

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS (DCA)

Time: 45 Min

Date: 28-06-2025

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INDIA'S START-UP ECOSYSTEM WITNESSED EXPONENTIAL GROWTH: META

Context

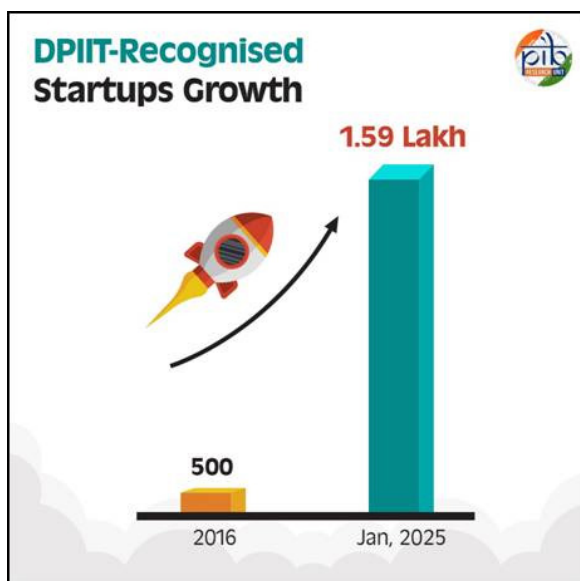
- According to a report released by Meta, **India's start-up ecosystem has witnessed exponential growth over the last decade.**

Key Highlights

- It identified six key levers of growth of India's startups such as:** AI adoption, cross-border expansion, omnichannel presence, Tier 2/3 market expansion, category diversification, creator-led brand building.
- Integration of AI: Over 70% of startups** were integrating artificial intelligence into their business operations.
 - Sectors such as healthcare, edtech, and beauty were leading in AI maturity, leveraging automation for customer service, predictive analytics, and personalisation.
- Tier 2 and 3 Market Focus:** Emerging as the new growth area.
 - Startups use vernacular content, regional influencers, and WhatsApp-based commerce for penetration.
 - Service-based startups are entering these markets earlier than product-based ones.

India's Startup Ecosystem

- India is home to one of the most vibrant startup ecosystems with close to 30,000+ tech startups, making it the **3rd largest startup ecosystem in the world after the US and China.**
- The number of DPIIT-recognised startups has grown from around **500 in 2016 to 1,59,157 as of January 2025.**



- From 2016-2024, recognised startups have reportedly created over **16.6 lakh direct jobs**, significantly contributing to employment generation.

Industries Leading Job Creation in Startups



(Jobs created as of October 31, 2024)

- India is ranked fourth** after the US, UK and China in terms of total funding to tech startups.
 - At present, the country has over 1.4 lakh startups. **India minted six new unicorns in 2024 alone.**
- Significance:**
 - Generated Employment:** Startups have created over 1.6 million jobs across the country, demonstrating their role as significant employment generators.
 - Boosted GDP Growth:** Startups contribute directly to GDP through innovation-driven productivity and indirectly by fostering ancillary industries.
 - Attracted Foreign Investments:** India has become a magnet for global venture capital (VC) and private equity (PE) investments.
 - Promoted Inclusivity:** Rural-focused startups and social enterprises are addressing critical gaps in healthcare, education, and agriculture, improving the quality of life for millions.

Government Initiatives

- Startup India:** Launched in 2016, it is a flagship initiative by the Government of India to foster innovation and create a thriving startup ecosystem. Through various schemes, it aims to empower startups to scale and succeed.
- Startup India Seed Fund Scheme (SISFS):** Launched in 2021, the SISFS supports startups at various stages, including proof of concept, prototype development, product trials, market entry, and commercialisation.

- **Credit Guarantee Scheme for Startups (CGSS):** It provides credit guarantees for loans to DPIIT-recognised startups from Scheduled Commercial Banks, NBFCs, and Venture Debt Funds.
- **Atal Innovation Mission (AIM):** Launched in 2016 by NITI Aayog, it aims to promote innovation and entrepreneurship across India.
 - ♦ It includes initiatives like Atal Tinkering Labs at the school level to foster creativity, Atal Incubation Centres to build a robust startup ecosystem, and Atal Community Innovation Centres to serve unserved and underserved regions.
- **MeitY Startup Hub (MSH):** It serves as a central hub, ensuring synergies among incubation centres, Centres of Excellence on Emerging Technologies, and other platforms supported by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.
- **IndiaAI Mission (2024):** It has a budget of ₹10,300 crore over five years.
 - ♦ A key goal is the creation of a high-end common computing facility with 18,693 GPUs.
- **India's AI Models & Language Technologies:** The government is facilitating the development of India's own foundational models, including Large Language Models (LLMs) and problem-specific AI solutions tailored to Indian needs.
- **AI Centers of Excellence:** Establishing dedicated AI hubs and innovation centers across the country to support AI startups and research.
- **India's Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI):** Combines public funding with private sector innovation to drive digital transformation.

Conclusion

- Over the last 10 years, India's startup ecosystem has experienced tremendous growth, becoming the **third-largest in the world**.
- India's startup ecosystem is entering a new maturity phase, marked by:
 - ♦ Smarter tech-led growth;
 - ♦ Regional inclusivity;
 - ♦ Global ambition;
 - ♦ Focus on sustainability and consumer personalization.
- These shifts reflect not just a digital revolution but a **strategic rethinking of entrepreneurship in India**.

Source: TH

INDIA-US TRADE DEAL TO FINALISE SOON

Context

- In a recent address, the **US President** signaled the possibility of a **'very big' trade deal with India**, suggesting that negotiations between the two nations are gaining momentum.

About India-USA Trade Deal

- **Past Engagements:**
 - ♦ **Post-independence:** India's protectionist policies and the US's Cold War alliances limited deep economic engagement.
 - ♦ **1991 Reforms:** India's economic liberalization marked a turning point, opening the door to greater foreign investment and trade.
 - ♦ **2005–2015:** The US emerged as a key trading partner, with bilateral trade growing steadily.
 - Initiatives like the **US-India Trade Policy Forum (TPF)** were launched to resolve disputes and deepen ties.
- **Present Scenario:**
 - ♦ **Trade Volume:** Bilateral trade reached \$191 billion, making the US India's largest trading partner.
 - ♦ **Tariff Tensions:** The US imposed a **10% baseline tariff** and **proposed a 26% reciprocal tariff** on Indian goods in April 2025, citing trade imbalances.
 - ♦ **Negotiations Underway:** Talks have intensified, with both sides aiming to **finalize an interim trade deal before July 9, 2025**. Key areas include:
 - Market access for agricultural and industrial goods, including **entry of genetically-modified (GM) crops**;
 - Tariff concessions for Indian textiles, pharmaceuticals, and electronics;
 - Digital trade and customs facilitation.

Key Concerns in US-India Trade Relations

- **Tariff Disparities:** India maintains one of the highest average applied tariffs among G20 nations — around 17%, compared to the US average of 3.3%. India is seeking full exemption from these duties.
- The US is looking for greater market access, especially in sectors like agriculture, dairy, and industrial goods.
- **Agriculture and Dairy Sensitivities:** India is cautious about opening its agriculture and dairy sectors, citing the need to protect small farmers and domestic producers.

- ♦ These sectors are politically sensitive and have become major sticking points in trade talks.
- **Steel and Aluminum Tariffs:** The US has imposed **reciprocal tariffs of up to 26% on Indian steel and aluminum exports**, citing national security concerns.
 - ♦ India has protested these measures and is seeking concessions.
- **Regulatory and Infrastructure Barriers:** U.S. exporters often face non-transparent regulations, price sensitivity, and infrastructure bottlenecks in India.
 - ♦ These include delays in project approvals, inconsistent state-level policies, and logistical inefficiencies.
- **Digital Trade and Data Localization:** India's push for data localization and its stance on digital sovereignty have raised concerns among US tech firms.
 - ♦ Negotiations are ongoing to find common ground on digital trade norms.

Way Forward

- India & US remain committed to finalizing a multi-sector **Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA) by end 2025**.
 - ♦ The goal is **to double bilateral trade to \$500 billion by 2030**, up from **\$191 billion in 2024–25**.
- As both nations work toward a comprehensive trade pact, the outcome could reshape global supply chains, bolster economic resilience, and set a precedent for equitable globalization.

Source: TH

STATISTICAL REPORT ON AGRICULTURE AND ALLIED SECTORS

Context

- The **National Statistics Office (NSO)**, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation

(MoSPI) released the **annual publication of “Statistical Report on Value of Output from Agriculture and Allied Sectors (2011-12 to 2023-24)”**.

About

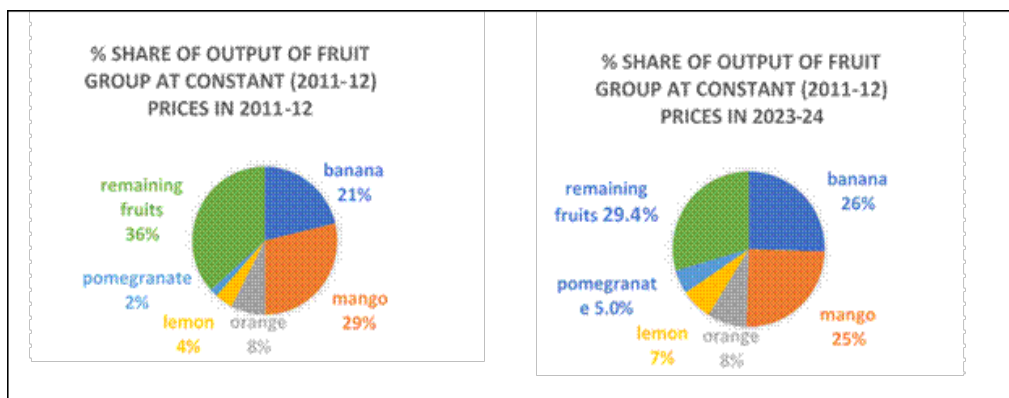
- It is a comprehensive document which provides **detailed tables on values of output of Crop, Livestock, Forestry & logging and Fishing & aquaculture sectors** of Agriculture & allied activities from **2011-12 to 2023-24** at both current and constant (2011-12) prices.

Key Highlights

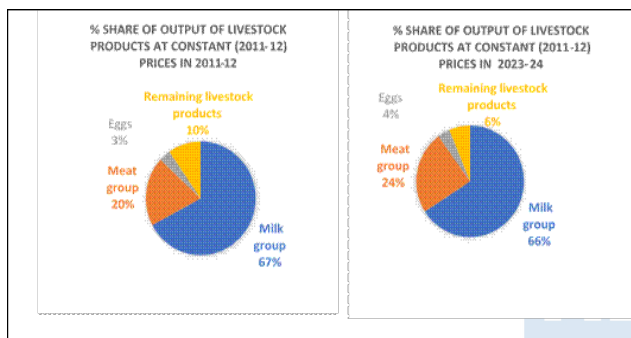
- **Overall Growth:** Gross Value Added (GVA) at current prices **grew by 225%**, from ₹1,502 thousand crore in 2011–12 to ₹4,878 thousand crore in 2023–24.
 - ♦ **Gross Value of Output (GVO)** at constant prices increased by **54.6%**, from ₹1,908 thousand crore to ₹2,949 thousand crore.
- **Sectoral Contribution to GVO (2023–24, at constant prices):**

Sector	Contribution to GVO	Notable Trends
Crop sector	₹1,595 thousand crore (54.1%)	Largest contributor
Livestock	₹919 thousand crore	Fastest growing
Forestry	₹227 thousand crore	Moderate growth
Fishing & Aquaculture	Share rose to 7.0% (from 4.2%)	Rapidly rising

- **Crop Sector Details:** Cereals + Fruits & Vegetables contributed **52.5%** of total crop GVO, **Paddy & Wheat** contributed 85% of cereal GVO.
- **Top Cereals GVO States (2023–24):** Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Telangana, and Haryana collectively contributed 53% of cereal GVO.



- **Condiments & Spices:** Top State Madhya Pradesh (19.2%) followed by Karnataka (16.6%) and Gujarat (15.5%).
- **Livestock Sector:** GVO rose from ₹488 to ₹919 thousand crore.
 - ♦ Milk is dominant but share decreased from 67.2% to 65.9%.
 - ♦ Meat share has increased from 19.7% to 24.1%.
- **Fishing & Aquaculture:** Contribution increased from 4.2% in 2011-12 to 7.0% in 2023-24.
 - ♦ The **share of inland fish** has decreased from 57.7% to 50.2% whereas, the share of marine fish has increased from 42.3% to 49.8% during 2011-12 to 2023-24.
 - ♦ Significant shifts in GVO (at constant prices) in Fisheries has been observed in the two major contributing States of **West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh**.



Importance Agriculture and Allied Sectors

- **Contribution to GDP and GVA:** The sector contributed around **18% to India's Gross Value Added (GVA) in 2023-24**.
 - **Employment Generation:** It is the largest employer in the country. About 45% of India's workforce is engaged in agriculture and allied activities (as per Periodic Labour Force Survey - PLFS 2022-23).
 - **Food Security:** Ensures food security for over 1.4 billion people through production of cereals, pulses, vegetables, fruits, dairy, fish, and livestock products.
 - ♦ Key to successful implementation of the Public Distribution System (PDS) and food subsidy schemes.
 - **Contribution to Exports:** India is among the top exporters of rice, spices, marine products, cotton, tea, coffee, and buffalo meat.
 - **Rural Development and Poverty Alleviation:** Drives rural income growth, supports rural infrastructure, and boosts consumption.
 - **Strategic and Political Importance:** Plays a critical role in political stability due to its impact on inflation, rural distress, and food prices.
 - ♦ Agriculture often features centrally in policy debates, budget allocations, and election manifestos.
- ### Government Initiatives
- **Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN):** PM-KISAN is a central sector scheme launched in 2019 to supplement financial needs of land holding farmers, subject to exclusions.
 - **Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY):** It was launched in 2016 in order to provide a simple and affordable crop insurance product to ensure comprehensive risk cover for crops to farmers against all non-preventable natural risks.
 - **Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF):** The Fund of Rs. 1 lakh crore under the scheme will be disbursed from FY 2020-21 to FY2025-26 and the support under the scheme will be provided for the duration of FY2020-21 to FY2032-33.
 - **National beekeeping and Honey Mission (NBHM):** It is a Central Sector Scheme launched in 2020 under Atma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyan for overall promotion and development of **scientific beekeeping & to achieve the goal of "Sweet Revolution"**.
 - **Namo Drone Didi:** It is a Central Sector Scheme for a period from 2024-25 to 2025-26.
 - ♦ The scheme aims to provide drones to 15000 selected Women Self Help Group (SHGs) for providing rental services to farmers for agriculture purposes (application of fertilizers and pesticides).
 - **Soil Health Card (SHC):** Provides information to farmers on nutrient status of their soil along with recommendation on appropriate dosage of nutrients to be applied for improving soil health and its fertility.
 - **National Mission on Edible Oil (NMEO)-Oil Palm (NMEO-OP):** It has been launched in 2021 in order to promote oil palm cultivation for making the country Aatamnirbhar in edible oils.
 - **e-NAM (National Agriculture Market):** Pan-India electronic trading platform integrating APMCs.
 - ♦ Aims at transparent, competitive prices for farmers.
 - **National Livestock Mission (NLM):** Focuses on breed improvement, fodder development, and entrepreneurship in livestock.
 - **Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY):** Comprehensive development of the fisheries sector with focus on infrastructure, processing, and exports.

Conclusion

- The agriculture and allied sectors are not just about food production—they are the **backbone of India's economic resilience, social equity, and ecological sustainability.**
- Strengthening these sectors is vital for **achieving SDGs, ensuring inclusive growth, and making India Atmanirbhar (self-reliant).**

Source: PIB

INDIA'S FIRST MARITIME NBFC LAUNCHED

In News

- The Union Minister of Ports, Shipping & Waterways (MoPSW) inaugurated Sagarmala Finance Corporation Limited (SMFCL).

Sagarmala Finance Corporation Limited (SMFCL)

- It was formerly known as Sagarmala Development Company Limited.
- It is a Mini Ratna, Category-I, Central Public Sector Enterprise and has been formally registered as a **Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC)** with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).
- It is **India's first NBFC in the maritime sector.**

Do you know?

- A Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC) is a company registered under the **Companies Act, 1956 or 2013**
- It is primarily engaged in financial activities like loans, advances, and investments in securities.
- It excludes companies whose main business is agriculture, industry, trade in goods or services, or real estate.
 - ♦ Companies that collect deposits under various schemes are classified as Residuary NBFCs.
- **Banks and NBFCs differ** in key ways despite both engaging in lending and investments:
 - ♦ NBFCs cannot accept demand deposits.
 - ♦ NBFCs are not part of the payment and settlement system and cannot issue cheques.
 - ♦ Deposit insurance facility of Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC) is not available to depositors of deposit taking NBFCs.

Importance of SMFCL

- It is aligned with the Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047 and aims to bridge financing gaps and offer tailored financial solutions for ports, MSMEs, startups, and maritime institutions.
- It will support strategic areas like shipbuilding, renewable energy, cruise tourism, and maritime education, helping to drive economic growth and logistics efficiency.
- The launch marks a key step in making India a global maritime power, creating a dedicated financial ecosystem for inclusive and sustainable maritime development.

India's maritime sector

- It is crucial to its trade, handling 95% of trade by volume and 70% by value.
- The Ministry of Ports, Shipping & Waterways oversees the sector, which includes 12 major and 200+ minor ports.
- In FY24, ports handled 818 million tonnes of cargo, up 4.45% from FY23. The government supports the sector with 100% FDI and tax incentives.
- The **Amrit Kaal Vision 2047 builds on Maritime India Vision 2030** to globalize ports, enhance inland/coastal shipping, and promote sustainability.
- **SAGAR SETU Platform** was launched by the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MoPSW) in June 2025 to revolutionize maritime and logistics operations.
- India also plans a new shipping company to expand its fleet by 1,000 ships, aiming to cut foreign freight costs by a **third by 2047.**

Source: TH

NEWS IN SHORT

MANASAROVAR LAKE

In News

- The first batch of Indian pilgrims has arrived at Lake Manasarovar in Tibet after a five-year pause, marking the resumption of the sacred pilgrimage.

Lake Manasarovar

- It is one of the **world's highest freshwater lakes**, located about 2,000 km from Lhasa at the southern foot of Mount Kailash.

- ♦ Mount Kailash and the Mansarovar Lake lie in the Tibet Autonomous Region of China.
- It is known for its crystal-clear blue shores and emerald green center.
- It is revered in both **Hinduism and Buddhism** and attracts pilgrims mainly from **India, Tibet, and neighboring countries**.

Religious Significance Lake Manasarovar

- According to Hindu mythology, the lake was created by Lord Brahma for his sons to perform religious rituals.
- In Buddhism, Lake Manasarovar is associated with Jambhala, the Tibetan Buddhist god of wealth and abundance.

Source :TH

ADI KARMYOGI PROGRAMME

In News

- The Ministry of Tribal Affairs launched the Adi Karmyogi Programme.

About the Adi Karmyogi Programme

- **Launched by:** Ministry of Tribal Affairs
- **Aim:** To capacitate nearly 20 lakh stakeholders involved in tribal welfare delivery, including bureaucrats, block officials, and frontline workers.
- **Focus Areas:** The program will focus on improving outcomes in critical areas such as:
 - ♦ Healthcare gaps (with special attention to Sickle Cell Disease)
 - ♦ School staffing shortages
 - ♦ Poor access to public services in tribal belts
- **Connection to Mission Karmayogi:** While “Adi Karmyogi” is specifically for tribal affairs, it aligns with the broader “Mission Karmayogi” (launched in 2020) – the National Programme for Civil Services Capacity Building (NPCSCB).

Source: TH

SPREE SCHEME

In News

- In the 196th meeting, the Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) re-launched this scheme for 2025 with the objective of expanding ESI coverage across the country.

About SPREE Scheme

- **Genesis:** Originally introduced in 2016, SPREE (Scheme to Promote Registration of Employers/ Employees) has facilitated the registration of over 88,000 employers and 1.02 crore employees.

- **Objective:** It aims to bring unregistered employers and left-out workers (including contractual and temporary staff) under the ESI Act.
- **Duration:** The renewed SPREE scheme will be open from July 1st to December 31st, 2025.
- **Benefit:** By focusing on voluntary compliance rather than penalisation, the scheme will seek to ease the litigation burden, encourage formal registration, and foster improved engagement and goodwill among stakeholders.

Amnesty Scheme – 2025

- The Corporation also approved Amnesty Scheme – 2025, a one-time dispute resolution window from October 1, 2025 to September 30, 2026 aimed at reducing litigation and promoting compliance under the ESI Act.

Source: ET

VARIABLE RATE REVERSE REPO (VRRR) AUCTION

In News

- Recently, The Reserve Bank of India conducted a 7-day **Variable Rate Reverse Repo (VRRR) auction** to manage liquidity, receiving and accepting ₹84,975 crore in bids against a notified amount of ₹1 lakh crore.
 - ♦ The cut-off rate was 5.49%, with a weighted average rate of 5.45%, indicating the interest at which RBI absorbed excess funds from banks.

Variable Rate Reverse Repo (VRRR)

- It is a short-term tool under **RBI's Liquidity Adjustment Facility**.
- It used to absorb surplus liquidity at market-driven rates.
- It helps the RBI maintain monetary stability and control short-term interest rate volatility, reflecting its ongoing focus on effective liquidity management.

Source: AIR

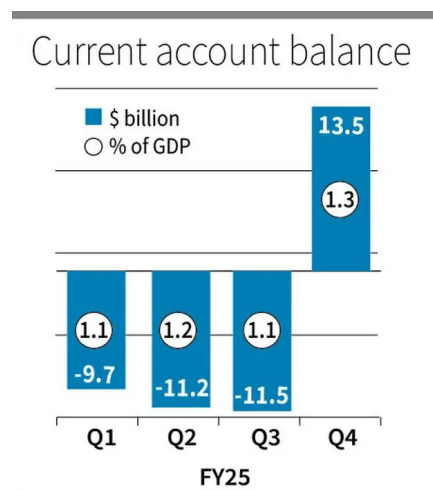
INDIA REPORTS CURRENT ACCOUNT SURPLUS

Context

- According to the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)**, India's current account balance **recorded a more than expected surplus of \$13.5 billion** in Q4 (January-March) of FY25.

About

- **The CAB surplus is higher than expected** is underscored by the fact that India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra) had estimated it at around 7 billion (0.7 per cent of GDP) in the reporting quarter.

**The Current Account Balance**

- **The Current Account Balance** is a key component of a country's Balance of Payments (BoP) and reflects its **transactions with the rest of the world in goods, services, income, and transfers**.
- **The Current Account comprises** trade in goods, trade in services, primary income (investment income), and secondary income (transfers and remittances).
- **A surplus** in the current account occurs when **inflows exceed outflows**.
- **Significance of CAB Surplus:**
 - ♦ Indicates Strong External Position.
 - ♦ Strengthens Foreign Exchange Reserves.
 - ♦ Improves Investor Confidence.

Source: TH

ALPHAGENOME**Context**

- Google DeepMind has released a new tool called **AlphaGenome**.

About

- This is a new AI model that is specifically tuned to **accurately predict how individual mutations in human DNA affect their functions**.
- It can **analyze extremely long DNA sequences** (up to 1 million base pairs) and predict how genetic variants affect gene regulation.

- It is capable of analyzing **both common and rare genetic variants**, across diverse **cell types and biological processes**, using a **single unified model**.
- It is trained using **large public genomic datasets**.
- **Availability:** Currently available via Application Programming Interface (API) for non-commercial, research-focused use.
 - ♦ Not approved for clinical diagnosis yet.

Significance

- Marks a major step in AI-powered genomic research.
- Enhances understanding of non-coding DNA, often overlooked but critical to genetic diseases, including cancers.
- Reflects the growing role of AI in biosciences and precision health.

Source: IT

TEC-VERSE 2025**In News**

- The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology launched the Tec-Verse 2025.

Tec-Verse 2025

- It is the inaugural technology showcase event organized by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) to support the Viksit Bharat 2047 vision.
- It brings together MeitY's premier R&D institutions—Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC), SAMEER, and C-MET—to exhibit indigenous innovations addressing real-world societal challenges.
- It marks a shift towards a product-driven economy and will be held annually to promote research, development, and commercialization of cutting-edge technologies.

Source: PIB

IBAT ALLIANCE**In News**

- **IBAT Alliance** doubled its investment in biodiversity data from 2023 to 2024.

About IBAT (Integrated Biodiversity Assessment Tool) Alliance

- **Founded in 2008** at the IUCN World Conservation Congress.
- It is a collaboration of **four major global conservation organisations** like BirdLife International, Conservation International, IUCN

(International Union for Conservation of Nature) & UNEP-WCMC (United Nations Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre).

- Its mission is to provide data, tools, and guidance that help organizations act on biodiversity-related risks and opportunities.
- IBAT data help monitor progress towards international biodiversity goals, including those outlined in the **Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (adopted in Dec2022)**
- **Headquarter:** The UK

Source: DTE

GREEN DATA CENTRE

Context

- Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister and Union Minister for Science & Technology, laid the foundation stone for a state-of-the-art **Green Data Centre in Sahibabad, Ghaziabad.**

About

- **A Green Data Centre** is a facility **designed to house computer systems and associated components** (like storage and networking) **while minimizing environmental impact** through energy efficiency, sustainable practices, and the use of renewable resources.
- It is set up through a **collaboration between Central Electronics Limited (CEL) (a PSU under the Ministry of Science & Technology) and ESDS.**
- **Purpose:** Strengthen India's digital self-reliance and infrastructure.
- **Sustainability Features:** Energy-efficient technologies and renewable energy sources.
 - ♦ Smart cooling systems, reflective roofing, rainwater harvesting.
 - ♦ Designed to minimize environmental impact and support 200 high-density racks per floor.
 - ♦ Tier III/TIA/Uptime-compliant for high availability and disaster resilience.

- The Green Data Centre is **expected to attract startups, enterprises, and government agencies**, while generating skilled jobs and fostering local innovation.

Central Electronics Limited (CEL)

- Established in **1974** to commercialize indigenous technologies.
- Developed India's first solar cell in 1977, and India's first solar panel in 1978 and installed India's first solar power plant in 1992.
- Awarded **Mini Ratna status recently.**

Source: IE

DHOLE (ASIATIC WILD DOG)

Context

- The **Dhole, or Asiatic wild dog (*Cuon alpinus*)**, once thought locally extinct, was recently seen in Assam's Kaziranga–Karbi Anglong Landscape (KKAL), according to the **Wildlife Institute of India (WII)**.
 - ♦ The last confirmed sighting of dholes in northeast India was reported from Nagaland in 2011.

About the Dhole

- **Social Behaviour:** Highly social; typically form packs of up to 30 but may hunt alone or in pairs depending on prey availability.
- **Lifespan:** 10–13 years in the wild; up to 16 years in captivity.
- **Threats:** Major threats include habitat loss, prey depletion, persecution, disease, and competition with other predators — causing population fragmentation.
- **Distribution:** Now restricted to parts of Central and Eastern Asia, including India, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, China, Myanmar, Indonesia, Thailand, and Malaysia.
- **Conservation Status:** It is included in CITES – Appendix II
 - ♦ Dholes are classified as **endangered** on the IUCN Red List.

Source: TH