

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS (DCA)

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15TH INDIA–JAPAN ANNUAL SUMMIT (2025)

In News

- At the 15th India–Japan Annual Summit (2025), both nations adopted a “**Joint Vision for the Next Decade**” along with multiple agreements covering economic, security, technological, and cultural cooperation.
 - Japan also announced an investment target of 10 trillion yen (5.5 lakh crore) in India over the next 10 years.

Key Outcomes of the Summit

- Joint Vision for the Next Decade:** Framework across eight pillars: economic partnership, economic security, mobility, innovation, defence, environment, multilateral cooperation, and cultural exchanges.
- Security & Defence Cooperation:** Adoption of a Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation, intensifying strategic ties.
 - Launch of economic security initiatives to safeguard supply chains, technology, and minerals.
 - Expanded defence exercises: Dharma Guardian (Army), Shinyuu Maitri (Air Force), JIMEX (Navy).
 - Logistics support under the Acquisition & Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA) has been strengthened.
- Mobility & Human Resource Exchange:**
 - Action Plan for Human Resource Exchange enables two-way mobility for 500,000 people in 5 years.
 - 50,000 Indian workers targeted for placement in Japan under the Next-Generation Mobility Partnership.
- Technology & Digital Cooperation:**
 - Launch of India-Japan Digital Partnership 2.0, covering AI, semiconductors, quantum computing, and cybersecurity.
 - Joint R&D through India-Japan AI Initiative boosts tech innovation.
- Sustainability & Environment:**
 - Cooperation under the Joint Crediting Mechanism (JCM)—aimed at low-carbon technology and clean energy adoption.

- Sustainable Fuel Initiative promotes clean hydrogen and ammonia.
- Collaboration on wastewater management and renewable energy deployment.
- Space & Minerals:**
 - Joint Lunar Polar Exploration Mission brings together ISRO and JAXA for moon exploration.
 - MoU signed for critical mineral resource cooperation.
- Cultural & People-to-People Ties:**
 - Programs boost cultural exchanges, tourism, and education.
 - City–prefecture level partnerships deepen subnational ties.

Significance of India–Japan Relations

- Strategic Convergence:** The partnership addresses shared concerns about assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific, aligning with the Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) strategy.
- Economic Ties:** Japan is the 5th largest investor in India and key partner in infrastructure projects like the Delhi–Mumbai Industrial Corridor and Bullet Train.
 - Industrial Competitiveness Partnership builds resilient supply chains.
- Global Governance:** Both countries advocate for UNSC reform, are Quad and G20 members, and support reformed multilateralism.
- Defence Cooperation:** Regular joint exercises enhance interoperability, strengthening India's Indo-Pacific role.

Way Forward

- Expand defence ties with maritime tech co-development.
- Upgrade CEPA to boost bilateral trade.
- Scale up hydrogen, ammonia, and renewable energy collaboration.
- Align skilling initiatives to match India's workforce with Japan's demographic needs.
- Promote resilient supply chains, digital infrastructure, and climate leadership in the Global South.
- This summit sharpens Indo-Japanese cooperation for regional stability, shared economic growth, and sustainable progress over the coming decade.

BRIEF ON INDIA-JAPAN RELATIONS

- **Establishment of Relations:** After WWII, India opted for a separate Peace Treaty with Japan, signed in 1952, marking the start of formal diplomatic relations.
- **Growth in Bilateral Ties:** India-Japan bilateral relations were elevated to Global Partnership in 2000, Strategic and Global Partnership in 2006, and Special Strategic and Global Partnership in 2014.
- **Strategic Synergy:** India's Act East Policy and Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI) align closely with Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) policy.
- **Collaboration on Global Initiatives:** Japan and India cooperate in initiatives like the International Solar Alliance (ISA), Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI), and Leadership Group for Industry Transition (LeadIT).
 - ♦ Both countries work together in multilateral frameworks like the Japan-Australia-India-U.S. Quad and the India-Japan-Australia Supply Chain Resilience Initiative (SCRI).
- **Defence and Security:** Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation (2008), Defence Cooperation and Exchanges MoU (2014), Information Protection Agreement (2015), Reciprocal Provision of Supplies and Services Agreement (2020), and co-development of the UNICORN naval mast (2024).
 - ♦ **Exercises:** Malabar (with the US and Australia), Milan (multilateral naval), JIMEX (bilateral maritime), Dharma Guardian (Army), and Coast Guard cooperation are held regularly.
 - 2024-25 saw the participation of service chiefs in India and Japan, strengthening interoperability.
- **Bilateral Trade:** Bilateral trade reached \$22.8 billion in 2023-24.
 - ♦ **Imports from Japan continue to outweigh exports.** India's main exports are chemicals, vehicles, aluminium, and seafood; imports include machinery, steel, copper, and reactors.
- **Investment:** Japan is India's **fifth-largest source of FDI**, with \$43.2 billion cumulative investment up to 2024.
 - ♦ Japan has consistently ranked India as the most promising long-term investment destination.
- **Space Collaboration:** ISRO and JAXA collaborate in X-ray astronomy, satellite navigation, lunar exploration, and the Asia Pacific Regional Space Agency Forum (APRSAF).
 - ♦ In 2016, they signed a Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) for peaceful space exploration and use.
- **Emerging Focus Areas:** Digital cooperation (semiconductors, startups), clean energy, supply chain resilience, industrial competitiveness, and skill development.
- **Development and Infrastructure Cooperation:** Japan has been India's largest Official Development Assistance (ODA) donor since **1958**, supporting critical infrastructure and human development projects.
 - ♦ ODA disbursement stood at about JPY 580 billion (\$4.5 billion) in 2023-24.
 - ♦ The flagship Mumbai-Ahmedabad High Speed Rail is the flagship project symbolising advanced technology transfer and skill development.
- **Tourism:** 2023-24 was celebrated as the Year of Tourism Exchange, with the theme "Connecting Himalayas with Mount Fuji".
- **Diaspora:** About 54,000 Indians live in Japan, mainly IT professionals and engineers.

Source: DD News

UNDP REPORT ON FRA IMPLEMENTATION (2025)

In News

- The UNDP report "Securing Rights, Enabling Futures – Policy Lessons from FRA and Future Pathways" reviewed nearly **20 years of Forest Rights Act (FRA) implementation**.

About Forest Rights Act

- The **Forest Rights Act, 2006** (Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act) is landmark legislation recognizing and vesting rights over forest land and resources for forest-dwelling **Scheduled Tribes (STs) and other traditional forest dwellers (OTFDs)**.

- Under this, Tribe and traditional dwellers get rights to manage, access, and use forest land and produce, including intellectual property and **traditional knowledge**.
- The **Gram Sabha (village assembly)** initiates, verifies, and decides claims for rights, supported by sub-divisional and district-level committees
- FRA prevents eviction of forest dwellers without **rehabilitation and settlement**.

Key Findings

- **Persistent Gaps:** Uptake gaps, under-implementation due to historical conflicts, weak policy execution, and jurisdictional issues.
 - ♦ Several FRA titles are missing in Chhattisgarh records (record-keeping errors).
- **Sunset Clause Proposal:** States like Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Maharashtra favour an “end date” for recognition and vesting of rights.
 - ♦ Gram Sabhas recommended to decide when claims saturation is reached.
- **Incorrect Recognition:** Some FRA titles were incorrectly recognised due to weak record-keeping, and lack of proper verification.
- **Institutional Challenges:** Conflicts between Tribal Welfare Departments vs Forest Departments.
 - ♦ Unclear stage for integration of Gram Sabha Forest Management Plans with official Working Plans.

Key Recommendations

- **Strengthening Post-Recognition Governance:** Establish inter-departmental committees to resolve conflicts.
 - ♦ Accurate and centralised record-keeping of FRA holders.
- **Gender Equity:** Disaggregate FRA data gender-wise.
 - ♦ Ensure women's leadership in designing Community Forest Resource (CFR) management plans.
 - ♦ Link FRA with NRLM, emphasising gender-sensitive livelihood avenues.
- **Mainstreaming Forest Rights:** Recognise FRA right-holders as a category in all welfare and livelihood schemes.
 - ♦ Formulate a National Tribal Policy (5-year horizon).
 - ♦ Use **Article 275(1)** for financial support to integrate FRA + PESA for stronger tribal self-governance.

- **Sustaining Growth:** Mission-mode schemes like PM-JANMAN and DAJGUA praised, but long-term programmes needed for durable outcomes.
- **Unutilised Provisions:** Section 3(1)(k), FRA: Community rights over biodiversity, IP, and traditional knowledge – no claims yet, potential for monetisation.
- **Minor Forest Produce (MFP):** Clarify ownership, harvesting, transit, and sale norms.

Source: IE

INDIA–SAUDI ARABIA DEFENCE COOPERATION (2025)

In News

- The 7th meeting of the Joint Committee on Defence Cooperation (JCDC) was held recently.

Key Outcomes of the Meeting

- **Expansion of Defence Cooperation:** Training, industrial partnerships, maritime security, and joint military exercises.
 - ♦ India offered training slots for Saudi personnel in Indian institutions.
- **New Areas of Collaboration:** Cybersecurity, Tactical communication, Information technology, Disaster management etc.
- **Military Engagements:** India showcased ‘Make in India’ defence equipment.
 - ♦ Both sides explored joint production and industrial partnerships.

Significance of India–Saudi Defence Partnership

- **Strategic:** Enhances India's security footprint in the West Asian region.
 - ♦ Complements both countries' Indo-Pacific and Gulf maritime security priorities.
- **Economic/Industrial:** Opens market for India's growing defence manufacturing sector.
 - ♦ Potential for joint ventures in line with Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 diversification strategy.
- **Security:** Maritime cooperation crucial for Indian Ocean Region (IOR) stability and securing energy trade routes.
 - ♦ Defence collaboration complements counter-terrorism and intelligence sharing.
- **Diplomatic:** Adds depth to the India–Saudi Strategic Partnership Council (2019, upgraded in 2025).
 - ♦ Balances India's West Asia diplomacy alongside ties with UAE, Iran, Israel.

Brief About India and Saudi Arabia Relations

- **Historical Linkages:** The historic visit of King Abdullah to India in **2006 led to the Delhi Declaration**, marking enhanced bilateral cooperation.
 - ♦ In **2010, the Riyadh Declaration** further elevated the relationship to a Strategic Partnership during Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh's visit to Saudi Arabia.
- **Economic Cooperation:** India is Saudi Arabia's second largest trade partner; Saudi Arabia ranks as India's fifth largest trading partner.
 - ♦ Bilateral trade reached approximately USD 42.98 billion in FY 2023-24, with Indian exports worth USD 11.56 billion and imports of USD 31.42 billion from Saudi Arabia.
- **Energy Partnership:** Saudi Arabia remains India's third largest crude oil & LPG supplier.
- **Defence Partnership:** The defence relationship has strengthened with extensive naval cooperation, two editions of the bilateral naval exercise Al Mohed Al Hindi, and the first-ever India-Saudi joint land force exercise EX-SADA TANSEEQ-I held in India in 2024.
- **Cultural Relations:** India was 'Guest of Honour' at Saudi Arabia's 32nd National Festival of Heritage and Culture (JANADRIYAH) in 2018.
 - ♦ In 2017, the Saudi Arabian government approved the practice of yoga as a sports activity.
- **Indian Community in Saudi Arabia:** Approximately 2.7 million Indians reside in Saudi Arabia, forming a significant living bridge promoting closer ties.

Source: TH

ROAD ACCIDENTS IN INDIA 2023 REPORT

Context

- Recently, the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) released its '**Road Accidents in India 2023**' report following a Supreme Court's direction after several delays.

Key Findings of Report

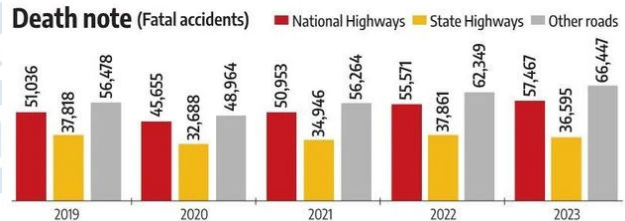
- **Surge in Road Crashes & Death:** Road accidents in India grew **4.2% year-on-year** in 2023, reaching **480,583 cases**. These accidents claimed **172,890 lives** – the highest ever recorded.

- ♦ The number of deaths rose **2.6% compared to 2022**, while **462,825 people were injured** – a 4.4% increase.
- **Surge in Fatal Accidents:** Fatal road accidents increased from **1,55,781 in 2022 to 1,60,509 in 2023**, marking a **3.04% growth**.
 - ♦ These accounted for **33.4% of all accidents**, with a fatal accident defined as one causing two or more deaths.
- **Who's Most at Risk?**
 - ♦ **Young Adults (18–45 years):** Accounted for 66.4% of fatalities;
 - ♦ **Working Age Group (18–60 years):** Made up 83.4% of total deaths;
 - ♦ **Two-Wheeler Users:** Represented 44.8% of all fatalities;
 - ♦ **Pedestrians:** Nearly 20% of deaths;
 - ♦ **Children:** Over 9,489 lives lost in 2023 alone;

Crash report

Year	Accidents	% chg Y-o-Y	Fatalities	% chg Y-o-Y	Injuries	% chg Y-o-Y
2019	456,959	-2.9	158,984	0.9	449,360	-3.3
2020	372,181	-18.6	138,383	-13	346,747	-22.8
2021	412,432	10.8	153,972	11.3	384,448	10.9
2022	461,312	11.9	168,491	9.4	443,366	15.3
2023	480,583	4.2	172,890	2.6	462,825	4.4

Death note (Fatal accidents)



Source: Road Accidents in India 2023 report

Key Causes of Road Accidents

- **Overspeeding (68%):** The leading cause of fatalities. Driving beyond speed limits reduces reaction time and increases impact severity.
- **Driving on the Wrong Side (5.5%):** Includes wrong-way driving on one-ways or overtaking from the left. Often leads to head-on collisions.
- **Distracted Driving:** Use of mobile phones, eating, or adjusting controls while driving contributes significantly to crashes.
- **Drunk Driving:** Alcohol impairs judgment, reflexes, and coordination, making it a persistent risk factor.
- **Poor Road Conditions:** Potholes, unmarked speed breakers, and lack of signage increase accident likelihood, especially in rural areas.
- **Vehicle Defects:** Brake failure, tire bursts, and other mechanical issues can trigger loss of control.

- **Weather and Visibility:** Fog, rain, and low light conditions reduce visibility and traction, leading to more accidents.
- **Neglecting Safety Gear:** Not wearing helmets or seatbelts drastically increases the risk of fatal injuries.

Key Efforts For Road Safety in India

- **Road Safety as a Fundamental Right:** The right to safe road travel is an essential component of the **right to life under Article 21** of the Indian Constitution.
- **Bharat New Car Assessment Programme (Bharat NCAP):** It provides safety ratings for passenger cars, empowering consumers to make informed decisions.
- **Vehicle Scrapping Policy:** The government has implemented a vehicle scrapping policy, with 44 **Registered Vehicle Scrapping Facilities** operational across 15 states, to remove unsafe vehicles from roads.
- **Electronic Enforcement Mechanisms:** Speed cameras, CCTV surveillance, and automated traffic enforcement systems have been deployed to improve compliance with road safety regulations.
- **Emergency Care Initiatives:** The **Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Act, 2019** introduced a cashless treatment scheme for accident victims during the golden hour, ensuring timely medical intervention.
- **Targeted Interventions of Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH):**
 - ♦ Rectification of over 5,000 black spots on highways;
 - ♦ Mandatory road safety audits to assess risk areas;
 - ♦ Stricter vehicle safety norms, including airbags and anti-lock braking systems;
 - ♦ Electronic enforcement mechanisms such as speed cameras and CCTV surveillance to improve compliance;
 - ♦ District-wide driving training and vehicle fitness centers to reduce accidents caused by unskilled driving;

Global Efforts

- **Brasilia Declaration (2015):** It defined the urgent measures needed to achieve the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development's** ambitious target (Target 3.6) to halve road traffic deaths by the end of this decade.

- **United Nations Decade of Action for Road Safety (2021–2030):** It aims to halve deaths related to road accidents **by 2030**.
 - ♦ It aligns with the **Stockholm Declaration (2020)**.
- **World Bank Report (2020):** It estimates that an additional \$109 billion are required over the next decade to achieve a 50% reduction in road crash fatalities.

Key Committees & Policy Frameworks

- **Sundar Committee on Road Safety and Traffic Management (2005):**
 - ♦ It recommended the creation of a **National Road Safety Policy**, approved by the Union Cabinet in 2010.
 - ♦ It also proposed the establishment of a **National Road Safety Board** to oversee safety regulations and enforcement.
- **National Road Safety Council (NRSC):** As an **advisory body under MoRTH**, to provide recommendations on policy measures, enforcement strategies, and infrastructure improvements.
- **Working Group on Road Safety Education:**
 - ♦ It focuses on driver training, public awareness campaigns, and school-level road safety education.
 - ♦ It advocates for stronger enforcement of traffic laws and integration of road safety into school curricula.
- **Supreme Court's Committee on Road Safety: District Road Safety Committees** for each district in the State, in accordance with The **Motor Vehicle Act, 1988**.
 - ♦ It focuses on **4Es viz Engineering, Education, Enforcement & Emergency**.

Source: BS

FUNDING CONCERNS IN DBT BIOCARE PROGRAMME

Context

- Almost five months after being selected for the **DBT Biocare programme**, none of the 75 chosen candidates has received the funds promised or salaries.

About

- The DBT, which is under the **Ministry of Science and Technology (MoST)**, has been running the **Biocare programme since 2011**.

- It is mainly meant for the **career development of unemployed female scientists**, for whom it will be the first extramural research funding sanctioned by the government.
- A doctoral woman researcher selected under the programme is eligible for a **₹60 lakh grant for three years**. This includes a salary component of **₹75,000 a month**.
- **From 2020 to 2024**, on average annually, nearly **50 women scientists** have been beneficiaries of the programme.
- This year, **75 women scientists** were chosen; however, in the absence of the required sanction letters or funds, they were unable to commence their research.

R&D Expenditure in India

- India's Gross Expenditure on Research and Development (GERD) as a percentage of GDP remained between **0.6% to 0.7%** which is **below the global average** and lower than countries like **China, South Korea and the US**.
- Another factor contributing to this is the **relatively low investment by India's private sector in GERD**, accounting for **only around 36%**, whereas in the aforementioned countries, **private sector contributions are more than 70%**.

Need for Funding in R&D

- **Economic Growth**: Drives new industries, improves productivity, and enhances global competitiveness.
- **Technological Advancement**: Facilitates breakthroughs in fields like AI, biotechnology, and renewable energy.
- **Social Challenges**: Helps address poverty, healthcare, education, and environmental sustainability issues.
- **Job Creation**: Innovation generates employment opportunities and stimulates entrepreneurship.
- **Global Positioning**: Positions India as a global leader in science, technology, and knowledge.
- **Attracts Investment**: Promotes foreign and domestic investments in research-driven sectors.

Implications of Low Funding

- **Investment Concerns**: Limited investment in research and development, especially in public institutions.
- **Infrastructure Gaps**: Inadequate research facilities and resources in many institutions.
- **Brain Drain**: Loss of talent to other countries due to better opportunities abroad.

- **Lack of Industry Collaboration**: Limited partnerships between academia and industry for practical innovation.
- **Skill Gaps**: Insufficient training and development of skilled researchers and innovators.

Government Initiatives

- **Research, Development and Innovation (RDI) Scheme**: Approved with a 1 lakh crore corpus, this scheme aims to energise private-sector R&D and deep-tech startups.
 - ♦ It offers long-term, low- or zero-interest loans, equity investments, and funds a new Deep-Tech Fund of Funds via the Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF).
- **National Quantum Mission**: Allocated 6,003.65 crore for 2023–31, to advance quantum technologies through scientific and industrial R&D.
- **Atal Innovation Mission (AIM)**: To foster innovation at the grassroots level by providing support to students, startups, and entrepreneurs.
- **The National Mission on High-Yielding Seeds** will focus on strengthening the research ecosystem and developing high-yielding, pest-resistant, and climate-resilient seeds, aligning with DBT's efforts in agricultural biotechnology.
- **National Manufacturing Mission (NMM)**: Aligned with the government's 'BioE3 Policy' for fostering high-performance biomanufacturing, the NMM announced in the Budget aims to accelerate technology development and commercialisation.
- **The Seaweed Mission and Learn & Earn Program** empower women entrepreneurs, supporting economic inclusion.

Way Forward

- To raise R&D spending, there is a need to have increased partnerships with the private sector.
- Efforts are being made to create better synergies between industry, research labs, and educational institutions to broaden both research activity and the funds to support it.

Source: TH

INDIA'S ATTEMPT TO HARNESS ITS MARINE FISHERIES POTENTIAL

Context

- The Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying recently released draft rules and guidelines to enable "sustainable" fishing in the Indian Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and the High Seas.

Potential of India's Fisheries Sector

- India has a coastline of approximately **11,098.81 km**, with **1,457 landing centres** and **3,461 fishing villages**, providing a strong base for fisheries development.
- India is the **third largest fish-producing country** in the world accounting for **8%** of global production in 2022-2023.
- The country's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) spans nearly **2 million sq km**, with an estimated **annual potential of 5.31 million metric tonnes (MMT)** of capture fisheries.
 - ♦ India's marine fish catch was recorded at **44.95 lakh tonnes in 2023-24** and 44.32 lakh tonnes in 2022-23.
- **High-value tuna and tuna-like species** have been identified as a major area for growth, particularly for exports.

Key Features of the New Regulatory Framework

- The draft guidelines mandate that no Indian-flagged vessel can fish in the High Seas without a **Letter of Authorisation (LOA)**.
 - ♦ The LOA will be **valid for three years**, ensuring regulatory oversight for a defined period.
- The framework **prohibits Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing**, aligning India with global fisheries governance standards.
- Indian vessels are required to comply with the conservation and management measures of **Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs)**, including:
 - ♦ Catch limits,
 - ♦ Gear restrictions,
 - ♦ Bycatch mitigation,
 - ♦ Fish Aggregation Device (FAD) management,
 - ♦ Voyage reporting requirements.
- The guidelines also provide for **training and capacity-building programmes** to help small-scale and traditional fishers participate in **High Seas fishing** and strengthen value-chain efficiencies.

Focus on Andaman & Nicobar and Lakshadweep Islands

- **The Andaman & Nicobar Islands** account for 6.6 lakh sq km of EEZ, roughly **one-third** of India's total maritime zone.
 - ♦ **A dedicated "tuna cluster" has been notified**, which includes: On-board processing and freezing facilities, Licensing

of deep-sea tuna vessels, A single-window clearance system administered by the Andaman & Nicobar Administration.

- **The Lakshadweep Islands cover** an EEZ of **4 lakh sq km**, about **17%** of India's total EEZ, along with a **lagoon area of 4,200 sq km**.
 - ♦ Development plans for Lakshadweep aim at harnessing opportunities in tuna fisheries, aquaculture, and sustainable lagoon-based fishing systems, making the islands a key hub for marine resource development.

What are the challenges?

- **There is overexploitation of nearshore fisheries** while offshore and deep-sea potential remains underutilised.
- **Traditional and small-scale fishers face limitations** in accessing technology, capital, and training needed for High Seas fishing.
- **Infrastructure gaps** such as inadequate cold chains, harbours, and modern processing facilities reduce efficiency and export potential.
- **Environmental concerns**, including bycatch, coral reef degradation, and unsustainable fishing gear, pose ecological risks.
- **Monitoring and enforcement against IUU fishing** require stronger surveillance mechanisms and institutional capacity.

Government initiatives

- **Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA):** It facilitates technology upgradation, market development, and quality certification.
- **National Marine Fisheries Action Plan (NMFAP):** The plan includes measures to improve fishery resources assessment, enhance infrastructure and technology in the fisheries sector, and promote aquaculture development.
- **Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY):** It was implemented to bring the Blue Revolution through sustainable and responsible development of the fisheries sector in India from **FY 2020-21 to FY 2024-25**.
- **Fisheries and Aquaculture Infrastructure Development Fund (FIDF):** It was implemented to create a fund to address the infrastructure requirement for the fisheries sector.
- **Kisan Credit Card (KCC)** scheme was extended in the **2018-19** to fisheries and animal husbandry farmers to help them meet their working capital requirements.

Way Ahead

- **Strengthening Infrastructure:** Invest in modern harbours, cold-chain logistics, and processing facilities to reduce post-harvest losses and enhance export competitiveness.
- **Promoting Value Addition and Exports:** Focus on high-value species such as tuna by creating robust value chains, on-board processing, and global market linkages.
- **Capacity-Building for Fishers:** Expand training and skill development programmes for traditional and small-scale fishers to enable their participation in deep-sea and High Seas fishing.

Source: IE

NEWS IN SHORT

MELA PATT**Context**

- In Jammu and Kashmir, the annual **three-day Mela Patt**, commenced at the ancient Khakhal Mohalla in Doda district.

Mela Patt

- It is dedicated to **Lord Vasuki Nag**, the presiding deity of **Bhaderwah Valley**.
- The festival is rooted in the **Nag culture**, which marks the historic meeting between **Mughal Emperor Akbar and King Nag Pal of Bhaderwah**.
- The festival has been celebrated **since the 16th century**.
 - ♦ It was first celebrated by **King Nag Pal** when Bhaderwah was known as **Bhadarkashi**.
- It is observed **every year on Nag Panchami**, seven days after the conclusion of the Kailash Yatra, and is renowned for its inclusive nature.
- **The unique 'Dikko Dance,'** a traditional folk performance where men and women of all religions and backgrounds participate, serves as a symbol of peace, pride, and communal harmony.

Bhaderwah Valley

- It is Situated in Doda district, Jammu division, Jammu & Kashmir (J&K).
- **The Neeru River** flows through the valley.
- **Major festivals:** Mela Patt and Kailash Yatra.
- **Languages spoken:** Bhaderwahi (a Western Pahari dialect), Kashmiri, Dogri, Urdu.

Source: AIR

DARUMA DOLL**In News**

- The chief priest of Daruma-ji temple gifted a Daruma Doll to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on his visit to Japan.

Daruma doll

- The Daruma is a Japanese papier-mâché doll inspired by Bodhidharma, founder of Zen Buddhism.
- It symbolizes perseverance, resilience, and good luck.
- **Under the Goal-Setting ritual**, one eye is painted when a goal is set; the second eye is filled in upon achievement—representing commitment and determination.
- Its rounded base ensures it always rights itself when tipped, embodying the proverb: "Fall seven times, stand up eight"—a metaphor for never giving up.

Relations with india

- The Daruma doll symbolizes the intense meditation of Bodhidharma, an Indian monk from Kanchipuram, revered in Japan as Daruma Daishi.
- He is believed to have meditated for nine years, facing a wall with folded limbs—hence the doll's limbless, rounded form and blank eyes.
- Bodhidharma's journey took him from India to Henan Province, China, where he meditated in a cave.
- The Daruma's name derives from the Sanskrit word "Dharma," underscoring its Indian roots.

Do you know?

- **Shorinzan Darumaji Temple** in Takasaki, Gunma, built in 1697, is considered the place of **origin of Daruma**.
- The temple houses huge piles of **Daruma Dolls**.
- Takasaki is also one of the largest producers of Daruma dolls in Japan.

Source :IE

350TH MARTYRDOM DAY OF GURU TEGH BAHADUR JI

Context

- Indian Railways will commemorate the **350th Martyrdom Day of Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji** to

aware the younger generation about his teachings and sacrifices.

About Guru Tegh Bahadur

- **Early Life:** He was born on **1 April 1621** in Amritsar and was the **youngest son of Guru Hargobind Sahib**, the sixth Sikh Guru.
 - ♦ Guru Tegh Bahadur was known as **Teyag Mal** in his youth and he later earned the title "Tegh Bahadur" by his father.
 - ♦ In **1664**, he became the ninth Sikh Guru.
- **Contributions:** He established **Anandpur Sahib**, strengthened Sikh institutions, and added over **700 hymns** to the **Guru Granth Sahib**, leaving a profound spiritual legacy.
- **Teachings:** His hymns in the **Guru Granth Sahib** emphasize **spiritual liberation, human rights, and equality**.
 - ♦ Guru Tegh Bahadur **advocated tolerance and opposed tyranny**.

Historical Significance

- Guru Tegh Bahadur, revered as **Hind ki Chadar (Shield of India)**, sacrificed his life to protect religious freedoms.
- In **1675**, he was martyred in Delhi, defending the Kashmiri Pandits against forced conversions under **Aurangzeb's rule**.
- The site of his martyrdom is now marked by **Gurudwara Sis Ganj Sahib**.

Source: AIR

INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND (IMF)

Context

- The Union government has approved the appointment of former Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Urjit Patel as Executive Director at the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for a period of **three years**.

International Monetary Fund (IMF)

- **Origin:** The IMF was established in **1944** in the aftermath of the Great Depression of the 1930s.
- **Membership:** The organization is currently composed of **191 member** countries. Each member's representation on the Executive Board is determined by its financial contribution (quota).
- **Executive Board:** The Board consists of **25 Executive Directors**, elected by member countries or groups of countries.

- ♦ India belongs to a four-country constituency along with Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Bhutan.

- **Headquarters:** Washington, D.C
- **Publications:** World Economic Outlook, Global Financial Stability Report, Fiscal Monitor, Global Policy Agenda.

IMF's Role in the Global Economy

- **Crisis Management:** The IMF provides financial assistance to countries facing macroeconomic risks, particularly currency crises, often referred to as a **"bailout."**
- **Lending Mechanism:** Assistance is usually provided in the form of **Special Drawing Rights (SDRs)**, a reserve asset based on a basket of five currencies: U.S. dollar, euro, Chinese yuan, Japanese yen, and British pound.
- **Lending instruments** include the **Extended Credit Facility, Flexible Credit Line, and Stand-By Arrangements**.
- **Conditionality:** IMF support is tied to structural reforms and policy adjustments. Borrowing countries are often required to implement fiscal consolidation, currency stabilization, or governance reforms.

Source: TH

INDIA EXTENDS IMPORT DUTY EXEMPTION ON COTTON

Context

- The Government of India has extended the **import duty exemption on cotton till 31st December 2025**, as notified by the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs.
 - ♦ Duty-free cotton imports help control the cost of raw material across the textile value chain, yarn, fabric, garments, and made-ups.

Production and Consumption of Cotton in India

- India is the only country which **grows all four species of cotton** G. Arboreum & G. Herbaceum (Asian cotton), G. Barbadense (Egyptian cotton) and G. Hirsutum (American Upland cotton).
- Majority of cotton production comes from **9 major cotton growing states**, which are grouped into three diverse agro-ecological zones, as under:
 - ♦ **Northern Zone** - Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan.
 - ♦ **Central Zone** - Gujarat, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh.

- ♦ **Southern Zone** - Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka.
- ♦ Apart from the above the cotton is also grown in the state of Odisha and Tamil Nadu.
- **India is the 2nd largest producer** in the world with estimated production of 5.84 Million Metric Tonnes during cotton season 2022-23 i.e. **23.83%** of world cotton production.
- **India is also the 2nd largest consumer** of cotton in the world with estimated consumption of 22.24% of world cotton consumption.

Source: PIB

STATE ENERGY EFFICIENCY INDEX (SEEI)

In News

- Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Assam, and Tripura have emerged as the top performers in their respective groups in the State Energy Efficiency Index 2024 (sixth edition).

About State Energy Efficiency Index (SEEI)

- **Released by:** Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) under Ministry of Power + Alliance for an Energy Efficient Economy (AEEE).
- ♦ First launched in 2018, SEEI is published annually.
- **Objective:** To track state-level energy efficiency progress and encourage energy-efficient governance, policies, and outcomes.
- **Classification:** States and UTs are classified into four categories: Front Runners (>60% score), Achievers (50–60%), Contenders (30–50%), and Aspirants (<30%).

Source: PIB

CONOCARPUS TREES

In News

- The Supreme Court-mandated Central Empowered Committee (CEC) has sought a ban on **Conocarpus trees** in India due to ecological harm.

About Conocarpus Trees

- **Scientific Name:** Conocarpus erectus (also called Buttonwood tree).
- **Origin:** Native to coastal areas of North & South America, West Africa.
- ♦ Introduced in India (mainly Gujarat, Maharashtra, Telangana) for urban greening

and roadside plantations due to its fast growth and ability to withstand saline & arid conditions.

- ♦ They are evergreen, medium-sized trees (up to 20 m) and grow rapidly in dry, saline, and polluted environments.
- **Concerns in India:**
 - ♦ Allergic Reactions: Reported to release high levels of pollen, causing respiratory issues, asthma, and skin allergies.
 - ♦ Ecological Impact: Classified as invasive in some regions – suppresses native vegetation.
 - High water intake may stress groundwater in dry areas.
 - ♦ Municipal Bans: Hyderabad (2022) and Gujarat (2023) restricted large-scale plantation.

Source: HT

EXERCISE ACHOOK PRAHAR

Context

- The Indian Army and Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) wrapped up a high-altitude exercise Achook Prahar in Arunachal Pradesh.

About the Exercise

- It was conducted under **simulated combat conditions**, the drill tested **interoperability** between Army and ITBP, reaffirming the **combat readiness** of Armed Forces and CAPFs in safeguarding the nation's frontiers.
- It reinforces India's **layered defence architecture** and **rapid-response capability** in the sensitive eastern sector bordering **China**.
- It follows a series of recent integrated exercises — such as **Prachand Prahar** and **Poorvi Prahar** — that have tested India's tri-service capabilities in the high-altitude terrain of Arunachal Pradesh.

Source: TH

SCOPE EMINENCE AWARDS

In News

- President Droupadi Murmu presented the SCOPE Eminence Awards 2022–23 in New Delhi, lauding the pivotal role of Public Sector Enterprises (PSEs) in India's development.

SCOPE Eminence Awards

- It is an endeavour to commemorate the

remarkable achievements and contributions of PSEs across multiple domains and represents one of the highest honours for the Public Sector.

- It is part of SCOPE's continued efforts towards recognizing the **Public Sector's role as nation builders.**

Standing Conference of Public Enterprises (SCOPE)

- It was established in 1973, promotes competitiveness and excellence among Public Sector Enterprises (PSEs) and was formally given recognition as an apex body of Central Public Sector Enterprises in November 1976.
- It focuses on four key pillars: **Policy Advocacy, Programs & Workshops, Capacity Building, and Skill Development & Brand Building.**
- It has been representing employers' organizations on international forums such as the International Labour Organization (ILO); United Nations (UN); Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and International Organization of Employers (IOE).

Source :PIB

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