Operationalise DPDP for the state, not only for firms.** Narrow and justify the government exemptions, notify the Data Protection Board, and enforce purpose limitation so that welfare data...
- **Legislate algorithmic accountability in administration.** Any adverse decision materially assisted by a model must carry a recorded reason, an identified human authority and a statutory right...
- **Build the public datasets.** Curate and openly release high-quality Indian-language and administrative corpora, because deployment advantage collapses if every application must first solve...

Rewriting Inheritance: Why Gene Drives Need Governance Before Release

A technology that can rewrite the inheritance of an entire wild species offers to erase diseases that have killed for millennia, yet the same power that makes it miraculous makes it irreversible, and the wise course is to build the brakes...

- **Adopt a phased, contained pathway.** Government and regulators should require laboratory and confined field trials with rigorous monitoring before any open release is even considered, so that...
- **Prioritise reversible and self-limiting designs.** Fund research into drives that can be halted or reversed, and into daisy-chain or threshold designs that limit spread, building an...
- **Strengthen domestic biosafety oversight.** Equip the GEAC with the expertise and mandate to appraise gene-drive proposals, ensuring transparent, science-led, and publicly accountable...
- **Build an international governance regime.** Since drives cross borders, pursue agreed rules under the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Cartagena Protocol, with community consent for...

A Small COVID Cluster and the Cracks in India Disease Surveillance

A handful of deaths in one district should never be a national surprise. When a small COVID-19 cluster in **Kadapa, Andhra Pradesh**, reportedly the state's first COVID deaths since 2022, set off alerts across several states, it revealed a...

- **Fund surveillance counter-cyclically.** Protect IDSP, IHIP and INSACOG budgets during calm periods through ring-fenced allocations, so capacity does not collapse the moment cases fall.
- **Compress genome-sequencing turnaround.** Set enforceable timelines for sample transport and sequencing, and maintain a standing baseline of samples even when case counts are low.
- **Institutionalise risk communication.** Create pre-approved, tiered messaging templates and designated spokespersons so responses are calm, consistent and fast rather than improvised.
- **Operationalise One Health.** Link human, animal and environmental surveillance under the **National One Health Mission**, and align domestic reporting with the **International Health Regulations**...

When a Battery Can Be Switched Off by a Stranger: India Needs Cyber-Physical...

A machine that can be turned off by a stranger is not a smart product; it is a public risk waiting for a name. When a Delhi e-rickshaw was disabled mid-route because its **Battery Management System (BMS)** app trusted any device that came near...

- **Mandate baseline security standards through BIS.** Make a consumer-IoT and connected-battery security specification mandatory, covering unique credentials, encrypted communication and...
- **Require software bills of materials.** Ask manufacturers to declare the firmware and modules inside a product, so supply-chain risk becomes visible and auditable rather than hidden.
- **Extend CERT-In from reactive to preventive.** Pair the incident-reporting regime with pre-market vulnerability testing and a coordinated disclosure channel for connected consumer products.
- **Build domestic testing and trusted-component capacity.** Invest in certification labs and incentivise indigenous, auditable battery-management and communication modules to reduce dependence...

Reading Past the Headlines on GLP-1 Drugs and Health Communication

A drug that lowers blood sugar and trims weight is genuinely useful. A drug that headlines claim also prevents cancer, dementia and heart failure has stopped being medicine and become mythology. As **GLP-1 receptor agonists** like **semaglutide**...

- **Communicate evidence honestly.** Regulators and public-health bodies should issue plain-language guidance distinguishing proven benefits from unproven claims, so citizens can read headlines...
- **Strengthen regulatory caution.** The **CDSO** should monitor off-label promotion and ensure marketing claims stay within approved, evidence-backed indications.
- **Invest in prevention first.** Prioritise diet, physical activity and NCD screening over pharmaceutical silver bullets, addressing the double burden of malnutrition and obesity together.
- **Build health literacy.** Support media training and school and community education so that correlation-versus-causation becomes common public reasoning, not specialist knowledge.

No Escape to Orbit: Governing the Environmental Cost of AI

The fashionable pitch that we can simply lift our data centres into orbit and let the environment off the hook gets the physics exactly backwards; a vacuum is a poor place to dump heat, not a good one. Artificial intelligence has a real...

- **Mandate disclosure and metrics.** Require data centres to report energy and water use through standard metrics such as PUE and WUE, so the footprint is measured before it is managed.
- **Power compute with clean firm energy.** Tie AI and data-centre expansion to renewables plus storage and round-the-clock clean-energy contracts, so new compute load does not lock in new fossil...
- **Cut the water burden.** Incentivise closed-loop, air-cooled, liquid and immersion cooling and treated or recycled water, and set water-efficiency benchmarks alongside energy ones.
- **Reuse heat and set standards.** Promote waste-heat recovery, efficient chips and green-data-centre standards, and reject techno-fixes such as orbital data centres that shift rather than solve...

Money and Minds Are Not Enough: What Will Decide India's Research Leap

A country does not become a research power by writing a bigger cheque; it does so by changing who gets to spend it, and how freely. India in 2026 has the funds, the talent and a rare political opening for a research leap. Whether that...

- **Deliver on private co-funding, not just announce it.** Use tax design, matching grants and mission-mode partnerships to make the ANRF's non-government share real, so business R&D rises...
- **Institutionalise industry-academia bridges.** Fund joint centres, shared facilities and problem-led grants that force firms and universities onto the same track rather than parallel ones.
- **Protect research freedom and reduce friction.** Ensure autonomy in project selection, tolerate high-risk failure, and cut delays in grant release so scientists spend time on science, not...
- **Retain and grow the talent base.** Raise researchers-per-million through fellowships, competitive salaries and return pathways for the diaspora, converting a talent pool into a research...

Powering 2047: The Right Road to a Nuclear India

A nation cannot decarbonise its economy on sunlight alone. Solar and wind are indispensable, but they are intermittent, and an industrial power that means to run steel mills, data centres and electric transport around the clock needs firm...

- **Amend the enabling laws first.** Reform the **Atomic Energy Act, 1962** to allow regulated private participation and recalibrate the supplier-recourse clause of the **2010 liability law**, while...
- **Industrialise the SMR programme.** Fund, standardise and licence the **Bharat Small Reactor** design for series production, and site early units at retiring thermal plants to reuse grid and land.
- **Build a financing architecture.** Create long-tenor debt, viability support and risk-sharing instruments so private and foreign capital can enter a sector with long gestation and high upfront...
- **Guard fuel and safety in parallel.** Secure uranium supply under the post-**2008 NSG** framework, accelerate the thorium stage, and strengthen the independent regulator so expansion never outruns...

Trains That Float: The Physics of Maglev and India's High-Speed Rail Path

A train that never touches its track sounds like a magic trick, but it is only physics done cleverly: the same magnets that push two north poles apart can lift a carriage into the air and shove it forward. The romance of a floating train...

- **Deliver the conventional corridor first.** Complete and operate the Mumbai-Ahmedabad line to build domestic expertise, ridership and confidence before committing to exotic technology.
- **Build indigenous capacity.** Use the bullet-train programme to localise manufacturing, signalling and civil-engineering skills so that future high-speed projects rely less on imports.
- **Keep maglev under study.** Fund research and pilot evaluation of maglev for select ultra-high-density or ultra-high-speed routes where its advantages could eventually justify the cost.
- **Decide by evidence, not prestige.** Choose between maglev and conventional rail on transparent cost-benefit and interoperability analysis rather than on the appeal of the newest technology.

When Machines Decide: The Peril of Outsourcing Moral Judgment to AI

An algorithm can compute a decision, but it cannot be held answerable for one. The moment a society lets a machine make the moral call, it does not remove the human from the loop, it removes the human who was responsible.

- **Keep a human answerable by design.** Mandate meaningful human review for every high-stakes decision affecting rights, benefits or liberty, with a named official on record, not a nominal...
- **Enforce explainability and audit.** Require that consequential AI systems used in the public sector be explainable, bias-tested and independently auditable, drawing on the UNESCO ethics...
- **Legislate a risk-tiered regime.** Move from voluntary principles toward enforceable rules, learning from the EU AI Act's tiering, so that higher-risk uses carry higher duties.
- **Build ethical capacity, not just compute.** Pair the IndiaAI Mission's infrastructure push with training that keeps officials competent to question, override and take ownership of algorithmic...

Heat from Below: India Drills Its First Geothermal Wells

The sun sets and the wind falls, but the heat beneath our feet never rests. India has finally begun to tap it.

- **De-risk exploration with public funding.** The State should bear the high upfront exploratory-drilling risk through GSI and MNRE, so that confirmed reservoirs can then attract private...
- **Build a geothermal roadmap.** Move from a single pilot to a phased national plan covering Puga, Tattapani and the Himalayan and west-coast belts, with clear targets and a dedicated policy...
- **Pair firm heat with local needs.** Beyond electricity, use geothermal directly for space heating, greenhouses and tourism in Ladakh, maximising value from a single well field.
- **Safeguard fragile ecology.** Mandate reinjection of spent fluids, seismic monitoring and strict environmental appraisal so that a clean source does not damage a sensitive high-altitude...

Writing India's AI Law for Autonomous Agents and Deepfakes

Most of India's technology law was written for a world where humans clicked and machines merely obeyed. **Agentic AI** that acts on its own and **deepfakes** that manufacture reality break that assumption. The question before policymakers is no...

- **Legislate accountability.** Enact a calibrated AI law that assigns default liability across the developer, deployer and user chain for autonomous agents.
- **Mandate provenance.** Require watermarking, labelling and traceability of synthetic media so deepfakes can be identified and misuse penalised.
- **Tier by risk.** Adopt a risk-based structure, with strict duties for high-risk uses and a light touch for low-risk innovation, drawing lessons from the EU AI Act.
- **Build capacity.** Empower a competent regulator through the IndiaAI Mission, invest in auditing and testing, and keep rules principles-based so they age well.

Intelligence at the Edge: Why On-Device AI Matters for India

For a decade the assumption was that artificial intelligence lives in the cloud, in vast air-conditioned halls of servers, and that your phone is merely a window to it. That assumption is quietly breaking. Increasingly the intelligence...

- **Anchor chip-design capacity.** India should deepen **semiconductor design** strength for NPUs and edge accelerators, building on the Semiconductor Mission so that the enabling hardware is...
- **Fund the software and model layer.** Under the **IndiaAI Mission**, back the creation of efficient, compressed **open models** and toolkits optimised for Indian languages and edge devices, so local...
- **Set standards and align with DPDP.** Craft interoperability and security standards for on-device AI, and treat edge processing as a preferred, privacy-protective default in sensitive domains...
- **Grow skills and startups.** Invest in talent for **TinyML** and edge optimisation, and support startups building on-device applications, converting India's developer base into an edge-AI...

The Age Question: Why Social Media Bans Are Easier to Legislate Than to Enforce

Imposing a ban is one thing and enforcing it another. Every age-specific restriction on social media rests on age verification, and verification means identifying real users with real data, which is a privacy cost paid upfront for an...

- **Regulate design before access.** Obligations on algorithmic recommendation, autoplay and default privacy settings for minor accounts are harder to circumvent than an age gate.
- **Keep verification off government systems.** If verification is adopted, privacy-preserving attestation that does not hand identity data to the state limits the speech chill.
- **Account for shared devices.** Any Indian framework built on one-user-one-device assumptions will fail in most Indian households.
- **Invest in digital literacy.** The durable protection against predation, bullying and bubbles is a user who recognises them.
- **Legislate reviewably.** Given the contested evidence, sunset clauses and mandatory review are more defensible than permanent thresholds.

Four Enemies, One Shot: Why India's First Dengue Vaccine Needs a Screening Rule

Dengue is not one disease but four, and immunity to one of them can make the next one worse. That single fact is why India's approval of Qdenga on 20 July 2026 is both a genuine public health advance and a regulatory question that is not...

- **Make serostatus screening conditional, not universal.** Direct pre-vaccination rapid testing at children in the lower age band in districts with documented low seroprevalence, while...
- **Fund a national dengue seroprevalence map before mass rollout.** The ICMR survey published in 2019 remains the last comprehensive national picture. A district-level, age-stratified refresh is...
- **Make the post-marketing study serotype-resolved, adequately powered and public.** The six-month condition attached by the Subject Expert Committee should specify active surveillance of...
- **Communicate the caveat before critics do.** Consent material at the point of vaccination must state plainly what is known, what remains uncertain about DENV-3 and DENV-4 in never-infected...
- **Do not let a vaccine displace vector control.** *Aedes aegypti* breeds in stored clean water inside urban homes, which is why source reduction, municipal water supply reliability, solid waste...
- **Back the indigenous pipeline.** The ICMR and Panacea Biotec **DengiAll** phase 3 trial, launched in August 2024 across 19 sites in 18 states and union territories with more than 10,000...

Noisy Machines, Precise Targets: Quantum Computing Enters Cancer Vaccine Design

A personalised cancer vaccine begins with a search problem, not a chemistry problem: out of thousands of mutated fragments in one patient's tumour, which handful will the immune system actually notice? That search explodes combinatorially...

- **Fund quantum and biotechnology at the interface, not in silos.** The NQM's computing hub at IISc Bengaluru and the Department of Biotechnology's vaccine programmes should issue a joint call...
- **Build the HLA reference base India needs.** Indian HLA diversity is under-represented in global datasets, so a consent-based national HLA and neoantigen database is a prerequisite for...
- **Leverage the mRNA platform India has already proved.** India demonstrated indigenous mRNA vaccine capability with Department of Biotechnology support, and that platform is the natural...
- **Prioritise access to quantum hardware over ownership of it.** For biological applications, cloud access to photonic and superconducting devices abroad, paired with strong domestic algorithm...
- **Set an evidence standard early.** The Indian Council of Medical Research and the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation should articulate now how patient-specific vaccines will be...
- **Train the interface workforce.** Expand quantum-for-biology and computational immunology curricula through the NQM's four thematic hubs and their spoke institutions, since the binding...

The Illusion of Wisdom: Why a Process Can Be Automated but Judgement Cannot

A process can be automated. Wisdom cannot. Ford Motor Company spent years widening the use of artificial intelligence in engineering quality control, then brought hundreds of veteran engineers back because the automated inspection systems...

- **Mandate a named accountable officer for every automated decision system in government.** Adopt the human-in-command principle from the India AI Governance Guidelines as a binding procurement...
- **Build skill retention into automation contracts.** Following Bainbridge, require periodic manual-mode practice, scenario drills and shadow review for operators of high-consequence automated...
- **Protect fresh human data as critical infrastructure.** Guard against model collapse by requiring provenance labelling of synthetic content, which the Information Technology Amendment Rules...
- **Legislate an exclusion audit for welfare automation.** Automated eligibility, biometric authentication and de-duplication in schemes such as the Public Distribution System and rural...
- **Move from principles to enforceable duties in stages.** Retain the light-touch posture for low-risk applications, but convert the NITI Aayog principles into binding obligations for high-risk...
- **Follow the judiciary's assistive model across public administration.** SUVAS and SUPACE were adopted with an explicit limit at the point where the machine would begin to decide rather than...
- **Institutionalise contestation to prevent epistemic monoculture.** Require public agencies procuring AI systems to document the alternatives considered and to preserve at least one independent...

The Medal and the Pipeline: What China's Fields Win Asks of Indian Basic Research

A Fields Medal is not won in the year it is announced; it is won about twenty years earlier, in a classroom where a fourteen-year-old is allowed to find a hard problem interesting. On July 23, 2026, at the opening ceremony of the...

- **Ring-fence the discovery layer inside the ANRF.** Reserve a stated, published share of ANRF spending for curiosity-driven basic research in mathematics and the theoretical sciences, insulated...
- **Rebuild an early-talent identifier.** Restore a KVPY-equivalent aptitude route within INSPIRE that selects for research temperament rather than examination rank, with a mathematics-specific...
- **Make the private-funding assumption real or replace it.** Roughly Rs 36,000 crore of the ANRF corpus depends on money that has not been appropriated. Use matching grants, philanthropic tax...
- **Build the undergraduate ring, not only the doctoral one.** The CMI, ISI, IMSc and TIFR model works and is far too small. Fund a tranche of comparable research-track undergraduate mathematics...
- **Fix the faculty gate.** Clear mathematics vacancies in central universities and the Indian Institutes of Technology on a time-bound basis, with tenure-track terms, competitive salaries and...
- **Convert diaspora fellowships into recruitment.** Treat the Ramanujan and VAIBHAV Fellowships as pipelines that end in an offered chair rather than as two-month visiting arrangements, and...

The Rule Writers: China's Open-Weight Surge and the Contest Over AI Governance

The striking thing about China's artificial intelligence surge is not that it caught up but how: denied the best chips, it substituted abundant electricity and a larger quantity of weaker ones, then gave the results away. Open weights are...

- **Treat open-weight models as sovereign infrastructure, subject to audit.** Permit locally hosted foreign open models for non-sensitive workloads under a CERT-In supervised security and bias...
- **Fix compute economics, not just compute volume.** Pair the IndiaAI compute pillar with predictable industrial power tariffs and a coherent data centre siting policy, because China's...
- **Make standards diplomacy a named national objective.** Resource BIS participation in ISO/IEC JTC 1/SC 42 and the relevant ITU study groups with dedicated technical staff rather than rotating...
- **Build for the physical turn.** Direct a defined share of IndiaAI application funding towards embodied AI and robotics for manufacturing, agriculture and logistics, the frontier Xi has already...
- **Convert the Global Capability Centre base into an evaluation industry.** India's concentration of engineering talent makes it a natural global hub for model evaluation, red-teaming and...
- **Keep the open-source lane open at home.** Continue the present posture of funding indigenous models without discouraging open ones, so that India retains a credible fallback if subsidised...

The Next DPI: How India Can Commoditise AI

Aadhaar made "who are you" a one-rupee question and UPI made "pay them" a zero-rupee one. Making "what should I do" equally cheap is a different kind of problem, because a payment has one right answer and a model's output usually does not.

- **Pilot narrowly, not broadly.** Start the DPI-for-AI extension with specific, bounded, high-value public-good use cases rather than a general-purpose AI utility, to keep compute costs...
- **Separate the interoperability problem from the cost problem.** A "Unified Intelligence Interface" for provider interoperability is achievable independent of whether inference itself is...
- **Build a transparent compute-cost accounting framework** under the IndiaAI Mission before scaling subsidised access, so the fiscal exposure of any expansion is understood in advance.
- **Draw explicitly on open-weight model development** to reduce per-query licensing costs, since subsidising inference on proprietary, expensive-to-license models compounds the affordability...
- **Evaluate success by public-good outcomes, not usage volume,** avoiding a scenario where a subsidised AI utility is dominated by low-value commercial queries rather than the public-service use...

The Delhi High Court Ruling Is Unlikely to Be the Last Word on AI and Copyright

An interim order is a judge's best guess made under time pressure with an incomplete record, not a verdict. Treating this ruling as the final word on AI and copyright mistakes a placeholder for a monument.

- **Report and discuss this ruling explicitly as an interim finding,** avoiding language that implies a settled, final resolution of AI-training copyright questions.
- **Track the case through to its final judgment and any appeal,** since the interim finding's substantive conclusion may or may not survive fuller argument.
- **Consider legislative clarification of the fair-dealing exception's application to AI training,** providing clearer, more uniform rules than gradual, fact-pattern-by-fact-pattern judicial...
- **Develop a licensing or compensation framework for AI training on copyrighted content,** as a middle path between an absolute copyright bar and unrestricted fair-dealing coverage, worth...
- **Monitor comparable international rulings** on AI-training copyright disputes, since Indian courts and legislators may draw on emerging global doctrine as the issue matures across multiple...

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Manipur: The Roads We No Longer Take

Years of ethnic conflict severed movement between Manipur's hills and valley; with an elected government restored and dialogue begun, restoring roads, trust and administration is now the test.

- **Secure the corridors.** Deploy impartial central forces to make key highways safe for all communities before pushing wider free movement.
- **Sustain dialogue.** Institutionalise the Meitei-Kuki talks begun in March 2026 into a credible, time-bound reconciliation process.
- **Enable safe return.** Ensure the voluntary, dignified return and rehabilitation of the displaced, with relief and reconstruction.
- **Restore even-handed governance.** Rebuild impartial administration and justice so both communities trust the state as a neutral guarantor.

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First Responder at Sea: India's Watch Over the Indian Ocean

Security in the Indian Ocean is now measured in response time. When a merchant ship sends a distress call off Yemen, the flag that arrives first sets the rules of the sea.

- **Sustain mission-based deployments.** Keep warships forward-deployed in the Gulf of Aden and Arabian Sea to guarantee rapid response.
- **Deepen indigenous naval strength.** Continue building blue-water capability (aircraft carriers, Project 17A frigates) so presence is affordable and enduring.
- **Widen maritime-domain awareness.** Strengthen the IFC-IOR and information-sharing links with partner navies and littoral states.
- **Build regional partnerships.** Use IONS and joint exercises to turn net security provision into a shared, capacity-building endeavour with regional navies.
- **Push for a legal-cooperative order.** Support frameworks for prosecuting piracy and safeguarding sea lanes, keeping the seas open and rules-based.

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Algorithmic War: AI, Autonomy and India's Defence Choice

Wars are increasingly decided not only by who has the sharpest steel but by who has the smartest software. Artificial intelligence, military autonomy and algorithmic decision-making now shape targeting, surveillance and the pace of battle...

- **Deepen indigenisation.** Fund DRDO, CAIR, DAIPA, iDEX and ADITI to build sovereign models, secure chips and domestic drone and counter-drone stacks.
- **Codify a human-control doctrine.** Adopt a clear national policy on meaningful human control over lethal force, consistent with international humanitarian law.
- **Champion responsible use internationally.** Continue engaging in CCW and multilateral forums, reflecting India's stand of responsible, ethical and human-supervised military AI.
- **Build data and algorithmic sovereignty.** Secure defence data pipelines, invest in indigenous compute, and audit imported systems for backdoors.
- **Grow the talent and startup base.** Deepen civil-military tech fusion so that Indian AI startups strengthen the defence base without ceding strategic autonomy.

BUSINESS STANDARD

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The First Batch Comes Home: Agnipath and the Retention Question

The Agnipath scheme was designed around a number: keep one in four, release three in four. As the first batch nears the end of its four years, the armed forces are asking whether that number was set right. The answer will shape both the...

- **Differentiate retention by stream.** Retain more in technical and specialised arms where skill-depth is decisive, and hold the line elsewhere, rather than one flat cap.
- **Cost the pension tail explicitly.** Any rise in retention must be matched against long-run pension liability so modernisation spending is protected.
- **Strengthen the exit ramp.** Guaranteed reservations in central armed police forces, credible skilling and recognition of service make the majority exit fair and productive.
- **Deliver the welfare fixes.** Lifetime support for families of the fallen and disability medical cover should be finalised, closing the scheme's biggest equity gaps.

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Hormuz Is Not Malacca: Why India Cannot Copy Iran's Chokepoint Playbook

A chokepoint is only leverage if you can close it without closing yourself, and that is precisely why India's position near Malacca is not a mirror image of Iran's grip on Hormuz.

- **Invest in the Andaman and Nicobar Command.** Strengthen India's only tri-service theatre command with surveillance, logistics and reach so that presence in the eastern Indian Ocean is...
- **Build capability for sea denial, plan for sea control.** Prioritise submarines, maritime domain awareness and long-range strike, while recognising that sustained control of a strait is a much...
- **Anchor strategy in partnerships.** Deepen cooperation under the Quad, with regional navies and littoral states, so that any pressure on sea lines is shared and legitimate, not unilateral.
- **Lead on the SAGAR/MAHASAGAR vision.** Frame India as the net security provider and rule-of-law champion in the Indian Ocean Region, which is more durable leverage than the threat of a...

THE HINDU

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Unevenly Unsafe: Reading the Global Terrorism Index 2026

A falling death toll can hide a rising threat, because terrorism does not always announce its strength through numbers; sometimes it announces it through where and how it strikes.

- **Disaggregate the intelligence.** Track terrorism by region, group and method rather than by headline totals, so resources follow the concentrating threat rather than the reassuring average.
- **Counter the decentralised attack.** Strengthen online counter-radicalisation, community policing and rapid-response capacity aimed at lone actors and low-tech methods that evade conventional...
- **Engage the neighbourhood and the Sahel.** Sustain diplomatic and security cooperation on cross-border terror, and support multilateral counter-terror efforts in fragile regions before...
- **Invest in development and governance.** Recognise that terrorism entrenches where governance fails, and pair kinetic responses with the development and state-capacity work that drains the...

A Breach at the Perimeter: Why Critical Infrastructure Needs Mandatory Disclosure

The wall around a nuclear plant is only as strong as the smallest vendor who holds a key to the gate.

- **Extend CII obligations down the supply chain.** Any contractor holding sensitive data about a notified critical installation should be brought within NCIIIPC's baseline security standards...
- **Make breach disclosure time-bound and unambiguous.** Clarify that the 6-hour CERT-In clock applies to vendors of critical assets, and mandate that the operator (NPCIL here) be notified...
- **Mandate vendor cyber-hygiene as a procurement condition.** Tie eligibility for contracts on critical projects to demonstrable controls, encryption of data at rest, and periodic third-party...
- **Build a graded, honest public-communication protocol.** Confirm quickly that safety-critical systems are unaffected while acknowledging the administrative breach, rather than defaulting to...

Integrated Theatre Commands Need a Readiness Framework, Not Just an Org Chart

A reorganisation chart changes who reports to whom on the day it is signed. It does not change who actually knows how to command jointly, and that gap, unmeasured, is where readiness quietly erodes during exactly the transition period a...

- **Establish explicit joint-command competency benchmarks,** tracked internally, covering training completion, joint exercise performance and command-chain response-time metrics.
- **Create a dedicated oversight body** with security clearance to review readiness data honestly and report gaps up the chain without political or inter-Service pressure to overstate progress.
- **Retain single-Service reserve command structures** as an operational hedge during the transition, so a joint-command readiness gap does not translate into an actual capability gap during a...
- **Invest in joint training pathways and career incentives,** so officers see joint-operations expertise as a career asset, not a disruption to established single-Service promotion tracks.
- **Study the US and Chinese multi-year stabilisation timelines explicitly,** setting realistic internal expectations for how long genuine jointness takes to mature, rather than treating the...

History, Art & Culture

5 items · cards 759–763

The Taj and the Docket: When Litigation Besieges a Monument

A monument that has stood for nearly four centuries does not need a court to tell it what it is, yet every fresh claim over the Taj Mahal converts settled heritage into a contestable docket, and the cost is paid in judicial hours the...

- **Uphold custodianship as the operative principle.** Treat the ASI's statutory custody under the AMASR Act as the settled answer to conservation and access, keeping ownership theories separate...
- **Insist on an evidentiary threshold before intrusive surveys.** Require claimants to place verifiable historical evidence on record before any physical inspection of a fragile protected...
- **Protect judicial economy.** Use existing procedural filters to screen repetitive or manifestly weak claims early, so that heritage litigation does not crowd out ordinary justice.
- **Strengthen documentation and public communication.** Have the ASI and the Ministry of Culture proactively publish source-based histories of contested monuments so that public understanding...

A Temple the Jungle Swallowed: What Prambanan Teaches About Heritage

A monument is not merely old stone but a memory the present chooses to keep alive, and Prambanan survives because generations decided its silence was worth breaking.

- **Deepen conservation partnerships.** Expand India's cooperation on heritage restoration across Southeast Asia, sharing expertise as it has done at other sites in the region.
- **Invest in scholarship and exchange.** Fund joint research, student exchange and museum collaboration that keep the shared history studied and understood rather than forgotten.
- **Use culture in diplomacy deliberately.** Weave civilisational links into India's Act East engagement so that soft power complements strategic and economic ties.
- **Promote responsible heritage tourism.** Encourage travel that funds conservation and respects local communities, rather than tourism that erodes the very sites it celebrates.

Bringing the Gods Home: Antiquities, Treaties and Soft Power

A stolen idol does not merely leave a temple; it leaves a hole in a living practice, and returning it is the rare act of diplomacy that repairs something no treaty text can measure.

- **Complete the national antiquities register.** Photograph, measure and digitally document every idol in every temple, especially the small unprotected ones, because an object that was never...
- **Institutionalise the Idol Wing model.** Replicate Tamil Nadu's specialised investigative unit in other States with rich temple heritage, and link them to a central database and to Interpol's...
- **Widen the treaty net.** Pursue bilateral cultural-property agreements and MLAT-based cooperation with major market states, and press for wider ratification of the UNIDROIT Convention, which...
- **Secure the objects that are still in place.** Fund physical security, custodianship and periodic audit at temples, since prevention is cheaper and faster than a decade of international...

Patriarchitecture: The Women Written Out of How India Builds

The buildings we call our heritage were paid for, planned and lived in by women as much as by men, yet the story we tell of who builds India has quietly edited them out, so that the record in stone reads as if architecture were a world...

- **Credit patrons in the record.** Museums, signage and textbooks should name the women who commissioned monuments alongside the rulers they honoured, so that patronage is recognised as a form...
- **Broaden how heritage is read.** Conservation and interpretation should include domestic and everyday spaces, courtyards, stepwells and gardens, where women's agency is most visible, not only...
- **Correct the profession's imbalance.** Architecture education and practice should track and address the under-crediting of women in leadership and in the histories of the discipline, so that...
- **Fund gendered heritage scholarship.** Support archival and field research that recovers women patrons, builders and users across regions and periods, giving the fuller record an evidentiary...
- **Tell the story respectfully and accurately.** Public history should present these recoveries with careful sourcing and without overstatement, so that restoring women to the record strengthens...

Begumpura: A Fifteenth-Century Blueprint for Governance Without Exclusion

A government can build roads, schools and hospitals in a place that still has a Begumpura-shaped hole in it, if it never asks who those roads, schools and hospitals quietly continue to exclude. Ravidas's standard was never about what a...

- **Incorporate exclusion-and-harm audits alongside service-delivery metrics** in governance evaluation, asking explicitly whose exploitation a given policy design permits to continue.
- **Ground policy design in lived experience of exclusion,** following Begumpura's own origin, by involving affected communities directly in evaluating whether a policy addresses structural harm...
- **Use Begumpura as an interpretive lens in social-justice policy discourse,** not as a literal zero-taxation, zero-hardship target.
- **Teach Bhakti social philosophy alongside its devotional content,** recognising its governance and social-reform dimension as academically significant in its own right.
- **Apply the absence-of-harm standard to contemporary caste, gender and economic-exclusion policy debates,** using it as a complement to, not a replacement for, conventional development...

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The Rule Curve We Ignore: How Full Dams Manufacture Floods

A flood cushion that has been quietly filled with water to sell more power and irrigation is no cushion at all, and when the rain comes the reservoir does not absorb the surge, it forwards it, turning a manageable inflow into a man-made...

- **Make the rule curve binding.** Convert reservoir operation manuals from advisory documents into auditable, enforceable schedules, with the NDSA empowered to penalise revenue-driven...
- **Shift to forecast-led operation.** Use CWC and modern inflow forecasting to pre-release water ahead of predicted heavy spells, restoring the flood cushion before the storm rather than...
- **Coordinate the whole basin.** Operationalise empowered river basin authorities so that cascades of dams across state lines are operated as one system, ending fragmented releases.
- **Warn and protect downstream.** Strengthen last-mile flood warnings and emergency action plans under the Dam Safety Act so that any necessary release reaches communities with real lead time.