

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS (DCA)

Time: 45 Min

Date: 16-01-2025

Table of Content

India-Singapore: 60 Years of Diplomatic Ties

India-Bangladesh Border Disputes

India's Merchandise Trade Deficit

Nine Years of Startup India

Rise in Sea Level in India

NEWS IN SHORT

Kashi Tamil Sangamam

Tharu Community & Maghi Festival

Siachen Glacier

Blood Money

Global South

Pixxel, Digantara Launch Satellites to Monitor Earth

Kampala Declaration

Frontline Naval Combatants — INS Surat, INS Nilgiri, and INS Vaghsheer

Melanistic Royal Bengal Tiger

Bharat Ranbhoomi Darshan

INDIA-SINGAPORE: 60 YEARS OF DIPLOMATIC TIES

Context

- Recently, **India and Singapore** celebrated **60 years of diplomatic relations**, marked by **Singapore's President Tharman Shanmugaratnam** first visit to India.

India-Singapore: Historical Ties

- Colonial Legacy:** The diplomatic relationship between India and Singapore was established on **August 24, 1965**, shortly after Singapore gained independence.
 - The modern relationship between India and Singapore dates back to 1819, when **Sir Stamford Raffles** established a **British trading post** in Singapore.
- Role in Independence:** Formation of the **Provisional Government of Azad Hind** from **Singapore in 1943** by **Subhash Chandra Bose** during the **Indian independence movement**.
- Recognition of Independence:** India was one of the first countries **to recognize Singapore's independence in 1965**, setting the stage for a close and evolving relationship.
- Comprehensive Partnership:** Over the decades, the relationship has evolved into a **Comprehensive Strategic Partnership**, reflecting the deepening economic, political, and cultural ties.

Key Areas of Co-operation: Significance of India-Singapore Relations

- Economy & Trade:** Bilateral trade between the two countries grew significantly from **USD 6.7 billion** in FY 2004-05 to **USD 35.6 billion** in FY 2023-24.

Framework of the India-Singapore Relationship

- Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement, CECA (2005);
- Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement, DTAA (1994);
- Bilateral Air Services Agreement (1968);
- Defence Cooperation Agreement (2003);
- MOU on Foreign Office Consultations (1994);
- Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (2005).

- Singapore ranks as **India's 6th largest trade partner**, accounting for 3.2% of India's total trade.
- In **FY 2023-24**, India's imports from Singapore were **USD 21.2 billion** (a **10.2% decrease** from the previous year), while exports to

Singapore reached **USD 14.4 billion** (a 20.2% increase from the previous year).

- FDI Inflows:** FDI equity inflows in India from Singapore during 2023-24 stood at **US\$ 11.774 billion**.
 - Top sectors attracting FDI Equity inflows from Singapore are:** Services Sector, Computer Software & Hardware, Trading, Telecommunications and Drugs & Pharmaceuticals.
- Fintech and Digital Economy:** Acceptance of **RuPay card and UPI-Paynow Linkage** in Singapore.
 - Singapore is the first nation** with which India has begun this **cross-border Person-to-Person (P2P) payment facility**.
- Defense and Strategic Collaboration:** It has deepened under the **Defense Cooperation Agreement**.
 - Bilateral Exercises:** For all three services:
 - Exercise Agni Warrior and Bold Kurukshetra (Army);
 - Exercise SIMBEX (Navy).
 - Maritime Security:** Both nations work together to ensure freedom of navigation and counter-piracy in the **Indo-Pacific region**.
 - Strategic Partnership:** Singapore supports **India's Act East Policy**, facilitating India's engagement with **regional cooperation** and beyond.
- Science & Technology Cooperation:** ISRO has launched several **Singaporean satellites**, Singapore's first indigenous built micro-satellite in 2011, 2 more in 2014, 6 in 2015 and 9 in 2023.
 - Singapore co-hosted the inaugural **ASEAN – India Women Scientists Conclave** (2024).
 - Cyber Policy Dialogue (2024)
 - e-workshop on digital health and medical technologies (2024)
- Education and Skill Development:** Initiatives like the **Skill India program** benefit from Singapore's expertise in vocational training.
 - Indian and Singaporean institutions engage in joint research programs.
- Multilateral and Regional Cooperation:**
 - Singapore has joined the **International Solar Alliance** and **Global Bio-fuel Alliance** in 2023.
 - Singapore supported the Indian initiative of the **Declaration on Digital Public Infrastructure, AI and Data for Governance** (at the G20 Summit in Brazil in 2024).
 - Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA):** It was the first such

agreement to be signed by India with any country.

- ♦ **Indo-Pacific Strategy:** India and Singapore actively engage to maintain peace, stability, and connectivity in the Indo-Pacific region.
- **Cultural Ties:** Indian influence on Singapore is evident in its multicultural society, with a vibrant **Indian diaspora** constituting **about 9% of the city-state's population**.
- ♦ Programs like **Kalaa Utsavam** and the presence of **Little India in Singapore** showcase strong cultural bonds.

Future Prospects

- As India and Singapore look to the future, the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership is set to deepen further.
- Both nations are committed to exploring new avenues of cooperation in areas such as digitalization, trade development, and cultural exchanges.
- The 60th anniversary celebrations have set the stage for a new era of collaboration and mutual growth.

Source: DD News

INDIA-BANGLADESH BORDER DISPUTES

Context

- India summoned the Bangladesh Acting High Commissioner to India over security measures at the border.

Reasons for India-Bangladesh Border Disputes

- As per the **1975 Joint India-Bangladesh Guidelines** for Border Authorities, no defence structures can be built within **150 yards** from the **zero line** of the border.
 - ♦ India does not consider wire fencing a defence structure, while **Bangladesh** and **Pakistan** do.
- **Impact on Border Residents:** The construction of fencing, especially in densely populated border areas, has led to practical challenges for local populations.
- **CCTV and Electronic Surveillance:** India has implemented high-tech surveillance systems, including CCTV cameras and electronic gadgets, to monitor the border.
 - ♦ This has raised concerns in Bangladesh about sovereignty, with accusations that such surveillance constitutes an infringement on its territorial integrity.

India- Bangladesh Border

- India and Bangladesh share **4,096.7 km** of border, the largest land border India shares with any of its neighbours.
- **States Sharing Border:** West Bengal (**2,216.7 km**), Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, Mizoram.
- **Fencing:** Along the India-Bangladesh border, covering all eastern states including West Bengal, 3,141 kilometers have been fenced out of a total of 4,156 km.

Need for Managing the Borders

- **Security Concerns:** India's **porous borders** facilitate illegal crossings, smuggling of contraband, and cross-border terrorism, particularly from militant groups in Pakistan, posing significant security threats.
- **Demographic Changes:** Unregulated migration from Bangladesh has affected the demographic landscape in border states, leading to social strain and challenges in resource distribution.
- **Infrastructure Development:** Many border areas in India lack basic infrastructure such as roads, communication networks, and border outposts, hampering the effectiveness of border management efforts.

India's border management

- **Border Monitoring:** Construction of fences, floodlights, roads, Border Out Posts (BOPs), and Company Operating Bases (COBs) for constant surveillance and rapid response to threats.
- **Border Security Force** plays a pivotal role in patrolling and safeguarding India's borders, including handling infiltration, smuggling, and other security concerns.
- **Cross-Border Trade:** Construction of integrated checkpoints and trade facilitation centers has streamlined customs clearance and reduced trade barriers.
- **Border Area Development Programme (BADP):** Launched in 1986-87 for the balanced development of border areas in states bordering Pakistan—Jammu & Kashmir, Punjab, Gujarat, and Rajasthan—later extended to all land borders.

Concluding remarks

- Resolving border disputes is essential for ensuring national security, particularly in light of cross-border terrorism and illegal activities.
- **The Land Boundary Agreement (LBA) of 2015** between India and Bangladesh stands as a testament to the importance of diplomatic dialogue in resolving longstanding border issues.

Land Boundary Agreement (LBA)

- The Land Boundary Agreement (LBA) between India and Bangladesh, signed on **6th June 2015** in Bangladesh, marked a significant milestone in bilateral relations.
- The agreement was a historic step in resolving long-standing border disputes, particularly regarding the **exchange of enclaves** along the India-Bangladesh border.

Key Features of the Agreement

- India to Bangladesh:** The agreement facilitated the transfer of **111 Indian enclaves (also called chitmahals)** to Bangladesh, covering an area of 17,160.63 acres.
- Bangladesh to India:** Conversely, India received **51 enclaves** located within Bangladesh, totaling 7,110.02 acres.
- In the land swap, **Bangladesh gained a larger portion** of land than India.
 - This disparity was a point of contention but was ultimately viewed as a compromise necessary to resolve the decades-old border issues.

Source: IE

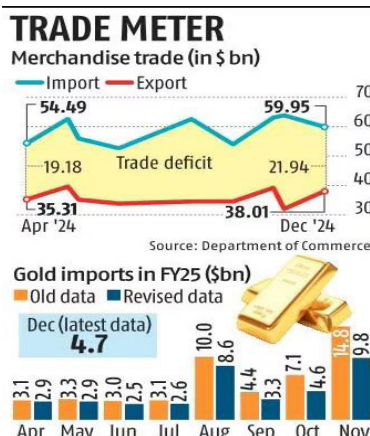
INDIA'S MERCHANDISE TRADE DEFICIT

Context

- India's merchandise trade deficit came in at a **three-month low of \$21.94 billion in December 2024**.

About

- India's **merchandise exports contracted 1%** year-on-year even as **imports rose 4.9% in December 2024**.
 - Earlier, the country's merchandise trade deficit had widened to a record-high of \$37.84 billion in November.



India's Total Trade Deficit

- India's trade deficit has shown **considerable improvement in FY 2023-24** (April-March).
- Overall trade deficit for FY 2023-24** (April-March)* is estimated at **USD 78.12 Billion** as compared to the deficit of USD 121.62 Billion during FY 2022-23 (April-March), **registering a decline of (-) 35.77 percent**.
- The **merchandise trade deficit** during FY 2023-24 (April-March) is USD 240.17 Billion compared to USD 264.90 Billion during FY 2022-23 (April-March), registering a decline of (-) 9.33 percent.

Difference Between Trade Deficit and Merchandise Trade Deficit:

Aspect	Trade Deficit	Merchandise Trade Deficit
Definition	A situation where a country's total imports exceed its total exports, including goods and services .	A specific type of trade deficit that only concerns the balance of imports and exports of physical goods (merchandise).
Broader Scope	Broader, as it encompasses both goods and services.	Narrower, focused exclusively on goods (merchandise).
Policy Focus	Often requires comprehensive economic policy adjustments, including trade agreements, currency values, or fiscal policies.	Primarily focused on policies that affect physical trade of goods, such as tariffs or trade barriers.

Reasons for Trade Deficit

- High Import of Crude Oil:** India is a major importer of crude oil, which significantly contributes to its trade deficit due to rising global oil prices.
- Gold Imports:** India has a strong demand for gold, particularly for jewelry, leading to high import bills.
- Global Economic Conditions:** Economic growth or downturns in key trading partners (such as the US, China, and the EU) affect demand for Indian exports, thereby influencing the trade balance.
- High Import Demand:** Rising domestic demand for goods like crude oil, gold, electronics, and

machinery increases imports, widening the trade deficit.

- **Limited Export Competitiveness:** Despite growth in service exports, India's merchandise exports have not grown at the same pace, leading to an imbalance between imports and exports.
- **Structural Imbalances in Manufacturing:** India's manufacturing sector still faces challenges in scaling up and competing globally, leading to reliance on imports for industrial inputs and finished goods.
- **Rupee Depreciation:** A weaker Indian rupee increases the cost of imports, exacerbating the trade deficit.

Challenges

- **Pressure on Foreign Exchange Reserves:** A persistent trade deficit depletes foreign exchange reserves, affecting the country's ability to meet its external financial obligations.
- **Currency Depreciation:** A high trade deficit weakens the Indian Rupee, increasing the cost of imports and triggering inflation.
- **Widening Fiscal Deficit:** The need to finance the trade deficit requires increased borrowing, putting pressure on government finances.
- **Impact on Economic Growth:** If the deficit continues for an extended period, it strains economic stability, affecting long-term growth prospects and domestic industries.

Measures to Improve Trade Deficit

- **Boosting Exports:** India has focused on increasing exports through incentives, trade agreements, and enhancing the competitiveness of sectors like textiles, pharmaceuticals, and IT.
- **Promoting "Make in India" Initiative:** Encouraging domestic manufacturing and reducing dependency on imports by fostering local production in key sectors such as electronics and machinery.
- **Attracting Foreign Investment:** Encouraging foreign direct investment (FDI) to support domestic industries, reduce import dependence, and promote technology transfer.
- **Diversifying Trade Partners:** Expanding trade ties with new markets, particularly in Africa, Latin America, and Southeast Asia, to reduce over-reliance on a few regions.
- **Improving Infrastructure:** Enhancing port facilities, logistics, and transport infrastructure to reduce costs and improve export efficiency.

Way Ahead

- Strengthening export competitiveness.
- Enhancing domestic manufacturing.

- Reducing dependence on crude oil imports by promoting renewable energy sources and improving energy efficiency.
- Expanding trade relationships with countries beyond traditional partners to reduce vulnerability to global economic fluctuations.

Source: TH

NINE YEARS OF STARTUP INDIA

In News

- Recently, India celebrated the **ninth anniversary of the Startup India initiative**.

Startup India Initiative

- **About:** It was launched on January 16, 2016 and managed by the **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)**.
 - ♦ The flagship initiative aimed at fostering startup culture and building an inclusive ecosystem for innovation and entrepreneurship.
- **Core Features:**
 - ♦ **Ease of Doing Business:** Simplified compliance, self-certification, and single-window clearances streamline processes for startups.
 - ♦ **Tax Benefits:** Eligible startups enjoy tax exemptions for three consecutive financial years.
 - ♦ **Funding Support:** The 10,000 crore Fund of Funds for Startups (FFS) supports early-stage funding.
 - ♦ **Sector-Specific Policies:** Focused policies for sectors like biotechnology, agriculture, and renewable energy foster targeted growth.
- **Flagship Schemes under Startup India:**
 - ♦ **Startup India Seed Fund Scheme (SISFS):** Provides financial assistance for proof of concept, prototype development, product trials, market entry, and commercialization through eligible incubators.
 - ♦ **Credit Guarantee Scheme for Startups (CGSS):** Offers credit guarantees for loans to DPIIT-recognized startups by scheduled commercial banks, NBFCs, and SEBI-registered venture debt funds.
 - ♦ **Fund of Funds for Startups (FFS):** Introduced in June 2016 with a corpus of 10,000 crore to enhance access to domestic capital. Managed by SIDBI, the scheme does not invest directly in startups but provides funding to SEBI-registered Alternative Investment Funds (AIFs), which further invest in startups through equity and equity-linked instruments.

- ♦ **BHASKAR Platform:** Launched in September 2024, it connects startups, investors, and mentors, empowering non-metro cities.

Key Achievements

- **Growth in Startup Ecosystem:** Recognized startups have grown from around 500 in 2016 to 1.59 lakh, making India the **world's third-largest** startup hub.
- **Employment Generation:** Over 16.6 lakh direct jobs created, with major sectors including IT services (2.04 lakh jobs), healthcare (1.47 lakh jobs), and education (90,414 jobs).
- **Women Entrepreneurship:** 73,151 startups have at least one woman director, highlighting the increasing role of women in the ecosystem.
- **Funding Support:** 10,000 crore Fund of Funds and Startup India Seed Fund Scheme (SISFS) have supported early-stage funding.
- **Sectoral Growth:** Startups in fintech, edtech, health-tech, and e-commerce have thrived, with companies like Zomato, Nykaa, and Ola transforming the job market.

Challenges

- **Regulatory Environment:** Regulatory frameworks often struggle to keep pace with rapid innovation, causing uncertainty for startups.
- **Lack of Skilled Workforce and Mentoring:** A shortage of skilled professionals makes it difficult for startups to hire the right talent.
- **Infrastructure Issues:** Poor infrastructure in smaller cities, including internet connectivity and logistics, hampers growth.
- **Digital Inequality and Rural-Urban Divide:** Startups in rural areas face limited resources, market access, and talent compared to urban counterparts.

Conclusion and Way Forward

- As India progresses toward becoming a global leader in innovation and entrepreneurship, the Startup India initiative continues to play a pivotal role in driving economic growth and fostering a diverse entrepreneurial ecosystem.
- To sustain and enhance its impact, addressing challenges such as regulatory barriers, skill gaps, and infrastructure deficiencies is crucial.

Source: TH

RISE IN SEA LEVEL IN INDIA

Context

- Kerala's coastline has transformed dramatically over the past three decades, shrinking under the

relentless forces of **coastal erosion, rising sea levels, and human interventions.**

- ♦ Over 55% of Kerala's coastline is now classified as vulnerable, threatening the livelihoods of over 9.3 million people across nine coastal districts.

Rising Sea Level Across India

- Earlier, the report titled "**Sea Level Rise Scenarios and Inundation Maps for Selected Indian Coastal Cities**", published by the Centre for Study of Science, Technology and Policy (CSTEP), provides critical insights into the projected **impacts of sea level rise (SLR) on 15 Indian coastal cities.**
- The report highlights that sea levels in Indian coastal cities have risen significantly, with **Mumbai witnessing the highest increase**, followed by Haldia and Visakhapatnam.
- By 2040, over **10% of land in Mumbai, Yanam, and Thoothukudi** is projected to be submerged, while Panaji and Chennai may see 5%-10% inundation.
- Other cities like Kochi, Mangaluru, and Puri face 1%-5% submergence. This emphasizes the urgent need for **localized adaptation and resilience strategies** to mitigate the impact of rising sea levels.

Reasons for the Rise of Sea Level

- **Rising Temperatures:** Climate change brought on by fossil-fuel burning and greenhouse gas emissions has led to a steady increase in global temperatures.
- **Melting Glaciers and Ice Caps:** As global temperatures rise, ice melts, contributing more water to the oceans.
- **Thermal Expansion:** As seawater warms, it expands, taking up more space and raising sea levels.

Challenges Associated with the Rise in Sea Level

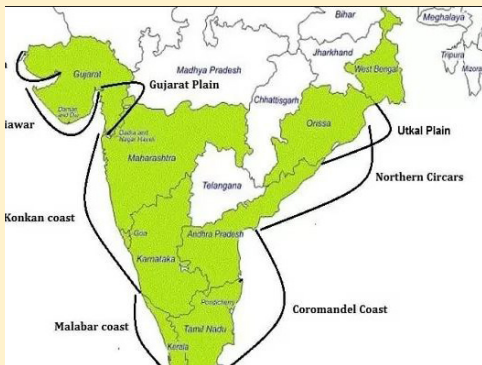
- **Key sectors that will be impacted** include water, agriculture, forest and biodiversity, and health.
- **Coastal Flooding:** Increased flooding of low-lying coastal areas, displacing communities and damaging infrastructure.
- **Agriculture Impact:** Saltwater intrusion into freshwater sources, affecting crop production.
- **Displacement of People:** Threatens millions living in coastal regions, increasing migration and pressure on inland areas.
- **Economic Losses:** Damage to ports, tourism, and fishing industries, affecting livelihoods and the economy.

India's Efforts to Combat Climate Change

- **Renewable Energy Expansion:** India has set ambitious targets for renewable energy generation, aiming to increase its capacity significantly.
- **International Commitments:** India is a signatory to the Paris Agreement and has announced its aim to meet **50% of its electricity demands from renewable energy sources by 2030.**
- **Afforestation and Forest Conservation:** There are programs to increase forest cover, restore degraded lands, and promote sustainable forest management practices.
- **Clean Transportation:** India is promoting the **adoption of electric vehicles (EVs) and has set a target of 30% EV market share by 2030.**
- **Climate Resilience:** This includes the development of climate-resilient crop varieties, water conservation techniques, and disaster preparedness measures.
- **International Cooperation:** Engaging in initiatives such as the **International Solar Alliance and the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure.**

India's Coastline

- As per the recent MHA report, India's coastline expanded by almost half in just over five decades - from **7,516km in 1970 to 11,098km in 2023-24** - with states like Bengal, Gujarat and Goa adding to their shoreline while Puducherry's shrunk by 10.4%.
- It is bordered by the Arabian Sea to the west, the Bay of Bengal to the east, and the Indian Ocean to the south.
- **States:** Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, and West Bengal.
 - ♦ **Gujarat has the longest coastline in India.**
- **Union territories:** Daman & Diu, Lakshadweep, Puducherry, and Andaman & Nicobar Islands.



Source: TOI

NEWS IN SHORT

KASHI TAMIL SANGAMAM

Context

- The Union Minister for Education launched the registration portal for the **3rd edition of Kashi Tamil Sangamam (KTS).**

About

- It will commence on 15th February 2025 in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh.
- **Organized by:** Ministry of Education.
- **Launched in:** 2022.
- **Universities:** IIT Madras and Banaras Hindu University (BHU).
- **Aim:** To rediscover, reaffirm, and celebrate the age-old links between Tamil Nadu and Kashi.
 - ♦ It is in sync with NEP 2020's emphasis on integrating the Indian Knowledge Systems with modern systems of knowledge.
 - ♦ It provides an opportunity for scholars, students, philosophers, and artists from the two regions to share their knowledge.
 - ♦ It also aims to make the youth aware and experience cultural oneness.
- **Both Kashi and Chennai** have been recognised by **UNESCO as 'Creative Cities of Music'.**

Source: PIB

THARU COMMUNITY & MAGHI FESTIVAL

Context

- The Tharu Cultural Museum in Morang district is organizing a weeklong Maghi Parva (Maghi Festival).

About

- **Makar Sankranti**, also popularly called **Maghi**, is observed by the people of the Tharu community as the beginning of their new year.
- It is observed on the **first day of Nepali month Magh** according to the **lunar calendar.**
- **Dance:** The Tharu community performs traditional dances during festivals such as **Jhumara, Mayur, Lathhawa, and Maghauta.**

Tharu community

- The Tharu community is an **indigenous ethnic group** primarily residing in the **Terai region of Nepal** and the adjoining areas of **Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Uttarakhand** in India.

- They speak a language called **Tharu or Tharuhati**, which is part of the **Indo-Aryan language group**.
- The Tharu tribe was recognized as a **Scheduled Tribe** by the Government of India in **1967**.

Source: AIR

SIACHEN GLACIER

In News

- Siachen Glacier, the world's highest and coldest battlefield, has now been equipped with high-speed 4G and 5G connectivity.

About Siachen Glacier

- The Siachen Glacier is a **Piedmont glacier**, which spreads out on a plain at the base of mountains. It is the world's second-longest non-polar glacier after the **Fedchenko Glacier in Tajikistan**.
- It is located in the **Karakoram Range**, between the **Saltoro Ridge to the west and the main Karakoram Range to the east**.
- The glacier originates near **Indira Col West**, marking the boundary between Central Asia and the Indian subcontinent.
- The glacier feeds the **Nubra River, which is a tributary of the Shyok River**. The Shyok River is part of the larger Indus River system.
- India took control of the glacier under **Operation Meghdoot (1984)**, preempting Pakistan's plans to occupy it.

Source: FE

BLOOD MONEY

Context

- The death sentence awarded by a Yemen court to an Indian-origin nurse has brought the focus back on 'blood money'.

About

- **Blood money**, or '**diyya**', finds footing in the **Islamic Sharia law**, and is followed in countries that incorporate these laws.
- **Provision:** A select quantity of a valuable asset, primarily monetary, has to be paid by the perpetrator of the crime to the victim, or the victim's family if the latter has died.
 - ♦ It is practised in cases involving **unintentional murder and culpable homicide**.
 - ♦ It is done to **avoid harsh punishments** like death sentences and to provide monetary compensation to the victim's family in exchange for mercy.
 - ♦ This system leaves the offender's fate in the hands of the family of the victim.

- **India:** Concept of Blood money is not found in India's formal legal system.

- ♦ However, the system does provide a way for the accused to negotiate with the prosecution through '**plea bargaining**'.

Source: TH

GLOBAL SOUTH

In News

- India is recognized as the first responder to the **Global South** during humanitarian crises, as per Union Minister Piyush Goyal's address at the WCDM-DRR Awards.

Global South

- The Global South refers to developing or less-developed countries, mostly in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.
- **Origin:** The term "Global South" was first used in 1969 by Carl Oglesby and gained prominence after the 1991 Soviet Union breakup, replacing the term "Third World" which had been used since 1952.
 - ♦ It reflects shared political, geopolitical, and economic conditions.
- **Features :** It is characterized by lower income, higher inequality, and poorer living conditions compared to the Global North (rich nations in North America, Europe, and Oceania).
 - ♦ Countries in the Global South were largely victims of imperialism and colonialism, which shaped their political and economic outlook, often leading to non-alignment with great powers.
- **India's Interventions :** India is recognized as a reliable and responsible partner, particularly in the Global South, and promotes security and development in the Indo-Pacific region through the SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) vision.
 - ♦ The Indian government **supports disaster relief efforts** both domestically and internationally, demonstrating global leadership, including during the Covid-19 pandemic via the '**Vaccine Maitri**' initiative.

Source : PIB

PIXCEL, DIGANTARA LAUNCH SATELLITES TO MONITOR EARTH

Context

- Pixxel and Digantara, Indian space start-ups, successfully launched satellites aboard a SpaceX rocket.

About

- **The mission aims** to enhance **earth observation and space object tracking**, addressing critical challenges in agriculture, defence, and space sustainability.
- **Pixxel**: It has become the first private company in India to establish its own constellation of satellites utilizing advanced hyper-spectral frequency technology.
 - ♦ It enables **observation of the earth** in more than **150 bands**.
- **Digantara Aerospace**: It introduced the world's inaugural commercial satellite, the **Space Camera for Object Tracking (SCOT)**, tailored for tracking objects as small as 5 cm in earth's orbit to enhance space operations safety.

India's private space sector

- India constitutes 2-3% of the global space economy and is expected to enhance its share to more than 10% by 2030.
- Indian start-ups are taking active interest in the space market, from just 1 start-up in the space sector in 2012 to **189 start-ups in 2023**.
- The funding received by these start-ups reached a total of **\$124.7 Mn in 2023** from \$67.2 Mn in 2021.

Source: FE

KAMPALA DECLARATION**Context**

- The **Kampala Declaration** for Africa's agri-food systems from 2026 to 2035 was adopted in the Extraordinary African Union Summit on the **Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP)**.

About

- The new declaration is the successor to the **Malabo Declaration**.
- During the summit, African leaders endorsed the **ten-year CAADP action plan (2026–2035)**, outlining a detailed roadmap for transforming agriculture across Africa.

Objectives of Kampala Declaration

- **Intensifying sustainable food production**, agro-industrialization, and trade,
- **Boosting Investment and Financing** for Accelerated Agrifood Systems Transformation,
- Ensuring Food and Nutrition Security,

- Advancing Inclusivity and Equitable Livelihoods,
- Building Resilient Agrifood Systems,
- Strengthening Agrifood Systems Governance.

Malabo Declaration

- In 2003, during the **Second Ordinary Session of the African Union Assembly in Maputo**, Mozambique, the Maputo Declaration on Agriculture and Food Security in Africa was adopted.
- This Declaration marked the official launch of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (or CAADP).

Source: DTE

FRONTLINE NAVAL COMBATANTS — INS SURAT, INS NILGIRI, AND INS VAGHSHEER**In News**

- India achieved its first-ever tri-commissioning of naval platforms with the induction of INS Nilgiri, INS Vaghsheer, and INS Surat.

About naval platforms

- **INS Nilgiri** is the lead ship of the Project 17A frigates and It honors the maritime history of the Chola dynasty.
 - ♦ It is a next-generation stealth frigate designed by the Indian Navy's Warship Design Bureau.
- **INS Vaghsheer** is the sixth and final submarine of the P75 Scorpene Project.
 - ♦ It is dedicated to India's naval legacy and It is constructed in collaboration with France's Naval Group.
- **INS Surat** is the fourth and final ship of the Project and It reflects Gujarat's historical maritime ties with West Asia.
 - ♦ A state-of-the-art destroyer with 75% indigenous content.

Importance

- The commissioning marks a significant step in **India's self-reliance in defense** and strengthening its Navy.
 - ♦ India's defense production exceeds 1.25 lakh crore, with over 100 countries importing Indian defense equipment.
 - ♦ The Make in India initiative is driving economic growth and self-reliance in defense.

Source :TH

MELANISTIC ROYAL BENGAL TIGER

In News

- A **melanistic Royal Bengal Tiger (RBT)** was hunted by poachers in the **Similipal Tiger Reserve**, Odisha, the **world's only habitat** for these rare black-striped tigers.

Black Tigers

- **About:** Black tigers are not a distinct species or subspecies but a rare color variant of the Bengal tiger.
 - ♦ Their distinctive fur pattern arises from **melanism, a genetic condition (mutation in the gene Transmembrane Aminopeptidase Q)**. The white fur results from a lack of the pigment **pheomelanin**.
 - ♦ Melanistic tigers tend to grow faster and are often heavier than their non-melanistic counterparts.
- **Genetic Drift:** Geographic isolation has led to inbreeding within Similipal, where genetically related tigers have mated for generations, amplifying the mutation.
- **Black Tigers Beyond Similipal:** Found in captivity at Nandankanan Zoological Park, Bhubaneswar, Ranchi Zoo, Arignar Anna Zoological Park, Chennai

Similipal National Park

- Similipal is one of India's largest biospheres, designated as a **tiger reserve under Project Tiger (1973)**. Recognized as a Biosphere Reserve by the Indian government in June 1994.
- Named after the **Simul tree (silk cotton)**, abundant in the region.
- Added to **UNESCO's Biosphere Reserve** list in May 2009.
- Similipal has the world's highest rate of black tiger sightings, making it a significant habitat for this rare variant.

Source: TOI

BHARAT RANBHOO MI DARSHAN

In News

- On the occasion of Army Day (15th January), Defense Minister Rajnath Singh launched a dedicated website — Bharat Ranbhoomi Darshan.

About Bharat Ranbhoomi Darshan

- The Bharat Ranbhoomi Darshan website will feature details on various battlefields like Galwan (2020), Doklam (2017), and 75 other sites across India's borders), offering virtual tours, historical narratives, and interactive content.
- The sites will also be highlighted by the Tourism Ministry as part of the Incredible India campaign.

Source: IE

