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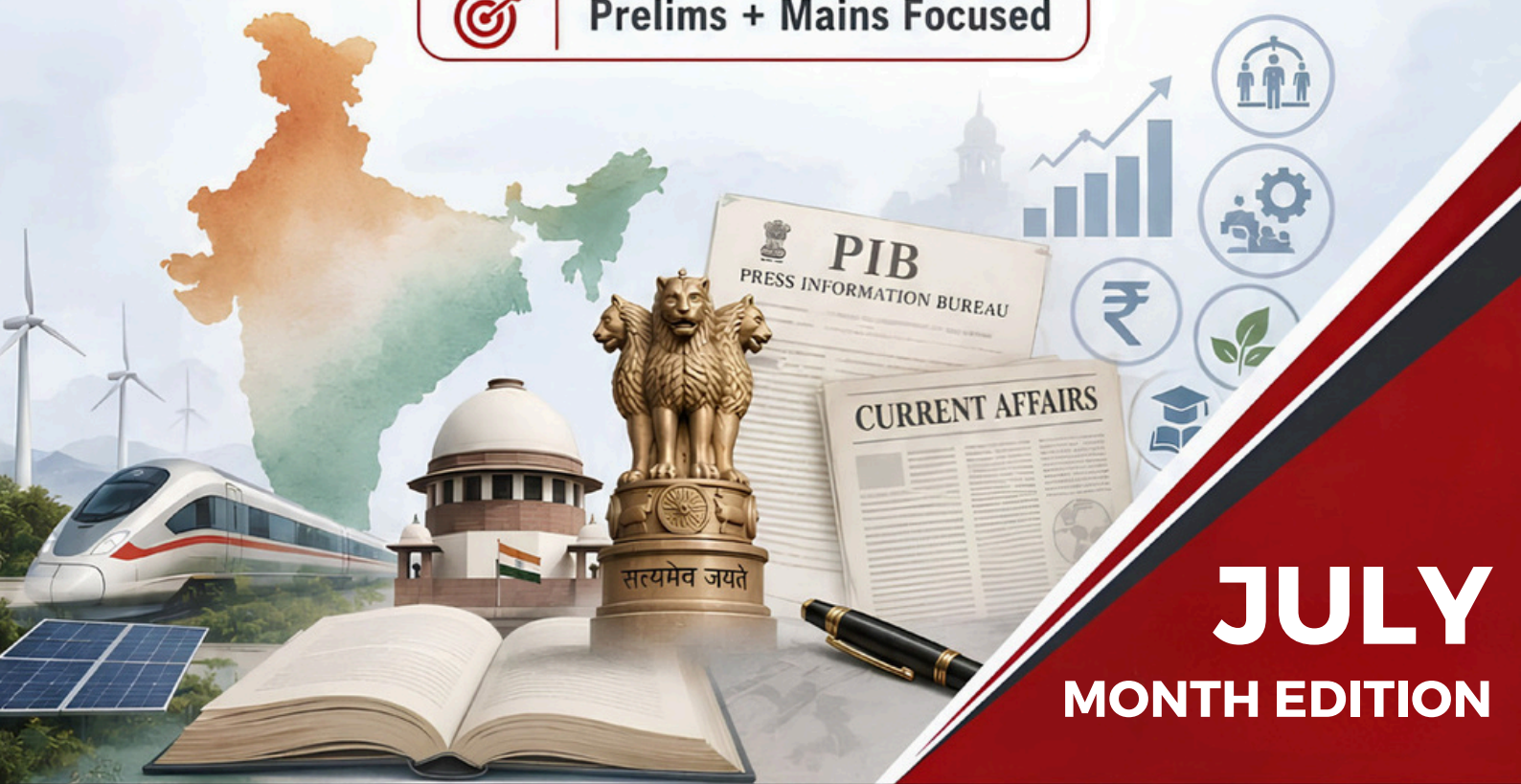
IMPACT PIB 360

Monthly PIB Analysis for
UPSC Civil Services

CURRENT AFFAIRS MAGAZINE



Prelims + Mains Focused



JULY
MONTH EDITION

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Why Should UPSC Aspirants Read PIB?

A recent public post by **Ajay Kumar, Chairman, UPSC**, offers an important clue about the nature of sources behind UPSC Prelims questions. While discussing the **Civil Services Prelims 2026 Provisional Answer Key**, he noted that many answers are based on **standard textbooks, Government websites, Government press releases and reputed newspapers**.

This makes **PIB (Press Information Bureau)** especially relevant for serious UPSC preparation. PIB is one of the Government's primary channels for publishing official information on **policies, schemes, Bills, Cabinet decisions, reports, indices, international engagements, science and technology, environment, economy and governance**.

Why PIB Matters for UPSC

- **Authentic Government Source:** PIB carries official information directly from Union Ministries and Departments.
- **Useful for Prelims:** Schemes, institutions, reports, factual details, objectives and implementing ministries frequently become potential statement-based questions.
- **Strengthens Mains Answers:** Official statistics, initiatives, achievements and policy developments can add credibility and contemporary examples to GS answers.
- **Connects Static + Current Affairs:** PIB helps aspirants link topics such as Parliament, economy, environment, agriculture, science and international relations with current developments.
- **Reduces Dependence on Unverified Material:** Reading the original government source helps avoid factual errors and distorted summaries.

IMPACT PIB 360

IMPACT PIB 360 – Monthly PIB Analysis for UPSC Civil Services is designed to filter the large volume of PIB releases and present only the **UPSC-relevant issues, background concepts, Prelims facts and Mains dimensions** that aspirants need.

Read less. Read relevant. Read from authentic sources.

POLITY

1. PHASE I OF CENSUS 2027

Why in News?

Self-Enumeration under **Phase I of Census 2027** began in **Tamil Nadu and Tripura** in July 2026.

Census 2027 is significant because it will be **India's first digitally conducted Census**. Along with traditional door-to-door enumeration, enumerators will collect data using a dedicated mobile application.

For the first time, **Self-Enumeration** has also been introduced, allowing households to submit Census information through an online portal. However, Self-Enumeration does not completely replace field verification, as the **Self-Enumeration ID must be verified by an enumerator**.

Background & UPSC-Relevant Facts

About Census

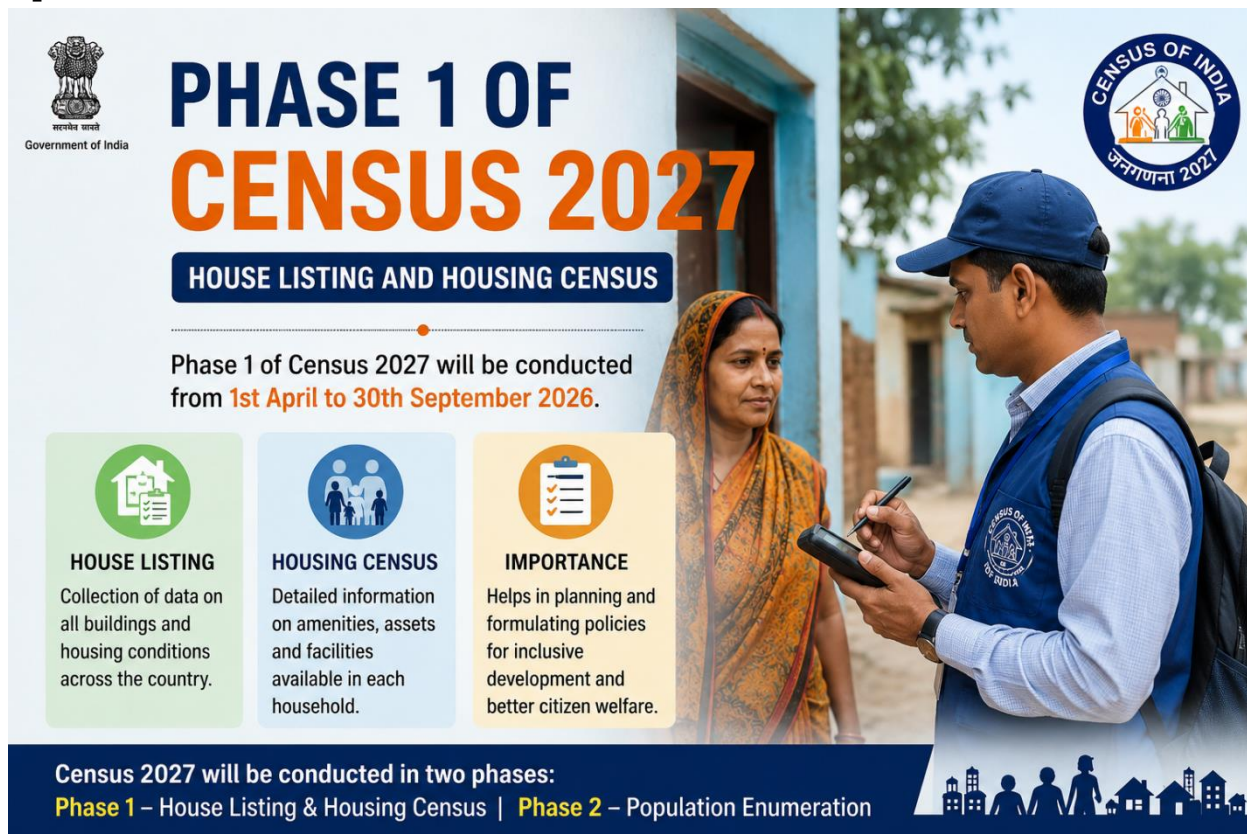
The Census provides comprehensive demographic, social and economic information about India's population and households.

- The **Census is a Union subject** under **Entry 69 of the Union List** in the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution.
- The Census of India is conducted under the **Ministry of Home Affairs**.
- It is conducted by the **Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India**.
- The legal framework for conducting the Census is provided by the **Census Act, 1948** and the **Census Rules, 1990**.
- Traditional **door-to-door enumeration will continue along with digital data collection** to ensure wider and inclusive coverage.

Historical Background

- The **first Census exercise in India was conducted in 1872** during the tenure of **Lord Mayo**. It was not synchronous across the country.
- The **first synchronous Census of India was conducted in 1881** during the tenure of **Lord Ripon**.
- The **first Census after Independence was conducted in 1951**.
- **Census 2011** was the 15th Census overall and the 7th Census after Independence.

- **Census 2027 will be the 16th Census of India overall and the 8th Census after Independence.**
- The Census scheduled for 2021 was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



The poster for Phase 1 of the Census 2027 features the Government of India emblem and the Census of India logo. It highlights the 'HOUSE LISTING AND HOUSING CENSUS' phase, scheduled from 1st April to 30th September 2026. A census worker in a blue uniform is shown interacting with a woman in a yellow sari. The poster is divided into three sections: 'HOUSE LISTING' (collection of data on all buildings and housing conditions), 'HOUSING CENSUS' (detailed information on amenities, assets, and facilities), and 'IMPORTANCE' (helps in planning and formulating policies for inclusive development and better citizen welfare). The bottom of the poster states that the Census 2027 will be conducted in two phases: Phase 1 (House Listing & Housing Census) and Phase 2 (Population Enumeration).

PHASE 1 OF CENSUS 2027
HOUSE LISTING AND HOUSING CENSUS

Phase 1 of Census 2027 will be conducted from **1st April to 30th September 2026**.

HOUSE LISTING
Collection of data on all buildings and housing conditions across the country.

HOUSING CENSUS
Detailed information on amenities, assets and facilities available in each household.

IMPORTANCE
Helps in planning and formulating policies for inclusive development and better citizen welfare.

Census 2027 will be conducted in two phases:
Phase 1 – House Listing & Housing Census | **Phase 2** – Population Enumeration

Census 2027: Key Features

Census 2027 will be conducted in **two phases**.

Phase I – Houselisting and Housing Census

Phase I collects information relating to houses, household amenities and assets, including:

- Type and condition of houses
- Drinking water
- Sanitation
- Electricity
- Cooking fuel
- Internet access
- Household assets
- Vehicles and other amenities

Phase II – Population Enumeration

Phase II collects demographic and socio-economic information about individuals, including:

- Age and sex
- Education
- Occupation
- Migration
- Fertility
- Social characteristics

Digital Census and Self-Enumeration

Census 2027 introduces several important digital features:

- Mobile application for enumerators
- Online Self-Enumeration facility
- Digital monitoring of Census operations
- Faster processing and compilation of Census data

Self-Enumeration has been introduced for the first time, enabling households to fill in Census details online.

However, Self-Enumeration does not eliminate physical verification. The **Self-Enumeration ID must be verified by an enumerator**, and door-to-door visits will continue.

Important Constitutional Link

Census 2027 is important for the future **delimitation of Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assembly constituencies**.

Article 82 provides for readjustment of Lok Sabha constituencies after each Census, while **Article 170** deals with readjustment of State Legislative Assembly constituencies.

The constitutional framework links future seat readjustment with the **first Census conducted after 2026**, making Census 2027 particularly significant for representation and delimitation.

Conclusion

Census 2027 marks a major transition towards technology-driven population enumeration in India. Its data will be crucial for policy making, welfare planning, infrastructure development, resource allocation and future delimitation. The combination of digital tools, Self-Enumeration and traditional field verification aims to improve both efficiency and inclusiveness.

2. NATIONAL e-VIDHAN APPLICATION (NeVA)

Why in News?

In July 2026, the Government informed Parliament that **33 out of 37 State/UT Legislatures have signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs)** for implementation of the **National e-Vidhan Application (NeVA)**, and **21 Legislative Houses have already been transformed into Digital Legislatures**. The digitalisation of the **Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha is outside the scope of NeVA**.

In another development, the **Maharashtra Legislature** moved towards implementing NeVA, with discussions held in July 2026 on its implementation roadmap.

Background & UPSC-Relevant Facts

About NeVA

- **National e-Vidhan Application (NeVA)** is a **Mission Mode Project of the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs** under the **Digital India Programme**.
- It aims to create **paperless, transparent and efficient State/UT Legislatures** through a common digital platform.
- It is based on the concept of **“One Nation, One Application”**, bringing legislative Houses onto a common digital platform.
- The project has an approved total outlay of **₹ 673.94 crore**.
- NeVA is a **device-neutral and member-centric application**, enabling legislators to access legislative information through tablets, smartphones and other digital devices.

Key Features

NeVA digitises important legislative functions such as:

- List of Business and Bulletins
- Starred and Unstarred Questions and Answers
- Submission of Questions and Notices
- Bills and legislative documents
- Papers laid on the Table of the House
- Committee Reports
- Members' information
- Legislative debates and proceedings
- Bills, Committees and Assurances Management Systems.

It enables electronic exchange of information between **Members, Legislature Secretariats and State Government Departments**, reducing dependence on printed documents.



NATIONAL e-VIDHAN APPLICATION (NeVA)

ONE NATION, ONE LEGISLATURE PLATFORM

NeVA is a Mission Mode Project under Digital India Programme to digitalize and integrate the legislative processes of all State Legislatures and Union Territories.

KEY FEATURES

- Paperless Legislature
- Legislative Business
- Bills, Questions & Assurances
- e-Signatures & Workflows
- Digital Library & Archives
- Real-time Reports & Analytics
- Alerts & Notifications
- Multilingual Support

BENEFITS

- Improves efficiency and transparency
- Enhances citizen engagement
- Secure & reliable system
- Saves time, cost & paper

TOWARDS **SMART, TRANSPARENT & ACCOUNTABLE** LEGISLATURES

Technology and Institutional Mechanism

- NeVA is implemented by the **Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs (MoPA)**.
- The **National Informatics Centre (NIC)** is the technology partner responsible for developing and supporting the application.
- NeVA is hosted on the Government's **NIC MeghRaj cloud infrastructure**.
- It has been integrated with **BHASHINI** for text-to-text translation, improving access to legislative information in Indian languages.
- **NeVA Seva Kendras** provide training and technical assistance to legislators and other stakeholders.

Funding Pattern

Implementation is based on a **Tripartite MoU** between the **Union Government, State/UT Government and concerned Legislature**.

- **North-Eastern and Hilly States:** Centre : State = **90:10**
- **Union Territories with Legislatures:** **100% Central funding**
- **Other States:** Centre : State = **60:40**.

Significance

NeVA promotes **paperless governance**, reduces printing and storage costs and enables faster processing of legislative business. It also improves transparency by providing citizens easier access to legislative documents and proceedings.

A **mid-term evaluation** by **NITI Aayog** observed that NeVA had reduced paper usage, improved legislative workflows and facilitated quicker processing of legislative business.

Conclusion

NeVA represents an important component of India's **Digital Governance** architecture by modernising State and UT Legislatures. By integrating legislative procedures on a common digital platform, it can improve efficiency, transparency, accessibility and citizen participation while moving India towards environmentally sustainable and paperless legislative institutions.

3. PUBLIC EXAMINATIONS (PREVENTION OF UNFAIR MEANS) AMENDMENT BILL, 2026

Why in News?

The **Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill, 2026** was introduced in the Lok Sabha on **27 July 2026** to strengthen the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024. It was passed by the **Lok Sabha on 29 July** and the **Rajya Sabha on 30 July 2026**.

The amendment was brought in against the backdrop of continued incidents of **question-paper leaks and organised examination malpractices**, with the objective of introducing stronger punishments and faster investigation and trial.

Background & UPSC-Relevant Facts

About the 2024 Act

- The **Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024** was enacted on **12 February 2024** and came into force on **21 June 2024**.
- It is administered by the **Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT)** under the **Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions**.
- It aims to prevent unfair means and organised malpractice in specified public examinations.
- Offences under the Act are **cognizable, non-bailable and non-compoundable**.



**PUBLIC EXAMINATIONS
(PREVENTION OF UNFAIR MEANS)
AMENDMENT BILL, 2026**



**AIMING TO ENSURE TRANSPARENCY, FAIRNESS AND INTEGRITY
IN PUBLIC EXAMINATIONS**

WHY IN NEWS?
The Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill, 2026 was introduced in Lok Sabha in July 2026 to strengthen the law and curb malpractices in public examinations.

WHAT IS THE BILL?
It amends the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024 to plug loopholes, deter malpractices and ensure the credibility of public examinations.

SCOPE

- Covers exams conducted by government departments, public bodies, universities, boards, and government-funded institutions.
- Encompasses entrance tests, recruitment exams, educational exams, and any other public examination.

KEY AMENDMENTS

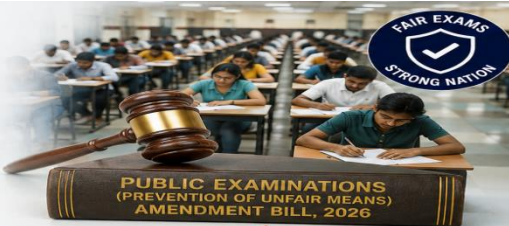
Tougher punishment:
Imprisonment increased from 3–5 years to 3–10 years and fine increased from ₹10 lakh to ₹1 crore.

Organised crime included:
Organised gangs involved in unfair means are now explicitly covered.

Use of technology:
Use of electronic devices, communication gadgets, or any digital means for unfair means to be an offence.

Liability of service providers:
Coaching centres, service providers, hospitals, and educational institutions can be held accountable if involved.

Broader coverage:
Applies to all public examinations conducted by the Centre, States, public authorities and government-funded institutions.



**PUBLIC EXAMINATIONS
(PREVENTION OF UNFAIR MEANS)
AMENDMENT BILL, 2026**



EXAMPLES OF UNFAIR MEANS

Using electronic devices

Communicating or receiving information

Leakage of question paper or answers

Impersonation

Bribery or inducement

PENALTIES UNDER THE AMENDMENT

Imprisonment:
3 to 10 years

Fine:
Up to ₹1 crore

OBJECTIVE: To create a strong deterrent against malpractices, protect the sanctity of examinations and secure the future of students.

FAIR EXAMS, EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES **STRONG NATION**

Examinations Covered

The Act covers public examinations conducted by:

- **Union Public Service Commission (UPSC)**
- **Staff Selection Commission (SSC)**
- **Railway Recruitment Boards (RRBs)**
- **Institute of Banking Personnel Selection (IBPS)**
- **National Testing Agency (NTA)**
- Central Government Ministries and their attached offices
- Other authorities notified by the Central Government.

Unfair means include **leakage of question papers or answer keys, tampering with answer sheets or computer systems, manipulation of examination processes, creation of fake websites or admit cards and organised attempts to facilitate cheating.**

Key Changes under the 2026 Amendment

- Punishment for a person using unfair means is increased from **3–5 years to 5–10 years imprisonment**, with the maximum fine increased from **₹ 10 lakh to ₹ 50 lakh**.
- For a **service provider** involved in malpractice, the maximum fine rises from **₹ 1 crore to ₹ 5 crore**.
- Debarment of such service providers from conducting public examinations is increased from **4 years to 8 years**.
- Directors and senior management of service providers may face **5–10 years imprisonment** and a fine up to **₹ 5 crore**.

- For **organised crime**, the minimum imprisonment is increased from **5 years to 7 years**, extendable up to 10 years, while the fine is substantially enhanced.

Fast-Track Investigation and Trial

The amendment introduces a stronger enforcement mechanism:

- Investigation must be completed within **two months**.
- Every State/UT must designate a **Court of Session as a Special Fast Track Court**.
- Trials should be conducted on a **day-to-day basis** and completed within **three months from filing of the charge sheet**.
- **Special Public Prosecutors** will be appointed for such courts.
- The Central Government may constitute a **Special Task Force (STF)** to investigate offences.
- Appeals from Special Fast Track Courts lie before the **High Court** and should, as far as possible, be disposed of within three months.

By the end of July 2026, the amendment had been incorporated into the law as the **Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Act, 2026**.

Conclusion

The 2026 amendment strengthens India's legal framework against paper leaks and organised examination fraud through **harsher penalties, Special Task Forces and time-bound fast-track courts**. Effective implementation can help protect merit, restore confidence among aspirants and enhance the credibility and transparency of India's public examination system.

4. OATH/AFFIRMATION OF NEWLY ELECTED RAJYA SABHA MEMBERS

Why in News?

On **20 July 2026**, Rajya Sabha Chairman **C. P. Radhakrishnan** administered the **oath/affirmation to nine newly elected/re-elected Members of the Rajya Sabha** in the Rajya Sabha Chamber.

The event brings into focus the constitutional provisions governing the **oath of Members of Parliament and the composition, election and tenure of the Rajya Sabha**.

Background & UPSC-Relevant Facts

Oath or Affirmation of Members of Parliament

- Under **Article 99 of the Constitution**, every Member of Parliament must make and subscribe an **oath or affirmation before taking his/her seat in Parliament**.
- The oath or affirmation must be made before the **President or a person appointed by the President for this purpose**.
- The prescribed form of oath is contained in the **Third Schedule of the Constitution**.
- A Member pledges to bear true faith and allegiance to the Constitution, uphold the **sovereignty and integrity of India**, and faithfully discharge the duties of office.
- Members may take the oath or affirmation in **Hindi, English or any language included in the Eighth Schedule** to the Constitution.
- A Member who has not taken the oath cannot perform normal parliamentary functions such as asking questions, moving resolutions or introducing Bills.
- Under **Article 104**, a person who sits or votes in Parliament before complying with Article 99 is liable to a penalty of **₹ 500 for each day**, recoverable as a debt due to the Union.

About Rajya Sabha

- The **Rajya Sabha or Council of States** is the Upper House of Parliament.
- **Article 80** deals with its composition.
- The Constitution provides for a maximum strength of **250 members**, of whom **12 may be nominated by the President** for special knowledge or practical experience in literature, science, art and social service.
- Representatives of States in the Rajya Sabha are elected by the **elected members of State Legislative Assemblies** through **proportional representation by means of the Single Transferable Vote (STV)**.
- States do **not have equal representation** in the Rajya Sabha; allocation of seats broadly reflects population and is specified in the **Fourth Schedule**.



OATH/AFFIRMATION OF NEWLY ELECTED RAJYA SABHA MEMBERS

A solemn commitment to the Constitution and the Nation



WHY IT MATTERS?

The oath or affirmation signifies the member's acceptance of constitutional obligations and commitment to uphold the sovereignty, unity and integrity of India while faithfully discharging duties.

KEY POINTS



Ensures that members uphold the Constitution and the laws of India.



Reinforces collective responsibility towards the people and the nation.



Promotes integrity, impartiality and dedication in public service.



A reminder that membership is a privilege accompanied by constitutional duties.

OATH/AFFIRMATION

Every member of the Rajya Sabha, before taking his seat, makes and subscribes an oath or makes an affirmation according to the form set out for the purpose in the **Third Schedule** of the Constitution.



ADMINISTERED BY

The oath or affirmation is administered by the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha.



CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISION

- **Article 99** – Oath or affirmation by members
- **Third Schedule** – Form of oath or affirmation



FORM OF OATH (Third Schedule)

In the name of God, I swear that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the Constitution of India as by law established, that I will uphold the sovereignty and integrity of India, and that I will faithfully discharge the duties upon which I am about to enter.



THE THIRD SCHEDULE – FORMS

Form of Oath



Taken by members who swear in the name of God.

Form of Affirmation



Taken by members who solemnly affirm.

DID YOU KNOW?



Members have the option to either take an oath (in the name of God) or make an affirmation (solemnly affirm), as per their preference.

INTERESTING FACTS



0 No member can take part in proceedings or vote before taking the oath/affirmation.



It is a mandatory requirement before a member takes his seat.



Upholds the dignity of the House and the spirit of the Constitution.



“The oath is not a mere formality; it is a pledge to the Constitution, the people and the future of India.”



Tenure and Qualifications

- Under **Article 83(1)**, the Rajya Sabha is a **permanent House** and is **not subject to dissolution**.
- Approximately **one-third of its members retire every second year**.
- The normal term of a Rajya Sabha Member is **six years**.
- Under **Article 84**, the minimum age for membership of the Rajya Sabha is **30 years**.

Chairman of Rajya Sabha

- Under **Article 64**, the **Vice-President of India is the ex-officio Chairman of the Rajya Sabha**.
- **Article 89** provides for the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha.
- The Chairman presides over the proceedings of the House and is responsible for maintaining order and regulating its business.

Conclusion

The oath or affirmation is not merely ceremonial but a **constitutional prerequisite for a Member to participate in parliamentary proceedings**. The July 2026 oath-taking also highlights the Rajya Sabha's character as a **permanent federal chamber**, ensuring continuity in Parliament while representing the States in India's parliamentary system

5. FOREIGN CONTRIBUTION (REGULATION) ACT (FCRA)

Why in News?

The **Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA)** came into focus in July 2026 following the **Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026** and the implementation of the revised **FCRA Rules, 2026**. The Amendment Bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha on **25 March 2026** and remained under consideration of Parliament, while the revised Rules notified on **22 June 2026** came into force.

Background & UPSC-Relevant Facts

About FCRA

- FCRA regulates the **acceptance and utilisation of foreign contribution and foreign hospitality** by individuals, associations and companies.
- Its objective is to ensure that foreign contributions are not used for activities detrimental to India's **sovereignty, security, democratic institutions, electoral processes or public order**.
- It is administered by the **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)**.
- The first FCRA was enacted in **1976**. It was replaced by the **Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010**, which came into force on **1 May 2011**.
- Foreign contribution may include an **article, currency or foreign security** received from a foreign source.

Registration and Receipt of Foreign Funds

- An organisation must obtain either **FCRA registration** or **prior permission from the Central Government** to receive foreign contribution.
- Regular FCRA registration is generally available to organisations that have been operational for at least **three years**.
- FCRA registration is valid for **five years** and requires renewal.

- All foreign contributions must initially be received in the designated **FCRA Account at the State Bank of India, New Delhi Main Branch**.
- Foreign contribution cannot be transferred by an FCRA-registered organisation to another person or organisation.
- Not more than **20% of foreign contribution** received in a financial year may ordinarily be used for administrative expenses.



FOREIGN CONTRIBUTION (REGULATION) ACT (FCRA)

Regulating acceptance and use of foreign contributions in India

Why in News?

The Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA), 2010 regulates the receipt, utilisation and transfer of foreign contribution or foreign hospitality by individuals and organisations in India.

OBJECTIVES

- ✓ Regulate foreign contributions.
- ✓ Ensure it is not prejudicial to national interest.
- ✓ Promote transparency and accountability.



WHO CAN RECEIVE?

- ✓ Registered Associations
- ✓ Companies (under Section 8 of Companies Act, 2013)
- ✓ Trusts / Societies
- ✓ Individuals (with prior permission of Central Government)

KEY PROVISIONS

- **Mandatory Registration** – Prior permission required to receive foreign contribution.
- **Bank Account** – Must be in a designated FCRA bank account.
- **Utilisation** – Only for the declared purpose.
- **Reporting** – Annual returns and accounts must be submitted.
- **Renewal** – Valid for 5 years (usually) and renewable.

PROHIBITED ACTIVITIES

- ✗ Activities detrimental to national interest.
- ✗ Use for political activities or personal gain.
- ✗ Transfer of FCRA to others without permission.
- ✗ Misutilisation or diversion of funds.

ADMINISTERED BY

Under the **Ministry of Home Affairs** (Department of Home)

- FCRA Division, New Delhi
- State Government/UT Administration
- FCRA Online Portal for registration, filing and reporting

SIGNIFICANCE



Ensures national security and sovereignty



Supports genuine NGOs and social causes



Promotes transparency in funding



Strengthens accountability and governance

QUICK FACTS

- ▶ Enacted In : 2010 (Amended in 2020)
- ▶ Applicable To : All of India
- ▶ Mode of Receipt : Banking Channel Only
- ▶ Maximum Validity : 5 Years

Who Cannot Receive Foreign Contribution?

Under **Section 3 of the FCRA**, foreign contribution cannot be accepted by specified persons and entities, including:

- Candidates for election
- Members of Parliament and State Legislatures
- Judges
- **Public servants**
- Political parties and their office-bearers
- Organisations of a political nature
- Certain persons associated with newspapers and news/current-affairs media.

Important Changes under the 2020 Amendment

The **FCRA Amendment Act, 2020**:

- Made identification through **Aadhaar/passport** mandatory for specified office-bearers.
- Required foreign contributions to be received through the designated SBI New Delhi account.
- Prohibited **sub-granting or transfer of foreign contributions**.
- Reduced the administrative-expense ceiling from **50% to 20%**.

2026 Changes

The **FCRA Amendment Rules, 2026** introduced stricter reporting and renewal requirements. Registration certificates must specify the purposes and States/UTs where activities will be undertaken. For renewal, organisations are generally required to demonstrate utilisation of at least **₹ 10 lakh of foreign contribution during the preceding two financial years**. Reporting requirements were also expanded to include project-wise, activity-wise and ultimate-donor details. The **2026 Amendment Bill** proposes a framework for management of foreign-funded assets where an FCRA registration is cancelled, surrendered or not renewed. Such assets may provisionally vest in a **Designated Authority**, with restoration possible if registration is subsequently restored.

Conclusion

FCRA seeks to balance the legitimate role of foreign funding in areas such as education, health, research and social welfare with concerns relating to **national security, transparency and accountability**. Effective regulation must ensure that foreign contributions remain transparent without unnecessarily restricting genuine civil-society activities.

6. ULPIN & DIGIPIN

Why in News?

In July 2026, the **Department of Land Resources (DoLR), Ministry of Rural Development**, held a meeting with the **Department of Posts** and the **National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA)** to explore integration of the **Unique Land Parcel Identification Number (ULPIN)** with **DIGIPIN**, India's digital addressing framework.

The proposed integration aims to combine a **unique identity for every land parcel** with a **precise geo-referenced digital address**, improving land governance and public-service delivery. Pilot projects and an **open, standards-**

based API architecture are proposed for interoperability across government platforms.

Background & UPSC-Relevant Facts

Unique Land Parcel Identification Number (ULPIN)

- **ULPIN**, also known as **Bhu-Aadhaar**, is a unique identification number assigned to individual land parcels.
- It is implemented by the **Department of Land Resources, Ministry of Rural Development** under the **Digital India Land Records Modernization Programme (DILRMP)**.
- ULPIN is a **14-digit alphanumeric identification number** generated using the latitude and longitude coordinates of a geo-referenced land parcel.
- It is based on detailed surveys and **geo-referenced cadastral maps**.
- ULPIN conforms to standards of the **Electronic Commerce Code Management Association (ECCMA)** and the **Open Geospatial Consortium (OGC)**.
- It seeks to create a **single, authoritative identity for every land parcel**, reducing duplication and ambiguity in land records.

About DIGIPIN

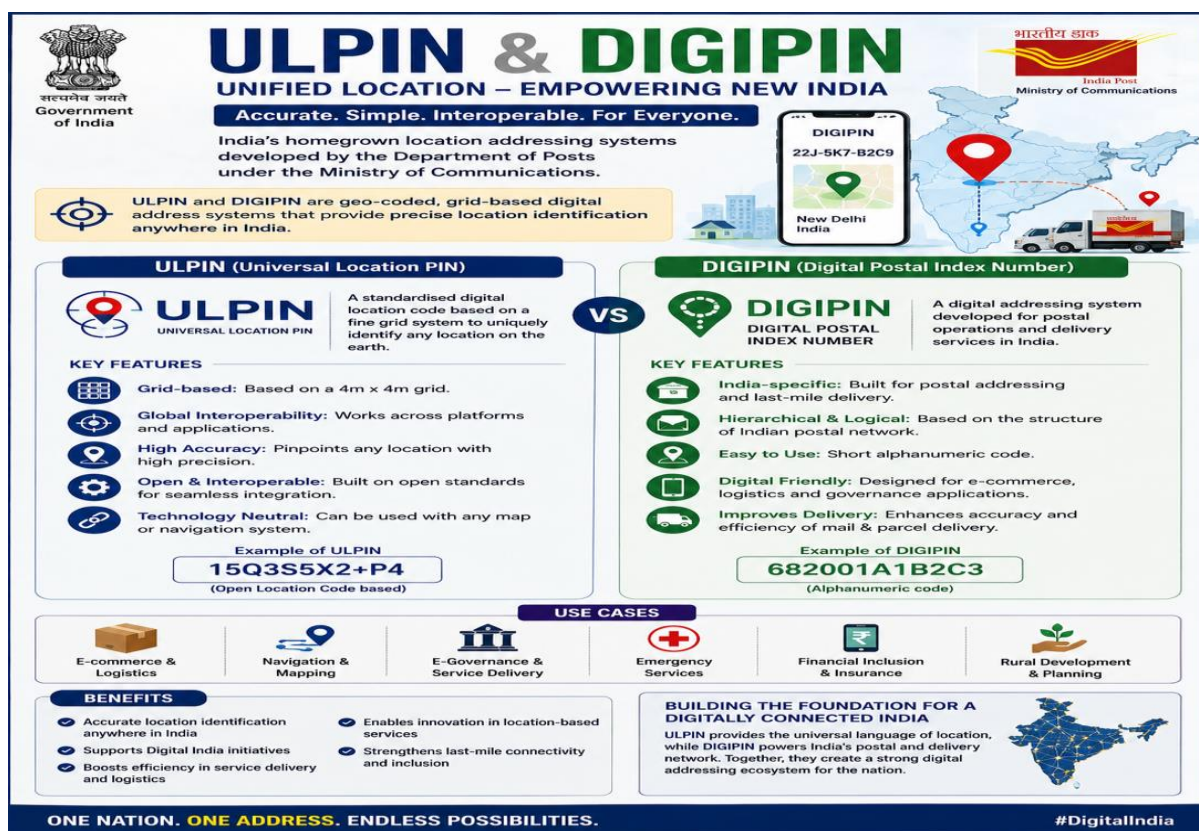
DIGIPIN — Digital Postal Index Number is a national geo-coded digital addressing system developed by the **Department of Posts, Ministry of Communications**, in collaboration with **IIT Hyderabad and the National Remote Sensing Centre (NRSC), ISRO**.

- It is an **open-source national-level addressing grid**.
- India is divided into approximately **4 metre × 4 metre grids**.
- Each grid is assigned a unique **10-character alphanumeric DIGIPIN** based on its latitude and longitude.
- DIGIPIN represents a **location**, not a person's identity, and does not itself store personal information.
- It can function **both online and offline** and complement the conventional postal-address system.

DIGIPIN can improve precision in postal delivery, emergency response, logistics, e-commerce, banking and KYC-related address verification.

ULPIN vs DIGIPIN

- **ULPIN identifies a land parcel**, whereas **DIGIPIN identifies a precise geographical location**.
- ULPIN is associated with **land administration and land records**; DIGIPIN is part of India's **digital-address infrastructure**.
- ULPIN is a **14-digit alphanumeric code**, while DIGIPIN is a **10-character alphanumeric code**.
- ULPIN comes under the **Ministry of Rural Development**, while DIGIPIN is developed by the **Department of Posts under the Ministry of Communications**.



ULPIN & DIGIPIN
UNIFIED LOCATION – EMPOWERING NEW INDIA
Accurate. Simple. Interoperable. For Everyone.

India's homegrown location addressing systems developed by the Department of Posts under the Ministry of Communications.

ULPIN and DIGIPIN are geo-coded, grid-based digital address systems that provide precise location identification anywhere in India.

ULPIN (Universal Location PIN)

ULPIN
UNIVERSAL LOCATION PIN

A standardised digital location code based on a fine grid system to uniquely identify any location on the earth.

KEY FEATURES

- Grid-based:** Based on a 4m x 4m grid.
- Global Interoperability:** Works across platforms and applications.
- High Accuracy:** Pinpoints any location with high precision.
- Open & Interoperable:** Built on open standards for seamless integration.
- Technology Neutral:** Can be used with any map or navigation system.

Example of ULPIN
15Q3S5X2+P4
(Open Location Code based)

DIGIPIN (Digital Postal Index Number)

DIGIPIN
DIGITAL POSTAL INDEX NUMBER

A digital addressing system developed for postal operations and delivery services in India.

KEY FEATURES

- India-specific:** Built for postal addressing and last-mile delivery.
- Hierarchical & Logical:** Based on the structure of Indian postal network.
- Easy to Use:** Short alphanumeric code.
- Digital Friendly:** Designed for e-commerce, logistics and governance applications.
- Improves Delivery:** Enhances accuracy and efficiency of mail & parcel delivery.

Example of DIGIPIN
682001A1B2C3
(Alphanumeric code)

USE CASES

E-commerce & Logistics

Navigation & Mapping

E-Governance & Service Delivery

Emergency Services

Financial Inclusion & Insurance

Rural Development & Planning

BENEFITS

- ✓ Accurate location identification anywhere in India
- ✓ Supports Digital India initiatives
- ✓ Boosts efficiency in service delivery and logistics
- ✓ Enables innovation in location-based services
- ✓ Strengthens last-mile connectivity and inclusion

BUILDING THE FOUNDATION FOR A DIGITALLY CONNECTED INDIA
ULPIN provides the universal language of location, while DIGIPIN powers India's postal and delivery network. Together, they create a strong digital addressing ecosystem for the nation.

ONE NATION. ONE ADDRESS. ENDLESS POSSIBILITIES. #DigitalIndia

Conclusion

Integration of ULPIN and DIGIPIN can create an interoperable digital ecosystem linking **land parcels with precise geographical addresses**. It can strengthen property administration, reduce land disputes, improve service delivery and support India's broader **Digital Public Infrastructure and Digital India** objectives.

ECONOMY

1. MECON – MINIRATNA CATEGORY-I STATUS

Why in News?

In July 2026, the **Ministry of Steel granted Miniratna Category-I status to MECON Limited**, a Schedule 'A' Central Public Sector Enterprise (CPSE) under the administrative control of the Ministry of Steel.

MECON qualified for the status after reporting profits for three consecutive financial years and achieving a **positive net worth of ₹ 535.42 crore as on 31 March 2026**. Its Profit Before Tax (PBT) stood at ₹ 77.62 crore in 2023-24, ₹ 32.08 crore in 2024-25 and ₹ 104.53 crore in 2025-26.

Background & UPSC-Relevant Facts

About MECON Limited

- **MECON Limited** is a Central Public Sector Enterprise under the **Ministry of Steel**.
- It was established in **1959** and is headquartered at **Ranchi, Jharkhand**.
- It is a **Schedule 'A' CPSE** engaged primarily in engineering, consultancy, project management and contracting services.
- Though closely associated with India's iron and steel sector, MECON has diversified into **mining, infrastructure, power, oil and gas and other core sectors**.
- Before the July 2026 upgradation, MECON was listed as a **Miniratna Category-II CPSE**.

About Miniratna Status

The **Miniratna scheme was introduced in 1997** to provide greater financial and operational autonomy to consistently performing CPSEs.

Miniratnas are divided into:

- **Miniratna Category-I**
- **Miniratna Category-II**

The classification and related guidelines are administered by the **Department of Public Enterprises (DPE)**, which functions under the **Ministry of Finance**.

Eligibility for Miniratna Category-I

A CPSE is eligible for Miniratna Category-I status when it:

- Has made **profits continuously during the preceding three years**.

- Has earned a **pre-tax profit of at least ₹ 30 crore in at least one of those three years.**
- Has a **positive net worth.**

MECON fulfilled these financial requirements and was accordingly upgraded to Category-I status.



MECON

GRANTED MINIRATNA CATEGORY-I STATUS

A MAJOR MILESTONE IN INDIA'S ENGINEERING & CONSULTANCY SECTOR



ABOUT MECON

- Full Name** : Metallurgical & Engineering Consultants (India) Limited
- Established** : 1973
- A Mini Public Sector Enterprise**
(Under Ministry of Steel, Govt. of India)
- Leading engineering consultancy and turnkey project management company in India
- Global presence with projects in over 50 countries

WHAT IS MINIRATNA CATEGORY-I?

- A status granted by the Government of India to CPSEs, based on their performance and financial parameters.
- Greater operational and financial autonomy.
- Higher investment ceiling and delegated powers.
- Enables faster decision-making and global competitiveness.



KEY BUSINESS AREAS

Steel Plants

Mines & Minerals

Oil, Gas & Petrochemicals

Power Plants

Infrastructure

Environment Engineering

Water Resources

Industrial Facilities

BENEFITS OF MINIRATNA CATEGORY-I STATUS

- ✓ Enhanced autonomy in operations and management
- ✓ Higher investment limit: Up to ₹500 crore (without prior Govt. approval)
- ✓ Ability to enter into joint ventures and collaborations more independently
- ✓ Strengthens global competitiveness and project execution capability
- ✓ Motivates better performance and innovation
- ✓ Improves value creation and shareholder wealth



SIGNIFICANCE

- Strengthens India's engineering consultancy ecosystem
- Supports Atmanirbhar Bharat and Make in India initiatives
- Enables MECON to take up larger and more complex projects globally
- Contributes to infrastructure development, employment generation and economic growth

WAY FORWARD

MECON aims to leverage this status to expand its global footprint, adopt emerging technologies and deliver sustainable engineering solutions.

MECON'S MINIRATNA CATEGORY-I STATUS MARKS A NEW CHAPTER OF GROWTH, AUTONOMY AND EXCELLENCE IN ENGINEERING CONSULTANCY.





Powers of Miniratna Category-I CPSEs

Miniratna status provides greater autonomy to the Board of the enterprise.

A **Miniratna Category-I CPSE** can incur capital expenditure on new projects, modernisation and purchase of equipment without prior government approval up to ₹ 500 crore or its net worth, whichever is lower.

This enhanced autonomy allows MECON to undertake:

- New investments
- Modernisation projects
- Technological upgradation
- Business expansion
- Faster commercial decision-making.

Important UPSC Distinction

Schedule classification and Ratna status are different.

MECON is both a **Schedule 'A' CPSE** and a **Miniratna Category-I CPSE**.

Schedule A/B/C/D classification relates to the categorisation of CPSEs, whereas

Maharatna, Navratna and Miniratna statuses provide different levels of financial and operational autonomy. The DPE's official CPSE list separately identifies Schedule categories and Ratna categories.

Conclusion

The grant of **Miniratna Category-I status to MECON** recognises its sustained financial performance and provides greater managerial and financial autonomy. The enhanced powers can enable the company to undertake investments and technological modernisation more quickly, strengthening its contribution to India's **steel, mining and infrastructure sectors**.

2.INSURANCE SURETY BONDS

Why in News?

In July 2026, the **Ministry of Coal** allowed **Insurance Surety Bonds (ISBs)** to be used in place of **Performance Bank Guarantees (PBGs)** for coal blocks allocated under the **Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957**. The change was introduced through the **Coal Blocks Allocation (Amendment) Rules, 2026**.

Existing coal-block allocatees can also replace Performance Bank Guarantees already furnished with Insurance Surety Bonds, subject to prescribed conditions. The move aims to reduce the financial burden on coal companies and release capital for mine development and operations.

Background & UPSC-Relevant Facts

About Insurance Surety Bonds

An **Insurance Surety Bond** is a financial guarantee issued by an insurance company assuring that a contractor or business will fulfil its contractual obligations.

A surety bond generally involves **three parties**:

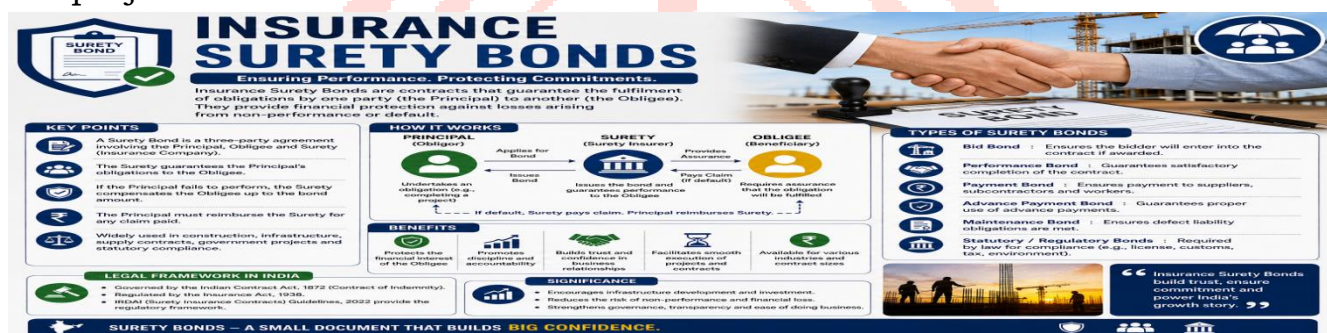
- **Principal** – Contractor or entity required to fulfil the contractual obligation.
- **Obligee/Beneficiary** – Project owner or authority to whom the obligation is owed.

- **Surety** – Insurance company that guarantees the principal's performance.

If the principal fails to fulfil the contractual obligation, the beneficiary can make a claim on the surety bond.

Regulatory Framework

- Insurance Surety Bonds are regulated by the **Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI)**.
- IRDAI issued the **Surety Insurance Contracts Guidelines** in 2022 and subsequently modified the regulatory framework to facilitate development of the surety insurance market.
- The **Union Budget 2022-23** announced that surety bonds would be accepted as a substitute for bank guarantees in government procurement to reduce indirect costs for suppliers and contractors.
- One of India's first Surety Bond Insurance products for infrastructure projects was launched in **December 2022**.



Types of Surety Bonds

Important forms include:

- **Bid Bond** – Ensures that a successful bidder enters into the contract.
- **Performance Bond** – Guarantees completion of contractual obligations.
- **Advance Payment Bond** – Protects advance payments made to a contractor.
- **Retention Bond** – Provides security in place of money retained from payments.

Surety insurance can also be used for purposes such as customs and court-related guarantees, subject to applicable insurance products and regulations.

Surety Bond vs Bank Guarantee

- In a **Bank Guarantee**, a **bank** provides the guarantee; in a Surety Bond, an **insurance company** acts as the surety.

- Bank guarantees often require contractors to provide significant collateral or utilise their banking credit limits.
- Surety Bonds generally reduce the need to block large amounts of working capital as collateral.
- Therefore, they can improve contractors' **liquidity and borrowing capacity**, particularly in infrastructure projects.

Significance of the 2026 Coal-Sector Reform

The amended framework allows coal-block allocatees to choose between a **Performance Bank Guarantee and an Insurance Surety Bond** for performance-security requirements. Initially, the facility applies to coal blocks allocated under the **MMDR Act, 1957**. The Government also intends to extend it to blocks allocated under the **Coal Mines (Special Provisions) Act, 2015**.

The reform can improve **ease of doing business**, reduce dependence on bank credit, release working capital and encourage greater private investment in commercial coal mining.

Conclusion

Insurance Surety Bonds provide an alternative to conventional bank guarantees by transferring contractual performance risk to insurers. Their wider acceptance in government procurement and coal mining can improve liquidity, strengthen competition and accelerate infrastructure and mining projects while protecting the government's financial interests.

3. MOBILE PHONE MANUFACTURING SCHEME (MPMS)

Why in News?

In July 2026, the **Union Cabinet approved the Mobile Phone Manufacturing Scheme (MPMS)** with a total budgetary outlay of **₹ 62,500 crore**. The scheme aims to further expand mobile-phone production in India, increase domestic value addition, strengthen supply-chain resilience and improve India's competitiveness in global electronics manufacturing.

MPMS will operate for **five years from FY 2026-27 to FY 2030-31** under the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)**.

Background & UPSC-Relevant Facts

About the Scheme

- MPMS seeks to promote **large-scale manufacturing of mobile phones in India** and deepen the domestic electronics manufacturing ecosystem.
- It also aims to develop **Indian mobile-phone brands**, strengthen indigenous design and R&D capabilities and promote creation of Indian intellectual property and patents.
- The scheme follows the **Production Linked Incentive Scheme for Large Scale Electronics Manufacturing (PLI-LSEM)**, whose tenure ended on **31 March 2026**.

Incentive Structure

The scheme provides incentives linked to eligible sales of mobile phones manufactured in India.

- Basic incentive rates range between **2.25% and 5% of eligible sales**.
- An additional incentive of up to **1.5%** is available for increased **domestic sourcing of key components and sub-assemblies**.
- Indian brands can receive an additional **3% incentive on eligible sales** for undertaking **product design and Research & Development (R&D)**.



MOBILE PHONE MANUFACTURING SCHEME (MPMS)

**MAKING INDIA A GLOBAL
MOBILE MANUFACTURING HUB**

A production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme to promote
domestic manufacturing of mobile phones in India.




OBJECTIVES	SCHEME HIGHLIGHTS	ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA	IMPACT / BENEFITS
- Promote domestic manufacturing of mobile phones. - Make India a global hub for mobile phone production. - Attract large-scale investments and generate employment. - Develop a robust electronics manufacturing ecosystem. - Enhance exports and reduce import dependence.	- Production Linked Incentive (PLI) based scheme. Incentive of up to 4% on incremental sales (over base year) for a period of 5 years. - Applicable for manufacturing of specified mobile phones in India. - Target segments: All categories of mobile phones (including 5G). - Outlay: ₹12,195 crore. - Tenure: 5 years from the date of approval.	- Companies must be engaged in the manufacturing of specified mobile phones in India. - Minimum committed investment of ₹100 crore. - Minimum threshold of incremental sales of ₹1,500 crore (in the 1st year) with progressively higher targets. - Incentives linked to incremental sales of manufactured goods in India.	- Strengthens India's position in global electronics value chain. - Creates large-scale direct and indirect employment opportunities. - Boosts exports and foreign exchange earnings. - Promotes growth of component ecosystem and ancillary industries. - Supports innovation and adoption of advanced technologies like 5G.

INDIA'S ACHIEVEMENTS IN MOBILE MANUFACTURING

- India is now the 2nd largest mobile phone manufacturer in the world.
- Mobile phone manufacturing values crossed ₹4 lakh crore in recent years.
- India is now a major exporter of mobile phones to global markets.
- Thousands of jobs created across the country.

KEY PLAYERS & PARTNERS

And many more...

MPMS IS A BIG STEP TOWARDS A SELF-RELIANT INDIA AND A GLOBAL LEADER IN ELECTRONICS MANUFACTURING.

#AtmanirbharBharat

Thus, MPMS goes beyond merely assembling mobile phones by encouraging localization of components, domestic design capabilities and development of Indian brands.

Expected Outcomes

During the five-year scheme period:

- Cumulative mobile-phone production is expected to reach about **₹ 39 lakh crore**.
- The scheme is expected to generate around **60,000 direct jobs**.
- It is expected to significantly increase India's mobile-phone exports and strengthen India's participation in **Global Value Chains (GVCs)**.

Growth of Mobile Manufacturing in India

India's electronics-manufacturing sector has expanded significantly under initiatives such as **Make in India** and the earlier PLI scheme.

- Electronics manufacturing has grown about **seven times since FY 2014-15**.
- Electronics exports have increased about **eleven times** over the same period.
- India has emerged as the **world's second-largest mobile-phone manufacturer by volume**.
- Around **99.2% of mobile phones used in India are now manufactured domestically**.
- In **2025, smartphones became India's single-largest exported product category**, surpassing traditional export items such as diesel fuel and cut diamonds.

Significance

MPMS is important for reducing India's dependence on imported electronic components, increasing domestic value addition and improving supply-chain security.

The emphasis on **Indian brands, design, R&D and domestic component sourcing** can help India move from an assembly-oriented manufacturing base towards higher-value activities such as product development, intellectual property creation and advanced electronics manufacturing.

Conclusion

The Mobile Phone Manufacturing Scheme represents the next phase of India's electronics-manufacturing strategy after the PLI-LSEM programme. By combining production incentives with additional support for **domestic sourcing, R&D and**

Indian brands, MPMS can strengthen India's position as a global mobile-manufacturing and export hub while advancing the objectives of **Make in India** and **Atmanirbhar Bharat**.

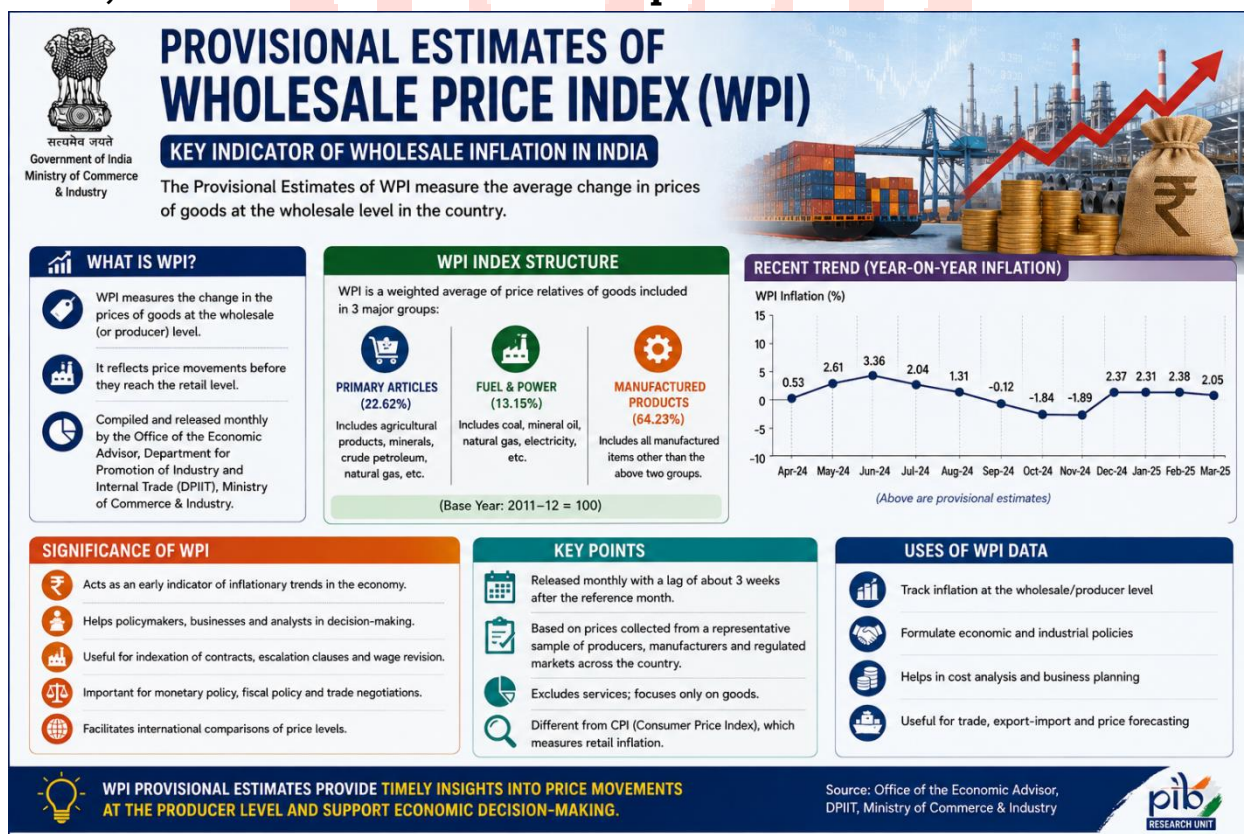
4. PROVISIONAL ESTIMATES OF WHOLESALE PRICE INDEX (WPI)

1. Why in News?

The **Office of the Economic Adviser, Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)** released the **Provisional Wholesale Price Index (WPI) estimates for June 2026** on **14 July 2026**.

India's **WPI inflation stood at 9.87% in June 2026** on a year-on-year basis, compared with **9.68% in May 2026**. The All-Commodities WPI increased to **110.2** in June from 109.9 in May.

Major drivers of wholesale inflation included **mineral oils, food articles, basic metals, and chemicals and chemical products**.



Background

About Wholesale Price Index

- The **Wholesale Price Index (WPI)** measures changes in the prices of a representative basket of **goods** at the wholesale/producer level.
- It is compiled by the **Office of the Economic Adviser, DPIIT**, under the **Ministry of Commerce and Industry**.
- WPI is released **monthly**, normally on the **14th of the following month**.
- Initial WPI figures are **provisional** and are finalised after about **10 weeks**.
- WPI covers **goods only**; services are not included in the WPI basket.

New WPI Series

A new WPI series with **Base Year 2022-23 = 100** became operational in **June 2026**, beginning with the release of May 2026 data. It replaced the earlier **2011-12 base-year series**.

Important features of the new series include:

- Number of items increased from **697 to 957**.
- **Solar, wind and nuclear electricity** have been included in the electricity group.
- **Crude petroleum and natural gas** have been shifted from Primary Articles to the **Fuel and Power** group.
- **Gross Value of Output (GVO)** is used for determining weights, replacing the earlier Net Traded Value methodology.

Major Groups and Weights

The WPI basket consists of three major groups:

- **Primary Articles – 22.76%**
- **Fuel and Power – 14.11%**
- **Manufactured Products – 63.13%**

Thus, **Manufactured Products carry the highest weight** in the WPI basket.

June 2026 Inflation

Year-on-year inflation in June 2026 was:

- **Primary Articles – 7.0%**
- **Fuel and Power – 27.41%**
- **Manufactured Products – 7.48%**
- **WPI Food Index – 6.14%**

The WPI Food Index combines **Food Articles under Primary Articles and Manufactured Food Products** and has a weight of about **25%**.

WPI and CPI – Important Distinction

- **WPI** measures price movements mainly at the wholesale/producer level and covers **goods only**.
- **Consumer Price Index (CPI)** measures changes in prices paid by consumers at the **retail level** and includes both goods and services.
- WPI is compiled by the **Office of the Economic Adviser, DPIIT**, whereas the national CPI is compiled by the **National Statistical Office (NSO), Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation**.

Shift Towards Producer Price Index

Along with the new WPI series, the Government introduced **Output PPI, Input PPI and Service PPIs** with the base year 2022-23.

WPI will continue to be published for **five years alongside PPI** to facilitate a gradual transition towards the **Producer Price Index**, which is more consistent with international best practices.

Producer Price Index (PPI) – Important Points

- **PPI measures changes in prices received by domestic producers** for the goods and services they produce.
- It captures price movements at the **producer/production stage**, whereas CPI measures prices paid by final consumers.
- PPI can cover **both goods and services**, unlike India's WPI, which primarily covers goods.
- It is useful as an **early indicator of inflationary pressures** arising in the production and supply chain.
- A comprehensive PPI can improve **inflation analysis, GDP deflation and policymaking** and bring India's price statistics closer to international practices.

Conclusion

The June 2026 WPI data indicate significant wholesale price pressures, particularly from energy and food-related commodities. The introduction of the **2022-23 base-year series** makes the index more representative of India's

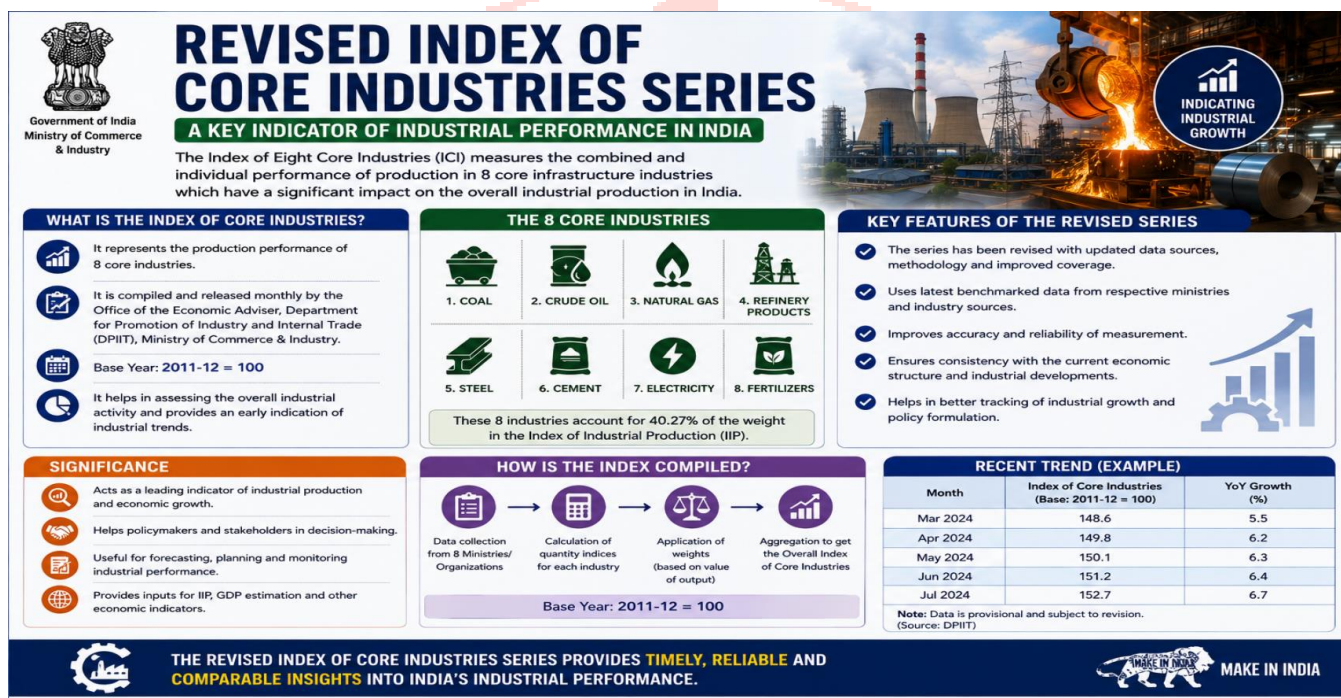
changing production structure, while the gradual transition towards PPI seeks to align India's price-statistics framework with global standards.

5. REVISED INDEX OF CORE INDUSTRIES (ICI) SERIES

1. Why in News?

In July 2026, the **Office of the Economic Adviser (OEA), Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)** released the revised **Index of Core Industries (ICI)** with a new **Base Year of 2022-23**, replacing the earlier **2011-12 series**. The new series was released on **20 July 2026**, along with provisional estimates for June 2026.

A major change is the inclusion of **Iron Ore** as a new core industry. Consequently, the number of core industries has increased from **eight to nine**.



Background & UPSC-Relevant Facts

About Index of Core Industries

- The **Index of Core Industries (ICI)** measures the collective and individual production performance of industries considered fundamental to India's industrial and infrastructure sectors.
- It is compiled every month by the **Office of the Economic Adviser, DPIIT**, under the **Ministry of Commerce and Industry**.
- The provisional ICI for a reference month is released on the **20th of the following month**, or the next working day if the 20th is a holiday.

Nine Core Industries under the Revised Series

The revised ICI consists of:

- Coal
- Crude Oil
- Natural Gas
- Refinery Products
- Fertilizers
- Steel
- Cement
- Electricity
- **Iron Ore – newly added**

Iron Ore was included because of its extensive use in industrial production and its importance for industrial development.

Revised Weights

Under the **2022–23 series**, the respective weights are:

- Electricity – **30.932%**
- Refinery Products – **22.572%**
- Steel – **17.584%**
- Crude Oil – **7.430%**
- Coal – **5.596%**
- Iron Ore – **4.905%**
- Cement – **4.410%**
- Natural Gas – **3.841%**
- Fertilizers – **2.731%**

Thus, **Electricity carries the highest weight**, while **Fertilizers have the lowest weight** in the revised ICI basket.

Link with Index of Industrial Production

The weights of the core industries are derived from the corresponding weights in the **Index of Industrial Production (IIP) 2022–23 series** and then proportionately redistributed to total 100 for the ICI.

The nine core industries together account for approximately **32.88% of the weight of the revised IIP series**. Under the previous 2011–12 series, the eight core industries accounted for **40.27% of IIP**.

Other Important Changes

- For **Steel**, gross production data are now used instead of net production data to maintain consistency with the revised IIP methodology.
- Under **Coal**, only Raw Coal has been retained. Washed Coal and Coal Middling have been excluded to prevent double counting.
- The overall **linking factor between the old and new ICI series is 1.47**, allowing comparison between the two series.

June 2026 Performance

Under the revised series, the ICI recorded **5.0% year-on-year growth in June 2026**. Iron Ore recorded the highest growth at **43.9%**, followed by Electricity and Cement at **9.8% each**.

Conclusion

The revised ICI series with **Base Year 2022–23** better reflects India's contemporary industrial structure. The inclusion of Iron Ore, revision of sectoral weights and methodological improvements enhance the usefulness of ICI as an early indicator of industrial activity and infrastructure performance.

6. INVESTMENT FRIENDLINESS INDEX (IFI)

Why in News?

In July 2026, **NITI Aayog released the report on the Investment Friendliness Index (IFI)** to assess how effectively States and Union Territories create and sustain an environment conducive to investment. The Index was released on **17 July 2026**.

The initiative follows the **Union Budget 2025–26 announcement** to develop an Investment Friendliness Index for States in order to promote reforms and strengthen **competitive and cooperative federalism**.

Background & UPSC-Relevant Facts

About the Investment Friendliness Index

- The **Investment Friendliness Index is prepared by NITI Aayog**.
- It evaluates the investment ecosystem across **all 28 States and 8 Union Territories**.
- Its objective is not merely to rank States, but to identify strengths, reform gaps and best practices that can improve the investment climate.

- The Index focuses on factors that directly influence investment decisions, such as infrastructure, regulation, government policy and institutional capacity.

Eight Pillars of the Index

The IFI assesses States and UTs across **eight major pillars**:

- Infrastructure
- Business Climate
- Resources
- Government Policy
- Regulatory Ease
- Institutional Environment
- Financial Health
- Environmental Resilience

The framework contains **84 indicators** and uses both **secondary data and perception-based information collected through investor surveys**.

Performance Categories

States and Union Territories are classified into four categories based on their overall scores:

- **Top Performers** – Score above 50
- **Frontrunners** – Score between 45 and 50
- **Emerging Performers** – Score from 40 to below 45
- **Aspiring States** – Score below 40.

Top Performers

The overall **Top Performers** in the Investment Friendliness Index were:

- Gujarat
- Maharashtra
- Tamil Nadu
- Goa
- Odisha.

Among **Large States**, Gujarat ranked first, followed by Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu.

Among **Hilly and North-Eastern States**, Uttarakhand ranked first, followed by Assam and Himachal Pradesh.

Among **City States and Union Territories**, Goa ranked first, followed by Delhi and Chandigarh.



INVESTMENT FRIENDLINESS INDEX

MEASURING STATES ON HOW EASY IT IS TO INVEST AND DO BUSINESS

The Investment Friendliness Index (IFI) evaluates and ranks States/UTs on the basis of their performance in creating a conducive environment for investors.



WHAT IS THE INVESTMENT FRIENDLINESS INDEX?

- A reform-based index that assesses States/UTs on the ease of doing business and investor-friendly environment.
- Measures the effectiveness of policies and initiatives that facilitate investments.
- Aims to promote healthy competition among States/UTs to attract investments.
- Released by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce & Industry.

CORE PARAMETERS (6 PILLARS)

1. Institutional Framework Quality of institutions and governance mechanisms to support investors. 2. Business Ecosystem Policies and support mechanisms for business growth. 3. Regulatory Framework Efficiency, transparency and ease of regulatory processes.	4. Infrastructure Availability and quality of infrastructure facilities. 5. Human Capital Availability of skilled manpower and employability. 6. Sustainability Environment sustainability and green initiatives.
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Higher score indicates a more investor-friendly State/UT.

USES OF THE INDEX

- Identifies strengths and improvement areas for States/UTs.
- Encourages States/UTs to implement investor-friendly reforms.
- Assists investors in making informed decisions.
- Supports policy makers in benchmarking and tracking reform progress.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- Launched in 2022.
- Covers all States and Union Territories.
- Based on data-driven assessment and extensive stakeholder feedback.
- Includes both quantitative data and qualitative perceptions of investors.
- Aligned with the vision of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' and 'Make in India'.

SIGNIFICANCE

- Drives economic growth and investment inflows.
- Facilitates job creation and sustainable development.
- Enhances competitiveness of States/UTs.
- Promotes ease of doing business across the country.
- Supports balanced regional development.

TOP PERFORMERS (EXAMPLE: IFI 2.0 - 2023)

RANK	STATE / UT	SCORE (OUT OF 1000)
1	Gujarat	725.64
2	Maharashtra	671.48
3	Tamil Nadu	641.51
4	Karnataka	633.27
5	Telangana	627.11

Note: Rankings are indicative. For the latest rankings, refer to DPIIT report.



THE INVESTMENT FRIENDLINESS INDEX IS A STEP TOWARDS BUILDING A COMPETITIVE, TRANSPARENT AND INVESTOR-READY INDIA.

 BETTER POLICIES
  EASE OF DOING BUSINESS
  MORE INVESTMENTS
  STRONGER ECONOMY

Peer-Group Approach

To account for differences in geography, economic scale and administrative structure, States and UTs are assessed under three peer groups:

- Large States
- Hilly and North-Eastern States
- Union Territories and City States.

This allows more meaningful comparison among jurisdictions with similar characteristics.

Significance

The Index promotes **competitive federalism** by encouraging States to improve their investment policies and compete for domestic and foreign investment. At the same time, it promotes **cooperative federalism** by enabling States to learn from each other's best practices.

It also highlights the importance of factors such as:

- Availability of industrial land
- Physical and digital infrastructure
- Regulatory efficiency
- Policy predictability
- Institutional capacity
- Environmental sustainability.

The Index is intended to function as a **policy-reform tool**, helping States identify areas requiring improvement rather than serving merely as a ranking exercise.

Conclusion

The Investment Friendliness Index strengthens India's efforts to create a more transparent, predictable and competitive investment environment. By benchmarking State-level performance and encouraging reforms, it can help attract greater private investment, generate employment and support the broader goal of **Viksit Bharat @2047**.

7.CPI BASE YEAR REVISION AND INDEX OF SERVICES PRODUCTION

Why in News?

In July 2026, the **Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI)** highlighted the revision of the **Consumer Price Index (CPI) base year from 2012 to 2024**. The new CPI series had been introduced in February 2026 to better reflect present-day household consumption patterns. Separately, on **14 July 2026**, MoSPI released India's **first sub-sectoral Trial Index of Services Production (ISP)** for 19 service sub-sectors, with **2024–25 as the base year**.

Background & UPSC-Relevant Facts

CPI Base Year Revision

- The **Consumer Price Index (CPI)** measures changes over time in the prices of goods and services consumed by households.
- CPI is compiled by the **National Statistical Office (NSO) under MoSPI**.
- The base year has been revised from **2012 = 100 to 2024 = 100**.
- The new series was first released on **12 February 2026**.
- The revised basket and weights are based on the **Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (HCES) 2023–24**.

The revised CPI adopts the **Classification of Individual Consumption According to Purpose (COICOP) 2018** and replaces the earlier six broad groups with **12**

Consumption divisions.

Major changes include:

- Number of weighted items increased from **299 to 358**.
- Goods increased from **259 to 308 items**.
- Services increased from **40 to 50 items**.
- **Rural housing** has been included.
- New-age consumption items such as **streaming services, value-added dairy products, pen drives, external hard disks, babysitter services and exercise equipment** have been added.
- Obsolete items such as **VCR/VCD/DVD players, tape recorders and audio/video cassettes** have been removed.

Price collection has been expanded to **1,465 rural markets and 1,395 urban markets across 434 towns**. Additionally, **12 online markets** have been incorporated to capture prices on e-commerce platforms.

For **June 2026**, CPI-based retail inflation was **4.38%**, while Consumer Food Price Index inflation was **5.32%**.



सत्यमेव जयते
Government of India
Ministry of Statistics &
Programme Implementation

CPI BASE YEAR REVISION AND INDEX OF SERVICES PRODUCTION

BETTER DATA. ACCURATE MEASUREMENT. STRONGER ECONOMY.

Strengthening India's statistical framework to measure prices and services better and reflect the changing economy.



1. CPI BASE YEAR REVISION



The Consumer Price Index (CPI) measures retail inflation faced by households.

BASE YEAR REVISED FROM 2012 = 100 TO 2022 = 100

WHY BASE YEAR REVISION?

- To capture changes in consumption patterns and lifestyle.
- To include new goods and services that are now widely consumed.
- To update data sources, methodology and classification standards.
- To provide a more accurate measure of inflation in the current economic scenario.

KEY CHANGES IN CPI (Base 2022 = 100)

- Updated basket of goods and services – more items and higher representation of current consumption.
- New classification: COICOP 2018 (international standard).
- More use of technology: e-prices, scanners, online price collection.
- Better coverage: rural, urban and different strata of population.
- Improved quality through advanced data validation and processing.

CHANGES IN CPI BASKET (EXAMPLES)

BASE 2012 = 100



Limited representation of mobile phones



DTH services excluded



Lower weight on transport services



Health services had limited coverage



Rent data limited to selected places

BASE 2022 = 100



Smartphones and data plans included



DTH, broadband and OTT services included



Higher weight on transport and communication



Broader coverage of health, education and insurance



Improved data collection across more locations

i Weights have been updated to reflect the current importance of different items in household spending.

SIGNIFICANCE

- CPI base year revision provides better inflation measurement, essential for policy making, wage revision, DA calculation, monetary policy and planning.
- ISP provides timely indicators of growth in services sector, which contributes more than 50% to India's GDP.
- Helps government, businesses and investors in decision-making.
- Improves international comparability of India's statistics.



2. INDEX OF SERVICES PRODUCTION (ISP)



The Index of Services Production (ISP) measures the short-term changes in the volume of services produced by different service industries in the economy.

COVERS 3 BROAD SECTORS AND THEIR SUB-SECTORS



TRADE, HOTELS, TRANSPORT, COMMUNICATION AND SERVICES RELATED TO BROADCASTING
(10 Sub-sectors)



FINANCING, INSURANCE, REAL ESTATE AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICES
(7 Sub-sectors)



PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION, DEFENCE AND OTHER SERVICES
(5 Sub-sectors)

RECENT DATA (EXAMPLES)

CPI (All India Combined)			Index of Services Production (ISP)		
Month	Base 2012 = 100 (Inflation %)	Base 2022 = 100 (Inflation %)	Month	Index Value (Base 2022-23 = 100)	YoY Growth (%)
Apr 2024	4.83	4.83	Apr 2024	154.3	7.6
May 2024	4.75	4.75	May 2024	155.2	7.5
Jun 2024	5.08	5.08	Jun 2024	156.8	7.8

Note: Data is provisional | Source: NSO, MOSPI



UPDATED DATA. RELIABLE INDICATORS.
STRONGER DECISIONS FOR A VIKSIT BHARAT.



BETTER MEASUREMENT



BETTER POLICIES



BETTER PLANNING



BETTER ECONOMY

Index of Services Production (ISP)

The **Index of Services Production** has been introduced as a high-frequency indicator to measure short-term changes in the output of India's services sector, similar to the role played by the **Index of Industrial Production (IIP)** for industry.

- Compiled by **NSO, MoSPI**.
- Base Year: 2024–25**.
- Based on the **National Industrial Classification (NIC), 2025**.
- Initially covers **19 service sub-sectors**, representing about **60% of the services sector**.
- At present, it primarily covers **formal-sector enterprises**.
- Major data sources include **aggregated GST data and administrative datasets**.

Covered activities include wholesale and retail trade, accommodation and food services, transport, postal services, banking, insurance, real estate and other professional and support services.

The first ISP release covered **April 2026**. Fourteen of the 19 sub-sectors recorded double-digit growth, with **Accommodation and Food Services (37.2%)** recording the highest growth. Subsequent trial indices are scheduled for release on the **29th of every month**, with an approximate 60-day lag. An overall composite ISP will be introduced later after assessing the stability and coverage of the sub-sectoral indices.

Conclusion

The CPI base-year revision and introduction of the ISP are important steps in modernising India's statistical system. While the revised CPI better captures changing household consumption patterns, the ISP fills a major statistical gap by providing a regular measure of services-sector activity, thereby improving economic monitoring and evidence-based policymaking.

8.KAMARAJAR PORT

Why in News?

In July 2026, **Kamarajar Port Limited (KPL)** became **India's second Major Port, after Visakhapatnam Port, to achieve an operational draft of 18 metres.**

This followed the completion of **Capital Dredging Phase VI** at a cost of about **₹ 440 crore**. The enhanced draft allows the port to handle fully laden **Capesize vessels carrying cargo parcels of up to 1,70,000 Deadweight Tonnage (DWT).**

The project is expected to enable larger ships to call at the port, improve cargo-handling efficiency and reduce freight costs through economies of scale.

Background & UPSC-Relevant Facts

About Kamarajar Port

- **Kamarajar Port**, formerly known as **Ennore Port**, is located on the **Coromandel Coast of Tamil Nadu**, about **24 km north of Chennai**.
- It is situated on the **east coast of India along the Bay of Bengal**.
- It is the **first corporatised Major Port in India** and operates under the **Landlord Port Model**.

- Kamarajar Port Limited functions under the **Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways** and is presently a **company of Chennai Port Authority**.
- It was declared a **Major Port in March 1999** and incorporated as **Ennore Port Limited in October 1999** under the Companies Act, 1956.
- The port was dedicated to the nation on **1 February 2001**, while commercial operations began on **22 June 2001**.
- Ennore Port Limited was renamed **Kamarajar Port Limited in February 2014**.

Cargo Profile

Kamarajar Port was originally developed primarily for handling **thermal coal** required by power stations in Tamil Nadu.

It has subsequently diversified and now handles:

- Coal
- Petroleum, Oil and Lubricants (POL)
- LNG and LPG
- Automobiles
- Containers
- Bulk and other general cargo.

The port handled **49.08 million metric tonnes (MMT)** of cargo in FY 2025–26, including about **25.72 MMT of coal**.

Capital Dredging Phase VI

The dredging project transformed Kamarajar Port into a **Cape-compliant deep-water port**.

Under the project:

- Outer approach channel was deepened from **20 m to 23 m**.
- Inner entrance channel was deepened from **19 m to 22 m**.
- Berths were upgraded to accommodate vessels requiring an **18-metre draft**.
- Harbour basin and navigational areas were also deepened.



KAMARAJAR PORT

A MAJOR MARITIME GATEWAY OF TAMIL NADU



Kamarajar Port (earlier known as **Ennore Port**) is one of the 12 Major Ports in India, located on the Coromandel Coast in Tamil Nadu.



OVERVIEW



Location : Ennore, Tiruvallur District, Tamil Nadu



Established : 1999 (Notified as Major Port)
(Constituted in 1901 as Ennore Port)



Named after : Perunthalaivar K. Kamaraj, former Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu



Administered by : Kamarajar Port Limited
(A statutory body under the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways)



Type : Multi-cargo Port



STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE

- ✓ Located near Chennai, an industrial and automobile hub.
- ✓ Handles a wide range of cargo – containers, coal, POL, bulk and break-bulk cargo.
- ✓ Provides efficient connectivity to hinterland industries in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Telangana.
- ✓ Plays a key role in India's EXIM trade and coastal shipping.
- ✓ Part of the Sagarmala Programme for port-led development.



KEY INFRASTRUCTURE & FACILITIES



Multiple cargo berths and modern handling equipment



Deep draft – capable of handling large vessels



Container Terminal, Coal Terminal, Oil Jetty, Multi Cargo Berths



Mechanized cargo handling for efficiency and faster turnaround

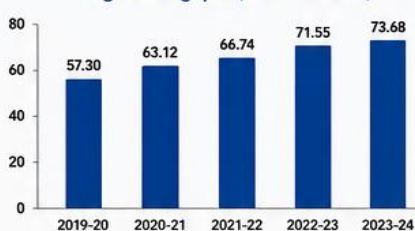


Well-connected by road, rail and NH-16 (Chennai-Kolkata Highway)



TRAFFIC PERFORMANCE (Recent Trend)

Cargo Throughput (Million Tonnes)



Kamarajar Port has shown consistent growth in cargo handling in recent years.



MAJOR CARGO HANDLED



Coal (Major share)



Containers



POL (Petroleum, Oil & Lubricants)



Fertilizers



Salt



Iron ore, Gypsum, Limestone, Project Cargo and others



RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

- ✓ Expansion of container terminal and deepening of berths.
- ✓ Development of additional cargo handling capacity.
- ✓ Improvement in port connectivity and logistics parks.
- ✓ Focus on green port initiatives and sustainability.



WHY NEWS?

Kamarajar Port continues to play a crucial role in boosting maritime trade, supporting industrial growth in South India and contributing to India's goal of becoming a global maritime leader.

QUICK FACTS



Major Port in Tamil Nadu



Strategically located on Coromandel Coast



Handles multi-cargo & container traffic



Key hub for industrial and EXIM trade



Driving port-led development in South India



"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."

– K. KAMARAJ

AT A GLANCE



12th Major Port of India



Land Area: ~ 2,300 acres (approx.)



Draft: Up to 16.5 m (approx.)



ISO 14001:2015 Certified Port



Working towards SMART and Sustainable Port



KAMARAJAR PORT – POWERING TRADE. ENRICHING FUTURE.



Draft refers to the vertical distance between the waterline and the lowest point of a ship's hull. A deeper port draft enables the port to accommodate larger and more heavily loaded vessels.

Significance

The enhanced draft allows Kamarajar Port to handle large **Capesize vessels**, which are commonly used for transportation of bulk commodities such as coal and iron ore.

Handling larger vessels can:

- Reduce per-unit freight costs.
- Improve port efficiency.
- Increase cargo-handling capacity.
- Strengthen India's EXIM trade.
- Improve competitiveness of Indian ports.

The development is aligned with **Maritime India Vision 2030** and **Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047**, which seek to modernise India's maritime infrastructure and improve logistics competitiveness.

Conclusion

Kamarajar Port's achievement of an **18-metre operational draft** strengthens its position as a major deep-water gateway on India's east coast. Its ability to accommodate Capesize vessels can reduce logistics costs, enhance cargo efficiency and strengthen India's maritime and international trade competitiveness.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. BRICS

Why in News?

India is hosting the 18th BRICS Summit in New Delhi from September 17 to 19, 2026, under its fourth term holding the presidential chair.

BRICS is expanding its membership and influence, making it increasingly important in debates on reform of the global financial and governance architecture.

Background

- **BRIC** was coined by Goldman Sachs economist **Jim O'Neill** in **2001** to describe Brazil, Russia, India and China as emerging economic powers.
- BRIC was formally established as a political grouping in **2009**; **South Africa joined in 2010**, making it **BRICS**.
- The grouping focuses on:
 - Economic and financial cooperation
 - Global governance reforms

- Development cooperation
- Trade and investment
- South-South cooperation



Recent Full Members

- **Indonesia** (January 2025)
- **Egypt** (January 2024)
- **Ethiopia** (January 2024)
- **Iran** (January 2024)
- **United Arab Emirates** (January 2024)
- **Saudi Arabia** (January 2024)

Key Institutions Under BRICS

- **New Development Bank (NDB)** – established in 2015; headquartered in **Shanghai**; finances infrastructure and sustainable-development projects.
- **Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA)** – provides financial support to members facing short-term balance-of-payments pressures.
- **BRICS Business Council** – promotes business and investment cooperation.

Significance for India

- Provides a platform to push for **reform of the UN Security Council, IMF and World Bank.**
- Enhances India's engagement with the **Global South.**
- NDB offers an additional source of **development finance.**
- Provides a forum for cooperation with both **Russia and China**, despite bilateral differences.
- Supports India's efforts toward a **multipolar world order.**

Conclusion

BRICS is evolving from an economic grouping into a broader platform for Global South cooperation and global-governance reform. For India, it provides strategic space to promote a **multipolar, representative and rules-based international order**, while maintaining strategic autonomy.

2.Operation Amistad

Why in News?

- India launched **Operation Amistad in June 2026** to provide **Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR)** to earthquake-hit **Venezuela.**
- The mission has since **concluded successfully**, with the Indian contingent returning to India in July 2026

What is Operation Amistad?

- **Amistad** means **“friendship” in Spanish.**
- It was an Indian **HADR mission** launched in response to devastating earthquakes in Venezuela.
- **Two IAF C-17 Globemaster III aircraft** transported the assistance.

Key Components

- **41-member Indian Army medical contingent** from the **60 Para Field Hospital.**
- **Two BHISHM Cubes** – portable modular medical facilities for rapid disaster response.
- Around **30 tonnes of emergency relief supplies.**
- **6 tonnes of medicines and medical equipment**

Similar Indian Humanitarian & Disaster Relief Operations

- **Operation Brahma (2025):** Deployed a 60-bed Indian Army field hospital, naval ships, and aircraft carrying 750 metric tons of relief material to assist earthquake-stricken Myanmar.
- **Operation Sagar Bandhu (2025):** Provided emergency HADR support, restored connectivity, and delivered over 1,000 tonnes of relief material to Sri Lanka following Cyclone Ditwah
- **Operation Dost (2023):** Sent search-and-rescue teams, field hospitals, and relief supplies via the Indian Air Force to assist Türkiye and Syria after major earthquakes.
- **Operation Karuna (2023):** Delivered emergency food, tents, and medical supplies to Myanmar after Cyclone Mocha.
- **Operation Maitri (2015):** Mobilized massive multi-organ rescue and medical aid missions by the Indian armed forces in Nepal following a devastating earthquake

Conclusion

Operation Amistad reflects India's transformation into a capable global first responder, combining military logistics, medical expertise and humanitarian diplomacy. It strengthens India's image as a **reliable partner during international disasters**.

3. India-UK CETA

Why in News?

- The **India-UK Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA)** entered into force on **15 July 2026**.
- It is a major post-Brexit trade agreement aimed at expanding **goods, services, investment and professional mobility** between India and the UK.

Background

- India and the UK began FTA negotiations in **January 2022**.
- The agreement was **signed on 24 July 2025** and subsequently entered into force on **15 July 2026**.
- It establishes a **Free Trade Area** between the two countries.

Key Provisions

Goods

- UK provides **near-total duty-free access** for Indian exports.
- Major beneficiaries: **textiles, leather, footwear, gems & jewellery, pharmaceuticals, auto components, machinery and processed foods.**
- India will remove/reduce tariffs on **90% of tariff lines**, covering about **92% of existing UK goods imports.**
- Sensitive Indian sectors such as **sugar, rice, pork, chicken and eggs** are excluded from liberalisation.

Services

- Greater market access for Indian **IT/ITeS, business, professional, education and healthcare services.**
- Provides a framework for **temporary movement of service providers.**

Social Security

- A separate **Double Contributions Convention (DCC)** prevents eligible workers from paying social-security contributions in both countries for the same period.

Significance for India

- Expands India's access to a **high-income developed market.**
- Boosts **labour-intensive exports and employment.**
- Improves competitiveness of Indian products through tariff reduction.
- Supports India's growing **services exports.**
- Strengthens India-UK economic ties in the **post-Brexit era.**

Conclusion

India-UK CETA marks a significant shift from traditional tariff-based trade towards a broader economic partnership covering goods, services and professional mobility. For India, it can strengthen **export competitiveness, employment and integration with global value chains**, while requiring continued support for domestic industries to utilise the opportunities effectively.

4. India-Australia Civil Nuclear Cooperation

Why in News?

- India-Australia civil nuclear cooperation remains important for **India's energy security**, particularly access to Australian uranium.

- The cooperation is significant because Australia is a major **uranium producer/exporter**, while India is expanding nuclear power as part of its low-carbon energy transition.
- The agreement also reflects the broader strengthening of the **India–Australia Strategic Partnership**.

Background

- Australia traditionally had a restrictive uranium-export policy and did not supply uranium to India because India is **not a signatory to the NPT**.
- The **2008 NSG waiver for India** enabled countries to undertake civil nuclear trade with India.
- India and Australia signed the **Civil Nuclear Cooperation Agreement on 5 September 2014**.
- It **entered into force on 13 November 2015**, along with the associated administrative arrangement.

Key Features

- **Australian uranium supply** to India for peaceful civilian nuclear activities.
- Australian-supplied nuclear material must remain under **IAEA safeguards**.
- Only India's **safeguarded civil nuclear facilities** can use Australian uranium.
- Australia maintains safeguards relating to **retransfer, enrichment, reprocessing and**

physical security of Australian-origin nuclear material.

- Cooperation is limited to **peaceful uses of nuclear energy**.



Significance for India

- **Energy security:** diversifies India's nuclear fuel supply.
- **Clean energy:** supports expansion of nuclear power as a low-carbon electricity source.
- **Strategic partnership:** strengthens India–Australia relations in the Indo-Pacific.
- **International acceptance:** demonstrates India's integration into the global civil nuclear order despite being outside the NPT.

- Complements India's broader cooperation with Australia in **critical minerals, clean energy and advanced technology**.

Conclusion

India–Australia civil nuclear cooperation represents the convergence of **India's energy-security needs and Australia's uranium resources**, supported by strong safeguards. It is an important pillar of the broader strategic partnership and India's transition towards a **secure, diversified and low-carbon energy mix**.

5. Indian Air Force – Exercise Pitch Black 2026

Why in News?

- The **Indian Air Force (IAF)** participated in **Exercise Pitch Black 2026** at **RAAF Base Darwin, Australia**, from **20 July to 7 August 2026**.
- The 2026 edition brought together **21 nations and around 100+ aircraft**, making it one of the major multinational air-combat exercises in the Indo-Pacific.
- **IAF Rafale fighters participated for the first time** in Pitch Black, adding significance to India's participation.

Background

- **Pitch Black** is the **Royal Australian Air Force's (RAAF) biennial multinational air-combat exercise**.
- It has a history of about **45 years** and is conducted mainly over the vast, sparsely populated areas of **northern Australia**.
- Its name reflects the exercise's emphasis on **night flying**.

India's Participation

- **Rafale** – primary fighter aircraft.
- **C-17 Globemaster III** – strategic airlift/support.
- **IL-78** – air-to-air refuelling support.
- IAF personnel included **pilots, engineers, technicians, controllers and other specialists**.
- India had earlier participated with air assets in **2018, 2022 and 2024**.



Key Objectives

- **Large Force Employment (LFE)** training.
- Improve **interoperability** among participating air forces.
- Practise **long-range expeditionary air operations**.
- Exchange operational experience and best practices.
- Strengthen India's **defence partnerships in the Indo-Pacific**.

Significance for India

- Enhances IAF's ability to operate in **multinational and extended-distance environments**.
- Provides exposure to advanced air forces and different operational doctrines.
- Strengthens **India–Australia defence cooperation**.
- Supports India's broader **Indo-Pacific strategic engagement**.
- The exercise also operationalised cooperation on **air-to-air refuelling** between India and Australia.

Conclusion

Exercise Pitch Black 2026 strengthens India's expeditionary air capabilities, interoperability and defence partnerships in the Indo-Pacific. India's participation, particularly with **Rafale fighters**, reflects its growing role as a capable security partner in the region.

6. India's 8th Trade Policy Review at WTO

Why in News?

- India underwent its **8th Trade Policy Review (TPR)** at the WTO on **21 and 23 July 2026** in Geneva.
- It reviews India's trade policies and practices and provides an opportunity for WTO members to assess India's evolving trade regime.

Background

- **Trade Policy Review Mechanism (TPRM)** is a WTO mechanism for **regular peer review and greater transparency** of members' trade policies.
- It was established under **Annex 3 of the Marrakesh Agreement** establishing the WTO.
- All WTO members are subject to TPRs, with the **frequency depending on their share of world trade**.

- India's **7th TPR** was held in **January 2021**.



What does the Review examine?

- **Trade in goods** – tariffs, import/export measures, customs procedures.
- **Trade in services** – regulatory framework and market access.
- **Agriculture** – subsidies, market-support measures and food security policies.
- **Investment and trade-related policies.**
- **Intellectual property and standards.**
- Overall compliance and implementation of **WTO commitments**.

How does the TPR work?

Two major reports form the basis of the review:

1. **WTO Secretariat's report** – independent assessment of the country's trade policies.
2. **Government's report** – country's own explanation of its trade policies and developments.

Other WTO members can submit questions and raise issues during the review.

Significance for India

- Enhances **transparency and predictability** of India's trade regime.
- Allows India to explain its **domestic policy priorities** and respond to concerns of trading partners.
- Provides an opportunity to highlight reforms in **customs, standards, trade facilitation and export promotion**.
- Helps identify areas where India's policies may face **WTO-related challenges**.
- Strengthens India's engagement with the **multilateral trading system**.

Conclusion

India's 8th TPR is **not a negotiation or dispute-settlement process**; it is primarily a **peer-review and transparency mechanism**. It enables India to

defend its developmental priorities while identifying areas where greater policy clarity and WTO compatibility can strengthen India's integration into global trade.

7. CORSIA – Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation

Why in News?

- **CORSIA** is increasingly important as international aviation seeks to reduce its **CO₂ emissions** and achieve the sector's long-term climate goals.
- India's position on CORSIA is relevant because of the **growing international aviation sector** and concerns over the impact of carbon-offsetting obligations on developing countries.

Background

- **CORSIA** was adopted by the **International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)** in **2016**.
- It is the world's first **global market-based measure for an entire sector** to address CO₂ emissions from international aviation.
- It complements technological improvements, operational measures and sustainable aviation fuels.

How CORSIA Works

CORSIA follows a simple principle:

International aviation emissions → Compare with baseline → Emissions above baseline → Offset through eligible carbon credits

- Airlines monitor and report their international flight emissions.
- For covered routes, airlines must compensate for emissions above the applicable baseline by acquiring **CORSIA-eligible emissions units**.
- It applies to **international aviation**, not domestic flights.

Phases

Phase	Period	Nature
Pilot Phase	2021–2023	Voluntary
First Phase	2024–2026	Voluntary
Second Phase	2027–2035	Mandatory for most participating States, subject to exemptions

Important: Participation is by **States**, while obligations are implemented by covered aircraft operators

India's Position

- India has not participated in the pilot phase and the first phase, but has raised concerns regarding the **equity and financial implications** of CORSIA.
- But now India is about to participate in the **second phase** (starting 2027).
- India argues that climate obligations should respect the principle of **Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDR-RC)**.
- India also stresses that developed countries have historically contributed more to cumulative emissions.



CORSIA vs EU ETS

CORSIA	EU ETS
ICAO framework	European Union framework
International aviation	Primarily flights within/connected to EU ETS jurisdiction
Global sectoral mechanism	Regional carbon-pricing system
Primarily offset-based	Emissions trading/cap-and-trade
Focused on international aviation	Covers multiple sectors, including aviation

Conclusion

CORSIA represents an attempt to reconcile the rapid growth of international aviation with global climate goals. For India, the key issue is balancing **aviation growth and developmental needs** with climate commitments while ensuring that international climate measures remain **equitable and consistent with CBDR-RC**.

Environment

1.DRAFT CORPORATE AVERAGE FUEL ECONOMY (CAFE) NORMS

Why in News?

In July 2026, the **Ministry of Power** circulated the **Draft Corporate Average Fuel Economy 2027 Norms (CAFE-III)** for stakeholder consultation.

The proposed norms will apply to **M1-category passenger vehicles manufactured or imported for sale in India from FY 2027-28 to FY 2031-32** and are proposed to take effect from **1 April 2027**.

Background & UPSC-Relevant Facts

About CAFE Norms

- **Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) norms** regulate the average fuel consumption of the entire fleet of passenger vehicles produced or imported by an automobile manufacturer.
- They are **fleet-average standards**, rather than identical fuel-efficiency limits for every individual vehicle model.
- The standards are notified by the **Ministry of Power in consultation with the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE)**.
- Their legal basis is the **Energy Conservation Act, 2001**, particularly Sections **14 and 18**.
- India's CAFE framework has been operational since **2017**. According to the draft, the automobile industry performed around **10% better than the target under CAFE-I and 9% better under CAFE-II**.



DRAFT CORPORATE AVERAGE FUEL ECONOMY (CAFE) NORMS

TOWARDS CLEANER, MORE FUEL-EFFICIENT MOBILITY

The draft CAFE norms aim to improve the fuel efficiency of vehicles, reduce oil consumption and lower emissions, supporting India's energy security and climate goals.





WHAT ARE CAFE NORMS?		KEY FEATURES OF DRAFT NORMS		INDICATIVE FUEL ECONOMY TARGETS*																					
CAFE (Corporate Average Fuel Economy) norms mandate that automobile manufacturers achieve a specified average fuel efficiency across their vehicle fleet. OBJECTIVES ✓ Improve average fuel efficiency of vehicles ✓ Reduce greenhouse gas emissions ✓ Cut dependence on imported crude oil ✓ Promote innovation in automotive technology ✓ Support India's Net Zero by 2070 goal	Applies to passenger cars, utility vehicles, vans and M1 category vehicles Fleet fuel economy targets for manufacturers to be achieved in a phased manner Targets aligned with global best practices and India's energy & environmental goals Credits for the use of advanced technologies and alternative fuels Compliance through a star rating system and penalties for non-compliance	(Average Fuel Economy in km/l) <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>Passenger Cars</th> <th>Utility Vehicles</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2027-28</td> <td>15.0</td> <td>13.0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2029-30</td> <td>17.0</td> <td>15.0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2031-32</td> <td>19.3</td> <td>17.5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2033-34</td> <td>21.7</td> <td>19.5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2034-35</td> <td>22.7</td> <td>20.5</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> *Targets are indicative and subject to change in the final notification.			Year	Passenger Cars	Utility Vehicles	2027-28	15.0	13.0	2029-30	17.0	15.0	2031-32	19.3	17.5	2033-34	21.7	19.5	2034-35	22.7	20.5	BETTER mileage. Lower emissions. Stronger future. For India. For the planet.	EXPECTED BENEFITS - Reduced emissions - Energy security - Growth in clean mobility & jobs	YOUR MILEAGE. OUR FUTURE. Drive Efficient. Drive Responsible.
Year	Passenger Cars	Utility Vehicles																							
2027-28	15.0	13.0																							
2029-30	17.0	15.0																							
2031-32	19.3	17.5																							
2033-34	21.7	19.5																							
2034-35	22.7	20.5																							

Key Features of Draft CAFE-III

The new framework provides progressively stricter **year-on-year fuel-efficiency standards for five years from 2027–28 to 2031–32**.

A manufacturer-specific target will be determined primarily on the basis of the **sales-weighted average unladen mass of vehicles** sold by that manufacturer. Actual fleet performance will be measured in **petrol-equivalent litres per 100 km**.

The norms seek to create a **technology-neutral framework**, covering different fuels and propulsion technologies.

Incentives for Cleaner Technologies

The draft provides special treatment for cleaner vehicles, including:

- **Battery Electric Vehicles (BEVs)**
- Strong Hybrid Electric Vehicles
- Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicles
- Range-Extended Electric Vehicles
- Flex-fuel vehicles

These vehicles can receive **super-credit or volume-derogation benefits**, encouraging manufacturers to increase their share in total sales.

The framework also proposes **Carbon Neutrality Factors (CNFs)** to recognise the emission-reduction benefits of renewable fuels such as ethanol, compressed biogas and other biofuels.

Manufacturers may claim benefits of up to **9 g CO₂ /km** for approved fuel-saving technologies, including start-stop systems, regenerative braking, tyre-pressure monitoring, efficient air-conditioning, LED lighting and other energy-efficient technologies.

Credit and Compliance Mechanism

A manufacturer performing **better than its prescribed target earns credits**, while one exceeding the permitted fuel-consumption level incurs debits.

The draft introduces a **“passbook” system** to record these credits and debits.

Manufacturers may:

- Carry forward eligible credits within specified compliance periods.
- **Trade or pool credits with other manufacturers.**
- Purchase compliance credits from **BEE** through the proposed buyout mechanism.

Manufacturers with fewer than **1,000 eligible vehicles annually** are treated as small-volume manufacturers and are exempt from specific fleet-average targets.

Testing Framework

Vehicle fuel consumption and CO₂ emissions will be reported under both:

- **Modified Indian Driving Cycle (MIDC)**
- **Worldwide Harmonized Light Vehicles Test Procedure (WLTP)**

This is intended to facilitate India's gradual transition towards globally harmonised and more realistic vehicle-testing procedures. Vehicle testing and type approval remain under the framework of the **Ministry of Road Transport and Highways**, while BEE oversees the CAFE compliance mechanism.

Conclusion

CAFE-III seeks to improve the fuel efficiency of India's rapidly expanding passenger-vehicle fleet while encouraging **electric vehicles, hybrids, renewable fuels and advanced fuel-saving technologies**. Stronger fuel-economy standards can reduce petroleum consumption, lower transport-sector emissions and strengthen India's **energy security by reducing dependence on imported crude oil**

2. WILD RICE (ORYZA RUFIPOGON) CONSERVATION

Why in News?

In July 2026, the **National Rainfed Area Authority (NRAA)** highlighted a major achievement under its project for **in-situ conservation of wild rice (*Oryza rufipogon*) in Sonitpur district, Assam**.

The **Borjuli Wild Rice Conservation Site in Sonitpur** has been notified as a **Biodiversity Heritage Site (BHS)**, strengthening the conservation of an important wild genetic resource of cultivated rice.

The project, initiated in **2022**, is funded by NRAA and implemented by the **ICAR-National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources (ICAR-NBPGR)** in collaboration with the **Assam State Biodiversity Board**.

Background & UPSC-Relevant Facts

About *Oryza rufipogon*

- *Oryza rufipogon* is a **wild relative and progenitor of cultivated Asian rice (*Oryza sativa*)**.
- It is a **perennial wild rice species** commonly occurring in marshes and aquatic habitats of **eastern and southern Asia**.
- It is **photosensitive** and generally flowers during short-day conditions in November–December.

- Its mature seeds show a natural tendency to **shatter**, an important characteristic of wild plants.
- The species is naturally tolerant to **flooding and acidic soils**.

Importance for Crop Improvement

Wild relatives of crops act as important **genetic reservoirs** for improving cultivated varieties.

Oryza rufipogon possesses useful genes associated with:

- Resistance to diseases and pests
- Tolerance to **submergence**
- Tolerance to **salinity**
- Adaptation to changing climatic conditions.

These genetic traits can be used in rice-breeding programmes to develop **climate-resilient, high-yielding and nutritionally improved rice varieties**.

Conservation of wild rice is therefore directly linked with India's long-term **food and nutritional security**.

WILD RICE (ORYZA RUFIPOGON) CONSERVATION

Preserving India's ancestral grain for a sustainable future

ABOUT WILD RICE



- ✓ Scientific Name: *Oryza rufipogon*
- ✓ A wild relative of cultivated rice (*Oryza sativa*)
- ✓ Grows in wetlands, shallow waters, marshes and along riverbanks
- ✓ Native to India and other parts of Asia
- ✓ Diploid (2n=24) with high genetic diversity

WHY IT MATTERS

Wild rice is the ancestor of all cultivated rice. It holds unique genes for stress tolerance, disease resistance and climate resilience.

THREATS



Habitat loss due to urbanization, drainage and land conversion



Pollution and industrial effluents in wetlands



Invasive species and eutrophication



Unregulated harvesting and overexploitation



Climate change impacting wetland ecosystems

CONSERVATION STRATEGIES



In-situ conservation of natural habitats (wetlands, lakes, floodplains)



Ex-situ conservation in gene banks and seed repositories



Community participation and awareness for wetland protection



Research on genetic diversity and climate-resilient traits



Policy support for wetland conservation and biodiversity protection

WHERE IT GROWS IN INDIA



- Manipur (Loktak Lake)
- Assam
- Uttar Pradesh (Saman Bird Sanctuary)
- West Bengal
- Odisha
- Andhra Pradesh



India is one of the primary centers of origin and diversity for wild rice.



Protecting wild rice means protecting our **food security, biodiversity and future generations**.



Small grain. Great legacy.
Let's conserve it today
for a better tomorrow.

**CONSERVE WETLANDS.
CONSERVE WILD RICE.
CONSERVE LIFE.**



Borjuli Biodiversity Heritage Site

- Located in **Borjuli village, Sonitpur district, Assam**.

- It is a wetland ecosystem covering approximately **0.41 hectare**.
- The site supports a viable and genetically important population of *Oryza rufipogon*.
- The population faces threats from **climate change and anthropogenic activities**.

The emphasis is on **in-situ conservation**, which protects the species within its natural habitat and allows continuing natural evolution and adaptation.

Biodiversity Heritage Sites

- Biodiversity Heritage Sites are areas containing significant or unique biodiversity that receive special conservation recognition.
- Under **Section 37 of the Biological Diversity Act, 2002**, the **State Government**, in consultation with local bodies, may notify areas of biodiversity importance as Biodiversity Heritage Sites.
- The State Government may also frame rules for their management and conservation and provide compensation or rehabilitation to people economically affected by such notification.
- In Assam, BHSs are notified by the State Government based on recommendations of the **Assam State Biodiversity Board**.

In-situ vs Ex-situ Conservation

- **In-situ conservation** means conserving species in their **natural habitats**.
- **Ex-situ conservation** involves conservation outside natural habitats, such as through **gene banks, seed banks and botanical gardens**.

For crop wild relatives such as *Oryza rufipogon*, in-situ conservation is especially valuable because it permits continued interaction with the natural environment and ongoing genetic adaptation.

Conclusion

Conservation of *Oryza rufipogon* is important not merely for protecting biodiversity but also for safeguarding the **genetic foundation of future rice breeding**. Protecting wild crop relatives can help develop rice varieties resistant to floods, salinity, pests, diseases and climate stress, thereby strengthening India's agricultural resilience and food security.

3.AGROBIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF GENETIC RESOURCES

Why in News?

In July 2026, the **reconstituted National Advisory Board on Management of Genetic Resources (NABMGR)** held its first meeting at the **ICAR–National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources (ICAR-NBPGR), New Delhi**.

The Board outlined a roadmap to strengthen India's **agrobiodiversity conservation and sustainable utilisation of plant, animal, fish, microbial and insect genetic resources**. It emphasised greater use of conserved germplasm for developing climate-resilient varieties and breeds.

Background & UPSC-Relevant Facts

About Agrobiodiversity

Agrobiodiversity refers to the variety and variability of plants, animals, microorganisms and other biological resources that contribute to agriculture and food production.

It includes:

- Crop varieties and their wild relatives
- Indigenous livestock breeds
- Fish genetic resources
- Microbial genetic resources
- Insect and pollinator diversity
- Traditional and underutilised crop varieties

Such genetic diversity is important for **food and nutritional security, climate resilience, pest and disease resistance and sustainable agriculture**.

National Advisory Board on Management of Genetic Resources

- NABMGR was first constituted by the **Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) in 2011**.
- It was **reconstituted in 2026** to strengthen national coordination in genetic-resource management.
- It advises on national policies and strategies relating to **conservation, sustainable utilisation and management of agricultural genetic resources**.
- It promotes coordination among institutions dealing with **plant, animal, fish, microbial and insect genetic resources**.

Key Recommendations for 2026–31

The Board recommended:

- Systematic exploration and collection of germplasm from **unexplored and biodiversity-rich regions**.
- Strengthening **pre-breeding programmes** so that conserved genetic material is used in crop improvement.
- Greater use of **wild relatives and indigenous genetic resources** for developing climate-resilient varieties and breeds.
- Development of an **integrated national genetic-resources management framework**.
- Mainstreaming traditional and underutilised crops, livestock breeds, fish species, microorganisms and insects.
- Strengthening international cooperation for **exchange and access to useful germplasm**.
- Timely establishment of the proposed **National Safety Genebank** as a secure backup of genetic resources.

ICAR-NBPGR and National Genebank

The **ICAR-National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources (NBPGR)** is the nodal institution for acquisition, exploration, conservation, characterisation and management of **plant genetic resources for food and agriculture**.

The **Indian National Genebank**, located at ICAR-NBPGR, New Delhi, conserves roughly **0.4 million germplasm accessions belonging to about 1,800 species** for use in research and crop-breeding programmes.

Legal and International Framework

The **Biological Diversity Act, 2002** provides for conservation of biodiversity, sustainable use of biological resources and **fair and equitable sharing of benefits** arising from their utilisation.

The **Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Act, 2001 (PPV&FR Act)** recognises both **plant breeders' rights and farmers' contributions in conserving and improving plant genetic resources**.

India is also a **founding member of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA)**, which facilitates conservation, sustainable use, exchange of plant genetic resources and equitable benefit-sharing.



AGROBIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF GENETIC RESOURCES

Safeguarding Diversity • Ensuring Food Security • Sustaining Future



Diversity
today,
Security
tomorrow

WHAT IS AGROBIODIVERSITY?



Agrobiodiversity refers to the variety and variability of animals, plants and microorganisms that are essential for food and agriculture. Genetic resources are the raw material for crop improvement, livestock development and sustainable agriculture.

SOURCES OF GENETIC RESOURCES

- **Crop Genetic Resources** – landraces, wild relatives, obsolete varieties, improved cultivars
- **Animal Genetic Resources** – indigenous breeds, wild relatives, exotic breeds
- **Microbial Resources** – bacteria, fungi, yeasts important for agriculture
- **Trees and Forestry Resources** – timber, non-timber forest products
- **Aquatic Genetic Resources** – fish, shellfish, aquatic plants



IMPORTANCE



- Ensures food and nutrition security
- Enhances resilience to climate change, pests and diseases
- Provides valuable genes for crop and livestock improvement
- Supports livelihoods and rural economy
- Preserves traditional knowledge and cultural heritage

CONSERVATION STRATEGIES



- In-situ Conservation** – on-farm conservation, community reserves, protected areas
- Ex-situ Conservation** – seed/gene banks, field gene banks, cryo-preservation, tissue culture
- On-farm Conservation** – maintaining landraces and local varieties by farmers
- Participatory Conservation** – involvement of communities and farmers
- Documentation & Characterization** – inventory, evaluation and information management

THREATS TO AGROBIODIVERSITY



- Habitat loss and environmental degradation
- Monocropping and high-yielding varieties
- Overuse of chemicals and pollution
- Unregulated exploitation and genetic erosion
- Climate change and emerging pests/diseases

MANAGEMENT AND POLICY SUPPORT

- National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources (NBPGR)
- National Bureau of Animal Genetic Resources (NBAGR)
- Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Act, 2001
- Biological Diversity Act, 2002
- International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA)
- Sustainable use through research, policy and community participation



EXAMPLES OF INDIA'S RICH AGROBIODIVERSITY



Rice
(100,000+ landraces)



Millet
(Bajra, Ragi, Jowar)



Pulses
(Varied species)



Indigenous Cattle
(Bos indicus breeds)



Oilseeds
(Sesame, Niger)



Wild Relatives
(For future breeding)

THE WAY FORWARD



Conserve
our diversity



Strengthen research
and innovation



Empower communities
and farmers



Ensure sustainable
use and benefit sharing



Secure food, nutrition
and a resilient future

Conserving agrobiodiversity is not just about saving genes, it is about securing our food, our future and our planet.

In-situ and Ex-situ Conservation

- **In-situ conservation** protects genetic resources in their natural habitats or traditional farming systems.
- **Ex-situ conservation** involves conserving them outside their natural habitats through **seed banks, gene banks, field gene banks and cryopreservation**.

Both approaches are essential to prevent **genetic erosion** and maintain diversity for future agricultural improvement.

Conclusion

India's agricultural genetic resources constitute a strategic asset for **food security and climate-resilient agriculture**. The 2026–31 roadmap seeks to move beyond merely conserving germplasm towards its active utilisation in breeding, research and sustainable farming, while protecting farmers' rights and ensuring equitable benefit-sharing.

4.INDIA'S RENEWABLE ENERGY INSTALLED CAPACITY – 288.58 GW

Why in News?

India's **renewable energy installed capacity reached 288.58 GW as on 30 June 2026**, compared with **76.38 GW in 2014**, representing a nearly fourfold increase. The data were provided by the **Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE)** in a written reply in the Rajya Sabha in July 2026.

India's total installed capacity from **non-fossil fuel sources** reached **297.36 GW**, comprising **288.58 GW of renewable energy** and **8.78 GW of nuclear power**.

Background & UPSC-Relevant Facts

Source-wise Renewable Energy Capacity

As on 30 June 2026:

- **Solar Power – 162.15 GW**
- **Wind Power – 57.44 GW**
- **Hydro Power – 57.24 GW**
- **Bio Power – 11.75 GW**
- **Total Renewable Energy Capacity – 288.58 GW**

Thus, **solar power constitutes the largest component** of India's renewable energy capacity. MNRE data further show that solar capacity includes ground-mounted projects, rooftop solar, hybrid projects and off-grid solar systems.

Renewable Energy vs Non-Fossil Fuel Energy

An important UPSC distinction is that **renewable energy and non-fossil fuel energy are not identical**.

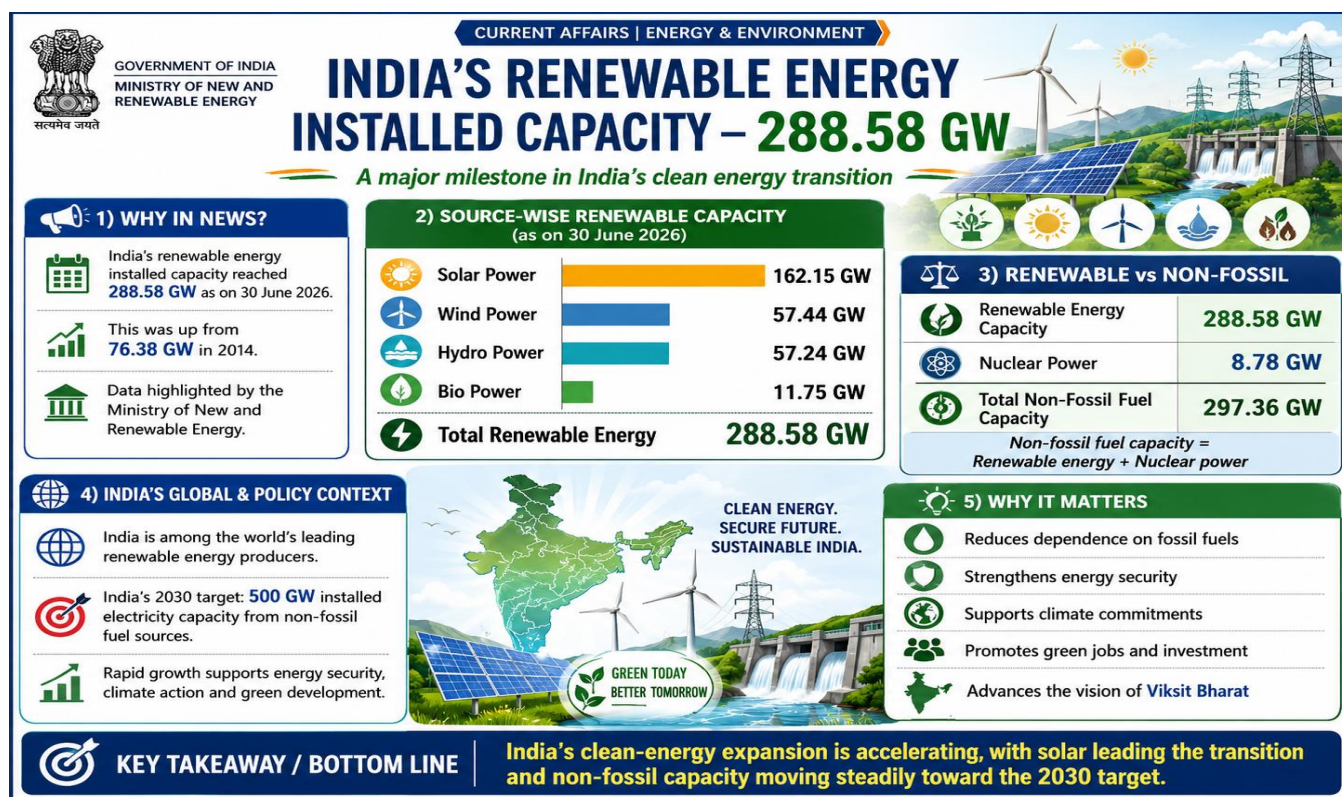
- **Renewable energy** includes solar, wind, hydropower, biomass and waste-to-energy.
- **Non-fossil fuel capacity** includes renewable energy **plus nuclear power**.

Therefore, India's renewable capacity was **288.58 GW**, while its total non-fossil capacity was **297.36 GW** as of June 2026.

India's Global Position

According to **IRENA Renewable Energy Statistics 2026**, based on data for December 2025, **India ranked third globally in renewable energy installed**

capacity, behind China and the United States. India moved ahead of Brazil in the global ranking.



India's 2030 Clean-Energy Target

At **COP26 in Glasgow**, India announced the target of achieving **500 GW of installed electricity capacity from non-fossil fuel sources by 2030**.

India also achieved the milestone of having **50% of its cumulative installed electricity capacity from non-fossil fuel sources in June 2025**, five years ahead of the corresponding 2030 commitment under its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC).

Investment in Renewable Energy

Between FY 2014 and FY 2026:

- India's renewable energy sector attracted approximately **USD 45.72 billion in Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)**.
- Domestic financial institutions, including public-sector banks, IREDA, PFC, REC, IIFCL, NaBFID and SIDBI, deployed around **₹ 12.32 lakh crore** towards the renewable energy sector.

Major Government Initiatives

India's renewable-energy expansion is supported by programmes such as:

- **PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana** – promotes residential rooftop solar.
- **PM-KUSUM** – promotes decentralised solar energy and solar pumps in agriculture.
- **National Green Hydrogen Mission** – promotes production and use of green hydrogen.
- **Solar Parks and Ultra Mega Solar Power Projects.**
- Renewable Consumption Obligations and transmission-related incentives for clean-energy projects.

Conclusion

India's achievement of **288.58 GW of renewable energy capacity** demonstrates the rapid transformation of its power sector towards cleaner sources. Sustained expansion of solar, wind, hydro, storage and transmission infrastructure will be crucial for achieving the **500 GW non-fossil capacity target by 2030**, strengthening energy security and meeting India's climate commitments.

SOCIETY

1. TribeX – Digital Learning Platform for Tribal Heritage

Why in News?

- The **Ministry of Tribal Affairs** launched **TribeX** on **7 July 2026** in Bhubaneswar during the National Workshop on Strengthening Tribal Research Institutes (TRIs).
- It is described as a **first-of-its-kind digital learning platform** dedicated to tribal arts, culture, languages, traditional knowledge and skill development.

Background

- TribeX evolved from the **“Adi Sanskriti”** digital platform, whose beta version was launched on **10 September 2025**.
- Adi Sanskriti was subsequently **renamed TribeX** and expanded into a broader digital ecosystem.

Major Components

1. Digital E-learning Academy

- Structured courses on:
 - Handicrafts and artefacts
 - Traditional skills
 - Tribal paintings
 - Music
 - Textiles



2. Socio-Cultural Repository

- Digital archive documenting tribal **heritage, oral traditions, festivals, arts, languages and indigenous knowledge**.
- The platform's heritage archive currently contains **5,000+ multimedia resources**, with plans to expand to **10,000**.

3. Online Marketplace

- E-commerce interface linked with **TRIFED**.
- Enables tribal artisans to showcase and sell their products directly to consumers.

Key Facts

Feature	Details
Ministry	Ministry of Tribal Affairs
Launched	7 July 2026
Place	Bhubaneswar, Odisha
Earlier platform	Adi Sanskriti
Free certificate courses	20 currently
Target	100+ certificate courses
Heritage resources	5,000+ , expanding to 10,000
PG programmes	5 UGC-recognised one-year hybrid diplomas
Marketplace partner	TRIFED

Five PG Diploma Programmes

Through an MoU with **Sampurnanand Sanskrit University, Varanasi**, TribeX offers:

1. Tribal Language – **Santali (Ol Chiki)**
2. Sustainable Tribal Culture-Based Livelihood Practices
3. Museology and Tribal Museum Management
4. Tribal Arts and Crafts of India
5. Tribal Textiles

Conclusion

Tribex represents a shift from merely documenting tribal heritage to creating a digital ecosystem for learning, preservation, research and livelihoods. By combining **technology with indigenous knowledge and artisan-led learning**, it can help preserve India's tribal heritage while making it economically and educationally relevant to future generations.

2.MANAS – Mental Health and Normalcy Augmentation System

Why in News?

- **MANAS** is a national digital platform developed to promote **mental well-being and healthy behavioural practices** among citizens.
- It is relevant to India's growing emphasis on **preventive mental healthcare, digital health and wellness promotion**.

Background

- **MANAS** stands for **Mental Health and Normalcy Augmentation System**.
- It was developed as a **comprehensive, scalable national digital wellbeing platform and mobile application**.
- It focuses on **mental well-being, positive lifestyle practices and behavioural change**, rather than functioning solely as a clinical treatment platform.

CAUSE FOR CONCERN

13.7% Prevalence of mental illness in India as per National Mental Health Survey (2016)

28% of global suicides occur in India

Access to mental healthcare

49% had a mental health facility within 20km radius

26% reported no mental health facility within 50km radius

59% reported lack of any de-addiction service in their area

Awareness about mental health

57% not aware of any person with mental illness

28% did not consider suicide to be associated with mental illness

Insurance for mental healthcare

80% had no health insurance or thought mental health treatment was not covered



Key Features

- **Digital platform/app** for promoting mental well-being.
- Provides information and tools related to:
 - Mental health and emotional well-being

- Positive lifestyle practices
- Healthy habits
- Behavioural wellness
- Designed for **scalability and nationwide accessibility**.
- Uses digital technology to support **preventive and promotive healthcare**.

MANAS vs Tele-MANAS

MANAS	Tele-MANAS
Digital well-being platform/app	24×7 tele-mental-health service
Focus on wellness and behavioural change	Focus on counselling and mental-health care
Preventive/promotive approach	Clinical + psychosocial support
Digital self-help/wellness orientation	Counselling, specialist consultation, referral
Developed as a national digital wellbeing platform	Digital component of the National Mental Health Programme

Important UPSC distinction: Do not confuse **MANAS** with **Tele-MANAS**. Tele-MANAS was launched in **October 2022** as India's National Tele Mental Health Programme

Broader Government Context

India's **National Mental Health Programme (NMHP)** has been implemented since **1982**, while the **District Mental Health Programme (DMHP)** was added in **1996**. Tele-MANAS subsequently expanded access to 24×7 tele-mental-health services across States and UTs.

Conclusion

MANAS represents the use of digital technology for preventive mental well-being and behavioural health. **Alongside programmes such as NMHP and Tele-MANAS, it reflects India's gradual movement towards a more** accessible, preventive and technology-enabled mental-health ecosystem.

SCHEMES

1.VB-GRAM G – Viksit Bharat–Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin)

Why in News?

- **VB-GRAM G** is a rural employment framework that has officially replaced the MGNREGA scheme. It is aimed at strengthening **employment security and livelihood opportunities in rural India**.
- It is relevant in the context of reforms in the **rural employment guarantee system** and the broader goal of achieving **Viksit Bharat**.

Background

- India's rural employment guarantee framework originated with the **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), 2005**.
- MGNREGA provides a **legal guarantee of wage employment** to rural households willing to undertake unskilled manual work.
- It is a **demand-driven, rights-based** programme.

- implemented through **Gram Panchayats**.



VB-GRAM G

- **VB-GRAM G = Viksit Bharat–Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin)**.
- The broader approach is to move from merely providing wage employment towards **sustainable rural livelihoods and productive assets**.

Significance

- Strengthens **rural income security 125 Days of employment**.
- Can improve **rural infrastructure and productive assets**.
- Promotes **convergence** between employment and livelihood programmes.
- Supports the objective of **inclusive growth** under Viksit Bharat.

- Can reduce distress migration by improving local employment opportunities.

Key Concerns

- Ensuring adequate and timely **funding**.
- Maintaining the **demand-driven nature** of rural employment.
- Preventing delays in wage payments.
- Ensuring transparency and effective **social audits**.
- Avoiding exclusion of vulnerable rural households

Conclusion

VB-GRAM G represents a shift from short-term wage employment towards employment-linked livelihood and asset creation. **Its success will depend on maintaining** employment security, adequate funding, decentralised implementation and strong social accountability.

2. Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana–Urban (PMAY-U)

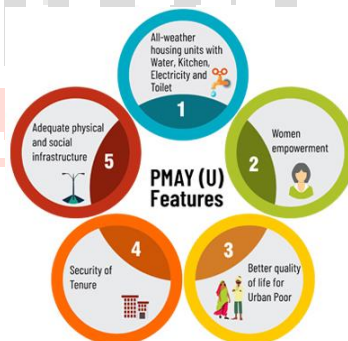
Why in News?

- **PMAY-U 2.0** is the latest phase of the urban housing programme, aimed at providing affordable housing to **1 crore additional urban families**.
- It is relevant to India's goals of **Housing for All, inclusive urbanisation and**

Background

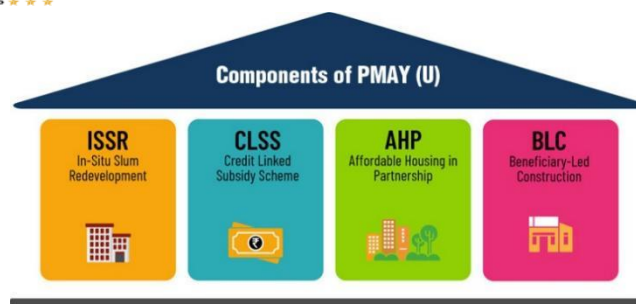
- **PMAY-U was launched in 2015** under the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA).
- Objective: **"Housing for All"** in urban areas.

improvement of living conditions.



- It targets **Economically Weaker Sections (EWS), Low-Income Groups (LIG) and other eligible urban households**.
- The original mission operated through four major verticals:

1. **In-situ Slum Redevelopment (ISSR)**
2. **Credit Linked Subsidy Scheme (CLSS)**
3. **Affordable Housing in Partnership (AHP)**
4. **Beneficiary-Led Construction (BLC)**



PMAY-U 2.0

- Approved in **2024** for **2024–2029**.
- Aims to assist **1 crore urban families** to construct, purchase or rent affordable houses.
- It has four components:
 - **Beneficiary Led Construction (BLC)**
 - **Affordable Housing in Partnership (AHP)**
 - **Affordable Rental Housing (ARH)**
 - **Interest Subsidy Scheme (ISS)**

Key Features

- Greater focus on **affordable and climate-resilient housing**.
- Encourages use of **modern and innovative construction technologies**.
- Promotes **women's ownership/co-ownership** of houses.
- Focus on vulnerable groups such as **SCs, STs, minorities, persons with disabilities and other disadvantaged sections**.

Significance

- Addresses **urban housing shortage and homelessness**.
- Improves **living standards and basic services**.
- Promotes **social inclusion and women's empowerment** through property ownership.
- Reduces pressure from **informal settlements and slums**.
- Supports **inclusive and sustainable urbanisation**.

Challenges

- High **urban land prices**.
- Limited availability of suitable land for affordable housing.

- Delays in construction and beneficiary identification.
- Poor connectivity of affordable housing projects to **jobs and public transport**.
- Need for convergence with **water, sanitation, electricity and other urban services**.

Conclusion

PMAY-U represents a shift from merely providing houses to promoting inclusive and sustainable urban living. **PMAY-U 2.0 further strengthens this approach through** affordable ownership, rental housing, interest support and technology-enabled construction, **contributing to the goal of Housing for All.**

3.National Green Hydrogen Mission (NGHM)

Why in News?

- The **National Green Hydrogen Mission** remains important for India's efforts to reduce dependence on **fossil fuels** and build a domestic **green hydrogen economy**.
- It is significant for India's **energy security, industrial decarbonisation and net-zero target**.

Background

- The Mission was approved by the Union Cabinet in **January 2023**.
- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE).
- **Outlay:** ₹ 19,744 crore up to **2029–30**.
- It seeks to make India a **global hub for production, use and export of green hydrogen**.

What is Green Hydrogen?

- Hydrogen produced using **renewable electricity**, generally through **electrolysis of water**.
- Since the electricity comes from renewable sources, its production has very low associated greenhouse-gas emissions.

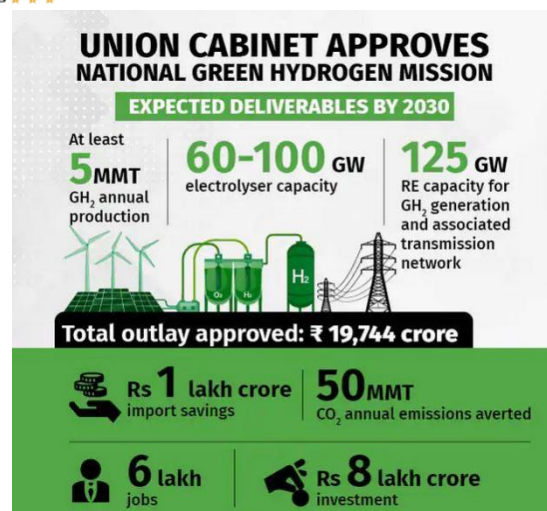
Renewable electricity → Electrolyser → Water → Hydrogen + Oxygen

Key Targets

By **2030**, the Mission aims for:

- At least **5 million metric tonnes (MMT) of green hydrogen production per year**.

- Addition of about **125 GW of associated renewable-energy capacity**.
- Reduction of nearly **50 MMT of annual greenhouse-gas emissions**.
- Significant reduction in **fossil-fuel imports**.



Major Components

- **Strategic Interventions for Green Hydrogen Transition (SIGHT)** – provides financial incentives for:
 - Electrolyser manufacturing.
 - Production of green hydrogen.
- Development of **Green Hydrogen Hubs**.
- Support for **pilot projects** in sectors such as:
 - Steel
 - Mobility
 - Shipping
- Development of standards and a **Green Hydrogen Certification framework**.
- Promotion of **research, innovation and skill development**.

Significance for India

- **Energy security:** reduces dependence on imported fossil fuels.
- **Industrial decarbonisation:** useful for hard-to-abate sectors such as steel, fertilisers, shipping and refining.
- **Renewable-energy integration:** can absorb surplus renewable electricity.
- **Export potential:** India can become a producer/exporter of green hydrogen and derivatives such as **green ammonia**.
- Supports India's **net-zero emissions target for 2070**.

Challenges

- **High production cost** compared with grey hydrogen.
- High cost of **electrolysers and renewable electricity**.

- Need for large-scale **storage and transportation infrastructure**.
- Water requirement in water-stressed regions.
- Lack of established global markets and common **certification standards**.

Conclusion

The National Green Hydrogen Mission can help India move from **fossil-fuel dependence towards a clean hydrogen-based economy**. Its success depends on reducing costs, scaling up renewable power and electrolyzers, developing infrastructure and creating reliable domestic and international markets.

4. Samudra Manthan – National Offshore Exploration Scheme

Why in News?

- The **Union Cabinet approved the National Offshore Exploration Scheme**, popularly called **Samudra Manthan**, in **July 2026**.
- It has an estimated outlay of **₹ 84,084 crore** and focuses on expanding **deepwater and ultra-deepwater oil and gas exploration**.
- The scheme is particularly important amid concerns over India's high dependence on **imported crude oil and natural gas**.

Background

- **Announced:** 15 August 2025 by the Prime Minister as the **National Deepwater Exploration Mission** under the Samudra Manthan initiative.
- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas.
- **Focus:** unlocking India's **under-explored offshore hydrocarbon potential**.
- It covers India's offshore regions, including areas of the **Arabian Sea, Bay of Bengal and Andaman Sea**.

Key Facts

Feature	Fact
Official name	National Offshore Exploration Scheme
Popular name	Samudra Manthan
Announced	15 August 2025
Approved	July 2026
Outlay	₹ 84,084 crore

Feature	Fact
Focus	Deepwater & ultra-deepwater exploration
Nodal Ministry	Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas
Main objective	Expand domestic oil & gas resource base
Key tools	Seismic surveys + exploratory drilling + offshore infrastructure

Major Components

1. Exploration support

- Large-scale exploration of **deepwater and ultra-deepwater areas**.
- Government support is intended to reduce the financial risk associated with high-risk exploration.

2. Seismic data

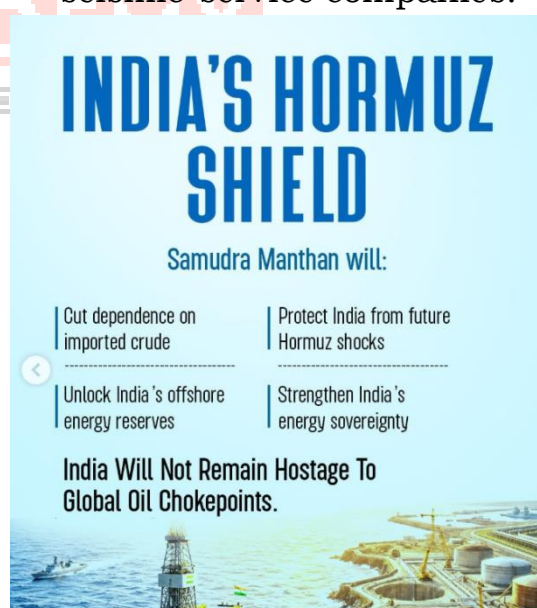
- Greater use of **2D/3D seismic surveys** and advanced geological data to identify potential hydrocarbon structures.
- Government has already approved additional **20,000 LKM of 2D seismic data on land and 30,000 LKM offshore beyond India's EEZ**.

3. Exploratory drilling

- Focus on drilling wells in frontier offshore areas.
- ONGC has already initiated deepwater drilling activity under the programme.
- with Indian operators and seismic-service companies.

4. Technology & private investment

- Seeks participation of **global oil & gas companies, technology providers and domestic operators**.
- A 2026 government conference under Samudra Manthan brought together companies such as **BP, ExxonMobil and Shell**, along



5. Important Quantitative Facts for UPSC

- India had released around **1 million sq km of offshore 'No-Go' areas** for exploration in 2022.
- The government aims to expand India's hydrocarbon resource base substantially; current estimates put the resource base at around **1.6 billion tonnes of oil equivalent**, with a target of about **2.2 billion tonnes** under the broader exploration push.
- The government is considering financial support that could cover **up to 50% of exploratory-well drilling costs**, subject to a per-well ceiling; this is part of the effort to make high-risk deepwater exploration commercially attractive.

Note: The 50% drilling-cost support should be treated as a **proposed/announced implementation detail**, not confused with the total ₹ 84,084-crore scheme outlay.

6. Recent Exploration Example

- **Andaman Sea:** Oil India Limited reported natural-gas presence in the **Sri Vijayapuram-3 exploratory well**, providing an important indication of the hydrocarbon potential of the Andaman Basin.

Conclusion

Samudra Manthan is a strategic attempt to convert India's vast offshore geological potential into commercially viable energy resources. With **₹ 84,084 crore of support**, deepwater exploration, seismic-data expansion and technology partnerships, it can strengthen India's **energy security and reduce import vulnerability**. However, environmental safeguards and alignment with India's **long-term transition towards cleaner energy** remain essential.

5. Pradhan Mantri Surya Sarovar Yojana (PM-SSY)

Why in News?

- The **Union Cabinet approved PM-SSY on 31 July 2026**.
- It has an outlay of **₹ 5,070 crore** and aims to develop **5,000 MW of Floating Solar Photovoltaic (FSPV) capacity** across India.
- The scheme is important because it combines **solar power generation with energy storage**, while using water bodies instead of additional land.

Background

Conventional ground-mounted solar parks require large areas of land.

- **Floating solar PV** places solar modules on floating structures over suitable reservoirs and other water bodies.
- India has been experimenting with floating solar projects as a way to address **land constraints and renewable-energy expansion**.



Key Facts

Feature	Details
Full name	Pradhan Mantri Surya Sarovar Yojana (PM-SSY)
Approved	31 July 2026
Outlay	₹ 5,070 crore
Target	5,000 MW FSPV capacity
Technology	Floating Solar Photovoltaic
Storage	Co-located Energy Storage Systems
Minimum storage	2 hours
Total targeted storage	10,000 MWh
Implementation	From FY 2026–27
Broad objective	Renewable energy + energy storage + efficient use of water bodies

The scheme specifically envisages **5,000 MW of floating solar projects with co-located storage systems having at least two hours of storage**, equivalent to **10,000 MWh** of storage capacity.

How does it work?

Water body → Floating platforms → Solar PV panels → Electricity → Energy storage → Grid

The panels are installed on floating structures rather than on land. The associated storage helps address the **intermittency of solar power** and makes electricity available beyond the hours of peak solar generation.

Why Floating Solar?

- **Saves land:** avoids competing with agriculture and other land uses.
- **Reduces evaporation:** partial water-surface coverage can reduce evaporation, particularly useful in reservoirs in water-stressed areas.
- **Potentially improves efficiency:** water can provide a cooling effect for PV modules.
- **Supports renewable expansion:** enables additional solar capacity where suitable land is limited.
- **Storage integration:** improves the dispatchability of solar power.

Conclusion

PM-SSY represents a shift towards integrating renewable generation with energy storage while reducing the land footprint of solar expansion. **Its success will depend on balancing** clean-energy generation, water conservation, grid integration and protection of aquatic ecosystems.

AGRICULTURE

1. Purple Revolution (Lavender Revolution)

Why in news?

The Purple Revolution was in news in 2026 because the government is promoting lavender cultivation and lavender-based entrepreneurship, particularly in Jammu & Kashmir, as a model for agricultural diversification, rural livelihoods and the aromatic plants sector

Background

- **Purple Revolution**, also known as the **Lavender Revolution**, promotes the **large-scale cultivation of lavender** and production of lavender-based products, particularly in the temperate regions of **Jammu & Kashmir**.
- It was launched in **2016** by the **Ministry of Science & Technology** under the **CSIR Aroma Mission**, implemented by the **Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR)**.

Aroma Mission

- **Launched and Implemented by:** CSIR
- **Launch Year:** 2016.
- **Objective:**
 - Promote cultivation of **medicinal and aromatic plants (MAPs)**.
 - Increase farmers' income through value addition.
 - Develop the essential oil industry.
 - Generate employment in rural and tribal areas.
- **Focus Crops:** Lavender, lemongrass, mentha (mint), vetiver, palmarosa, patchouli, citronella, geranium, rose mary etc.

Lavender (Lavandula)

- **Scientific Name:** *Lavandula*
- **Family:** **Lamiaceae**, belongs to **the Mint family**
- **Type:** Perennial aromatic flowering shrub.
- **Native Region:** **Europe**.

Major cultivation in India: Jammu & Kashmir (especially the temperate regions).

Key Features

- Drought- and frost-tolerant crop.
- Productive lifespan of **up to 15 years**.
- Harvesting begins from the **second year** after planting.
- Propagated through **seeds, rooted cuttings, tissue culture, and layering**.



Climatic Requirements

- **Climate:** Temperate; prefers **cool winters and cool summers**.
- **Sunlight:** Requires **full sunlight**.
- **Soil:** Well-drained, light, organic matter-rich, **neutral to alkaline** soil.
- **Sensitive to: Waterlogging.**
- **Rainfall: 300–1400 mm annually.**

Uses

- Essential oils and perfumes, Cosmetics and personal care products.
- Pharmaceuticals and aromatherapy.

- Food flavouring.
- Industrial applications.

2. National Investment Policy for Urea – 2026

Why in news?

The **National Investment Policy for Urea-2026 (NIPU-2026)** is a Government of India policy approved by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) in **July 2026** to encourage investment in new gas-based urea manufacturing plants and reduce India's dependence on imported urea.



Background

Key objectives

- Increase **domestic urea production** by about **10 million tonnes**.
- Reduce annual **urea imports** and improve self-reliance in fertilizers.
- Ensure a stable and affordable supply of urea for Indian farmers.
- Promote investment in **modern, energy-efficient natural gas-based plants**

Major features

- Encourages setting up **8–9 new gas-based urea plants** across India.
- Provides a **transparent investment framework** with clearer norms for project costs and returns.

- Offers an **assured return on equity (RoE)** to make investments financially attractive.
- Separates **fixed and variable costs** for better pricing and operational efficiency.
- Aims to improve fertilizer security while reducing exposure to international price volatility.

Need for the policy

- India consumes about **40 million tonnes** of urea annually but produces only around **30 million tonnes**, requiring imports of roughly **10 million tonnes** each year.
- Import dependence exposes the country to global supply disruptions and price fluctuations.

Expected benefits

- Greater **self-reliance** in urea production.
- Reduced fertilizer import bill.
- Improved availability of urea for farmers.
- Increased private and public investment in the fertilizer sector.
- Employment generation through new manufacturing facilities.

3. Continuation of PM-KISAN Scheme for 2026–31

Why in news?

The Union Cabinet has approved the **continuation of the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) Scheme for the period 2026–31** with a total financial outlay of ₹3.15 lakh crore, reaffirming the Government's commitment to strengthening farmers' income security and promoting inclusive agricultural growth

Background:

- **About the Scheme:**
 - **Launched: 24 February 2019.**
 - **Ministry:** Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare.
 - **Type: Central Sector Scheme** (100% funded by the Central Government).



• Objective:

- Provide assured income support to eligible farmer families.
- Enable timely purchase of agricultural inputs.
- Reduce dependence on informal credit and enhance rural livelihoods.

• Key Features:

- Financial assistance of **₹ 6,000 per year** to eligible landholding farmer families.
- Amount is transferred in **three equal instalments of ₹ 2,000** through **Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT)**.
- Uses **Aadhaar-based authentication** and the **Public Financial Management System (PFMS)** for transparent and efficient fund transfer.
- Beneficiary identification is carried out by **State/UT Governments** based on land records.

• Significance:

- Enhances income security for farmers and improves resilience against agricultural uncertainties.
- Supports timely investment in seeds, fertilisers, and other farm inputs.
- Strengthens rural demand, financial inclusion, and agricultural productivity.

- Complements schemes such as **PM Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY)**, **Kisan Credit Card (KCC)**, **e-NAM**, and the **Digital Agriculture Mission**.

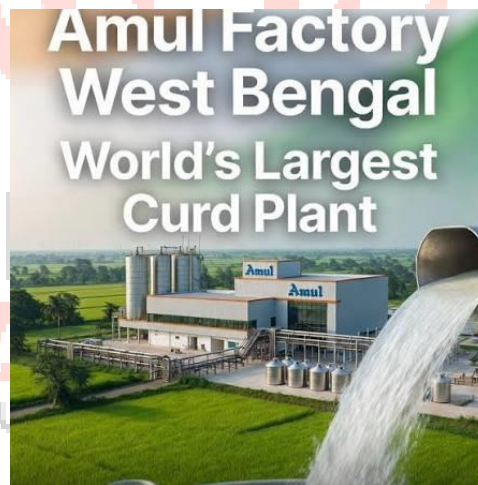
- **Challenges:**

- Exclusion of tenant farmers, sharecroppers, and landless agricultural labourers.
- Inaccurate or outdated land records leading to beneficiary exclusion.
- Need for continuous verification and updating of beneficiary databases.

4. Amul Bengal Dairy Project – World’s Largest Curd Manufacturing Plant

Why in news?

Amul’s **Bengal Dairy Project** is a major dairy-sector investment in West Bengal, with the foundation ceremony for its integrated dairy complex held at **Sankrail Food Park, Howrah, on 19 July 2026**. The project is significant from the perspective of **cooperatives, rural economy, food processing and the White Revolution 2.0**.



Background

About:

- **Location:** Sankrail Food Park, Howrah, West Bengal.
- **Investment:** Around **₹ 700 crore**.
- **Milk-processing capacity:** **30 lakh litres/day**.
- **Curd & cultured dairy products:** Around **10 lakh kg/day (1,000 tonnes/day)**.

- It is projected to become the **world's largest curd manufacturing facility**.
- The complex will also produce/process products such as **milk, paneer, ghee, sweets, flavoured milk and ice cream**.
- **Beneficiaries:** More than **1.25 lakh milk-producing farmers** in West Bengal, including **over 30,000 women milk producers**.

Why is it important?

1. Strengthening dairy cooperatives

- Connects milk producers more closely with organised dairy processing and marketing.
- Reflects the **Anand cooperative model**, where farmers collectively participate in the dairy value chain.

2. White Revolution 2.0

- The project is linked to the government's broader objective of expanding the cooperative dairy ecosystem under **White Revolution 2.0**.
- Focus shifts from merely increasing milk production to **value addition, processing and better market access**.

3. Higher value addition

- Instead of selling raw milk, farmers can become part of a value chain producing **curd, paneer, ghee, sweets and other processed products**.
- This can improve the realisation from each litre of milk.

4. Rural employment and women's participation

- Dairy farming provides relatively accessible livelihood opportunities in rural areas.
- The project's inclusion of more than **30,000 women milk producers** highlights the potential of dairy cooperatives for **women's economic empowerment**.

5. Food-processing infrastructure

- Large-scale dairy plants create demand for **cold chains, transportation, packaging, storage and logistics**.
- This can strengthen West Bengal's food-processing ecosystem.



CULTURE & HISTORY

1. Mangal Pandey – Birth Anniversary

Why in news?

19 July marks the birth anniversary of **Mangal Pandey**, one of the prominent figures associated with the **Revolt of 1857**. The Government of India commemorated his birth anniversary in 2026 as well.



Background:

Who was Mangal Pandey?

- **Born:** 19 July 1827, Ballia, Uttar Pradesh.
- **Died:** 8 April 1857, Barrackpore, Bengal Presidency.
- He served as a **sepoys in the 34th Bengal Native Infantry** of the East India Company's army.
- He is remembered for his role in the events at **Barrackpore on 29 March 1857**, shortly before the wider uprising.

The Barrackpore incident

The immediate background was the introduction of the **new Enfield rifle cartridges**, which soldiers had to bite open before loading. A widespread rumour held that the cartridges were greased with **cow and pig fat**, offending the religious beliefs of Hindu and Muslim sepoys.

On **29 March 1857**, Mangal Pandey confronted British officers at Barrackpore and attacked them. He was subsequently arrested, court-martialled and sentenced to death. His execution was carried out on **8 April 1857**, ten days before the originally scheduled date.

Significance in the Revolt of 1857

1. Early spark of rebellion:

The Barrackpore incident became an important early manifestation of sepoy discontent. The wider uprising subsequently erupted at **Meerut on 10 May 1857** and spread to Delhi and other regions.

2. Military discontent:

His actions reflected the growing resentment among Indian soldiers over perceived religious interference, discriminatory treatment and broader grievances against Company rule.

3. Symbol of resistance:

Mangal Pandey subsequently became a powerful symbol of resistance to British colonial rule and is commemorated as a freedom fighter and revolutionary.

2. Mizoram Natural History Museum

Why in news?

The **Natural History Museum (NHM), Mizoram University, Aizawl** has recently gained national importance after being notified as **India's 21st Designated Repository under the Biological Diversity Act, 2002**. The Central Government issued the notification on **19 June 2026**, following the recommendation of the National Biodiversity Authority (NBA).

Background

Key facts

- **Location:** Mizoram University, Tanhril, Aizawl, Mizoram.
- **Established:** The museum was established in **2022** under Mizoram University, with the underlying biodiversity-documentation project initiated earlier with support from the Department of Biotechnology

- **Biodiversity context:** It lies within the **Indo-Burma Biodiversity Hotspot**, one of the world's important biodiversity-rich regions.
- **New status: 21st Designated Repository in India** under the Biological Diversity Act, 2002.

What is a Designated Repository?

Under **Section 39 of the Biological Diversity Act, 2002**, the Central Government can notify institutions as **Designated Repositories** for preserving authenticated biological specimens accessed under the Act.

Their role includes:

- Preserving **voucher specimens** for species identification.
- Maintaining biological material for **taxonomic research**.
- Supporting scientific documentation of India's biodiversity.
- Helping establish reliable reference collections for biodiversity research



What will Mizoram's museum preserve?

The museum specialises in several relatively less-studied groups, including:

Flora

- Pteridophytes
- Macrofungi

Fauna

- Reptiles
- Amphibians
- Fishes
- Moths
- Beetles

- Butterflies

This is important because the North-East has enormous biodiversity but many taxa remain inadequately documented.

Why is it important?

1. Biodiversity conservation

- Creates a scientific repository of biological specimens.
- Strengthens **ex-situ documentation and conservation**.

2. Taxonomy and scientific research

- Authenticated specimens help researchers correctly identify species and study their distribution and evolution.

3. North-East India

- Mizoram and the wider North-East are part of the **Indo-Burma Biodiversity Hotspot**.
- The region has **7,500+ flowering plant species and 2,000+ faunal species**, making systematic documentation particularly important

4. Biological Diversity Act, 2002

- Provides a direct example of how India's biodiversity governance architecture works through institutions such as the **National Biodiversity Authority and Designated Repositories**.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

1. GAGAN – GPS Aided GEO Augmented Navigation

Why in News?

GAGAN was in news as India successfully demonstrated its first satellite-based landing system approach for a commercial aircraft using GAGAN technology.

Background

GPS Aided GEO Augmented Navigation (GAGAN) is India's **Satellite-Based Augmentation System (SBAS)** that improves the accuracy, integrity, and reliability of **GPS signals** over the Indian region. Developed by

- Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)
- Airports Authority of India (AAI)



Purpose

- Provides accurate navigation services for:
 - Civil aviation
 - Aircraft landing and approach guidance
 - Air traffic management
 - Maritime navigation
 - Disaster management
 - Intelligent transport systems

Key Features

- Uses a network of:
 - Ground reference stations
 - Master control centres
 - Communication satellites
- Provides **meter-level positional accuracy** compared to normal GPS.
- Covers the **Indian Flight Information Region (FIR)** and surrounding areas.

Significance

- Enables **precision approach and landing** of aircraft without relying only on ground-based navigation systems.
- Improves flight safety and reduces fuel consumption.
- Makes India one of the few countries with an operational **SBAS**.

Satellites Used

- GAGAN payloads are hosted on **GSAT series satellites** (e.g., GSAT-8, GSAT-10, GSAT-15).

NavIC and GAGAN are different:

- **NavIC** → India's own regional navigation system.
- **GAGAN** → Augments GPS signals using satellites.

2. BHASHINI – BHASHa Interface for India

Why in news?

BHASHINI was in news in July 2026 because the Digital India BHASHINI Division (DIBD), MeitY, conducted the **“BHASHINI Rajyam”** State Engagement Workshop in Goa on 21 July 2026. The initiative focuses on using **AI-powered multilingual technologies for governance**, particularly in Konkani and other Indian languages.

Background

What is BHASHINI?

- An **AI-powered National Language Translation Mission** that enables **real-time translation** and speech-based access across Indian languages.
- It aims to make **digital services accessible in all Indian languages**, promoting **digital inclusion**.

Launched By

- **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)** under the **Digital India Programme**.

Implemented By

- **Digital India BHASHINI Division (DIBD)**.

Key Features

- AI-based **text-to-text**, **speech-to-text**, **text-to-speech**, and **speech-to-speech** translation.
- Supports multiple **Indian languages**.
- Provides **open APIs** for integration into government and private digital platforms.
- Uses AI models for translation, transcription, and voice assistance.

Applications

- UMANG
- DigiLocker
- e-Governance portals
- Customer support
- Education and healthcare services

BHASHINI Rajyam

BHASHINI Rajyam is a state-level engagement initiative of the **Digital India BHASHINI Division (DIBD)**, **MeitY**, aimed at promoting **AI-powered multilingual and voice-first digital governance** in Indian languages. It is essentially the state-level implementation and adoption platform for the broader **BHASHINI** ecosystem.



What does “BHASHINI Rajyam” do?

It works directly with **State Governments, departments, startups, academia and language experts** to integrate BHASHINI technologies into state-level governance.

Key focus areas include:

- **Voice-first governance** – citizens can interact with services using speech.
- **Real-time translation** between Indian languages.
- Development of **AI models for regional languages**.
- Making government websites, documents and services available in local languages.
- Building language datasets and language-specific AI tools.
- Encouraging **state-level language innovation ecosystems**.

3. Semicon 2.0

Why in news?

Semicon 2.0 is the second phase of the **Semicon India Programme**, approved by the Union Cabinet in **July 2026**, with a total fiscal outlay of **₹ 1,27,500 crore**. It seeks to move India beyond individual semiconductor projects towards a **complete, resilient domestic semiconductor ecosystem**.

Background

Semiconductors are critical for **AI, telecom, automobiles, defence, space, consumer electronics and digital infrastructure**. India has traditionally been strong in chip design but dependent on imports for manufacturing, equipment, materials and components.

Hence, Semicon 2.0 aims to address the **entire semiconductor value chain**, reducing strategic vulnerabilities and increasing domestic value addition.



Six pillars of Semicon 2.0

1. Chip Design

- Deepen India's chip-design ecosystem.
- Support development of **indigenous semiconductor IP** and system-level products.
- Build on the existing base of startups and MSMEs working on chip design.

2. Machines & Materials

- Promote domestic production of **semiconductor manufacturing equipment, specialty chemicals, materials and industrial gases**.
- Reduce dependence on imported inputs.

3. Semiconductor Fabs

- Encourage additional **silicon, compound-semiconductor and other fabrication facilities**.
- Expand India's actual chip-manufacturing capacity.

4. ATMP/OSAT

- Strengthen **Assembly, Testing, Marking and Packaging (ATMP)** and **Outsourced Semiconductor Assembly and Test (OSAT)** facilities.
- Packaging is increasingly important with advanced chip architectures.

5. Research & Development

- Promote next-generation semiconductor technologies.
- Strengthen industry-academia-research linkages.

6. Talent Development

- Build a skilled semiconductor workforce covering **design, fabrication, packaging, equipment and materials**.
- Address the global shortage of semiconductor professionals.

4. Vikram-I

Why in news?

Vikram-I is the orbital launch vehicle developed by Indian space startup **Skyroot Aerospace**. On **18 July 2026**, it successfully lifted off from the **Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota**, becoming the **first privately developed Indian orbital rocket to launch from Indian soil**.

Background

About Vikram-I

- **Developer:** Skyroot Aerospace, Hyderabad-based Indian space startup.
- **Mission:** **Mission Aagaman – Test Flight-1**.
- **Launch:** 18 July 2026, Sriharikota.

- **Payload capability:** About **350 kg to Low Earth Orbit (LEO)**.
- **Target orbit:** Around **450 km LEO**.
- **Propulsion:** Combination of **solid-fuel stages** and a **3D-printed liquid engine**.
- **Structure:** Uses an **all-carbon-composite architecture**.
- The mission carried multiple payloads, including **SCOPE** and **Grahaa's SOLARAS S3**; two satellites were successfully injected into LEO.



Why is Vikram-I important?

1. First private orbital launch from India

It marks a transition from a predominantly **government-led space-launch ecosystem to a public-private space ecosystem**. Skyroot became the first private Indian company to successfully launch an orbital rocket from Indian soil.

2. Commercialisation of India's space sector

Private launch vehicles can provide:

- More frequent launches
- Dedicated launches for small satellites
- Lower-cost access to space
- Greater competition and innovation

3. Space-sector reforms

Vikram-I is an outcome of India's **2020 space-sector reforms** and **Indian Space Policy 2023**, which opened the space sector to private participation across launch vehicles, satellites and space applications. **IN-SPACe** facilitates and authorises private-sector participation.

4. Growth of the space-startup ecosystem

India's space-startup ecosystem has expanded dramatically, with **400+ startups by 2026**, compared with only one in 2014, according to the government.

5. CDSCO Approval of India's First Dengue Vaccine

Why in news?

In **July 2026**, India approved its **first dengue vaccine**, marking a major milestone in the country's public-health response to a major vector-borne disease.

Background

About the vaccine:

- **Vaccine:** Qdenga® (Dengue Tetravalent Vaccine – Live, Attenuated / TAK-003)
- **Developer/manufacturer:** Takeda Pharmaceutical Company
- **Indian regulator:** Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) under the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare.
- **Approval:** 21 July 2026
- **Age group:** 4–60 years
- **Type:** Recombinant live attenuated, tetravalent vaccine
- **Coverage:** Targets all **four dengue virus serotypes (DENV-1 to DENV-4)**.
- The vaccine has WHO prequalification and regulatory approval in **42 countries**. More than **24 million doses** have been distributed globally.



Why is this important?

1. Major public-health milestone

Dengue is a **mosquito-borne viral disease**, transmitted mainly by *Aedes aegypti*. India experiences recurrent outbreaks, particularly during and after the monsoon. The vaccine adds a **preventive tool** to existing measures such as:

- Vector control
- Elimination of mosquito breeding sites
- Disease surveillance
- Early diagnosis
- Case management

Importantly, vaccination **does not replace vector control**.

2. Tetravalent protection

Dengue is caused by **four major serotypes**. Infection with one serotype does not provide complete protection against the others.

Hence, a vaccine capable of generating immunity against all four serotypes is particularly significant.

3. Regulatory significance

The approval followed scientific evaluation of **quality, safety and efficacy**, under the **Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 and Drugs Rules, 1945**.

CDSCO's vaccine records also list the dengue tetravalent vaccine in its 2026 biological-products approvals.

How does Qdenga work?

Qdenga is a **live attenuated vaccine**—it uses weakened versions of dengue-virus components to stimulate the immune system without causing the disease in the normal manner.

It is designed to generate an immune response against **DENV-1, DENV-2, DENV-3 and DENV-4**.

The vaccine is administered as **two doses three months apart**.

India's dengue challenge

Dengue control is particularly difficult because:

- **Aedes mosquitoes** breed in relatively small collections of stagnant water.
- Urbanisation and inadequate water/waste management can create breeding sites.
- Transmission is influenced by **temperature, rainfall and humidity**.
- Multiple serotypes circulate.
- Immunity after natural infection is serotype-specific.
- Climate change can potentially alter the geographical and seasonal distribution of mosquito-borne diseases.

Challenges ahead

- **Affordability & accessibility:** Regulatory approval does not automatically mean universal access. Cost, distribution and availability will determine public-health impact.
- **Vaccination strategy:** India will need evidence-based decisions regarding the appropriate **target population, geographic prioritisation and integration with existing dengue-control programmes**.
- **Surveillance:** India has begun mapping circulating dengue serotypes. This is important because the four serotypes can circulate simultaneously and have implications for disease severity and vaccination strategies.
- **Continued vector control:** Even with vaccination, mosquito-control measures remain essential because vaccination alone cannot eliminate dengue transmission.

6. Private-Sector Participation in Space

Why in news?

Cumulative private investment in India's space sector reached **\$618.5 million** by March 31, 2026

Background

India is actively promoting **private-sector participation** in the space sector to enhance innovation, commercialisation, and global competitiveness.

Objective:

- Increase India's share in the global space economy.
- Encourage innovation, investment, and technology development.
- Reduce dependence on the government for space activities.

Key Reforms

IN-SPACe (Indian National Space Promotion and Authorization Centre):

- Established as an **autonomous nodal agency** under the Department of Space.
- Facilitates and authorises private participation in space activities and has granted 108 authorizations to **Non-Government Entities (NGEs)** for various space activities.
- Provides access to ISRO's infrastructure and technical expertise.

Indian Space Policy, 2023:

- Clearly defines the roles of **ISRO**, **NSIL**(New Space India Limited-commercial arm of ISRO), **IN-SPACe**, and **private entities**.
- Enables private companies to undertake **satellite manufacturing, launch services, satellite operations, and downstream applications**.

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI):

- Liberalised FDI norms in the space sector.
- Allows up to **100% FDI** in specified space activities under different approval routes, attracting global investment.

Role of the Private Sector

- Design and manufacture satellites and launch vehicles.
- Provide satellite communication and Earth observation services.
- Develop space applications in agriculture, disaster management, navigation, and telecommunications.
- Promote space startups and commercial launch services.

Benefits

- Accelerates technological innovation and indigenous manufacturing.
- Generates high-skilled employment and startup growth.
- Attracts domestic and foreign investment.
- Enhances India's competitiveness in the global space economy.
- Supports the vision of **Atmanirbhar Bharat** and the **New Space India** ecosystem.

Challenges

- Need for a robust regulatory and licensing framework.
- Ensuring cybersecurity and protection of strategic technologies.
- Balancing commercial interests with national security.

7. NaVIC

Why in news?

NavIC (Navigation with Indian Constellation) is in the news because its operational constellation has fallen below the minimum required for standalone positioning services, prompting India to accelerate replacement satellites. The issue was highlighted in Parliament in July–August 2026, with NVS-03 ready for launch and three more satellites planned.

Background:

NavIC (Navigation with Indian Constellation)

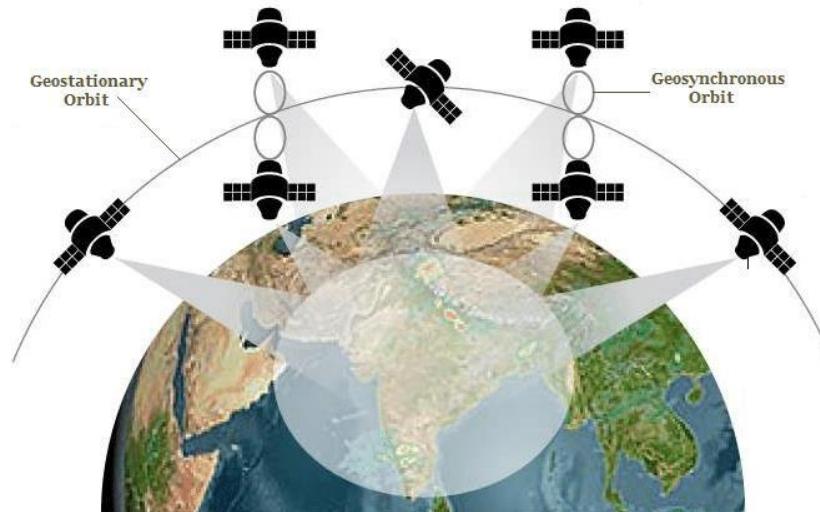
- **Developed by:** Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO).
- Formerly known as the **Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS)**.
- **Objective:** To provide **accurate Position, Navigation, and Timing (PNT)** services over **India and up to about 1,500 km beyond its borders**.

Key Features

- Consists of a constellation of **7 operational satellites** (with replacement satellites launched periodically to maintain the system).
- Provides **24×7** navigation services.
- Offers positioning accuracy of **better than 20 metres** over its primary service area.
- Operates independently, ensuring **strategic autonomy** without relying on foreign navigation systems.

Services Offered

- **Standard Positioning Service (SPS):**
 - Available for civilian users.
 - Provides positioning, navigation, and timing information.
- **Restricted Service (RS):**
 - Encrypted service for **authorised users**, including defence and strategic agencies



Applications

- Road, rail, air, and maritime navigation.
- Disaster management and emergency response.
- Fleet tracking and logistics.
- Precision agriculture.
- Surveying and mapping.
- Timing synchronisation for telecom, banking, and power grids.
- Defence and border surveillance.

Significance

- Strengthens **India's strategic and technological self-reliance**.
- Reduces dependence on foreign systems such as:
 - GPS (USA)
 - GLONASS (Russia)
 - Galileo (European Union)
 - BeiDou (China)
- Enhances national security and supports the **Atmanirbhar Bharat** initiative.
- Supports the growth of India's space-based services and digital economy.

Recent Developments

- NavIC is being integrated into **smartphones, vehicle tracking systems, fisheries, and maritime navigation.**
- The government is promoting wider adoption through support for **NavIC-compatible chipsets and receivers.**

8. Regulation of AI-Generated Deepfakes and AI-Enabled Cyber Threats

Why in news?

In July 2026 the Government announced measures to strengthen India's framework against AI-generated deepfakes, synthetic media and AI-enabled cyber threats, including new responsible-AI projects for deepfake detection.

Background:

Deepfakes, have emerged as a significant threat to public trust, democratic processes, and individual privacy, with potential misuse in misinformation campaigns, financial fraud, and identity theft.

Deepfakes refer to synthetic media, such as audio, video, or text, generated using AI techniques which create **highly realistic but fabricated** content

The Government of India has strengthened the legal and regulatory framework to combat **AI-generated deepfakes** and other **Synthetic Generated Information (SGI)**.

The objective is to ensure an **open, safe, trusted, and accountable cyberspace** while promoting responsible AI innovation.

Legal Framework

1. Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000 provides the primary legal framework to address deepfake-related crimes,

- **Section 66C:** Identity theft.
- **Section 66D:** Cheating by personation using computer resources.
- **Section 66E:** Violation of privacy.
- **Sections 67 & 67A:** Publishing/transmitting obscene or sexually explicit content.
- **Section 69A:** Power to block unlawful online content.

- **Section 79:** Intermediaries required to remove unlawful content; failure may result in loss of safe harbour protection.
- **Sections 78 & 80:** Empower police to investigate cyber offences.

2. Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023

- **Section 353:** Penalises dissemination of false or misleading information causing public mischief or fear.
- **Section 111:** Covers organised cybercrimes, including deepfake-related offences.

IT Rules Amendment, 2026 (10 February 2026)

Major Provisions

- Mandatory **labelling and traceable metadata** for AI-generated content.
- Stronger user awareness regarding legal consequences.
- Explicit prohibition of:
 - Child Sexual Exploitation Material (CSEM)
 - Non-consensual intimate imagery (NCII)
 - AI-based impersonation
 - Harmful deepfakes
- Mandatory deployment of automated AI detection tools.
- Reduced timelines:
 - **Removal of unlawful content: 36 hours → 3 hours**
 - **General grievance disposal: 72 hours → 36 hours**
 - **Sensitive complaints (nudity/impersonation): 24 hours → 2 hours**
- Non-compliance may result in **loss of safe harbour protection under Section 79 of the IT Act.**

Detection of Deepfakes

India AI Mission – Safe & Trusted AI Pillar

- Implemented by India AI, an independent business division under **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)**
- **13 Responsible AI projects approved** for deepfake detection.

Major Projects

- **Saakshya** (IIT Jodhpur & IIT Madras): Multi-agent deepfake detection framework.
- **AI Vishleshak**: Audio-visual forgery detection system.
- **IIT Kharagpur**: Real-time voice deepfake detection system.



Cyber Security Awareness

- **Information Security Education and Awareness (ISEA):**
 - **6,650 awareness workshops** conducted.
 - **11.37 lakh+ beneficiaries**, including students, teachers, law enforcement personnel, and government officials.
- Awareness materials disseminated through **Stay Safe Online, ISEA**, print, electronic, and social media.

CERT-In Initiatives (Computer emergency Response Team- India)

- India's national nodal agency for cyber security,
- Regular advisories on AI-related cyber threats.
- Published **Deepfake Advisory**
- Conducts awareness campaigns on cyber hygiene and online safety.

Significance

- Strengthens India's legal framework against AI misuse.
- Enhances platform accountability and user safety.
- Protects citizens from misinformation, impersonation, financial fraud, and privacy violations.
- Promotes **Responsible AI** while fostering innovation under the **IndiaAI Mission**.
- Improves trust in India's digital ecosystem and supports **Digital India**.

Challenges

- Rapid evolution of generative AI technologies.
- Cross-border enforcement against anonymous actors.
- Balancing regulation with innovation and freedom of expression.

Need for continuous technological upgradation and public awareness.

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THE IMPACT IAS ACADEMY, # B-25, 2nd floor, AS towers,
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