

# UPSC MONTHLY CURRENT AFFAIRS

**JULY 2025**



India-U.K. Relationship

Semi-Conductor Industry in India

10 Years of the Digital India Initiative

Inequality in India

BRICS

**Highlights**

Species and Places in News Explained via Infographic

# Our Toppers in CSE 2024



**AAKASH GARG**  
**(AIR-5)**

Interview Guidance Program



**RAJ KRISHNA JHA**  
**(AIR-8)**

Interview Guidance Program



**ADITYA VIKRAM AGARWAL**  
**(AIR-9)**

Interview Guidance Program



**SHAH MARGI CHIRAG**  
**(AIR-4)**

Interview Guidance Program



**ETTABOYINA SAI SHIVANI**  
**(AIR-11)**

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**VIBHOR BHARADWAJ**  
**(AIR-19)**

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**SIVACHANDRAN B**  
**(AIR-23)**

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**R RANGAMANJU**  
**(AIR-24)**

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**RISHABH CHOUDHARY**  
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**(AIR-32)**

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**4** *in* **Top 10**

**279+** Selections in CSE 2024

**and Many More Top Rankers...**

# Editor's Note



Dear Aspirants,

Welcome to the latest-July- edition of our current affairs magazine, a one-stop solution for all current affairs – designed to provide holistic coverage of domestic and international events.

As the UPSC examination continues to evolve with time, showing dynamism, it requires that we create comprehensive, in-depth, analytical, relevant, and appropriate content. This month, we have curated a mix of infographic-based content and textual descriptions spread across themes. Our feature articles are dedicated to covering the most significant events occurring on the domestic and global planes.

It is our objective to provide readers with structured and easy-to-comprehend content, which can be used by aspirants to broaden their subject-specific worldview and utilize information and analysis to supplement their preparation. Our attempt is to cut the clutter generally found in subject-specific vocabulary and jargon, and instead present it in a simpler manner.

We are committed to providing essential support to aspirants and acting like a pole star, guiding students towards content rooted in the UPSC syllabus.

Wishing you the very best for your journey ahead!

Warm Regards,

Mr. Sriram  
Chief Mentor  
SRIRAM's IAS

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## FEATURE ARTICLES

### India-U.K. Relationship

#### Context

India and the United Kingdom signed a Comprehensive Economic Trade Agreement during the Prime Minister's visit to the U.K.

#### Time Line of India-UK Relationship

Year	Major Developments
1940s	India joined the Commonwealth of Nations signaling intent for continued engagement with the UK
1960s - 1970s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>During Indo-China &amp; Indo-Pakistan wars UK takes a neutral or Pakistan-leaning stance</li> <li>UK recognizes Bangladesh's independence (1972)</li> <li>UK reduces military presence in Indian Ocean</li> </ul>
1980s	<b>Strengthening Economic and Political Ties</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bilateral trade and investment cooperation begins</li> <li>Indian PMs visit UK, showing intent for deeper ties</li> </ul>
1990s	<b>Towards Improved Relations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>UK actively seeks stronger economic engagement</li> <li>Relations normalize and expand post-Cold War</li> </ul>
2000s	<b>Strategic Partnership Emerges</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2004 – Bilateral relations elevated to "Strategic Partnership"</li> <li>2005 – Establishment of JETCO for structured trade cooperation</li> </ul>
2010s	<b>Enhanced Partnership and Evolving Dynamics</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2010 – Upgraded to "Enhanced Partnership for the Future"</li> <li>2015 – Signing of Defence &amp; International Security Partnership (DISP)</li> <li>2016 – Brexit alters trade &amp; diplomatic dynamics</li> <li>2017 – Launch of UK-India Year of Culture at Buckingham Palace</li> </ul>

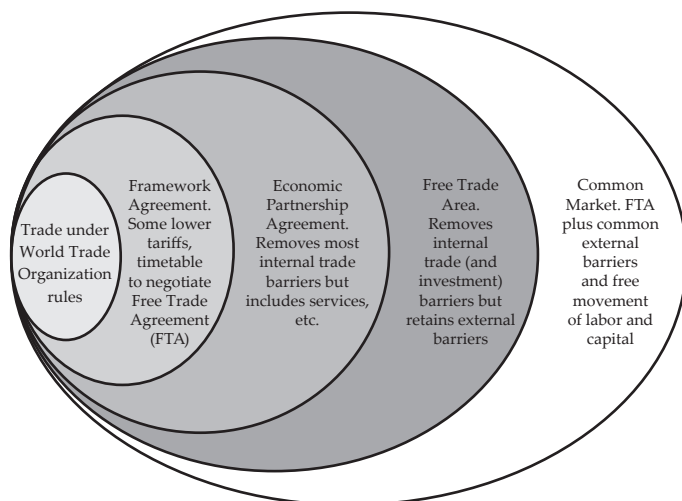
#### Towards Comprehensive Strategic Collaboration

2020s

- 2021 – Launch of Enhanced Trade Partnership
- 2021 – Adoption of India-UK Roadmap 2030
- 2022 – Launch of FTA negotiations (ongoing)
- 2025- India-UK signed FTA

#### India UK CETA

- It eliminates tariffs on approximately 99% of tariff **lines**, benefiting key Indian export sectors like textiles, chemicals, processed food, marine products, and engineering goods.
  - Aim:** To double the volume of trade between the two nations to over \$100 billion by 2030, signalling a shift in strategic and economic alignment in a post-Brexit global order.
- In key labour-intensive sectors, tariffs have been reduced to zero from previously high rates—up to 20% on marine products, 12% on textiles and clothing, 8% on chemicals, and 10% on base metals.
- In Agriculture, Indian farmers will gain access to the UK market for high-value products.
  - A free trade agreement is an arrangement where two or more countries commit to opening up their markets to one another by lowering or removing tariffs, quotas, and other trade barriers, making it easier for goods and services to move between them.
- Since 2014, India has signed five FTAs, including with Mauritius, the UAE, Australia, EFTA (European Free Trade Association), and now the UK.
- Other countries and blocs with which India has FTAs:** Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, South Korea, Japan, Asean (10-nation bloc), Australia, the UAE, Mauritius, and EFTA (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland).



### Key Highlights of the Agreement

- **Double Contributions Convention:** It will exempt Indian professionals and their employers from social security payments in the UK for up to three years, improving the cost competitiveness of Indian talent.
- **Technology and Innovation:** The partnership focuses on AI, semiconductors, biotech, critical minerals, 6G, cyber security, and health tech.
- **Defence and Security:** A 10-year Defence Industrial Roadmap, partnerships in advanced technologies.
- **Climate and Clean Energy:** The two countries will drive climate finance, clean energy collaboration (offshore wind, hydrogen, SMRs).
- **Education:** Initiatives such as the Green Skills Partnership and Young Professionals Scheme aim to build future-ready talent.
- **Multilateral Cooperation:** Both nations committed to strengthening and reforming multilateralism.

### INDIA'S BENEFITS FROM THE TRADE DEAL

#### Benefits to Consumer:

Zero duty goods and service will bring prices to the lower side benefiting consumers. With tariff implementation, goods like whiskey, automobiles etc. are going to come down.

#### Cheaper UK imports:

British products such as soft drinks, cosmetics, chocolates, biscuits, lamb, salmon, and cars etc.

#### Improvement in Exports

Export items like leather, footwear, and clothing to the UK without high duties.

#### Access to sophisticated items:

Critical and sophisticated goods such as medical devices, aerospace parts made at a cheaper cost would be available for the Indian market.

#### Double Contribution Convention

The agreement will save 20 percent of an employee's salary. More than 75,000 employees, mainly from the IT sector, are expected to benefit. The total financial benefit to Indian companies and employees is estimated to exceed Rs 4,000 crore.

### UK'S BENEFITS FROM THE DEAL

#### Major cuts in Indian tariffs

With reductions secured on 90% of tariff lines. In 10 years, 85% of these will be exempt from tariffs.

#### New jobs and increased wages

The UK will be able to create over 2,200 jobs as a direct result of the trade agreement.

#### Increased business opportunities

UK businesses will gain expanded access to public procurement opportunities in India.

#### Cheaper prices and more choice

On clothes, shoes, and food products.

### Cooperation Areas Between India and UK : Importance

- **Strategic:** The India-UK partnership was elevated to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership in 2021, and since then, the two countries have maintained regular high-level engagements.
- **Economic Cooperation:** India and the UK have strong economic relations which have resulted in steady increase in bilateral trade and investment.
  - India-UK bilateral trade (both goods and services) stood at around 43 billion during the 2024 with imports at around 17 billion and exports at around 26 billion pounds.
  - Total bilateral trade in goods is around 18 billion pounds while trade in services is around 25 billion pounds in 2024.
  - UK is the 6<sup>th</sup> largest inward investor in India, with a cumulative equity investment of US \$ 35 billion till September 2024.
- **Defence:** The Indo-Pacific region's rapidly evolving, economically dynamic, yet increasingly contested strategic landscape has necessitated a British pivot to the region.
  - India and the UK engage in regular bilateral and multilateral military exercises. These include flagship exercises like Exercise Konkan 2023, annual bilateral maritime exercise between Indian Navy-Royal Navy in the Arabian Sea off the West Coast of India
    - o Exercise Cobra Warrior
    - o Exercise Ajeya Warrior
    - o Exercise TarangShakti etc.
- **S&T, Research and Innovation:** India-UK Science and Innovation Council (SIC) which is held once every two





years is chaired by the Ministers on both sides to develop bilateral relationships in science, technology and innovation. In the past few years, the UK has emerged as India's second largest international research and innovation partner with a joint research programme to the tune of £300-400 million.

- **Health:** India-UK bilateral cooperation in mitigating the effects of COVID-19 Pandemic was significant.
  - The joint research and development of the COVID-19 vaccine, under a licensing agreement between UK-based AstraZeneca and Serum Institute of India, was an unprecedented example of India-UK cooperation in addressing global issues of concern.
- **Education:** It is an important pillar of India-UK Bilateral relationship. Since 2015-16, the number of first year enrolment of Indian students in the UK Universities have been increasing. Estimates based on the number of new student visas is that the number of Indian students in the UK is around 170,000.
- **People-to-People Exchanges:** India and UK signed the Migration and Mobility Partnership (MMP) Agreement on 4 May 2021 with the intention to address swifter movement of working professionals between the two countries - an important element of India-UK economic partnership.
- **Indian Diaspora in UK:** The UK has a large Indian diaspora of 1.864 million as per the 2021 Census. It forms about 2.6% of the total population of the UK, which is estimated at 68 million (in 2022).
  - The Indian diaspora has made valuable contributions in the areas of academia, literature, arts, medicines, science, sports, industry, business, and politics.

### Tensions and Divergences

- **Colonial Legacy and Extremism:** Efforts to deepen India-UK ties face obstacles due to colonial legacies and extremist activities related to Khalistan and Pakistan, including vandalism of the Indian High Commission in London in March 2023.
- **Media portrayals** critical of Indian leadership and diplomatic issues involving Canada's allegations against India have complicated security and intelligence cooperation.

- **Extradition Issues:** Several Indian fugitives have found refuge in the UK, with Britain rejecting some Indian extradition requests.
- **Geopolitical Realignments:** Diverging positions on global conflicts—such as the Russia-Ukraine war—and India's strategic autonomy can create friction in multilateral forums.
  - The UK's China strategy remains unclear, balancing cooperation and competition, with recent visits signaling pragmatic engagement.
- **Differing positions on global issues,** such as climate change policies and carbon border taxes, require diplomatic engagement to align interests and ensure mutual benefits.

### Latest Developments

- *India and U.K free trade agreement has chapters on issues including goods, services, innovation, government procurement, and intellectual property rights.*
  - *It will allow export of labour-intensive products such as leather, footwear and clothing at concessional rates, while making imports of whisky and cars from Britain cheaper.*
- *It also helps double trade between the two economies to \$120 billion by 2030*
- *The main proposals of the agreement include slashing of import duty on British Whisky and gin from 150% to 75% before reducing to 40% by ten years of the deal; automotive tariffs will be reduced from over 100% to 10% under a quota.*
- *On the services front, the agreement eases mobility for professionals including Contractual Service Suppliers; Business Visitors; Investors; Intra-Corporate Transferees; partners and dependent children of Intra-Corporate Transferees with right to work; and Independent Professionals like yoga instructors, musicians and chefs.*

### Conclusion

- The recent Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and the UK's strategic pivot towards the Indo-Pacific region are expected to reshape bilateral ties. By tackling emerging challenges through cooperation and strategic dialogue, both countries can forge a strong, forward-thinking partnership that supports regional stability and advances global progress.

**Significance of Voting**

- **Agent of Change:** It is a way to bring about change in the governance apparatus of the country. Through voting, a more efficient government can be established by bringing other political parties into power.
- **Right to Vote:** It is the constitutional right of every citizen of a country. Through voting, every citizen has the ability of getting his voice heard.
- **Impact on Life:** Any political party that has been elected by the people takes the decisions that affect every aspect of the people. Elected officials take decisions on behalf of the people that affect their well-being in every sense.
- **Better Development:** Voting is a way through which elected officials have numerous opportunities of policy formulation for better management of scarce resources of the country that are necessary for inclusive development.

**Challenges of Inclusive Voting**

- **Persons with Disabilities (PsDs):** One of the biggest challenges of inclusive voting is lack of participation of the PwDs in the election.
  - According to Census 2011, India has 2.21% PwDs which is a big chunk that could not able to cast their vote.
- **Unavailability of Data:** Another big challenge is the data collation on the persons with disabilities.
  - Although the Election Commission of India in collaboration with the Department of Social Justice and Empowerment is engaged in identifying data on PwDs, there is far more that needs to be done.
- **Attitudinal Barriers:** Many people have an indifferent attitude towards casting their vote during elections. They think that casting their vote will not bring any change.
- **Trust Deficit:** Most of the politicians are corrupt and power hungry and hence do not have high morality and integrity. This is the image that hinders many people from casting their vote.
- **Administrative Hassels:** There are several administrative issues like mistakes in voter lists, long lines at polling stations, and complicated voting procedures can discourage people from voting.

**Way Forward**

- **Creating Awareness:** Efforts must be made to create public awareness through various programs like campaigns, contests, street plays among the people

about their Right to Vote and the impact it made over their well being.

- **Accessibility:** There is a dire need to provide suitable means of transportation and communication to the persons with disabilities in order to make them comfortable so that they could cast their vote.
- **Administrative Barriers:** There is a need to mitigate administrative barriers like, long waiting times, long distance especially for the people residing in distant and rural places.
- **Misinformation:** Many times misinformation or false information is spread amongst the people that negatively impact the voting turn out. Therefore efforts must be made to conduct free and fair elections.
- **Informed Choice:** People of any constituency are always busy in fulfilling their numerous responsibilities. During elections, they have time constraints to conduct research on the right candidates, local issues to cast their vote.
  - Hence, implementing measures such as early voting, mail-in ballots, extended polling hours, and electronic voting systems can help mitigate this obstacle and engage a broad range of voters during elections.

**Conclusion**

For strengthening democracy, casting the vote is quintessential. Right to Vote is a very important right that has the potential to reforming the governance architecture of any country. Therefore, efforts should be made to undertake useful and necessary steps like easing the registration process, incentivizing and recognizing the voters to increase the voter turnout in elections.

**National Cooperation Policy – 2025****Context**

Recently, the Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation unveiled the National Cooperation Policy-2025. Also, he laid the foundation stone for India's first national cooperative university named as Tribhuvan Sahkari University, in Anand, Gujarat.

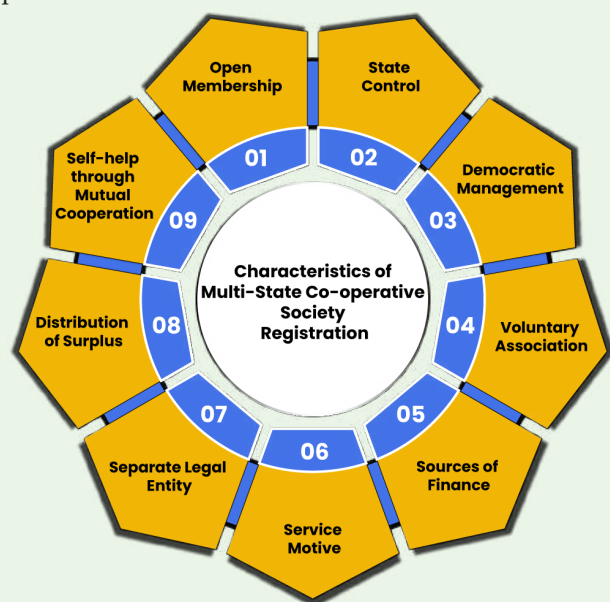
**Background**

- Article 19(1)(c) in Part III of the constitution provides for the fundamental right to form cooperatives.
- The 97<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment act of 2011 added three provisions to the Constitution:



- Made right to form cooperative society a fundamental right (article 19)
- Mandated state to promote cooperative society by adding article 43 B in the Directive Principle of State Policy
- It added a new Part IX-B in the constitution
- The Department of Cooperatives was established in 1979 which fell within the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Agriculture.
- In 2021, Ministry of Cooperation was made an independent ministry, changing its status from a department to a ministry.

Cooperatives are people-centred enterprises owned, controlled and run by and for their members to realise their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations



#### About NCP -2025

- The newly unveiled National Cooperative Policy (NCP)-2025 has replaced the NCP 2002. It will prove to be a milestone in the cooperative movement of India for the next two decades from 2025-45.
- **Prepared by:** A 48-member national-level committee headed by former Union minister Suresh Prabhu.
- **It replaced** - the National Cooperation Policy, 2002.
- **The objective:** To make cooperative institutions inclusive, manage them professionally, prepare them for the future, and create large-scale employment and livelihood opportunities, especially in rural India.

#### Aim

- To triple the cooperative sector's contribution to GDP,
- bring 50 crore active members into the fold, and connect youth with employment opportunities.
- 30% increase in the number of cooperative societies and the establishment of at least one cooperative society in every village.
- Ensure development at the grassroots level Create large-scale livelihood opportunities and achieve the goal of Viksit Bharat by 2047.

- **Vision:** To support India's goal of becoming 'Viksit Bharat' by 2047 by fostering sustainable cooperative growth through 'Sahkar-se-Samridhi'.

- **Mission:** To build a strong legal, economic, and institutional base for grassroots cooperatives, enabling their transformation into professional, transparent, tech-driven, and member-centric enterprises.

- **Six Pillar of NCP 2025:** The policy's mission will be achieved through six strategic mission pillars as follows:

- Strengthening the foundation for the cooperative movement.
- Promoting vibrancy by creating a vibrant and self-sustaining ecosystem.
- Making cooperatives future ready into professional and sustainable economic entities.
- Promoting inclusivity and deepening reach as a people's movement.
- Entering new and emerging sectors
- Shaping the young generation for cooperative growth.

### Resignation of the Vice President of India

#### Context

The 14<sup>th</sup> Vice President of India has recently resigned from his post, citing health concerns.

#### Background

- The resignation letter was addressed to the President of India (as per the norms).
- This was only the third time that a Vice President has resigned before completing his term.
  - The first and second Vice President to resigned in the office were VV Giri (1969) and Ramaswamy Venkataraman (1987) respectively.

# INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

## India's Cooperation with the Global South

### Context

The Prime Minister of India's recent five-nation visit during the BRICS summit was focused on strengthening India's ties across the Global South, enhancing partnerships across the Atlantic, and deepening engagement with multilateral platforms.

### Global South: Historical Linkages

- The idea of the Global South refers to the grouping of developing countries primarily in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Oceania that shared a history of colonialism and ongoing struggles against global inequalities.
  - It includes emerging economies like India, China, and other developing countries.
- The vision was shaped by significant initiatives like the 1955 Bandung Conference and the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), which promoted economic and cultural cooperation, human rights, and the establishment of a New International Economic Order (NIEO).
- These efforts sought to challenge the unequal power dynamics between former colonies and colonial powers by advocating for fairer trade, control over natural resources, and the right to nationalise strategic industries.

### India's approach towards the Global South

- **Guiding Principles**
  - India's approach is guided by the principles of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam ("One Earth, One Family, One Future") and Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, and Sabka Paryas(inclusive development).
  - India's support for developing nations is rooted in a longstanding tradition and a strong historical legacy.
  - It combines this legacy with current geopolitical leadership to champion Global South interests.
- **Prominent advocate for the Global South:** India has emerged as a leading advocate for the Global South, using its position as the world's fastest-growing major economy and a responsible democracy.

### Growing Development Cooperation

- India's development cooperation with the Global South has grown steadily, with funding rising from \$3 billion in 2010–11 to \$7 billion in 2023–24.
- Key areas of engagement include capacity building, technology transfer, and duty-free market access.
- The primary tool has been Lines of Credit (LoCs) provided under the Indian Development and Economic Assistance Scheme (IDEAS).

### Various Initiatives and Developments

- **Historic Role in Global South Leadership**
  - India played a key role in the 1955 Bandung Conference and the formation of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in 1961.
  - It helped establish the Group of 77 (G-77) in 1964 to empower developing nations at the UN.
- **Advocacy for Inclusive Global Governance:** India Successfully pushed for the African Union's permanent membership in the G20 during its 2023 G20 presidency.
  - India Hosted the third Voice of the Global South Summit in August 2024, with participation from 123 countries under the theme "An Empowered Global South for a Sustainable Future."
- **Support During Global Crises:** At the 2023 Rio G20 Summit, PM Narendra Modi emphasized the need to prioritize the Global South amid food, fuel, and fertilizer crises caused by international conflicts.
- **Development Initiatives:** Vaccine Maitri initiative provided nearly 300 million vaccine doses to less developed countries, many free of cost.
  - India Launched DAKSHIN, a global centre for excellence for Global South nations.
- **Multilateral Engagement:** India Actively involved in platforms like IBSA (India, Brazil, South Africa), BRICS, and cooperation with the African Union.

### Benefits for India as Voice of global south

- **Enhanced Global Standing**
  - India's leadership in G20 and BRICS has positioned it as a bridge between the Global North and South, amplifying its diplomatic influence.



- Inclusion of the African Union in G20 during India's presidency showcased its commitment to inclusive multilateralism.
- **Economic Partnerships**
  - India's energy and infrastructure investments in Africa and Latin America foster mutual growth and resource security.
- Initiatives like the Global Biofuel Alliance and International Solar Alliance promote sustainable energy transitions across the South
- **Technology and Capacity Building**
  - India shares Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) models like Aadhaar and UPI with developing nations, enabling financial inclusion and e-governance.
- **Launch of the Global Development Compact:** To support trade, skilling, and concessional finance for partner countries.
- **Geopolitical Leverage**
  - India's balanced stance on global conflicts (e.g., Ukraine) resonates with many Global South nations seeking strategic autonomy.
  - Through platforms like BRICS and SCO, India counters unilateralism and promotes multipolarity.

### Challenges

- **Multiple Development Challenges**
  - Global South nations face poverty, food insecurity, poor health infrastructure, debt burdens, terrorism, and conflict.
  - Many UN-designated Least Developed Countries are part of the Global South who require urgent humanitarian aid and equitable global support for sustainable development.
  - Global aid is expected to drop from \$214 billion in 2023 to around \$97 billion.
- **Diverse Interests Within the Global South:** The Global South countries included from continents and Aligning the varied political systems, economic strengths, and development priorities of these countries is complex and often difficult.
- **Resource and Capacity Constraints:** Budgetary and institutional capacity constraints limit India's ability to meet rising expectations.

- India faces pressing domestic challenges such as poverty, infrastructure development, and healthcare.
- Expanding global development outreach while addressing internal needs requires careful resource allocation and public consensus.
- **Geopolitical Competition:** China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) poses strong competition through aggressive infrastructure investments in the Global South.

### Way Ahead

- India continues to promote strategic autonomy, reforms in multilateral institutions, and the priorities of the Global South within a rules-based international order.
  - And to be an effective global development partner, India must build robust domestic systems, standards, and norms for international cooperation.
- Collaborations and trilateral partnerships can offer valuable learning opportunities to enhance India's development diplomacy.
  - Triangular Cooperation (TrC) is an emerging development model involving a traditional donor (Global North), a pivotal country like India (Global South), and a partner country (usually another developing nation). It promotes inclusive, locally driven solutions through shared learning.
- As the 'Voice' of the Global South, India must also listen actively and engage meaningfully, echoing its inclusive approach during the Non-Aligned Movement era.
- India should address the concerns being faced by the Global South, especially climate change and developmental assistance.
- Global South countries need to promote their agendas on global multilateral forums and shape their functioning to ensure pro Global South policies.

## New Development Bank (NDB)

### Context

Recently, annual meeting of the Board of Governors of the New Development Bank (NDB) at Rio De Janeiro, Brazil took place. Additionally, two new members, Colombia and Uzbekistan have joined the Bank as new members.



# PLACES IN NEWS

## Mount Elbrus

### Context

Teghbir Singh has become the youngest mountaineer to scale Mount Elbrus.

### About Mount Elbrus

- Located in southwest Russia and is part of the Caucasus Mountains.
- It is the highest mountain in Russia and Europe, which is 5,642 metres high.
- It is one of the Seven Summits of the world, which are the tallest mountains on each of the seven continents.
- This is the tenth-most prominent peak in the world as well.



## Israel launches airstrikes on Yemen's Red Sea Ports

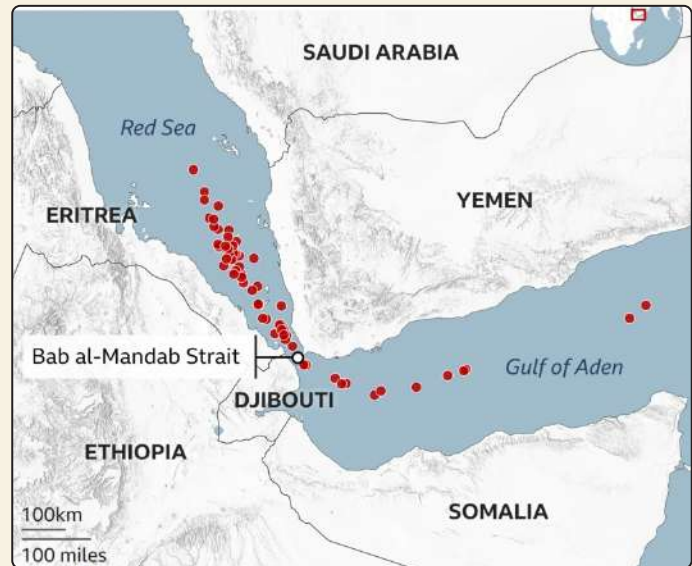
### Context

Israel launched airstrikes on Red Sea ports in Hodeidah Province, targeting Houthi strongholds, including the ports of Hodeidah.

### The Red Sea

- It is a narrow body of water stretching about 1,200 miles from Suez, Egypt, to the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, linking it to the Gulf of Aden and the Arabian Sea.

- It is strategically important for global trade due to the Bab el-Mandab Strait between Yemen and Djibouti
- It is one of the world's busiest cargo and oil transit points with almost 12% of international merchandise trade passing through it.



## Suriname

### Context

Jennifer Simons has been elected as Suriname's first female president by parliament.



### About Suriname

- It is located on the northern coast of South America.
- The southern majority of the country is covered by tropical rainforest.

## Global Capability Centers (GCCs)

### About

- Also known as Global In-house Centers, they are offshore units established by multinational corporations (MNCs) to provide specialized support and services in various domains including IT, business processes, finance, HR, and more.
- It represents a strategic shift from traditional outsourcing, allowing companies to maintain more control over their core operations and sensitive functions while leveraging global talent pools and cost efficiencies.
- **Current Status of GCCs in India**
  - GCCs currently employ nearly more than 2 million professionals and the number is expected to go up to 3 million by 2030.
  - Over 32% of global GCC talent is currently based in India.
  - The GCC sector contributes \$68 billion as direct gross value addition (GVA), that is, around 1.6% of the national GDP.
  - The setup rate of engineering research & development GCCs has grown 1.3 times faster than the overall GCC setup over the last 5 years.
  - There is approximately 35% female participation in the GCC workforce.

### Key Functions of GCCs

- **Technology and IT Services:** GCCs often handle a significant portion of a company's IT operations, including software development, IT management, cybersecurity, and the integration of information technology across global offices.
- **Business Process Management:** Many GCCs manage business processes that are essential but not core to the company's primary market offerings, such as customer service, back-office operations (like processing transactions or managing supply chains), and compliance with regulations.
- **Research and Development (R&D):** Some GCCs are heavily involved in research and development activities, working on innovation in products and services that align with the company's growth strategies and market expansion plans.
- **Human Resources:** Tasks include recruitment, training and development, payroll processing, and crafting policies that conform to the labor laws of different countries where the company operates.

- **Financial Services:** Including everything from basic accounting and bookkeeping to more complex financial analysis, budgeting, and financial planning and reporting.

### Significance of GCCs

- Provide a hub for innovation and operational efficiency.
- Helping companies integrate Global Business Processes.
- Leverage talent across borders to maintain a competitive edge in their respective industries.
- Optimize costs but also foster a culture of innovation by tapping into diverse pools of talent worldwide.

### Examples of GCCs in Operation

- Microsoft India Development Center (IDC)
- General Electric (GE) John F. Welch Technology Centre
- Goldman Sachs Services in Bangalore, India
- Philips Innovation Campus in Bangalore, India
- Adobe India

## Offshore Areas Atomic Minerals Operating Right Rules, 2025

### Context

Recently, the Central Government has notified new 'Offshore Areas Atomic Minerals Operating Right Rules, 2025' in order to regulate the exploration and mining of atomic minerals like uranium and thorium in offshore areas.

### Objective of the Bill

Its objective is to regulate the exploration and mining of atomic minerals like uranium and thorium in offshore areas.

### Offshore Mining

*Offshore mining is the process of extracting mineral resources from the seabed, typically at depths greater than 200 meters.*

**Extent:** From the seabed beyond a country's territorial waters, specifically within the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) or beyond, where mineral ownership is regulated by national governments or the United Nations International Seabed Authority.

### Nodal Ministry for Offshore Minerals Regulations

As per the Offshore Areas Mineral (Development and Regulation) Act, 2002, the Ministry of Mines is the nodal ministry responsible for controlling offshore mineral exploration and development in India.



### Key Points of the Offshore Areas Atomic Minerals Operating Right Rules, 2025

- It has restricted the sector to government entities and companies nominated by the Centre and mandated prior approvals for foreign contractors.
- It aimed at unlocking India's offshore atomic mineral potential and also lay down security and environmental safeguards.
- These norms will apply only when atomic minerals like uranium or thorium are found in an offshore area, either alone or mixed with other minerals, but only if their concentration is above a certain minimum level, called the threshold value.
- Before declaring any block open for offshore atomic mineral mining, the central government will consult with at least a dozen ministries, including the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Department of Fisheries under the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, among others.
- If the amount of atomic mineral present is below the threshold, then the area will be regulated under a different set of rules, namely the Offshore Areas Operating Right Rules, 2024.
- Central public sector enterprises (CPSEs) or nominated agencies can be granted exploration licences or production leases for atomic minerals found in India's exclusive economic zone (EEZ). Private companies can participate only if expressly nominated by the Centre.
- In case foreign domiciled entities or foreign entities or contractors, personnel, vessels or equipment are engaged or deployed, for undertaking exploration operations, prior approval shall be obtained from the Government authorities.
- Additionally, licensees would be required to restore affected marine and coastal areas soon after project completion. The licensee shall, within six months after the expiry or termination of the composite license, take all necessary steps enabling the natural rehabilitation of the seabed affected by exploration operations.

### India's Offshore Mineral Reserves

- India's offshore mineral reserves include a variety of resources like construction sand, lime-mud, and polymetallic nodules containing cobalt, nickel, and other elements. These reserves are located within India's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), territorial waters, and continental shelf

- The Ministry of Mines recently launched the first-ever auction of 13 offshore mineral blocks, including those for construction sand off the coast of Kerala, lime-mud off Gujarat, and polymetallic nodules near the Andaman Sea.

### Constitutional Provisions Related to Mining in India

- **Union List (List I)**
  - **Entry 54:** Regulation of mines and mineral development to the extent to which such regulation by the Union is declared by Parliament by law to be expedient in the public interest.
- **State List (List II)**
  - **Entry 23:** It relates to "Regulation of mines and mineral development". However, it is expressly subject to the provisions of the Union List with respect to regulation and development under the control of the Union.
- **Concurrent List (List III)**
  - While there is no direct entry related to mining, aspects of environmental regulation, labor laws, and industrial disputes may fall under this list, allowing both Central and state governments to legislate.

### Govt Extends NPS-like Tax Benefits to Unified Pension Scheme Staff

#### Context

In a bid to promote the Unified Pension Scheme (UPS), the government has recently made necessary changes to provide tax benefits to employees opting for UPS at par with those under the National Pension System (NPS).

#### Changes Introduced in UPS

As per the Union Finance Ministry, UPS will now receive all tax benefits available under the National Pension System (NPS). This decision was taken with an aim to make UPS a more attractive option for central government employees.

#### Unified Pension Scheme

- It was introduced earlier this year as an option under NPS for new central government civil services recruits starting April 1, 2025.
- It is designed to provide a more predictable and secure retirement income for government employees, offering assured pensions.



# ENVIRONMENT & DISASTER MANAGEMENT

## Deep Sea Mining

### Context

The International Seabed Authority (ISA) remains far from finalizing deep sea mining rules after two weeks of talks, hindered by disagreements over environmental protections.

### Deep Sea Mining

- Deep-sea mining is the process of extracting and often excavating mineral deposits from the deep seabed.
- The deep seabed is the seabed at ocean depths greater than 200m, and covers about two-thirds of the total seafloor.
- The deep seabed has valuable resources like manganese, nickel, cobalt, and rare earth elements.
  - Critical minerals are used in everything from defense systems and batteries to smartphones and medical devices.

*The rare earth elements (REE) are a set of seventeen metallic elements. These include the fifteen lanthanides on the periodic table plus scandium and yttrium.*

### Why is there Growing Interest in Deep-Sea Mining?

- **Resource Security:** It helps in accessing extensive reserves of poly metallic nodules, sulphides, and cobalt-rich crusts to satisfy the growing need for minerals used in batteries and green technologies.
- **Economic Growth:** It strengthens national economies by increasing mineral exports and fostering technological innovation.
  - Improvements in mining and processing technologies have made deep-sea mineral extraction more feasible.
- **Autonomy:** It decreases reliance on land-based mining, which is largely controlled by a few countries, notably China.
- **Knowledge Enhancements :** It improves knowledge of deep-sea ecosystems and geological processes.
- **Blue Economy:** It promotes sustainable ocean-based economic development in line with blue economy objectives.

### Challenges

- **Scientific Uncertainty:** There is limited knowledge about deep-sea ecosystems and the impacts of mining, making it hard to assess long-term consequences.

- **Environmental Risks:** Deep sea mining poses serious risks such as irreversible harm to marine life, sediment disruption, wastewater pollution, and light and noise disturbances.
  - Noise from machinery can disrupt behaviour, hinder communication and foraging efficiency and drive species away from essential habitats.
  - Mining activities may destroy unexplored habitats and erase valuable ecological and historical information.
- **Economic Challenges:** High operational costs, volatile metal markets, and uncertain profitability raise doubts about long-term viability.
- **Social Consequences:** Deep-sea mining also poses serious social risks, particularly for coastal and indigenous communities relying on marine ecosystems for livelihoods, food security and cultural identity.
  - Potential impacts include disruption of fishing, loss of traditional ways of life and threats to rights related to health, food, water, housing and self-determination.
- **Lack of Consensus:** Despite U.S. efforts to fast-track mining permits outside the ISA process, many member states, including Chile, are calling for a moratorium until scientific impacts are better understood.
  - Tensions rose after Canada's The Metals Company applied for a license, prompting calls for an ISA investigation into possible violations.

### Regulation of Deep-sea Mining

- **United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS):** The modern legal framework for deep-sea mining began with the UN Conferences on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) from 1958 to 1982, culminating in the 1982 UNCLOS treaty.
  - This treaty, effective from 1994, set comprehensive rules for marine activities and created the International Seabed Authority (ISA) to manage seabed mineral exploration and exploitation beyond national jurisdictions.
- **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Finance Initiative:** It has questioned the business rationale for deep-sea mining, urged caution and strongly recommended against investment.

- **International Seabed Authority (ISA):** It is an intergovernmental organisation established under the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) to develop rules, regulations, and procedures relating to commercial exploitation of mineral resources from the deep sea.
  - The ISA became fully operational in 1996 as an independent organization with 167 member states and the European Union.
- In 2021, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) World Conservation Congress called on states to establish a moratorium on deep-sea mining until the economic, environmental, social and cultural risks are fully understood and effective marine protections are in place.
- At COP15 of the Convention on Biological Diversity in 2022, states were urged to ensure that the impacts on the marine environment and biodiversity are thoroughly researched and risks comprehensively understood before mining proceeds and to follow the best available science and the traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples and local communities, with their free, prior and informed consent.
- Similarly, a 2024 resolution at COP14 of the Convention on Migratory Species urged countries to refrain from deep-sea mining activities until robust scientific data can confirm that such exploitation would not harm migratory marine species, their prey or ecosystems.

#### Status In India

- India was the first country to receive the status of a 'Pioneer Investor' in 1987 and was given an area of about 1.5 lakh sq km in the Central Indian Ocean Basin (CIOB) for nodule exploration.
  - In 2002, India signed a contract with the ISA and after complete resource analysis of the seabed 50% was surrendered and the country retained an area of 75,000 sq km.
- Deep Ocean Mission has been launched in 2021, as a Central Sector Scheme of Ministry of Earth Sciences.
  - It is a multi-ministerial, multi-disciplinary programme with activities encompassing six verticals, namely
    - o Development of Technologies for Deep Sea Mining and Manned Submersible, Underwater Vehicles and Underwater Robotics for exploring and harnessing ocean resources.

- o Development of Ocean Climate Change Advisory Services
- o Technological innovation for exploration and conservation of deepsea biodiversity
- o Deep Ocean Survey and Exploration
- o Energy and Freshwater from the Ocean, and
- o Advance Marine Station for Ocean Biology
- Matsya-6000 is India's flagship human submersible aimed to carry three persons to a depth of 6000 meters, developed as part of the Samudrayaan project of the Deep Ocean Mission.

#### Way Forward

- Deep sea mining offers huge potential to supply important resources, it also comes with serious environmental, social, and economic risks.
- For India and the rest of the world, it's important to find the right balance between development and protecting nature.
- To ensure responsible deep-sea mining, it's essential to strengthen scientific research to understand long-term ecological impacts.
  - There is also a need to invest in AI, robotics, and sustainable processing techniques to minimize ecological footprint.
- Transparent and inclusive governance must be prioritized by involving local communities, Indigenous groups, and civil society, while also reinforcing international legal framework.
  - Under UNCLOS, the deep seabed and its resources are considered the common heritage of humankind, requiring equitable benefit-sharing, support for scientific research, and strong environmental protection.

### India's Carbon Credit Trading Scheme

#### Context

The Indian government recently announced greenhouse gas emissions intensity of production targets for entities (such as a steel plant) operating within eight of the nine heavy industrial sectors covered in India's Carbon Credit Trading Scheme's (CCTS).

#### Carbon Credit

- Carbon credits are permits that allow the owner to emit a certain amount of carbon dioxide or other greenhouse gases (GHGs). One credit allows the emission of one ton of carbon dioxide or the equivalent of other greenhouse gases.



## New Garcinia Species found in Assam



**Context** A new tree species named “Garcinia Kusumae” has been discovered in Assam.

### Garcinia Kusumae

- ❖ It belongs to the genus *Garcinia* (locally known as thoikora).
- ❖ It is named in honour of Kusum Devi, mother of co-author Jatindra Sarma.
- ❖ It was found in Bamunbari, Baksa district, during a survey in April.
- ❖ It is a dioecious evergreen tree, growing up to 18 metres, flowering from February to April and fruiting between May and June.

## Rare Sighting of Great Hornbill



**Context** Recently, the Great Hornbill has been seen far from its usual habitats, which is a rare phenomenon, igniting sparks of hope among environmentalists.

### Great Hornbill

- ❖ **Range**
  - Mainland Southeast Asia, the Malay Peninsula, and Indonesia.
  - **In India:** Western Ghats, northeastern and southern regions.

### Habitats

- They are arboreal and live mainly in wet, tall, evergreen forests. Old-growth trees that extend beyond the height of the canopy are preferred for nesting.
- The height of the tree and the presence of a natural cavity large enough to hold a female and her eggs are more important than the type of tree.

### Appearance

- Males and females are similar except that the irises of males are red while those of females are white, and males have slightly larger bills and casques.

- ❖ **State Animal:** The Great Hornbill is the state bird of Arunachal Pradesh and Kerala.
- ❖ **IUCN Conservation Status:** Vulnerable

### Note

- Hornbills are often referred to as “forest engineers” or “farmers of the forest” because of their crucial role in seed dispersal.
- The Government of Tamil Nadu established India's first Centre of Excellence for Hornbill Conservation at the Anamalai Tiger Reserve (ATR) in Coimbatore.

## Ambrosia Beetle (*Euplatypus parallelus*)

**Context** Recently, Researchers at Kerala Forest Research Institute identified one parasite known as *Euplatypus Parallelus* which is posing a threat to the Rubber plantation in Kerala as it is attacking Rubber's trees and causing severe leaf fall and rapid drying.



### Key Points

- ❖ It shares mutualistic relationships with two fungal species, *Fusarium ambrosia* and *Fusarium solani*.
- ❖ It gets its name from the ambrosia fungi that call the beetle their home.
- ❖ **Habitat:** They are found in Central and South America and have been found first in India in Cashew trees of Ponda, Goa in 2012.
- ❖ They attack dead along with stressed trees when it releases a volatile compound called Ethanol.
- ❖ These beetles bore tunnels known as ‘galleries’ in the bark of the trees and carry fungi into these galleries where these beetles farm these fungi to concentrate on nutrients of the trees.
- ❖ The beetles and their larvae feed on the nutrients-rich fungal mycelia and release enzymes that weaken the wood and allow beetles to penetrate more deeply into the bark of the trees.

### Different Species of Ambrosia Beetle

- ❖ *Euplatypus Parallelus*    ❖ *Fusaria* sp    ❖ *Fusarium* fungi

### Impact on the Agriculture and Rubber Productivity

- ❖ Apart from weakening the trees, they also cause severe leaf falls, trunk drying, and even deaths of trees.
- ❖ They also affect the latex production from the trees resulting in economic and agricultural losses.



- Promoting space-related education and innovation, including support to space-sector start-ups.
- Using space as a driver for overall technology development, nurture scientific temperament in the society, and increase awareness on space activities.

- **Non-Governmental Entities (NGEs):** They shall be allowed to undertake end-to-end activities in the space sector through establishment and operation of space objects, ground-based assets and related services, such as communication, remote sensing, navigation, etc under the guidelines/regulations prescribed in IN-SPACe.
- **Indian National Space Promotion & Authorization Centre (IN-SPACe):** It shall function as an autonomous Government organization, mandated to promote, guide and authorize space activities in the country. It will act as the single window agency for the authorization of space activities by government entities as well as NGEs subject to relevant Government directives.
- **Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO):** As the national space agency, it will focus primarily on research and development of new space technologies and applications and for expanding the human understanding of outer space.
- **New Space India Limited (NSIL):** It is responsible for various activities like, commercializing space technologies and platforms created through public expenditure; manufacture, lease, or procure space components, technologies, platforms and other assets from private or public sector on sound commercial principles

### Conclusion

Although, India is efforting a lot to achieve the goal of Indian Space Policy, 2023, there are some challenges such as lack of skilled workforce capable of driving innovation in space technologies, budgetary constraints in comparison to the countries like China that are needed to be resolved in order to achieve the objective of positioning India at global level in space sector.

## Space-Based Internet and Starlink

### Context

The Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre (IN-SPACe) has recently given its final approval to Starlink to launch satellite broadband in India.

### Space Based Internet

- Space-based internet, or satellite-based internet, is a network of satellites or a low-earth orbit constellation of numerous satellites that provide internet access to users with ground terminals.
- Several companies offer satellite-based internet, such as Starlink, OneWeb, and Viasat.

#### Starlink

- It is the world's first and largest satellite constellation using a low Earth orbit to deliver broadband internet capable of supporting streaming, online gaming, video calls, and more.
- It was launched in 2019 by SpaceX to shoot 42,000 small satellites into space, form a globe-encircling ring just 547 km overhead, and offer high-speed internet in more than 100 countries globally.
- It has a shelf life of about 5-7 years, and they come with an advanced end-of-life mechanism and an ION propulsion system with argon thrusters.
- Starlink offers internet connectivity via a network of satellites from space directly to devices.

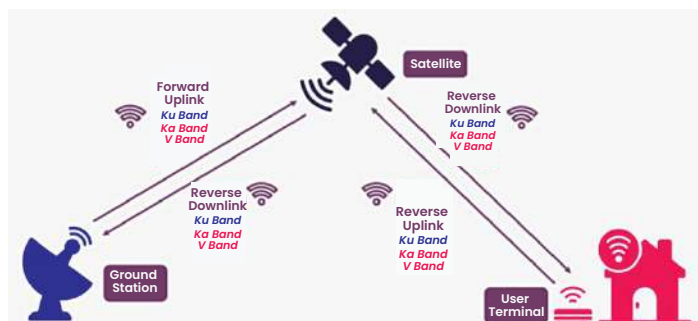
### Working Mechanism

- **Uses Satellites in LEO:** Starlink consists of thousands of small satellites in Low Earth Orbit (LEO), which helps reduce latency compared to traditional satellite internet systems that use geostationary satellites.
- **Uses Ground Station to Send Satellite Connection:** Starlink uses a network of ground stations (called gateway stations) that are strategically located around the globe. They connect the satellite network to the Internet backbone.
- **Users' Terminal:** Users access the Starlink service through a satellite dish or antenna, which is equipped with phased-array technology, allowing it to electronically steer its beam to track satellites as they move across the sky.
- **Transmission of Data:** When a user sends data, the signal travels from the user terminal to the nearest Starlink satellite, and then relays the data to a ground station, which connects to the broader internet. The response follows the same path in reverse.





- **High-speed Internet:** It provides high-speed internet (from 50-150 Mbps), making it competitive with terrestrial internet services.



### Advantages

- **Addressing Digital Divide:** It can deliver service in the remotest places on the planet with a portable dish antenna, and users can connect it to a mobile or computer to browse the internet.
- **Easily Accessible:** Starlink can come in handy for commercial fishing shippers, merchant vessels, offshore oil drilling stations, deep-sea research workers, and solo sea voyagers to connect with the internet for any purpose.
- **Helpful During National Calamities:** With the Starlink dish kit, the military or any emergency responder agency can set up a communication centre faster to coordinate among rescue teams in secluded regions or mountainous areas.
- **Able to Send SOS Messages Quickly:** Trekkers with a Starlink mobile kit can be able to send an SOS (save our souls and save our ship) message to emergency responders or loved ones for timely aid.

### Disadvantages

- **Overcrowding the Space:** Starlink is overcrowding the space with too many satellites, and the possibility of crashing into their spacecraft.
- **Could Increase Commercial Exploitation:** Starlink operates under US jurisdiction, and this has raised privacy concerns. The data is routed through foreign satellites, which have potential for commercial exploitation.
- **Increase Space Debris:** The rapid expansion of satellites into low Earth orbit contributes to space debris,

particularly due to numerous satellites, the potential for collisions, and the debris generated during satellite de-orbiting and re-entry.

- **Make Space Study Complex:** These constellations of space Internet satellites will make it difficult to observe other space objects and detect their signals.

*The Kessler Syndrome is a phenomenon in which the amount of junk in orbit around Earth reaches a point where it just creates more and more space debris, causing big problems for satellites, astronauts and mission planners.*

## Gamma-ray Burst (GRB)

### Context

The researchers have recently released remarkable findings from observations of GRB 221009A—the brightest gamma-ray burst (GRB) ever recorded.

### About GRB

- **Definition:** GRBs are among the universe's most powerful phenomena, releasing in just seconds as much energy as the sun emits over its entire lifetime.
- **Features**
  - They burst over a brief, prompt phase, lasting seconds to minutes, and then are followed by an afterglow that can fade over hours to months.
  - They are believed to involve ultra-fast jets of plasma ejected either from a black hole, remnant of long GRBs, or from the merging of neutron stars.

### Classifications of GRB

- **Long-Duration Bursts:** They last longer than 2 seconds. They are associated with the deaths of massive stars in supernovae.
  - **Cause of Occurrence:** Longer GRBs are triggered when a massive star collapses and births a black hole.
  - **Detected Long GRB:** In 2022, space-based observatories detected an extremely bright long GRB, GRB 221009A, dubbed the "BOAT" ("Brightest Of All Time"). The burst was so intense that it saturated multiple instruments observing it and triggered follow-up observations across the globe.

# HISTORY AND ART & CULTURE

## Sohrai, Pattachitra, and Patua Art forms

### Context

Recently, the President met with artists of Sohrai, Pattachitra, and Patua art forms at Rashtrapati Bhavan who participated in the second edition of Kala Utsav 2025 – Artists in Residence Programme.

*The Artists in Residence programme - Kala Utsav – is a celebration of the spirit of India's artistic traditions, a reaffirmation of the important role of living art traditions in preserving cultural identity and inspiring future generations.*

- This Kala Utsav has also provided a platform to the folk, tribal and traditional artists who have continued the varied forms of art for generations.

### Sohrai Painting

- It is a traditional tribal art form from Jharkhand, practiced by communities like the Kurmi Mahto, Santhals, Oraons, and Mundas.
- It is created using natural pigments on the mud walls of homes, depicting the beauty of nature, local legends and customs, and daily life.
  - These paintings are made by the women of the community and are an important part of their cultural heritage.



### Pattachitra

- It is a traditional cloth-based painting from Odisha which is rooted in religious and folk traditions.
- It is traditionally drawn by the Mahapatra or maharanas, the original artiste caste in Odisha.
- It involves a detailed process: preparing a cloth canvas with chalk powder and tamarind glue, sketching directly with brushes, and using natural pigments from minerals and plants.



- Common motifs include Krishna Leela and Lord Jagannath.
  - The Pattachitra artists also paint their themes on wooden boxes, on bowls, on tussar silk, on outer shells of the coconut, and on wooden doors.
  - Traditionally used in temple rituals, Pattachitra reflects Odisha's rich cultural and spiritual heritage.

### Patua Painting

- It is also known as Pattachitra or scroll painting, and stands as a vibrant testament to the rich cultural heritage of West Bengal.
- It is rooted in the traditions of the Patua community
- Themes range from Hindu mythology and local folklore to social issues and contemporary events, each narrative brought to life through bold outlines and expressive forms.



## Celebration of Ashadha Purnima at Sarnath

### Context

The International Buddhist Confederation (IBC), in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture and the Mahabodhi Society of India, has celebrated Ashadha Purnima at Sarnath.

### About

- **In the Buddhist Religion**
  - The day of Ashadha Purnima signifies the day that marks the Dhammachakra Pravartana Divas, when Lord Buddha delivered his first sermon to the 'panchavargiya' (five ascetic companions) at the Rishipatana Mrigadaya, Sarnath.
  - It also symbolizes the beginning of Varsha Vassa (rainy season retreat), observed by monks and nuns across the Buddhist world.



# GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES IN NEWS

## Prime Minister Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana (PMDDKY)

### Context

The Union Cabinet has approved the Prime Minister Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana (PMDDKY)

### About

- It is a **comprehensive agricultural scheme** which was announced in the 2025–26 Union Budget.
- It merges 36 existing schemes from 11 ministries and targets 1.7 crore farmers.
- It is designed to enhance crop productivity, promote diversification and sustainable farming, strengthen post-harvest storage, improve irrigation, and expand credit access for farmers.
- **Budget & Duration:** It has an annual outlay of ₹24,000 crore for six years.
- **Focused Areas:** It focuses on enhancing post-harvest storage, irrigation, and credit access.
- **Features:** 100 districts will be identified with low agricultural productivity, low cropping intensity, and limited credit access.
  - At least one district from every State/UT will be included, selected based on net cropped area and operational holdings.
  - It is modelled on the Aspirational District Programme and will involve planning and monitoring at district, state, and national levels, with participation from progressive farmers.
  - A District Agriculture and Allied Activities Plan will be finalised by the District Dhan Dhaanya Samiti, which will also have progressive farmers as members.
- **Objectives:** It is aimed at improving productivity and promoting sustainable farming across India.
  - It will result in higher productivity, value addition in agriculture and allied sector, local livelihood creation and hence increase domestic production and achieving self-reliance (Atmanirbhar Bharat).

### The Aspirational Districts Programme (ADP)

- It was launched in 2018 under the visionary leadership of Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, is a transformative initiative aimed at accelerating the development of 112 relatively backward and remote districts across India.
- It is envisaged as a means to uplift vulnerable citizens and focuses on measurable progress across 81 development indicators, spanning five critical themes: Health & Nutrition, Education, Agriculture & Water Resources, Financial Inclusion & Skill Development, and Infrastructure.

## Employment-Linked Incentive (ELI) Scheme

### Context

Recently, the Union Cabinet has approved the Employment Linked Incentive (ELI) Scheme to support employment generation, enhance employability and social security.

### About

- It was announced in the Union Budget 2024–25 as one of five key initiatives.
- The first-time employees will get one month's wage (up to Rs 15,000/-), the employers will be given incentives for a period to two years for generating additional employment, with extended benefits for another two years for the manufacturing sector.
- **Aim:** To facilitate employment, skilling and other opportunities for 4.1 Crore youth with a total budget outlay of ₹ 2 Lakh Crore.
- It carries a total outlay of around ₹99,500 crore.
- **It has two parts : Part A**
  - Targets first-time EPFO-registered employees earning up to ₹1 lakh.
  - It will offer a one-month EPF wage incentive (up to ₹15,000) in two installments—after 6 and 12 months of continuous service, with the second linked to completing a financial literacy program.
  - A portion of the incentive will be saved in a deposit account.



# STRIDE



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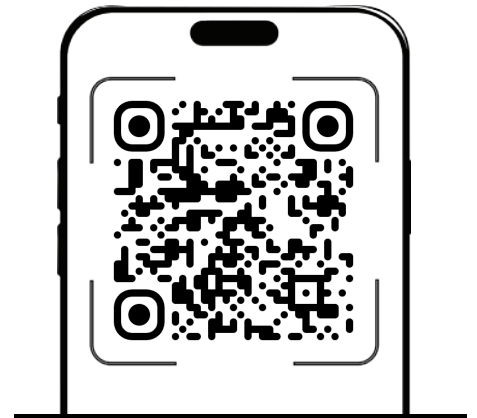
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