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PM STATE VISIT TO MALDIVES

Context

- Prime Minister Modi paid a **state visit to Maldives**.

About

- The two sides exchanged four **Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs)** and signed three agreements.
 - ♦ **Cooperation in several key sectors**, including fisheries, aquaculture, tourism, environment, digital solutions, and finalising the terms of reference to **launch negotiations of a Free Trade Agreement**.
- India agreed to extend a **fresh Line of Credit (LoC) of ₹4,850 crore**, to support the island as it faces an enduring **twin deficit problem**.
 - ♦ This is the **first time that such credit is being extended** to the Maldives in Indian Rupee.
- Both signed an **amendatory agreement** on reducing the Maldives's annual debt repayment obligations.
- **Significance:** Observers of India-Maldives ties see the renewed collaboration between the countries as a necessary and positive development.

Brief on India - Maldives Relations

- **Participation in Multiple Forums:** Both nations are **founding members** of the **South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)**, the South Asian Economic Union and signatories to the South Asia Free Trade Agreement.
- **Economic partnership:** India emerged as the Maldives' second largest trade partner in 2022 and became the largest trade partner in 2023, with bilateral trade reaching approximately **\$548 million in 2023**.
- **Tourism:** In 2023, India is the leading source market for Maldives with a **11.8% market share**.
 - ♦ In March 2022, India & Maldives agreed for an open skies arrangement which will further improve connectivity between two countries.
- **Defense and Security Cooperation:** Since **1988**, defence and security has been a major area of cooperation between India and Maldives.
 - ♦ A **comprehensive Action Plan for Defence** was also signed in **2016** to consolidate defence partnership.
 - ♦ Estimates suggest that almost **70 per cent of Maldives' defence training is done by India** — either on the islands or in India's elite military academies.

- **Connectivity:** The Male to Thilafushi Link project, popularly known as the **Greater Male Connectivity Project (GMCP)**, is a USD 530 million infrastructure project aimed at establishing a direct link between the capital city of the Maldives and Thilafushi, an island located in the South Indian Ocean.

Significance of Maldives:

- **Strategic Importance:** The Maldives is strategically located in the Indian Ocean, and its stability and security are of interest to India.
- **Trade Route:** Situated along **crucial maritime trade routes** between the Gulf of Aden and the Strait of Malacca, the **Maldives acts as a "toll gate" for nearly half of India's external trade and 80% of its energy imports**.



- **Counterbalancing China:** Maldives presents an opportunity for India to counterbalance China's growing influence in the Indian Ocean, fostering regional balance of power.
- **Diplomatic Leverage:** Strong bilateral relations with the Maldives enhance India's leadership role in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and in forums like the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA).

Challenges:

- **Change in Power:** Changes in government create uncertainty and complicate long-term cooperation projects.
- **Chinese Influence:** China's growing economic presence in the Maldives, evidenced by investments in infrastructure projects and debt-trap diplomacy, is perceived as a challenge to India's strategic interests in the region.
- **Non-traditional threats:** Piracy, terrorism, and drug trafficking remain concerns in the region, requiring continuous collaboration and intelligence sharing between India and the Maldives.
- **Extremism and radicalization:** The Maldives' vulnerability to religious extremism and radicalization poses a security threat that

necessitates joint efforts in countering such ideologies.

- **Trade imbalance:** The significant trade imbalance between India and the Maldives leads to resentment and calls for diversifying trade partnerships in Maldives.

Way Ahead

- The evolution of India-Maldives relations reflects a combination of geopolitical dynamics, changes in leadership, and shared regional interests.
- India is steadfast in its commitments towards Maldives and **has always walked the extra mile** towards building relations.
- By acknowledging and addressing the challenges, India and the Maldives can **navigate the complexities of their relationship and build a stronger, more resilient, and mutually beneficial partnership** for the future.

Source: PIB

CENTRE BLOCKS 25 OTT PLATFORMS OVER OBSCENE CONTENT

Context

- The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has directed the blocking of websites and apps of at least 25 OTT platforms for allegedly providing obscene and vulgar content.

Factors causing rise in Obscenity

- **Rapid Growth of Digital Platforms:** The proliferation of OTTs, social media, and video-sharing sites has enabled easy access and dissemination of objectionable content.
- **Lack of Pre-Screening on OTT Platforms:** Unlike films, OTT content is not subject to prior certification, allowing creators to bypass traditional censorship.
- **Inadequate Content Regulation Mechanisms:** Weak enforcement in self-regulatory frameworks result in unchecked publication of obscene material.
- **Anonymity and Encryption:** Users often exploit encrypted apps and anonymous browsing tools to share and consume explicit content, escaping legal scrutiny.

Legal Framework Governing Obscenity in India

- **Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000:**
 - ♦ **Section 67:** Punishes publishing/transmitting obscene material electronically.
 - ♦ **Section 67A:** Specifically penalizes sexually explicit content.

- **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023:** Section 294 (previously Section 292 of IPC, 1860) prohibits sale or distribution of obscene materials including digital content.
- **Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986:** Section 4 bans advertisements or publications that depict women indecently.
- **IT Rules, 2021:**
 - ♦ Mandates OTT platforms to adhere to a **Code of Ethics**.
 - ♦ Provides a **three-tier grievance redressal mechanism**.
 - ♦ Includes oversight by the **Digital Publisher Content Grievances Council (DPCGC)**, a self-regulatory body led by a former SC judge.

Important Judgments and Committees

- **Justice for Rights Foundation v. Union of India, 2018:** The Supreme Court transferred a plea seeking stricter regulation of OTT content to the Ministry of I&B, which later led to the formulation of self-regulation mechanisms under the **IT Rules, 2021**.
- **Shyam Divan Committee:** It was established in **2021 by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting** to draft a code of ethics and examine the need for regulation of content on digital media platforms, especially OTTs.
 - ♦ It called for self-regulation with government oversight, and accountability mechanisms for digital publishers and OTT platforms.

Implications of Rising Obscenity in India

- **Impact on Social Morality:** The growing presence of obscene content in digital media influences public morality, especially among impressionable audiences such as children and young adults.
- **Cybercrime and Exploitation:** Increased obscenity online fuel exploitation, including cyberbullying, harassment, and trafficking.
- **Challenge to Regulatory Mechanisms:** Despite the IT Rules, enforcement remains a challenge due to technological evasions (VPNs, mirror sites).
 - ♦ Balancing freedom of expression with public decency continues to be contentious.

Way Ahead

- **Strengthening Implementation:** Regular monitoring and swift enforcement of IT Rules are essential.
- **Promoting Digital Literacy:** Empower users, especially youth, to responsibly engage with digital content.

- **Platform Accountability:** OTTs must adopt content rating systems, age-gating, and pre-screening mechanisms.
- **Judicial Oversight:** Ensure legal actions align with constitutional rights and due process to prevent misuse.

Source: TH

DOT RELEASED DRAFT NATIONAL TELECOM POLICY (NTP), 2025

Context

- The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) has circulated **Draft National Telecom Policy (NTP), 2025**, for public consultation.
 - ♦ It outlines India's strategic priorities for the telecom sector for the period of **2025 to 2030**.

Key Features of Draft NTP 2025

- **Universal and Meaningful Connectivity:**
 - ♦ Achieve 100% 4G coverage and 90% 5G population coverage by 2030.
 - ♦ Increase fiberization of telecom towers from 46% to 80% for better speed and reliability.
 - ♦ Deploy 1 million public Wi-Fi hotspots and extend fixed-line broadband to 100 million households.
 - ♦ Promote satellite-based internet in remote areas.
- **Domestic Equipment Manufacturing:**
 - ♦ Incentivize use of locally made telecom equipment to replace 50% of imports, supporting companies like Tejas Networks and HFCL.
- **R&D and Innovation:**
 - ♦ Double telecom R&D expenditure.
 - ♦ Support 500 tech startups and aim to capture 10% of global 6G-related IPs.
 - ♦ Promote blended finance and fund-of-fund models for innovation.
- **Employment and Skill Development:**
 - ♦ Create 1 million new jobs in telecom.
 - ♦ Upskill 1 million workers in emerging technologies.
- **Investment and Export Promotion:**
 - ♦ Target 1 trillion annual investments in telecom.
 - ♦ Double telecom products and services exports.
- **Network Security:**
 - ♦ Conduct equipment audits to exclude non-trusted hardware.
 - ♦ Develop quantum-secure communication systems and strengthen cybersecurity.

Green Telecom Initiatives:

- ♦ Reduce telecom sector carbon footprint by 30%.
- ♦ Encourage renewable energy use and sustainable deployment.
- **Ease of Doing Business:** Simplify norms to improve telecom access and foster digital inclusion.

Significance of the Policy

- NTP 2025 aims to **boost telecom sector investment to ₹1 lakh crore annually**, doubling telecom product exports and fostering innovation in emerging technologies like 5G, 6G, artificial intelligence (AI), Internet of Things (IoT), and quantum communications.
- The policy targets **100% 4G population coverage and 90% 5G coverage by 2030**, alongside expanding fiberization of telecom towers and deploying one million public Wi-Fi hotspots.
- NTP 2025 proposes **simplification of regulations, cost reductions, and measures** to improve business environment and digital inclusion, fostering a robust ecosystem for telecom players and consumers alike.

Telecommunication Sector in India

- India is the **world's second-largest telecommunications market** with a total telephone subscriber base of 1.20 billion.
- India ranks as the **world's second-largest market in terms of total internet users**.
- The Telecom sector is the **4th largest sector in terms of FDI inflows**, contributing **6% of total FDI inflow**.

Challenges Faced by the Sector

- **Regulatory Framework:** Changes in regulations, spectrum pricing, licensing requirements, and government policies impact the operations and investments of telecom companies.
- **Infrastructure Development:** Despite significant progress in recent years, there are still gaps in telecommunications infrastructure, particularly in rural and remote areas.
- **Competition and Pricing:** Intense competition among telecom operators has led to price wars and margin pressures.
 - ♦ While this benefits consumers with lower tariffs, it puts strain on the financial health of telecom companies.
- **Quality of Service:** Maintaining consistent quality of service, especially in densely populated urban areas, is a challenge for telecom operators.

- **Cybersecurity:** With the increasing digitization of services, cybersecurity has become a critical concern for telecom companies.
- **Technological Advancements:** Keeping pace with rapid technological advancements, such as 5G deployment, requires substantial investments in infrastructure and upgrades.
 - ♦ Telecom companies need to balance these investments with revenue generation and profitability.

Way Ahead

- Operators are expected to expand 5G coverage and invest in infrastructure, which will drive demand for new devices and services.
- Increased smartphone penetration and data consumption are boosting demand for digital platforms and services.
- The telecom sector is crucial for the digital economy, and as its services expand, cybersecurity becomes even more critical.
- Addressing evolving threats, securing new technologies, and meeting regulatory requirements are critical for the growth of the sector.

Source: TH

PUBLIC PROCUREMENT OF GREEN STEEL

In News

The Indian government is finalising a green steel procurement policy, potentially mandating that 25% of public steel purchases be low-emission "green steel."












- The goal is to create market demand and prevent green steel from being undercut by cheaper, high-emission alternatives.

What is Green Steel?

- It refers to steel produced using low-carbon technologies, primarily by replacing coal-based blast furnaces with hydrogen-based direct reduced iron (DRI) processes or electric arc furnaces powered by renewable energy.
- It aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from one of the most carbon-intensive industries globally.

Importance

- **The steel industry accounts for 10-12% of India's total emissions.**
 - ♦ Therefore, the sector's decarbonisation is imperative for India to meet its climate goals.

NDC (2015)	Panchamrit	NDC (2023)
 40% Cumulative electric power installed capacity via RE	 50% Cumulative electric power installed capacity via RE	 50% Cumulative electric power installed capacity via RE
 2.5-3 billion tonnes additional carbon sink (CO2-eq)	 500 GW Non-fossil energy	 LIFE Mission "Lifestyle for Environment"
 30-35% Reduction in emission intensity of GDP compared to 2005	 45% Reduction in emission intensity of GDP compared to 2005	 45% Reduction in emission intensity of GDP compared to 2005
	 1 million tonnes CO2 reduction	
	 Net-zero By 2070	

- Steel is foundational to infrastructure, automotive, and manufacturing sectors.
 - ♦ Greening it ensures **sustainable industrial growth**.
- India became the **world's second-largest steel producer in 2018** surpassing Japan and remained so since then.
 - ♦ Transitioning to green steel can position it as a climate-responsible global supplier.

Challenges

- Green steel production is more expensive than conventional methods.
- Hydrogen-based DRI and carbon capture technologies are still evolving and not widely commercialized.
- Producing green hydrogen requires massive renewable energy capacity, which is still under development.
- Lack of mandatory procurement norms and weak demand-side incentives hinder adoption.

Steps Taken in India

- The Ministry of Steel has released a report titled **"Greening the Steel Sector in India: Roadmap and Action Plan"** in alignment with the recommendations of the 14 Task Forces constituted by this Ministry for this purpose.
 - ♦ This report provides a comprehensive overview of the steel sector, discusses the various pathways for the decarbonisation of the steel sector and chalks out the strategy, action plan and roadmap for the same.
- **Use of steel scrap** as raw material reduces emissions by 58%.
 - ♦ **Steel Scrap Recycling Policy, 2019**, formulated by the Ministry of Steel envisages to enhance the availability of domestically generated scrap. Motor Vehicles (Registration and Functions of Vehicles Scrapping Facility) Rules September 2021 of Ministry of Road Transport & Highways envisages to increase availability of scrap in the steel sector.

- **The National Solar Mission** launched by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy in January, 2010 promotes the use of solar energy and also helps to reduce the emission of steel industry.
- **Perform, Achieve and Trade (PAT) scheme**, under National Mission for Enhanced Energy Efficiency, incentivizes steel industry to reduce energy consumption.

Conclusion and Way Ahead

- Green steel is essential for India's climate goals and industrial growth.
- Through coordinated policies, innovation, and investment, India can become a global leader in sustainable steel production.

Source :BS

3 NAVIGATION SATELLITES TO BE LAUNCHED BY 2026

Context

- ISRO will launch three more navigation satellites, **NVS-03, NVS-04, and NVS-05**, by 2026 to bolster the Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS).

Navigation with Indian Constellation (NavIC)

- Established by **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)**, NavIC is India's **autonomous regional navigation satellite system**, designed to fulfill both civilian and military navigational needs.
 - ♦ NavIC was erstwhile known as **Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS)**.
- It provides **precise Position, Velocity, and Timing (PVT) services** within India and extends up to **1,500 km** beyond the country's borders, forming its primary service area.
- NavIC is designed with a constellation of **7 satellites** and a network of ground stations operating 24 x 7.



- ♦ **Three satellites** of the constellation are placed in **geostationary orbit** and **four satellites** are placed in **inclined geosynchronous orbit**.
- ♦ The **ground network** consists of a control centre, precise timing facility, range and integrity monitoring stations, two-way ranging stations, etc.
- **NavIC offers two services:** Standard Position Service (SPS) for **civilian users** and Restricted Service (RS) for **strategic users**.
 - ♦ It provides location accuracy better than 20 meters and timing accuracy better than 40 nanoseconds across the core service area.
- Currently **only four** out of the seven satellites in the current constellation are **fully functional**.

NVS Series

- These are **five second-generation NavIC satellites** — **NVS-01 to NVS-05** and are **planned to enhance the existing constellation**.
 - ♦ These satellites incorporate **L1 band communication**, which **broadens NavIC's compatibility and usability for diverse applications**.
- **NVS-01**, the first of the second-generation satellites, was launched in **2023**.
 - ♦ For the first time, an indigenous **atomic clock** was flown in **NVS-01**.
- **NVS-02 was launched in January 2025.**

Significance

- The first batch launched in the previous decades has been successful in establishing the **Personal Navigation Device (PND) services** in the country.
- The NVS series is the second generation of these satellites that are progressively being deployed to **further strengthen the PND ecosystem in the nation**.
- **Many applications based on NavIC** spanning from strategic uses, tracking of shipping vessels, time synchronization, train tracking and safety of alert life dissemination are accomplished.

Source: IE

PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE CHARTS ROADMAP FOR CLIMATE-RESILIENT AND ORGANIC AGRICULTURE

Context

- The Committee on Estimates (2024–25) presented its Sixth Report to Parliament, highlighting India's urgent need for systemic transformation in agriculture amid rising vulnerabilities due to climate change.

About

- The report lays out a transformative blueprint for Indian farming, that relies on;
 - Climate-resilient practices,
 - Natural and organic farming systems, and
 - Strengthening grassroots institutions like Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs).

Agricultural Vulnerabilities in India

- Climate Change Impacts:** According to the report, crop yields are projected to decline by **4.5% to 9%** in the medium term.
 - 310 districts** are vulnerable, with **109** categorized as **'very high risk'** and **201** as **'highly vulnerable'** by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).
- Soil Degradation:** Nearly 30% of India's total land suffers from soil degradation due to intensive chemical-based practices.
 - Overuse of urea and pesticides**, alongside declining organic matter, has led to nutrient imbalance, affecting soil fertility and ecosystem services.
- Rising Input Costs:** The Green Revolution model has reached diminishing returns, with input costs rising faster than returns, driving indebtedness and farmer suicides.

Shift towards Natural and Organic Farming

- Natural Farming:** To motivate farmers to adopt chemical free farming and enhance the reach of natural farming, the Government has formulated **National Mission on Natural Farming (NMNF)** as a separate and independent scheme from **2023-24** by up scaling the **Bhartiya Prakritik Krishi Paddati (BPKP)**.
- Organic Farming:**
 - Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY):** A Central Sector Scheme launched in **2015–16**, aimed at promoting cluster-based organic farming and **Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS)** for certification.
 - Mission Organic Value Chain Development for North Eastern Region (MOVCDNER):** Specifically designed for the North Eastern Region, where traditional farming systems and biodiversity offer a natural advantage for organic cultivation.

Challenges in transition

- Yield drops** during initial transition years.
- Certification complexity** for organic produce.
- Market linkages** remain weak and fragmented.
- Awareness and training gaps** among farmers.
- Financial risks** for smallholders without safety nets.

Committee Recommendations

- Mainstream climate-resilient agriculture** into national schemes like **PM-KISAN, MGNREGA, and RKVY**.
- Incentivize ecological services** provided by sustainable farmers through green subsidies.
- Create a national framework** for agroecological transition, integrating research, extension, and marketing.

Way Ahead

- Scale up National Innovations in Climate Resilient Agriculture (NICRA) interventions** across vulnerable districts with adequate funding and monitoring.
- Promote agroecological clusters** with organic/natural farming models and institutional support.
- Facilitate certification** and branding to boost consumer confidence and exports.
- Empower KVKs** with digital infrastructure and decentralized funds.
- Promote convergence** between ministries of agriculture, environment, and rural development.

National Innovations in Climate Resilient Agriculture (NICRA)

- NICRA, launched by the **Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)**, is a flagship initiative to equip Indian farming systems to withstand climatic extremes.
- Launched in 2011** by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), the NICRA is a **multi-disciplinary, multi-institutional initiative** designed to make Indian agriculture resilient to climate variability and change.
- Components of NICRA:**
 - Strategic research** on climate-resilient crops, livestock, and fisheries.
 - Technology demonstration** in vulnerable districts.
 - Capacity building** for farmers and field-level functionaries.
 - Strengthening of infrastructure** at research and extension institutions.
- Achievements: Development of 2,900+ climate-resilient varieties**, such as heat-tolerant wheat and drought-tolerant rice. In NICRA-adopted villages:
 - 28–37% increase** in crop productivity.
 - 10–12% improvement** in livestock productivity.
 - 35–40% higher farm incomes** compared to non-NICRA areas.

Source: ICAR

NEWS IN SHORT

THOOTHUKUDI PORT CITY

Context

- PM Modi will inaugurate the newly extended runway and terminal building at Thoothukudi airport.

About

- Thoothukudi**, also known as **Tuticorin**, is a significant port and industrial city in the Thoothukudi district of **Tamil Nadu**, India.
 - It is situated on the Coromandel Coast of the **Bay of Bengal**.
- Thoothukudi is known as the “**Pearl City**” due to its historical pearl fishing activities. It's a crucial seaport, often referred to as the “**Sea Gateway of Tamil Nadu**”.
- The port was officially renamed **V.O. Chidambaranar Port Trust** in 2011.

Thoothukudi's Significance in Ancient Times

- Thoothukudi**, along with the nearby ancient port of **Korkai**, was a major maritime center as early as the **6th century BCE**, renowned for **pearl fisheries and trade with Rome, Greece, and Southeast Asia**.
- Under the **Pandya (7th–9th century AD)** and **Chola (9th–12th century AD)** dynasties, it emerged as a hub for international trade and naval expeditions, linking Tamilakam with Southeast Asia.
- In the colonial era, **Portuguese (1532)**, followed by the **Dutch and British**, capitalized on its natural harbor.
 - Thoothukudi rose to prominence during the Swadeshi Movement when **V.O. Chidambaram Pillai** launched the **Swadeshi Steam Navigation Company in 1906** to break the British monopoly on the Tuticorin-Colombo shipping route.

Source: BS

ATAL PENSION YOJANA (APY)

In News

- The Atal Pension Yojana (APY) is India's flagship social security scheme aimed at workers in the **unorganized sector**, has crossed a major milestone of over **8 crore total gross enrolments** as of July 2025.

Atal Pension Yojana (APY)

- About:** It is a government-backed pension scheme designed to provide social security for workers in India's unorganized sector.

- Administered by the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) under the New Pension Scheme architecture.
- Target Group:** Aimed at unorganized sector workers, but open to all Indian citizens aged 18–40 years (as of 2025), except those who are or have been income tax payers.
- Defined Pension:** Assures a fixed minimum monthly pension of 1,000, 2,000, 3,000, 4,000, or 5,000 starting at the age of 60, selected based on individual contributions and age at joining.
- Contribution Period:** Minimum 20 years of contribution, with the contribution amount dependent on the pension amount chosen and age at enrolment.
- Automatic Debit:** Contributions are auto-debited monthly from the subscriber's bank account, ensuring regular savings.

Source: TH

REVAMPED MISSION VATSALYA PORTAL LAUNCHED

Context

- The Ministry of Women and Child Development has launched the revamped Mission Vatsalya Portal which is an integrated Digital platform for all the stakeholders related to child protection services.

Revamped Mission Vatsalya Portal

- Mission Vatsalya portal provides digital working platform for various stakeholders across different levels at State and district.
 - The earlier **Khoya-Paya and TrackChild services** have been brought under this unified portal.
- The key features** of Mission Vatsalya Portal include **single digital platform for use by the Stakeholders i.e.**
 - At State level:** State Child Protection Society and State Adoption Resource Agency level,
 - At District level:** District Child Protection Unit, Child Welfare Committee, Juvenile Justice Board, Special Juvenile Police Unit at District level and Child Care Institutions.

Mission Vatsalya

- Mission Vatsalya, earlier known as the **Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS)**, serves as a roadmap to achieve child development and protection goals aligned with the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**.

- Initially, **three separate schemes** were implemented by the **Ministry of Women & Child Development**:
 - Programme for Juvenile Justice,
 - Integrated Programme for Street Children, and
 - Scheme for Assistance to Homes for Children (Shishu Greh).
- These were **merged into ICPS in 2009–10**, renamed as Child Protection Services (CPS) in 2017, and finally subsumed under **Mission Vatsalya in 2021–22**.

Source: PIB

CITIZENSHIP AMENDMENT ACT (CAA)

Context

- In Gujarat 185 people were granted **Indian citizenship under the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA)**.

Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), 2019

- It amended the **Citizenship Amendment Act, 1955**, making two key changes to facilitate citizenship to undocumented migrants belonging to six non-Muslim communities — **Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi or Christian from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan**, who entered India on or before December 31, 2014.
- It reduced the period to qualify for citizenship from the existing requirement of continuous stay of 11 years to continuous stay of **five years**.
- However, Pakistani Hindus were anyway eligible for citizenship under **Section 5 and Section 6 (1)** of the Citizenship Act, 1955. The CAA only helped fast track the application process.
- The Rules grant the final authority to accord citizenship to an **empowered committee** headed by the Director, Census Operations, while the scrutiny of applications filed online on the portal was done by a **district level committee (DLC)** headed by Department of Post officials.
 - On successful verification of documents, the DLCs administered the oath of allegiance to the applicants.

Source: AIR

TOBACCO EPIDEMIC

Context

- A Lancet review stresses the **need for targeted research and policy** changes to **address**

tobacco use among women, who are increasingly vulnerable to second-hand smoke and related diseases.

Major Findings

- The dangers of tobacco use have been **well-known since the 1950s** but the **industry** continues to push its products and add to the global disease burden.
- In 2021 alone, 7.3 million** people lost their lives to ailments related to tobacco-use.
- Smoking** is the primary reason for the around **30% chronic obstructive pulmonary disease deaths** and half of all lung cancer deaths.
 - Further, women are more vulnerable to second-hand smoking, with more than **64 per cent** of second-hand smoke-related deaths occurring among women.
- Key policies like the **Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA)** and the **National Tobacco Control Programme** have contributed to reduction efforts, but challenges persist due to gender-specific socio-economic and cultural factors.

Source: DTE

TRACERS MISSION

In News

- NASA's twin TRACERS satellites launched aboard a Falcon 9 to study magnetic reconnection and how solar activity affects near-Earth atmosphere.

TRACERS Mission

- Tandem Reconnection and Cusp Electrodynamics Reconnaissance Satellites (TRACERS) mission will fly in low Earth orbit through the polar cusps, funnel-shaped holes in the magnetic field, to study magnetic reconnection and its effects in Earth's atmosphere.
 - Magnetic reconnection occurs when activity from the Sun interacts with Earth's magnetic field.
- By understanding this process, scientists will be able to better understand and prepare for impacts of solar activity on Earth.

Source: NASA

KARGIL VIJAY DIWAS

Context

- Kargil Vijay Diwas is observed every year on **July 26** to commemorate **India's victory over Pakistan** in the **1999 Kargil War**.

About

- The conflict began in **May 1999**, when **Pakistani intruders** occupied Indian posts across the **Line of Control (LoC)**, aiming to cut off **National Highway 1A** — the strategic lifeline to **Ladakh**.
- India launched **Operation Vijay** to reclaim the occupied territories, leading to nearly **three months of intense combat** in the icy heights of Kargil, Ladakh.
- **Battles at Tololing, Tiger Hill, and Point 4875** are now etched in **national memory** as enduring icons of **valor and heroism**.
- On **July 26, 1999**, the operation was officially declared successful, marking a **decisive Indian victory**.

Source: TH

MISSILE (ULPGM)-V3**In News**

- Defence Research & Development Organisation (DRDO) conducted successful flight-trials of Advanced Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Launched Precision Guided Missile-V3.

Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) Launched Precision Guided Missile (ULPGM)-V3

- It is Designed, developed and tested by DRDO and It is also referred to as ULM-ER (extended-range variant).
- It is an advanced version of **DRDO's UAV-launched precision munition**, and features passive homing using an imaging infrared (IR) seeker, allowing for accurate engagement in both day and night conditions.
 - ♦ It can be fired in plain and high-altitude areas.

Features

- The **12.5-kg fire-and-forget air-to-surface missile** is powered by a compact dual-thrust solid propulsion unit, enabling it to reach a maximum range of **4 km during daytime operations and 2.5 km at night**.
- It also incorporates a **two-way datalink for communication** and offers multiple warhead options to engage a variety of static and moving targets.

Source: AIR

THE GLOBAL SPECS NETWORK**In News**

- The World Health Organisation (WHO) has launched a global initiative — '**Global Specs**

2030' — to ensure that everyone has access to affordable eyecare services by 2030.

Do you know?

Over 800 million people across the world have vision problems and do not have access to eye care.

- Vision problems affect millions of people worldwide. It not only affects eyesight, but also affects education, economic productivity, and overall well-being.
- Children and adolescents between five and 15 years of age suffer from vision impairment and refractive errors.

The Global SPECS Network

- It is a **network of stakeholders** whose mission is to support the WHO SPECS 2030 initiative through coordinated advocacy and united action across all sectors.
- The Global SPECS Network membership application process is open, and eligible organizations can apply throughout the year.

Objectives

- It aims to unite stakeholders around a shared vision to achieve the 2030 global target for refractive error.
- It promotes evidence-based advocacy to support WHO's public health goals and raise awareness of refractive error.
- It encourages discussion, knowledge sharing, and collaboration among network members.

Source: IE

HENLEY PASSPORT INDEX 2025**Context**

- India's ranking in the Henley Passport Index in 2025 has improved significantly, jumping from **85th in 2024 to 77th in 2025**.
 - ♦ Indian passport holders now have visa-free or visa-on-arrival access to **59 countries**, up from 57 the previous year.
 - ♦ Singapore remains the strongest passport globally.

About Henley Passport Index

- The Henley Passport Index is a **popular ranking of global passports** that measures passport strength **by the number of destinations that holders can visit without a prior visa**.
- The index ranks countries based on **statistics provided by the International Air Transport Association (IATA)**.

Source: TH