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INDIA HAS THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF SLUM CLUSTERS

In News

- According to a 2024 study, over 158 million people live in slums located in floodplains in South Asia, with **India having the maximum share**.
 - Around 40% of slum dwellers in **India reside in urban and suburban areas**.

Growth of Slums

- Slums are **densely populated urban areas** characterised by poor-quality housing, the lack of adequate living space, public services, and accommodating large numbers of informal residents with insecure tenure.
- According to **UN-Habitat (2021)**, slum dwellers across the globe have increased from 980 million in 2010 to 1,059 million in 2020, accounting for 24.2% of the world's urban population.
- India's slum population in **2020 is estimated at 236 million** suggesting that nearly half of its urban population lives in slums (**UN-Habitat 2021**).

Factors Driving Slums

- Rapid Urbanization:** Massive rural-to-urban migration for livelihood and better opportunities leads to unplanned settlements.
- Lack of Affordable Housing:** Insufficient low-cost housing forces poor migrants to settle in informal slums.
- Poverty and Unemployment:** Economic insecurity prevents access to formal housing markets.
- Land Scarcity and High Land Prices:** Urban land shortages and expensive prices restrict housing availability for the poor.
- Inadequate Urban Planning and Governance:** Poor infrastructure, lack of formal tenure, and weak municipal services drive informal settlements.
- Social Exclusion:** Marginalized groups face discrimination, limiting their access to decent housing.
- Environmental Factors:** Slums often develop in hazard-prone areas like floodplains (e.g., Ganga delta) due to low-cost land availability.

Impacts and Concerns

- Health and Sanitation Risks:** Overcrowding, poor sanitation, and lack of clean water cause public health issues.
- Vulnerability to Disasters:** Slums are disproportionately affected by floods, heatwaves, and other climate-related disasters.

- Social Challenges:** Slum dwellers face insecure tenure, social stigma, poor education, and limited access to services.
- Environmental Degradation:** Waste accumulation and lack of green space degrade urban environments.
- Economic Impact:** Public-Private Partnerships models for slum rehabilitation have failed to attract developers due to low commercial viability and regulatory hurdles.

Way Ahead / Solutions

- Holistic Slum Rehabilitation:** Integrate housing, infrastructure, livelihood, and social services with community engagement.
- Legal and Institutional Clarity:** Streamline land rights, tenure security, and use clear frameworks for slum upgrading.
- Innovative Financing:** Utilize Public-Private Partnerships (PPP), Transferable Development Rights (TDR), and micro-financing to fund redevelopment.
- Inclusive Urban Planning:** Adapt local models respecting socio-cultural and economic diversity of slum communities.
- Decentralized Infrastructure:** Cost-effective sanitation, water, and energy decentralized systems tailored for slum areas.
- Community Participation:** Engage slum residents in planning and implementation to ensure acceptance and cultural appropriateness.

Source: TH

FIVE YEARS OF NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY

In News

- The National Education Policy 2020, marked the first comprehensive education policy completed five years since adoption.

Key Features of NEP 2020

- Structural Reform:** Shift from the 10+2 system to a 5+3+3+4 curricular structure—covering ages 3–18 across foundational, preparatory, middle, and secondary stages.
- Foundational Literacy & Numeracy:** Emphasis on basic reading and arithmetic skills through initiatives like NIPUN Bharat for all children by Grade 3.
- Mother Tongue & Multilingualism:** Promotes instruction in the mother tongue/regional language up to at least Grade 5 (preferably till Grade 8); advances the three-language formula.

- **Holistic & Multidisciplinary Education:** Multiple entry/exit options in higher education; flexible subject choices across streams.
- **Vocational & Skill Education:** Integration of vocational courses and internships from an early stage, with at least 50% learners exposed to vocational education by 2025.
- **Technology Integration:** National Digital Education Architecture (NDEAR), DIKSHA, and PM e-VIDYA as digital platforms for inclusive and scalable education delivery.
- **Higher Education Reforms:** Push for multidisciplinary institutions, Academic Bank of Credits (ABC), National Research Foundation, and increased autonomy for colleges/universities.
- **Universal Access & GER Targets:** Universal school access by 2030; gross enrolment ratio (GER) in higher education to 50% by 2035.
- **Digital Divide:** Inequities in internet/device access risk exacerbating socio-economic gaps, especially among marginalized populations.
- **Language Policy:** Concerns over the practicality of widespread mother tongue/vernacular mediums, especially in diverse linguistic settings and for higher education.
- **Privatization & Equity:** Fears that increasing privatization may hamper affordability and equal access to quality education.

Way Ahead

- **Strengthen Centre–State Coordination:** Build contextual MoUs with states to localise NEP. Create state-level resource groups for capacity building.
- **Bridging Implementation Gaps:** Accelerated capacity-building, state support, and regular review of progress are critical.
- **Digital and Physical Infrastructure:** Investment in devices, internet connectivity, and school infrastructure must continue.
- **Inclusive Pedagogy & Curriculum:** Regional needs and languages must be addressed; Special focus on SEDGs and inclusive strategies.

Source: PIB

INDIA-JAPAN OFFICIALS DISCUSSED KEY PROJECTS

In News

- Indian Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri met the Japanese Minister to discuss strengthening bilateral ties and key projects, including the Ahmedabad-Mumbai Shinkansen Bullet Train.

Historical

- India and Japan share a deep-rooted Special Strategic and Global Partnership, founded on spiritual, cultural, and civilizational ties.
- Historical connections include the Indian monk **Bodhisena's role** in consecrating the Buddha statue at **Japan's Todaiji Temple in 752 AD**.
- Prominent Indians linked to Japan include Swami Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore, JRD Tata, Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, Rash Behari Bose, and Justice Radha Binod Pal.
- Symbolic gestures such as Prime Minister Nehru's elephant donation to Tokyo's Ueno Zoo in 1949 reflect enduring friendship.

Defense Cooperation

- India-Japan Defense and Security partnership forms an integral pillar of bilateral ties.

Achievements & Impacts

- **School Education:** Over 6,400 PM SHRI schools upgraded as model schools in 27 states/UTs.
 - ♦ NIPUN Bharat has improved foundational learning outcomes, ASER 2024 shows remarkable progress: 23.4% of Class III students could read Grade II text in 2024, up from 16.3% in 2022.
 - ♦ DIKSHA platform has surpassed 5 billion learning sessions.
- **Higher Education:** Academic Bank of Credit (ABC) portal has onboarded 1,667 institutions and 32 crore Academic Bank of Credit (ABC) IDs have been created.
 - ♦ Launch of Multidisciplinary Education and Research Universities (MERUs).
- **Equity, Access & Inclusion:** Steps taken to mainstream out-of-school children, reduce dropout rates, and improve participation of girls and disadvantaged groups.
 - ♦ Higher education enrollment has risen significantly to 4.46 crore students.
 - ♦ Enrollment of SC, ST, Muslim, and North-East (NE) students has seen substantial growth, ranging from 36–75%.

Challenges

- **Centre–State Federal Tensions:** Three-language formula rejected by Tamil Nadu, Kerala citing linguistic imposition.
 - ♦ Opposition to schemes like PM SHRI Schools over centralisation fears.
- **Resource Constraints:** Significant financial investment is needed for infrastructure, teacher training, and digital access, especially in rural/remote areas.

- **India-Japan defense exchanges** have gained strength in recent years due to growing convergence on strategic matters and its significance is growing from the common outlook on issues of peace, security and stability of the Indo-Pacific Region.
- A **Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation (JDSC)** between India and Japan was signed in 2008.
- **JIMEX** is a bilateral maritime exercise between the Indian Navy and the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF).

Economic and Commercial relations

- India-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership (CEPA) Agreement came into effect from 1 August 2011.
 - ♦ The Agreement covers not only trade in goods but also services, movement of natural persons, investments, intellectual property rights, custom procedures and other trade related issues.
- Japan's bilateral trade with India totaled US\$ 22.85 billion during FY 2023-24.
 - ♦ Exports from Japan to India during this period were US\$ 17.69 billion and imports were US\$ 5.15 billion.
 - ♦ Today, India ranks 18th in Japan's total trade with 1.4% share while Japan ranks 17th in India's total trade with 2.1% share.
- **India's primary exports** to Japan are Organic Chemicals, Vehicles (Other than railways & trams), Nuclear Reactor, Aluminium and Articles thereof, Fish & other aquatic invertebrates.
- **India's primary imports** from Japan are Nuclear Reactors, Copper and Articles thereof, Electrical Machinery and Equipment, Inorganic Chemicals and Iron and Steel.

Cooperation in other areas

- The Trade Ministers of India, Japan and Australia formally launched the Supply Chain Resilience initiative in a Trilateral Ministerial Meeting in April 2021.
- **India-Japan Act East Forum** was established in December 2017 and it aims to provide a platform for India-Japan collaboration under the rubric of India's "Act East Policy" and Japan's "Vision of a Free and Open Indo-Pacific".
 - ♦ It identifies specific projects for economic modernization of India's North-East region such as those pertaining to connectivity, developmental infrastructure, industrial linkages as well as people-to-people contacts.

- Agreement on Cooperation in the Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy was signed during the visit of PM Modi to Japan in November 2016.

Latest Developments

- Japan plans to give India two advanced **E-10 Shinkansen trains**.
- The **Mumbai-Ahmedabad High-Speed Rail** project is now slated for completion by December 2029, delayed from its original 2022 target.
- Both sides addressed supply chain challenges caused by China's export restrictions on critical minerals needed for electric vehicle batteries.

Source :TH

LAYOFFS ACROSS IT SERVICES INDUSTRY

Context

- Recently, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) has announced plans to lay off approximately 12,261 employees — about 2% of its global workforce — during FY2026.
 - ♦ It has come under scrutiny for its **revised Bench Policy**.

What is the Bench Policy?

- The 'Bench' refers to employees who are not currently assigned to active, billable projects but remain on payroll. These individuals may be:
 - ♦ Awaiting project allocation;
 - ♦ Undergoing training;
 - ♦ Transitioning between roles.
- Major IT companies have historically maintained a sizable bench to ensure agility in responding to client demands.
- The **Nascent Information Technology Employees Senate (NITES)** has formally complained to the **Ministry of Labour and Employment**, calling the policy 'coercive', 'punitive', and 'inhumane'.

Key Reasons Behind the Change

- **Cost Optimization:** With global tech spending under pressure, companies are streamlining operations to reduce overhead.
 - ♦ Maintaining a large bench is expensive and inefficient in lean times.
- **Skill Mismatch & Redeployment Challenges:** As delivery models shift toward AI, cloud, and cybersecurity, many employees — especially in mid and senior roles — struggle to transition into new tech-heavy positions.

- **AI & Automation Impact:** While not the sole reason, AI is reshaping job roles. Entry-level tasks are increasingly automated, reducing the need for large bench pools.
- **Product-Centric Delivery Models:** IT firms are moving away from traditional project-based staffing to agile, product-focused teams. This reduces reliance on bench strength and demands continuous upskilling.

What's Driving Layoffs in India's IT Sector?

- **Shift in Delivery Models:** Companies are transitioning to agile, product-centric models, reducing the need for traditional project managers and legacy roles.
 - ♦ There's a growing skill gap, especially among mid and senior-level employees, who struggle to adapt to AI, cloud, cybersecurity, and other emerging tech.
- **Global Economic Uncertainty:** A volatile global economy and muted client spending have led to cautious hiring and workforce trimming.
 - ♦ Export-driven IT firms are especially vulnerable to global recessions and inflationary pressures.
- **Skill Misalignment:** There's a growing mismatch between academic curricula and industry demands, especially in emerging tech like AI and cybersecurity.
 - ♦ Challenges in reskilling senior professionals for tech-heavy roles due to cognitive rigidity and lack of practical exposure.

Repercussions of Layoffs in India's IT Sector

- **Employee Concerns:** Rising job insecurity is affecting employee morale and mental health. The stricter policies have led to stress, uncertainty, and fear of termination. It fosters:
 - ♦ A culture of fear and pressure;
 - ♦ Psychological burden on benched employees;
 - ♦ Reduced morale, especially among freshers and those in redundant roles;
- **Strain on Education & Career Pathways:** The IT sector has long been a gateway to upward mobility for engineering graduates.
 - ♦ With hiring slowing down, especially from Tier-II and Tier-III colleges, students are questioning the viability of traditional tech careers.
- **Economic & Structural Challenges:** Layoffs reflect deeper structural issues in India's

economy—where quality employment hasn't kept pace with growth.

- ♦ The **Bench Policy Reforms** are reducing the buffer workforce, impacting job stability.
- ♦ **Startups and GCCs (Global Capability Centres)** are emerging as alternatives, but they can't absorb the displaced workforce at scale.
- **Global Dependencies & Vulnerabilities:** India's IT firms are heavily reliant on export markets, especially the U.S. and Europe.
 - ♦ Global recessions, inflation, and tech budget cuts abroad directly affect hiring and project volumes in India.
 - ♦ H-1B visa holders face added pressure, with long wait times and limited fallback options.
- **Transparency & Fairness:** Critics argue that the policies lack empathy and may disproportionately affect freshers and mid-career professionals.

Way Forward

- **Reimagining Bench Policy with Empathy & Agility:** Instead of rigid limits (e.g., TCS's 35-day rule), companies could adopt **tiered bench durations** based on experience and skill relevance.
- **Investing in Scalable Upskilling:** Focus on GenAI, cybersecurity, cloud, and full-stack development.
 - ♦ Collaborate with government and edtech firms to subsidize training for displaced workers.
 - ♦ Offer bonuses or fast-track promotions for employees who complete critical tech certifications.
- **Strengthening Labor Protections & Policy Reform:** IT unions like NITES and FITE are urging the government to bring IT firms under the **Industrial Disputes Act**, ensuring due process in terminations, along with **Grievance Redressal Mechanisms and Policy Dialogue**.
- **Diversifying Employment Pathways:** Global Capability Centres and tech startups are emerging as alternative job creators.
- **Embracing a Human-Centric Tech Transition:**
 - ♦ **Mental Health Support:** Provide counseling and wellness programs during transitions.
 - ♦ **Ethical AI Deployment:** Ensure AI adoption doesn't disproportionately displace vulnerable roles without a safety net.
 - ♦ **Inclusive Growth:** Prioritize employment equity across Tier-II and Tier-III cities.

Source: LM

NEWS IN SHORT

GAVRI OF THE MEWAR BHILS

In Context

- The Gavri is a 40-day annual ritual and folk festival performed by the Bhil community of the Mewar region in Rajasthan.

About the Gavri Festival

- The festival is typically performed during the Hindu months of Shravana and Bhadrapad (July to September), coinciding with the monsoon and harvest season.
- The ritual is performed mainly by male members of the Bhil tribe, who enact various roles including gods, goddesses, demons, and other mythological characters.
- The play enacts mythological tales related to the goddess Gauri, battles between good and evil.

About the Bhil Community

- The Bhils are one of the **largest tribal (Adivasi) communities** in India, primarily concentrated in **Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, and Maharashtra**.
- They have a distinct cultural identity with unique customs, language (Bhili), and traditional practices tied closely to **nature and animist beliefs blended with Hinduism**.
- The Bhils consider themselves descendants of Lord Shiva and his consort Parvati (Gauri).

Source: IE

PAITHANI SAREES

In News

- Prime Minister in the monthly radio programme 'Mann Ki Baat' praised the traditional craftsmanship of **Paithani sarees**.

About Paithani Sarees

- Origin and History:** Paithani sarees originated over 2000 years ago in Paithan, a town near Aurangabad in Maharashtra, on the **banks of the Godavari River**.
 - The weaving tradition can be traced back to the **Satavahana dynasty (2nd century BCE)**.
- Royal Patronage:** Paithani sarees were woven for and worn by royalty and aristocrats, including the Satavahanas, the Peshwas of Pune, the Nizams of Hyderabad, and Mughal rulers.

- Material and Craftsmanship:** Traditionally made from fine silk with pure gold and silver zari (metallic thread), Paithani sarees are handwoven using the tapestry weaving technique. They are renowned for their intricate **floral and peacock motifs**.



- GI Tagging:** Paithani sarees have been granted the Geographical Indication (GI) tag in 2010.

Source: AIR

MAJULI ISLAND

Context

- Locals of Pathorichuk village of **Majuli, Assam** are combating **riverbank erosion** by planting **Kanchan trees** along the Brahmaputra's banks.

About the Majuli Island

- Majuli is the **world's largest river island**.
- It lies in the **Brahmaputra River** in Assam and became **India's first river island district in 2016**.
- The island is bounded by:
 - Northwest:** River Subansiri and its tributaries Ranganadi, Dikrong, Dubla, Chici, and Tuni etc.
 - Northeast:** Kherkatia Suli (a spill channel of the Brahmaputra)
 - South and Southwest:** Main Brahmaputra River
- Majuli is home to indigenous tribes such as the **Mising, Deori, and Sonowal Kachari**, and it is a centre for **Assamese neo-Vaishnavite culture**.

Do you know?

- Umananda Island**, located in the Brahmaputra at Guwahati, Assam, is the **world's smallest river island**. The British called it **Peacock Island** because of its shape.

Source: TOI

NOON RIVER

In News

- The Noon River is undergoing restoration through community-led desilting efforts.

Noon river

- The Noon River originates in Satah village, which is part of the Koch development block in the Bundelkhand region of Uttar Pradesh.
- The revival of the river seeks to address farmland submergence and water shortages.
- A major section of the river has been restored due to community involvement and administrative backing.
- It offers the potential to irrigate thousands of hectares and enhance water availability for many villages.

Source: IE

MEGA GAON MERA DHAROHAR PROGRAMME

In News

- Over 4.7 lakh villages have been mapped so far, with their cultural portfolios available on the Mera Gaon Mera Dharohar web portal.

Mera Gaon Meri Dharohar Programme

- **About:** Launched in June 2023 under the **National Mission on Cultural Mapping (NMCM)**.
- **Implementing Agency:** Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) under the Ministry of Culture.
- **Objective:** To map, document, and digitally preserve the intangible cultural heritage of all 6.5 lakh villages across India, providing a comprehensive cultural portfolio for each village.
- **Thematic Categories:** 7 main types, including crafts, ecology, history, epics, architecture.
- **Significance:** Heritage preservation, rural development, inclusive documentation.

About National Mission on Cultural Mapping (NMCM)

- It is a flagship scheme of the Ministry of Culture, Government of India, launched in 2017 to comprehensively document, preserve, and promote India's vast and diverse cultural heritage—particularly at the village level.
- **Major Components:**
 - ♦ **Mera Gaon Meri Dharohar (MGMD):** Maps and documents village-wise intangible and tangible cultural assets.
 - ♦ **Sanskritik Pratibha Khoj:** Talent discovery campaigns, revitalization of folk/tribal art, and cultural awareness.
 - ♦ **National Cultural Workplace (NCWP):** A web platform and mobile app to create a database of artists, art practices, and act as a cultural services platform.

Source: PIB

REVISED SHAKTI POLICY 2025

Context

- Recently, the Government has unveiled the **Revised SHAKTI Policy 2025** — a transformative update to the **Scheme for Harnessing and Allocating Koyala (Coal) Transparently in India**.

About SHAKTI Policy

- It is India's flagship framework, launched in 2017 **by the Ministry of Coal**, for transparent coal allocation to the power sector.
- It replaced the earlier **Letter of Assurance (LoA)–Fuel Supply Agreement (FSA)** regime (nomination-based system) with a more structured, auction-based system to ensure fairness, efficiency, and affordability in coal distribution.
- **Revised SHAKTI Policy 2025** introduces Window I & II for coal allocation:
 - ♦ **Window-I (Coal at Notified Price):** Coal supplied at fixed notified prices is allocated to government-owned thermal power plants including central and state-owned companies, joint ventures, and subsidiaries.
 - ♦ **Window-II (Coal at Premium above Notified Price):** Any domestic coal-based power producer, including independent power producers (IPPs) and imported coal-based power plants, can bid for coal through auction at a premium over the notified price for periods ranging from short-term (up to 12 months) to long-term contracts (up to 25 years).

Other Reforms in Coal Sector

- Commercial coal mining was opened to private entities starting with auctions in 2020 under the **Coal Mines (Special Provisions) Act, 2015**.
- **100% Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)** is allowed under the **automatic route** for coal mining and related activities.
- Draft legislation is underway to establish a **Coal Trading Exchange (CTE)** for online coal trading, clearing, and settlement, promoting market efficiency and transparency.
- Push for cleaner coal technologies like **coal gasification**, targeting 100 million tonnes of coal gasification by 2030, for producing chemicals, synthetic natural gas, and fertilizers.
- Introduction of the **National Coal Index (NCI)** to reflect prices from all sales channels and encourage fair pricing.

Source: PIB

INDIA'S FIRST PPP AIRPORT BETS ON A FUTURE-READY PLAN

Context

- **Cochin International Airport Limited (CIAL)**, the first Indian airport set up under a **Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model**, is embarking on a major expansion drive focused on green energy, smart tech and integrated growth.

About Cochin International Airport Limited (CIAL)

- It is situated in **Nedumbassery, near Kochi, Kerala**, and serves as a major gateway to southern India, and positioned to become a **hub for international cargo and passenger traffic**.
- It runs **entirely on solar energy**, generating over 250 million units of power, which has helped avoid 160,000 metric tons of CO₂ emissions.
 - ♦ It is the **world's first fully solar-powered airport**, aligning its operations with global carbon neutrality goals.
- CIAL is building the **world's first airport-based green hydrogen production plant**, in partnership with **Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL)**, scheduled for inauguration by **August 2025**.

Source: TH

GRASSLAND BIRD CENSUS IN KAZIRANGA NATIONAL PARK

In News

- The **first-ever Grassland Bird Census** in **Kaziranga National Park** was conducted between March 18 and May 25, 2025, involving forest officials, scientists, and conservationists.
 - ♦ Kaziranga is a **UNESCO World Heritage Site** located in the Golaghat and Nagaon districts of Assam. It has the largest population of Indian one-horned rhinoceros worldwide.

Key points about the census

- **Methodology:** Traditional bird counting methods are ineffective for many small, camouflaged grassland birds. The recordings were analyzed using spectrograms and machine learning software called Birdnet to identify species.
- **Species Surveyed:** The survey focused on 10 priority species that are either endemic to the Brahmaputra floodplains or globally threatened, among these were the Bengal Florican, Swamp Francolin, Finn's Weaver, and Black-breasted Parrotbill. A breeding colony of over 85 nests of the endangered Finn's Weaver was discovered.
- **Ecological Importance:** Grassland birds are indicators of ecosystem health. Their presence

shows the habitats are balanced and thriving. The census helps authorities understand biodiversity status and plan targeted conservation strategies.

Source: IE

ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION (MANAGEMENT OF CONTAMINATED SITES) RULES, 2025

In News

- The Union Environment Ministry has introduced the **Environment Protection (Management of Contaminated Sites) Rules, 2025**.

Environment Protection (Management of Contaminated Sites) Rules, 2025.

- They are introduced under the **Environment Protection Act, 1986** to legally address **chemically contaminated sites** under the Environment Protection Act.
 - ♦ These sites, often landfills or chemical storage areas, were polluted due to unregulated hazardous waste dumping in the past.
- **Features:** District administrations must submit half-yearly reports on "suspected contaminated sites."
 - ♦ A State Pollution Control Board or designated reference organisation will conduct a preliminary assessment within 90 days.
 - ♦ Complete a detailed survey within another 90 days to confirm contamination.
 - ♦ A remediation plan will be developed by expert bodies.
- The **polluter will be held financially responsible**; if they cannot pay, the Centre and State will bear the clean-up cost.
- **Criminal liability**, if proven (especially in cases of death or damage), will be dealt with under the **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (2023)**.

Do you know?

- The Environment (Protection) Act of 1986 was created to protect and improve the environment, giving the Central Government authority to set up bodies to prevent pollution and address region-specific environmental issues.
- In 2023, its penal provisions were amended under the Jan Vishwas Act to decriminalize and streamline offences, aiming to promote trust-based governance and make living and doing business easier.
- The Supreme Court earlier emphasized that **citizens have a fundamental right under Article 21 to live in a pollution-free environment**.

Source :TH

OPERATION MAHADEV

In News

- Under Operation Mahadev, Indian security forces have successfully neutralized three terrorists linked to the recent Pahalgam attack.

About

- It is an anti-terror operation carried out jointly by the Indian Army, CRPF, and Jammu & Kashmir Police.
- It was carried out in Lidwas area near Dara & Harwan, close to Dachigam National Park, Srinagar, J&K.
- This would reinforce India's resolve against cross-border terrorism and boost morale of security forces amid ongoing Operation Sindoor debate.

Source: TOI

FIDE WOMEN'S WORLD CUP 2025

In News

- Divya Deshmukh** became the **first Indian woman to win the FIDE Women's Chess World Cup**, defeating seasoned compatriot Koneru Humpy in the 2025 final held in **Batumi, Georgia**.

About

- The FIDE Women's World Cup is typically held **every two years**.
- FIDE 2025** was the third edition of the Women's Chess World Cup and featured 107 players from 46 federations.
- The tournament employs a **single-elimination (knockout) format**. Players are directly eliminated upon losing a match.
- Match Structure in Each Round:**
 - Classical Games:** Each match begins with two classical time control games, played over two days. Players are typically allotted 90 minutes for the first 40 moves, with an additional 30 minutes for the rest of the game, and a 30-second increment per move from move one.
 - Tie-breaks (if needed):** If the classical games are tied, tie-break games are played on the third day, with progressively shorter time controls:
 - First Tie-breaker:** Two rapid games (e.g., 15 minutes + 10-second increment per move).
 - Second Tie-breaker (if still tied):** Two quicker rapid games (e.g., 10 minutes + 10-second increment).

- Blitz Games (if still tied):** Two blitz games (e.g., 5 minutes + 3-second increment).
- Armageddon Game (if still tied):** A final, high-pressure decider where White gets more time (e.g., 3 minutes) but Black wins if the game is a draw (e.g., 2 minutes, with a 2-second increment from move 61).
- Qualification for Candidates:** The top three finishers in the Women's World Cup typically qualify for the next Women's Candidates Tournament.

Source: IE

GOLDEN JACKALS

Context

- Research undertaken by NGO **Aranyakam Nature Foundation** estimates that Kerala is home to 20,000–30,000 **golden jackals**.

About Golden Jackal (*Canis aureus*)

- Appearance:** Also known as the **common jackal**, it is smaller than a wolf but larger than a fox. It has a golden to pale gold or brown-tipped coat, which can vary seasonally and regionally.
- Behaviour:** Primarily **nocturnal**, active mostly at night.
- Habitat & Distribution:** Found across **Europe, Southwest, Central, South, and Southeast Asia**.
 - In India, golden jackals are found in states like **Kerala, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, and Haryana**.
- Diet: Omnivores** in nature, they feed on small mammals, insects, hares, fish, birds and fruits and often venture into human habitats in search of the same.
- Legal protection:**
 - IUCN Red List:** Least Concern
 - CITES:** Appendix III



Source: TH