

# DAILY PT POINTERS

22 January, 2025



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## Trump declares end to U.S. citizenship by birth

Democratic-led States challenge order that could affect thousands of Indians in the U.S.; President also threatens 100% tariffs on BRICS countries if they attempt to move to 'non-dollar' transactions

**Suhasini Haidar**  
NEW DELHI

Shortly after being sworn in on Monday, U.S. President Donald Trump signed an Executive Order cancelling the provision of "citizenship by birth", which could directly affect thousands of Indian professionals working in the U.S. under H-1B



dent's effort to end birthright citizenship was a flagrant violation of the U.S. Constitution.

As concerns grew in India over the announcements, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar was set to meet incoming U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio to discuss priorities for the India-U.S. bilateral relationship and the Quad.

On his first day in office, President Donald Trump signed multiple executive orders focusing on key policy areas:

- **Pardons:** He pardoned 1,500 individuals involved in the Capitol riot.
- **Immigration:** Reversed Biden's policies, prioritized deportations, suspended refugee resettlements, and sent troops to the border.
- **Revoked 78 of Biden's orders**, addressing issues like COVID relief and clean energy.
- **Rescinded orders** promoting DEI and LGBTQ+ rights.
- **Implemented freezes** on federal regulations and hiring; mandated in-person work for federal employees.
- Ordered measures to reduce costs, blaming Biden's policies for inflation.
- **Withdrew from the Paris agreement**, lifted oil drilling restrictions, and promoted energy exploration.
- **Health:** Withdrew from the WHO, criticizing its handling of COVID-19.
- Created a Department of Government Efficiency led by Elon Musk to cut federal jobs.
- Proposed 25% tariffs on Canada and Mexico; assessed China's compliance with trade deals.



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## 'PM internship scheme: companies to absorb 10% of the interns'

Opportunities Desk

**I**nternships are the new entry-level jobs. A study by TeamLease EdTech corroborates that idea, as it found 81% of India Inc. to be backing PM's internship scheme, and 73% of the companies intending to absorb at least 10% of their interns as full-time employees upon completion of the internship.

Insights from 932 surveyed companies show the growing role of internships in bridging skill gaps and advancing employability for Indian youth in the stu-



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maximise impact. 32% of

- The PM Internship Scheme, introduced in the Union Budget 2024-25, mandates the top 500 companies to provide internship opportunities to one crore youth over the next five years.
- Each intern is entitled to a monthly stipend of ₹5,000, with companies allowed to use CSR funds to cover a portion of this stipend and associated training costs. The scheme has sparked broader discussions on its potential expansion to include smaller companies

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# What is the status of the Smart Cities Mission?

Why did the implementation of smart cities bypass local government and depend on Special Purpose Vehicles? What has happened to the mission in Shimla?

**Tikender Singh Panwar**

### The story so far:

Almost a decade has passed since the Indian government announced the concept of “smart cities” as the new lighthouses of urbanisation. The June 2015 announcement of 100 smart cities aimed to create models of urban development. However, these lighthouses of urbanity have now been relegated to the annals of India’s urbanisation history.

### What went wrong with smart cities?

The smart cities initiative was based on the Internet of Things (IoT), a framework that works well in advanced capitalist countries where basic utilities are already in place. In contrast, in India, where basic services are still out of reach for many, “smart cities” essentially mean providing

plan included two key components – pan-city proposals which includes IT-enabled services like mobility and waste management; and Area-Based Development (ABD) which was restricted to specific zones within a city, focusing on retrofitting, redevelopment, and greenfield projects. Additionally, governance of these projects bypassed local governments, relying instead on Special Purpose Vehicles (SPVs) registered under the Companies Act, and managed like private companies. City councils were excluded, based on the assumption that private company-like structures could deliver better results.

### What happened in Shimla?

Shimla was not included in the initial list of smart cities. However, after legal challenges posed by Shimla in the Himachal Pradesh High Court, Shimla

Shimla’s smart city plan adhered to guidelines, including pan-city initiatives and ABD projects. The city had proposed a mix of retrofit and redevelopment projects within ABD. The retrofit project had targeted improving city wide pedestrian crossings, vehicular mobility on circular roads, and three transport corridors in addition to underground ducting and parking provision. Additional features were also added that included eco-adventure tourism, and water security through storm water and spring water management. A total of 244 acres of land was supposed to be retrofitted. Redevelopment projects focused on Lower Bazar, Ganj Bazar, and Krishnanagar. The aim was to replace dilapidated, unsafe buildings with modern, resilient, earthquake-safe structures that could boost tourism.

The total estimated investment for

sources as follows – ₹897.80 crore from Public-Private Partnerships (PPP); ₹101.77 crore through municipal bonds; ₹205.57 crore from external borrowings; and ₹348.49 crore from State and Union government schemes, and the rest from other sources. However, as of now, according to the Smart City dashboard, only ₹707 crore (24% of the original budget) has been spent: ₹53 crore on completed projects and ₹654 crore on ongoing ones. The proposed PPP contribution has not yet materialised.

### What has been the outcome?

None of the funds have been utilised for the redevelopment of the Lower Bazar, Middle Bazar, or Krishnanagar. Traffic congestion has worsened, and despite initial plans, non-motorised mobility remains neglected. Instead, funds were spent on flower pots worth ₹2 crore. Moreover, large, visually intrusive structures were erected for escalators that remain non-operational, obstructing Shimla’s iconic valley views.

As the Smart City Mission approaches its final chapter, the lessons are glaringly evident. Projects devoid of meaningful urban governance and public involvement, are bound to fail. With no ownership or accountability, the smart city vision has faded into oblivion.

*Tikender Singh Panwar is a former deputy mayor of Shimla and Member,*

### THE GIST

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▼ Governance of these projects bypassed local governments, relying instead on Special Purpose Vehicles registered under the Companies Act. City councils were excluded, based on the assumption that private company-like structures could deliver better results.

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- Smart Cities Mission was launched by the Hon’ Prime Minister on 25 June, 2015. The main objective of the Mission is to promote cities that provide core infrastructure, clean and sustainable environment and give a decent quality of life to their citizens through the application of ‘smart solutions’.
- The Mission aims to drive economic growth and improve quality of life through comprehensive work on social, economic, physical and institutional pillars of the city. The focus is on sustainable and inclusive development by creation of replicable models which act as lighthouses to other aspiring cities. 100 cities have been selected to be developed as Smart Cities through a two-stage competition.

## The Hindu-GS2(Health)Page8

### Why are antivenoms not easily accessible in India?

A landmark 2020 study by researchers from Canada, India, and the U.K. estimated that between 2001 and 2014, a staggering 1.2 million snakebite deaths and three-times as many cases of disability occurred in India

R.N.V. Krishna Deepak

**I**n New Year's Day, five-year-old Mayuri lost her life to a snakebite in Uttara Kannada district in Karnataka. The delay in receiving antivenom and the unsafe conditions at her anganwadi tragically sealed her fate. She became one of the estimated 58,000 Indians who die every year from venomous snakebite, a terrible number that renders India the 'snakebite capital' of the world and highlights the scale of this preventable crisis. What makes snake venom so deadly, and how does antivenom neutralise its effects?

#### What are antivenoms?

Antivenoms, or antivenins, are life-saving medicines used to treat snakebites. They are produced by injecting small amounts of venom into animals, usually horses, which then produce antibodies as part of their immune response. These antibodies become antivenoms.

Snake venom is one of nature's most lethal weapons, a complex cocktail of toxic proteins, each tailored by evolution to immobilise, and in some cases to



from Canada, India, and the U.K. estimated that between 2001 and 2014, a horrifying 1.2 million snakebite deaths and three-times as many cases of permanent disability occurred in India. The study also said one in 250 Indians were at risk of dying from snakebite before the age of 70.

These staggering mortality numbers reflect a pernicious combination of ecological, social, and systemic factors. People in rural India like agricultural workers are disproportionately affected and face a constant threat, particularly during the monsoon, when snakes become more active. Rapid, often unplanned urbanisation, poor garbage management, and urban floods have increased encounters between humans and snakes, making even city dwellers vulnerable.

#### Why are antivenoms hard to get?

India is the world's largest producer and consumer of antivenoms in the world. However, access to timely medical care remains a significant challenge for many Indians. People in remote areas often undertake long journeys to reach a healthcare facility equipped with antivenoms.

Even when antivenom is available, improper administration and inadequate facilities exacerbate the crisis. Logistical issues, unequal access to care, superstitious beliefs, and cultural practices often delay proper treatment in many parts.

Antivenoms often need to be transported in cold storage, however, India's rural parts lack the supporting infrastructure and power supply. Facilities that 'make do' with the resources

- India, known as the "snakebite capital" of the world, faces a devastating crisis with around 58,000 deaths annually from venomous snakebites. Snake venom contains deadly toxins like haemotoxins, neurotoxins, and cytotoxins, which can cause severe damage or death if untreated. Antivenoms, produced by immunizing horses with snake venom, work by neutralizing these toxins. However, antivenoms are often inaccessible in remote areas due to logistical challenges, high costs, and improper storage.
- India's existing polyvalent antivenoms target common species but are ineffective against rarer ones, contributing to poor outcomes. Researchers are working on synthetic antivenoms using DNA technology, AI-designed proteins, and region-specific solutions to improve effectiveness and accessibility. Continued investment in infrastructure, research, and education is essential to reduce snakebite deaths and prevent tragedies like that of Mayuri.



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## ‘Competent’ to judge Indus Water Treaty dispute, says World Bank Neutral Expert

Jacob Koshy  
NEW DELHI

The Neutral Expert (NE) appointed under terms of the Indus Water Treaty (IWT), 1960, decided that he was “competent” to decide on differences between India and Pakistan on the design of hydroelectric projects built on the Indus Treaty rivers. India, in a statement, on Tuesday “welcomed” the move.

The decision on January 7 by Michel Lino, the World Bank appointed NE, which was made public via a press release on Monday, however does not help resolve a demand by India in January 2023 to renegotiate the IWT but only keeps alive the differences

the terms of the treaty.

Last September, *The Hindu* had reported that India decided there would be no more meetings of the Permanent Indus Commission (PIC), made up of representatives of both countries until the IWT was renegotiated. The last meeting happened in Delhi in May 2022. Since January 2023, India has written four times to Pakistan to initiate talks on revising the treaty but is yet to receive a formal response.

### Differing stance

The dispute resolution mechanism laid out under the terms of the IWT – as India interprets it – says that disputes must first attempt to be resolved by the PIC. If



Work in progress on the Kishen Ganga Hydro Electric Power Project in North Kashmir district of Bandipora in 2012. NISSAR AHMAD

pointed Neutral Expert. If this fails too, the matter would be decided by a Court of Arbitration. However, while India has held that each step must be fully exhausted before both sides agree to moving on to the next step, Pakistan has

seemed to agree on the World Bank appointing a “neutral expert”. Pakistan in 2016 asked for a Court of Arbitration. The World Bank first ruled that having a neutral expert and court together could lead to “contradictory outcomes”.

man to the Court of Arbitration. India has refused to attend proceedings in the Court of Arbitration at The Hague. Pakistan has maintained that it is working within the terms of the treaty, whereas India says the treaty does not allow such parallel dispute mechanisms.

The press statement, issued on Tuesday, said that while the NE could under the terms of the treaty decide on technical disputes it did not invalidate the existing Court of Arbitration.

In the days ahead, Mr. Lino is expected to hear both India and Pakistan and decide on whether design parameters of the Kishenganga and Ratle hydroelectric projects con-

- The Neutral Expert (NE) appointed under terms of the Indus Water Treaty (IWT), 1960, decided that he was “competent” to decide on differences between India and Pakistan on the design of hydroelectric projects built on the Indus Treaty rivers
- In 1960, India and Pakistan signed the **Indus Waters Treaty** with the **World Bank** as a signatory of the pact.
- Under the treaty, **India got control over the three eastern rivers** Beas, Ravi, and Sutlej while Pakistan got control of the **western rivers Indus, Jhelum, and the Chenab.**
- According to the treaty, India has the right to generate hydroelectricity through the **run-of-the-river (RoR) projects** on the western rivers which, are subject to specific criteria for design and operation

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## India, France discuss civil nuclear issues ahead of PM's visit to Paris

**Suhasini Haidar**  
NEW DELHI

India and France have agreed to boost cooperation in "high-end technology sectors", as senior officials held Foreign Office consultations in Paris, and discussed long-pending civil nuclear cooperation issues ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit next month.

A delegation, led by Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri and including newly appointed Indian Ambassador to France Sanjeev Singla, met French Secretary-General for Europe and Foreign Affairs Anne-Marie Descôtes and French Foreign Minister Jean-Noël Barrot.

Mr. Modi will travel to



Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri with Secretary-General of the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs Anne-Marie Descôtes. PTI

programme and bilateral agenda during the visit. Last week, a French Minister had announced that India will "co-chair" the summit.

Mr. Misri and Ms. Descôtes held a meeting of the India-France Special Task

year ago, the two sides had agreed to convene the Special Task Force "within three months".

### **Jaitapur project**

In particular, talks between the two sides have

offer being made by French energy company EDF (Electricite De France) in 2022.

India and France signed a civil nuclear agreement in 2008 and inked the first MoU for the 990-MW Jaitapur plant in 2009. Officials have said that the high project cost, time overrun and the continuing logjam over India's civil liability law (Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act, 2010) are among the issues still being discussed on the Jaitapur project, even as India and France look towards cooperating on Small Modular Reactor in the future.

In a statement issued after the talks, the Ministry of External Affairs said that the two sides held talks on

- India and France have agreed to strengthen cooperation in high-tech sectors, including AI, defense, and civil nuclear energy, ahead of Prime Minister Modi's visit for the AI Summit in Paris.
- They discussed the Jaitapur Nuclear Power Project's delays and ongoing issues, such as high costs and India's civil liability law. Both countries are also exploring future collaboration on Small Modular Reactors.

# HEADLINES OF THE DAY

## PIB-GS3(Economy)

Ministry of Commerce & Industry



Department of Commerce introduces Diamond Imprest Authorization Scheme to boost global competitiveness of diamond sector

Scheme to support MSME diamond exporters and safeguard domestic industry

Posted On: 21 JAN 2025 5:40PM by PIB Delhi

- Department of Commerce, Government of India has introduced the Diamond Imprest Authorization (DIA) Scheme on 21st of January 2025, aiming to enhance the global competitiveness of India's diamond sector. This scheme provides a streamlined mechanism for duty free import of Natural Cut and Polished Diamonds, and there by promoting value addition and boosting exports. The Scheme will be implemented with effect from 01.04.2025.
- Key Features of the Scheme:
  - This scheme allows the duty-free import of Natural Cut and Polished Diamonds, of less than  $\frac{1}{4}$  Carat (25 Cents).
  - This scheme mandates export obligation with a value addition of 10%.
  - All Diamond exporters holding Two Star Export House status and above and having US \$15 Million exports per year, are eligible for availing the benefit under this scheme



# HEADLINES OF THE DAY

## PIB-GS1(History)

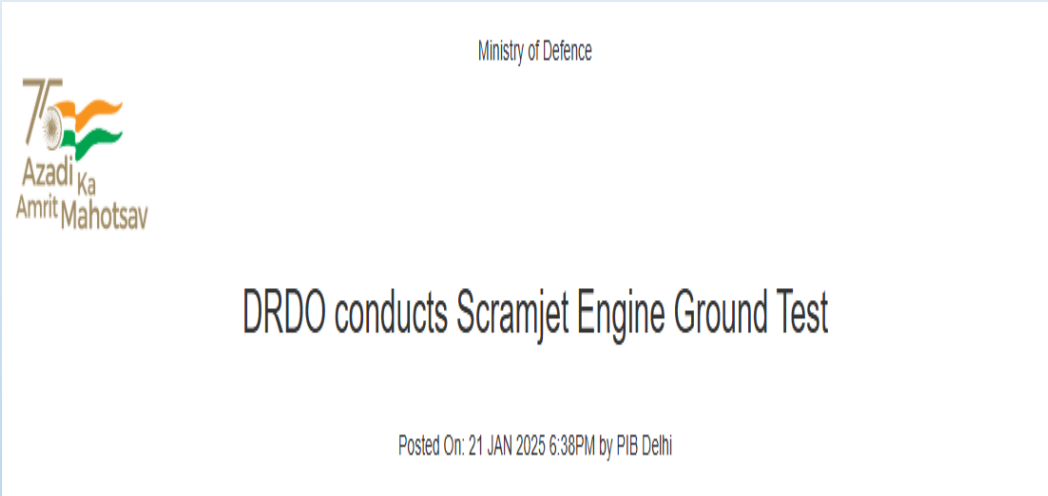


- Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose was a prominent Indian freedom fighter, known for his leadership and patriotic zeal. Expelled from Presidency College for activism, he later resigned from the Indian Civil Service to join the independence struggle.
- He became Congress president in 1938, advocating for complete self-rule. After differing from Gandhi, he founded the All India Forward Bloc and led the Azad Hind Fauj.
- In 1943, he declared the Andaman and Nicobar Islands as the first Indian territory freed from British rule. He remains a symbol of courage and patriotism in India's independence movement.

# HEADLINES OF THE DAY



## PIB-GS3(Defence)



- Defence Research & Development Laboratory (DRDL), a Hyderabad-based laboratory of Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has taken the initiative in developing a long-duration Supersonic Combustion Ramjet or Scramjet powered Hypersonic technology
- Hypersonic missiles are a class of advanced weaponry that travel at speeds greater than Mach 5 *i.e.*, five times the speed of sound or more than 5,400 km/hr. These advanced weapons have the potential to bypass existing Air Defence Systems and deliver rapid and high-impact strikes. Several nations including USA, Russia, India and China are actively pursuing Hypersonic technology. The key to hypersonic vehicles is Scramjets, which are air breathing engines capable of sustaining combustion at supersonic speeds without using any moving parts.

# HEADLINES OF THE DAY

## Air-GS2(Governance)

### Govt Celebrates 10th Anniversary Of 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao' Scheme

*Celebrating 10 Years of*  
**BETI BACHAO BETI PADHAO**



- The **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP)** scheme, launched by **Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi** on **22<sup>nd</sup> January, 2015**, in **Panipat, Haryana**, is completing a **decade** of implementation.
- This flagship initiative by the Government of India aims to address the **declining Child Sex Ratio (CSR)**, **prevent gender-biased sex-selective elimination** and **promote the survival, protection and education of the girl child**. The scheme has evolved to become one of the most impactful social initiatives by the Indian government.