

## DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS (DCA)

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## WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN INDIA

### Context

- Recently, the Governor of Andhra Pradesh emphasized a **critical gap in the nation's political landscape** at the **first national conference** on parliamentary and legislative committees on the empowerment of women.

### Women's Political Participation: Current Landscape

- According to **UN Women**, only 27.2% of parliamentarians in single or lower houses are women, up from 11% in 1995.
- In India, women hold **14.7% of seats in Lok Sabha**, but still far below the **global average of 26.5%** and ministerial representation is even lower, hovering around 10–11%.
- In **State Assemblies**, women's representation varies widely, often falling below 10%.
  - Chhattisgarh leads with 19 women MLAs**, while **Himachal Pradesh has just one**, and **Mizoram has none**.
- India is **ranked at 148 among 193 countries**, ranked 31st among 47 Asian countries, and fifth amongst eight SAARC countries.

### Why Is Women's Political Participation in India Still Low?

- Parties and Political Barriers:** In the 2024 elections, only **797 women contested**, and just **74 won** — fewer than the **78 elected in 2019**. The root causes include:
  - Low ticket allocation:** Parties often court women voters but fail to field adequate women candidates.
  - Patriarchal party structures:** Women face stereotypes, exclusion from leadership roles, and lack of internal democracy.
  - Weak mahila wings:** These exist across parties but rarely influence ticket distribution or policymaking.
- Patriarchal Social Norms & Gender Stereotypes:** Deep-rooted cultural beliefs often discourage women from pursuing political careers.
  - Politics is still perceived as a male-dominated space, and women are frequently expected to prioritize domestic responsibilities over public life.
- Safety and Mobility Concerns:** Women face heightened safety risks during political campaigns, especially in rural and conflict-prone areas.

- It restricts their mobility, public engagement, and ability to build voter bases.

- Low Female Labour Force Participation:** India's female labour force participation rate has historically been low, which often correlates with **limited civic and political engagement**, especially among marginalized women.

### Related Government Initiatives & Policy Push

- Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam (2023):** It reserves 33% of parliamentary seats for women. However, this reform will not take effect before the 2029 elections.
- 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments:** These mandate one-third reservation for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions and Urban Local Bodies.
  - It has led to over 1.4 million elected women representatives, making India a global leader in grassroots gender inclusion.
  - At the state level, 20 states have already raised **local body reservations for women from 33% to 50%**.
- Nari Shakti-led Development:** A policy framework that integrates women's empowerment across education, entrepreneurship, and leadership.
- National Policy for Women (2016):** It emphasizes leadership development and political empowerment.
- Training and capacity-building programs** for elected women representatives through institutions like the **National Institute of Rural Development**.
- Digital literacy and financial inclusion schemes** such as Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyaan (PMGDISHA), Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY), Stand-Up India, and NRLM Self-Help Groups which indirectly support women's civic engagement.

Source: TH

## SC UPHELD WAQF (AMENDMENT) ACT, 2025

### Context

- The Supreme Court has upheld the **Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025** while striking down few provisions and balancing state regulation with minority rights.

### Meaning of 'Waqf':

- Refers to **properties dedicated solely for religious or charitable purposes** under **Islamic law**.
- Sale or other use of the property is prohibited.**
- The ownership of the property is transferred from the person making the Waqf (called waqif) to Allah, making it irrevocable.
- The creator is a **wakif**, and the property is managed by a **mutawalli**.

### Origin of the Concept of 'Waqf':

- Traces back to the Delhi Sultanate** when **Sultan Muizuddin Sam Ghaor** dedicated villages to the Jama Masjid of Multan.
- Waqf properties grew with the rise of Islamic dynasties in India.
- The Mussalman Waqf Validating Act of 1913** protected the institution of Waqf in India.

### Constitutional Framework and Governance:

- Charitable and religious institutions** are under the **Concurrent List of the Constitution**, allowing both Parliament and State Legislatures to frame laws on it.
- Creation of Waqf:** Can be created via:
  - Declaration (oral or written deed).
  - Long-term use of land for religious or charitable purposes.
  - Endowment upon the end of a line of succession.
- States with the highest share of Waqf properties:** Uttar Pradesh (27%), West Bengal (9%), Punjab (9%).
- Evolution of Waqf Laws:**
  - 1913 Act:** Validated Waqf deeds.
  - 1923 Act:** Made registration of Waqf properties mandatory.
  - 1954:** Established Central Waqf Council and State Waqf Boards for better management.
  - 1995 Act:** Introduced Tribunals for dispute resolution and added elected members and Islamic scholars to Waqf Boards.

### Key Amendments of the Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025

- Composition of the Central Waqf Council:** The Union Minister in-charge of waqf is the ex-officio chairperson.
- Council members include:**
  - Members of Parliament (MPs).
  - Persons of national eminence.
  - Retired Supreme Court/High Court judges.
  - Eminent scholars in Muslim law.
  - Removes the Muslim requirement for MPs, former judges, and eminent persons.
  - It **mandates two non-Muslim members** in the Council.
- Composition of Waqf Boards:**
  - Empowers state governments to nominate one person from each group.
  - Non-Muslim members required: two.
  - Must include at least one member each from Shias, Sunnis, and Backward Muslim classes.
  - Requires two Muslim women members.
- Composition of Tribunals:**
  - Removes the expert in Muslim law.
  - District Court judge (Chairman).
  - Joint Secretary rank officer.
- Appeals Against Tribunal Orders:**
  - Act:** Decisions of Tribunals are final, with no appeals allowed in courts.
  - Amendment:** Allows appeals against Tribunal decisions to the High Court within 90 days.



- **Survey of Properties:** The Act replaces the Survey Commissioner with the **District Collector or other senior officers** to oversee the survey of Waqf properties.
- **Government property as waqf:** It states that any government property identified as waqf will cease to be so.
  - ♦ The Collector of the area will determine ownership in case of uncertainty, if deemed a government property, he will update the revenue records.
- **Audits:** Waqf institutions earning over ₹ 1 lakh will undergo audits by state-sponsored auditors.
- **Centralized Portal:** A centralized portal will be created for automating Waqf property management, enhancing efficiency and transparency.
- **Property Dedication:** Practicing Muslims (for at least five years) can dedicate property to the Waqf, restoring pre-2013 rules.
- **Women's Inheritance:** Women must receive inheritance before the Waqf declaration, with special provisions for widows, divorced women, and orphans.
- ♦ The Court's ruling has capped this at 4 (Central) and 3 (State).
- ♦ CEOs of Waqf Boards should, "as far as possible", be Muslims (not mandatory).
- ♦ This balance sought transparency & inclusivity vs. minority autonomy in religious affairs.
- **"Waqf by User" Deletion:** Earlier law allowed declaring property as waqf based on longstanding religious use without formal documents.
- ♦ **Court's ruling:** It upheld deletion, clarified that this change applies only prospectively—existing waqf-by-user properties registered before April 8, 2025, remain protected.
- **Protected Monuments:** The court declined to interfere with provisions declaring waqf status void for properties that are protected monuments or belong to Scheduled Tribes.

#### Conclusion

- A law made by Parliament carries a presumption of constitutionality unless a court strikes it down.
- While SC refused to stay the Waqf Act, it stayed certain provisions "to protect interest of all parties and balance equities during pendency".

Source: TH

#### Key changes SC has incorporated into the Act

- **Practicing Islam: The Court's** most significant intervention **concerns Section 3(r)**, which requires anyone creating a waqf to demonstrate they have been practising Islam for at **least five years**.
  - ♦ The court stayed the provision until the **government frames rules for determining religious practice**.
- **Collector's Power Over Waqf Properties: Section 3C empowers** the district collectors to determine whether properties claimed as waqf actually belong to the government.
  - ♦ **Court's ruling:** Stayed provision that allowed stripping waqf status before inquiry is complete, calling it "**prima facie arbitrary**".
  - ♦ Directed that waqf properties cannot be dispossessed or altered until final decision by Waqf Tribunal and any subsequent appeals.
- **Representation in Waqf Administration:** Its amended Act allowed up to 12 non-Muslims on the Central Waqf Council (22 members) and 7 non-Muslims on state boards (11 members).

## SC REJECTS PLEA TO BRING POLITICAL PARTIES UNDER POSH ACT

#### Context

- The Supreme Court declined to take into consideration a plea seeking to extend the ambit of the **Protection of Women from Sexual Harassment at Workplace (POSH) Act** to include political parties, observing that **such organisations cannot be classified as workplaces** under the law.

#### Background

- In **Centre for Constitutional Rights Research and Advocacy v State of Kerala & Ors (2022)** the Kerala High Court ruled that political parties do not have a conventional employer-employee relationship and cannot be mandated to set up **Internal Complaints Committees (ICCs)**.
- This ambiguity, combined with the decentralised and informal nature of political party structures, has often been cited as a reason for non-compliance.

**Key Features of the PoSH Act**

- **Clear Definition of Sexual Harassment:** The Act defines sexual harassment to include **unwelcome acts** such as physical contact and sexual advances, a demand or request for sexual favours, making sexually coloured remarks, showing pornography, and any other unwelcome physical, verbal, or non-verbal conduct of a sexual nature.
- **Applicability:** The Act is applicable to all workplaces, including the organized and unorganized sectors, the public and private sectors, and government and non-government organizations.
- **Employee:** All women employees, whether employed regularly, temporarily, contractually, on an ad hoc or daily wage basis, as apprentices or interns or even employed without the knowledge of the principal employer, can seek redressal to sexual harassment in the workplace.
- **Constitution of Internal Complaints Committee (ICC):** Employers are required to constitute an ICC at each office or branch with 10 or more employees.
  - ♦ It has to be **headed by a woman**, have at least two women employees, another employee, and a third party such as an NGO worker with five years of experience.
- **Local Committee (LC):** It mandates every district in the country to create a local committee (LC) to receive complaints from women working in firms **with less than 10 employees**.
- **Procedure for Filing Complaints:** Woman can file a written complaint **within three to six months** of the sexual harassment incident.
  - ♦ There are two ways to resolve the issue by the committee- **through conciliation** between the complainant and the respondent (which cannot be a financial settlement), or committees could **initiate an inquiry**, taking appropriate action based on what it finds.
- **Annual Audit Report:** The employer has to file an annual audit report with the district officer about the number of sexual harassment complaints filed and actions taken at the end of the year.
- **Penalty:** If the employer fails to constitute an ICC or does not abide by any other provision, they must pay a fine of up to ₹50,000, which increases for a repeat offence.

**Arguments in Favor of Extending the POSH Act to Political Parties**

- **Constitutional Mandate for Equality:** Denying women in political spaces protection under POSH undermines their rights under **Articles 14 (equality before law), 15 (non-discrimination), 19(1)(g) (right to profession), and 21 (right to life and dignity)**.
- **The Vishaka v. State of Rajasthan (1997)** case established that protection from sexual harassment is integral to women's fundamental rights.
  - ♦ Excluding political parties dilutes this spirit.
- **Filling the Accountability Gap:** Over **2,700 registered political parties** function without Internal Complaints Committees (ICCs).
  - ♦ Extending POSH would fill this institutional void and establish a formal redressal mechanism where none currently exists.
- **Encouraging Women's Political Leadership:** Sexual harassment remains a key deterrent to women's participation in politics.
  - ♦ Legal protection would create a safer environment, enabling more women to

contest elections, take leadership roles, and remain active in public life.

**Arguments Against extending the POSH Act to Political Parties**

- **Absence of Employer-Employee Relationship:** Political parties operate on informal structures and lack a clear employer-employee relationship, which complicates the applicability of the POSH Act.
- **Decentralized Party Structures:** The diverse and decentralized nature of political parties makes it difficult to implement centralized ICCs or ensure uniform compliance.

**Way Ahead**

- **Party-Level Codes of Conduct:** Political parties should voluntarily adopt gender-sensitivity policies, codes of conduct, and safe workplace protocols to build credibility and demonstrate commitment to inclusivity.
- **Sector-Specific Mechanisms:** For informal, freelance, and voluntary sectors like politics, cinema, and media, the government could establish sectoral grievance redressal boards to provide independent and credible forums outside employer control.

### Concluding remarks

- The implementation of the POSH Act in political parties is not only a legal necessity but also a moral obligation.
- Political parties must lead by example, fostering gender equality and ensuring the safety of women in their ranks.

Source: IT

## CII SUGGESTED FRAMEWORK FOR A NATIONAL GLOBAL CAPABILITY CENTRES (GCC) POLICY

### Context

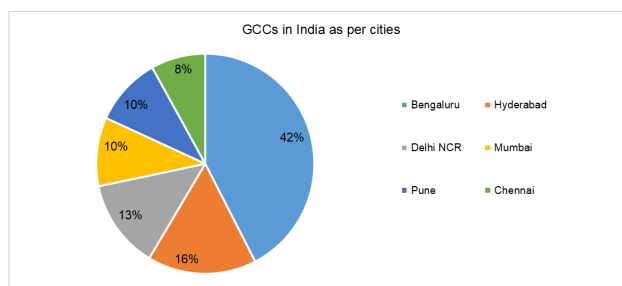
- The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) has unveiled a proposed **National Framework for Global Capability Centres (GCCs)**.

### What are Global Capability Centres?

- **Global In-house Centres or Captives (GICs) or Global Capability Centres (GCCs)**, are mainly offshore centres established by **global level firms/MNCs** to **provide various services to their parent organisations**.
- These centres operate as **internal organisations within the global corporate** structure, providing specialised solutions such as **IT services, Research and Development (R&D), customer support and other business tasks**.
- GCCs have evolved from being **cost-saving centres** that were largely **set up to gain from lower labour costs** to becoming **strategic hubs** that encourage innovation and lead to value creation, over the past couple of decades.

### India's GCC Landscape

- India already hosts **more than 1,800 GCCs** employing **2.16 million professionals** and contributing about **\$68 billion** in direct gross value addition (GVA), which roughly works out as **1.8% of GDP**.
- According to the CII framework, **by 2030** the number of centres **could rise to 5,000**, generating **\$154–199 billion in direct GVA**.
  - ♦ Including indirect and induced effects, **the overall impact could touch \$470–600 billion**.



Source: JLL

- **Employment potential:** By 2030, it could translate into **20–25 million jobs**, including **4–5 million high-quality direct roles** in areas such as artificial intelligence, engineering R&D, cybersecurity and digital platforms.

### Drivers of GCC Growth in India

- **Talent Hub:** India is known globally for its diverse pool of talent with expertise in domains ranging from IT, engineering, analytics, and finance.
  - ♦ The availability of a skilled workforce has enabled GCCs to implement high-value and complex projects in India.
- **Technological innovations:** ML, AI, Internet of Things (IoT) and blockchain are some of the advanced technologies that have been adapted rapidly.
  - ♦ This in turn has enabled GCCs in India to deliver innovative solutions and digitally transform their parent companies.
- **Strategically focused:** From being known as a cost-saving centre to becoming a strategic hub, over the years, MNCs have recognised the potential of setting up GCCs in India.
  - ♦ These centres are now viewed as a strategic asset that enables businesses to drive growth, improve operational efficiency and gain competitive advantages.
- **Government support:** Various reforms of the Indian government, such as the Digital India Campaign aimed at enabling ease of doing business, have contributed to making a favourable environment in India for the growth of GCCs.

### Recommendations by CII

- **Investment facilitation:** The policy recommends legislatively backed Digital Economic Zones with “plug-and-play physical and digital infrastructure, harmonised regulations and competitive incentives.”
- **National Portal:** It calls for a National Single Window Portal to provide seamless approvals, supported by a three-tier governance system anchored by a National GCC Council.

- **Expansion:** It suggests expanding GCCs beyond **India's six metro hubs**.
  - ♦ **Tier-2 and Tier-3** cities such as Coimbatore, Kochi, Indore, Jaipur, and Bhubaneswar are flagged as future growth centres, offering lower costs, rising digital talent and better retention rates.
- **Concessional Corporate Tax:** The government should consider offering concessional corporate tax rates or tax holidays to GCCs set up within the notified special economic zones.
  - ♦ It also called for the harmonisation of permanent establishment rules.
- **Clarification on Services:** The government should also provide clarification on the nature of services being provided by the GCCs, thereby removing them from the category of 'intermediary'.
  - ♦ This will help expedite goods and services tax (GST) refunds and detailed scrutiny by authorities on tax refund applications.
- **To support the talent requirement of these GCCs,** the government's national policy should aim to develop specialised talent that aligns with the sector's demands.

#### Way Ahead

- Global capability centres have **transformed** the landscape for corporations in India by **shifting the perspective** of viewing India as a cost-saving medium to a **hub of innovation and strategic value**.
- GCCs in India have enabled **economic growth, job creation and regional development** by utilising the country's skilled workforce, technological advantage, and supportive government policies.
- GCCs can drive sustainable growth and **contribute** to India's goal of becoming a **US\$ 5 trillion economy** through continued innovation, collaboration, and investment in talent and infrastructure.

#### Confederation of Indian Industry (CII)

- **Type:** Non-government, not-for-profit, industry-led and industry-managed organization.
- **Established:** 1895 (as Engineering and Iron Trades Association; renamed CII in 1992).
- **Headquarters:** New Delhi.
- **Membership:** Over 9,000 direct members (private and public enterprises, SMEs, MNCs) and 300,000 indirect members (through sectoral associations).

- **Coverage:** All sectors of economy across 62 offices in India and 8 overseas offices.
- CII charts change by working closely with governments and thought leaders and enhancing efficiency, competitiveness and business opportunities for industry.

Source: BS

## INDIA SIGNED CONTRACT WITH INTERNATIONAL SEABED AUTHORITY (ISA) FOR POLYMETALLIC SULPHIDES (PMS)

#### In News

- India has secured its **first-ever global exploration contract from the International Seabed Authority (ISA)** to explore **polymetallic sulphide nodules** in the **Carlsberg Ridge**.

#### Do you know?

- India had applied in January 2024 for exploration rights in two Indian Ocean regions—**Carlsberg Ridge**, which has now been granted, and **the Afanasy-Nikitin Sea (ANS) mount**, **still pending approval**. The ANS region is also claimed by Sri Lanka.
  - ♦ India previously obtained ISA permits in the **Central Indian Ocean Basin** and for **polymetallic sulphides in the Indian Ocean Ridge**, with these contracts valid through 2027 and 2031, respectively.

#### Carlsberg Ridge

- It is a 3,00,000-sq km stretch that lies in the Indian Ocean, specifically in the Arabian Sea and northwest Indian Ocean.
- It forms the boundary between the Indian and Arabian tectonic plates, extending from near Rodrigues Island to the Owen fracture zone.

#### Significance for India

- Enhances India's role in **strategic deep-sea mining** and access to critical minerals.
- Strengthens India's resource security in key industrial metals like copper, zinc, gold, and rare earths.
- **Supports India's "Deep Ocean Mission"** and transition to mineral self-reliance.



### The International Seabed Authority (ISA)

- It is an autonomous body established under the **1982 UNCLOS** and the **1994 Agreement**, tasked with regulating mineral-related activities in the deep seabed—**referred to as the Area**—for the benefit of humankind. Headquartered in Kingston, Jamaica, **ISA became operational in 1996 and now includes 170 members (169 States + EU)**.
- It ensures environmental protection from seabed mining and oversees resource management in the Area, which spans 54% of the world's ocean floor, recognized as the common heritage of humankind.
  - ♦ To explore mineral resources in the high seas—areas beyond any national jurisdiction—countries must obtain permission from the International Seabed Authority (ISA)
    - So far, 19 countries have been granted such exploration rights.

Source :TH

## SURGING EXPORTS NARROW INDIA'S TRADE DEFICIT

### Context

- According to the **Ministry of Commerce and Industry**, the country's trade deficit contracted by more than **54% to \$9.9 billion**, compared to **\$21.7 billion** in August **2024**, due to a sharp rise in merchandise exports.

### What is Trade Deficit?

- If a country imports more goods and services from other countries than it exports to them, it is said to have a trade deficit.
- **Trade Deficit** weakens the domestic currency.

### Drivers of the Positive Trade Performance

- **Policy support for exports:**
  - ♦ Schemes such as the **Production-Linked Incentive (PLI)**, **Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products (RoDTEP)**, and improved logistics infrastructure under **PM GatiShakti** have boosted competitiveness.
  - ♦ Exporters demonstrated resilience even under adverse conditions, such as the **25–50% tariffs** imposed by the U.S. in August.
- **Strong performance in services sector:**
  - ♦ IT, business process management, fintech, and professional services continue to dominate global demand.

- ♦ **The net services surplus of nearly \$16.7 billion** provided a significant cushion to offset the merchandise trade deficit, reinforcing the role of services as a stabiliser in India's external sector.
- **Import moderation:**
  - ♦ **Fall in crude oil and commodity prices** reduced the import bill.
  - ♦ **Government initiatives** to promote domestic manufacturing in electronics, defence, and renewable energy equipment are gradually reducing import dependence.

### Implications for the Indian Economy

- **Improved external sector stability:** A halved trade deficit strengthens India's current account position, easing concerns over excessive foreign exchange outflows.
- **Boost to foreign exchange reserves and rupee stability:** Lower trade imbalance reduces pressure on the rupee, supports forex reserves, and bolsters investor confidence.
- **Enhanced global competitiveness:** India's ability to grow exports despite tariffs and global headwinds reflects rising competitiveness of its goods and services.
- **Contribution to economic growth:** Strong export momentum provides a fillip to GDP growth, employment generation, and industrial expansion.

### Challenges Ahead

- **Global trade uncertainties:** Sluggish global growth, supply chain disruptions, and protectionist measures may affect export demand.
- **High dependence on a few markets:** The U.S. and EU account for a large share of exports, exposing India to geopolitical and policy risks.
- **Rising services imports:** While services exports are strong, increasing imports in the sector can gradually erode the net surplus.
- **Need for technology and value addition:** Indian exports remain concentrated in low to medium value-added sectors, limiting long-term competitiveness.

### Way Ahead

- **Diversification of export markets:** Deepen engagement with regions such as Africa, Latin America, and Southeast Asia through Bilateral Trade Agreements and multilateral groupings.
- **Promoting high-value exports:** Encourage exports in sectors like electronics, green



technologies, pharmaceuticals, and defence manufacturing.

- **Strengthening services exports:** Invest in skilling, digital infrastructure, and regulatory reforms to sustain leadership in IT and professional services.
- **Managing imports strategically:** Promote domestic capacity-building in critical sectors (semiconductors, rare earths, clean energy) to reduce vulnerabilities.
- **Leveraging global supply chain shifts:** Position India as a reliable manufacturing hub in the backdrop of China+1 strategies adopted by multinational corporations.

Source: TH

## DEFENCE PROCUREMENT MANUAL 2025

### In News

- The Defence Minister has approved the **Defence Procurement Manual (DPM) 2025**.

### Defence Procurement Manual 2025

- It is a revised document aimed at expediting revenue procurements for the armed forces, simplifying processes for domestic industry and supporting innovation in defence manufacturing.
- It was **last updated in 2009** and lays down principles and provisions for all revenue procurements in the Defence Ministry.
- The revised manual aligns with Finance Ministry guidelines and modern warfare needs, covering procurements worth nearly ₹1 lakh crore this year.
- It introduces **a new chapter on indigenisation and innovation**, encouraging collaboration among private firms, DPSUs, and institutions like IITs and IISc.
- It also **assures order guarantees of up to five years**, promotes field-level decision-making, and ensures faster supplier payments.

### Status of Defence Indigenisation in India

- India recorded its highest-ever indigenous defence production in FY 2023-24, reaching ₹1,27,434 crore—a 174% increase from ₹46,429 crore in 2014-15.
  - This growth, driven by government policies under **Prime Minister Modi and the Make in India initiative**, reflects the push for Atmanirbharta (self-reliance).

- India is now building a robust, self-reliant defence industry, contributing to both national security and economic growth.

### Growth in Defence Exports

- India's expanding global footprint in defence manufacturing is a direct result of its commitment to self-reliance and strategic policy interventions.
  - ♦ Defence exports have surged from ₹686 crore in FY 2013-14 to an all-time high of ₹21,083 crore in FY 2023-24, marking a 30-fold increase over the past decade.

### Importance

- **Strategic Autonomy:** It Reduces dependence on foreign suppliers, enhancing national security.
- **Economic Growth:** Boosts domestic manufacturing, job creation, and global trade.
- **Geopolitical Leverage:** Strengthens India's position as a reliable defence partner.

### Steps Taken

- **Liberalized FDI Policy:** Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the defence sector was liberalised in September 2020 to attract foreign investment, allowing up to 74% FDI through the automatic route and above 74% through the government route.
- **The defence budget** has risen significantly—from ₹2.53 lakh crore in 2013-14 to ₹6.81 lakh crore in 2025-26—highlighting India's focus on military modernisation.
- **Launched in April 2018, Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX)** has created a thriving ecosystem for innovation and technology development in defence and aerospace.
- **The 'SAMARTHYA' event at Aero India 2025** showcased India's achievements in defence indigenisation and innovation.
- **Self-Reliant Initiatives through Joint Action (SRIJAN):** Launched by the Department of Defence Production (DDP) in August 2020 to promote indigenisation under Atmanirbhar Bharat

### Latest Milestone

- **Operation Sindoor** marked a historic milestone for India's defence industry, showcasing for the first time how made-in-India weapons like Brahmos missiles and indigenous defense systems played crucial roles in offensive and defensive operations against Pakistan-sponsored terrorism.

### Challenges

- **Technological Gaps:** Limited capabilities in materials, engine, and chip technologies.
- **Import Dependence:** Many platforms still rely on foreign components despite local assembly.
- **Other challenges** remain, particularly underfunded R&D and the need for stronger political commitment.

### Conclusion

- India's remarkable strides in defence production and exports underscore its transformation into a self-reliant and globally competitive military manufacturing hub.
- Operation Sindoor's success has proven India's defence industry's capabilities, providing a foundation to further strengthen indigenous defence manufacturing.
- To maintain momentum, India can increase its defence budget and foster innovation by involving private firms and startups.

Source :TH

- The port is also part of the **proposed International North-South Transport Corridor**.
- **The International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC)**, which was initiated by **Russia, India, and Iran**, is a **multi-modal transportation project** linking the **Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf to the Caspian Sea** via Iran, and onward to northern Europe via St Petersburg in Russia.
- The route involves shipping goods from Mumbai to Bandar Abbas (Iran) by sea, transporting them by road to Bandar-e-Anzali, then by ship across the Caspian Sea to Astrakhan (Russia), and finally by rail to Europe.
- It aims to cut transit time and reduce freight costs compared to the Suez Canal route.

Source :ET

## 'AADHAAR IS PART OF STATUTE, CAN BE USED BY VOTERS': SC

### In News

- The Supreme Court stated that Aadhaar is legally valid for voter verification under the right to vote statute and can be used as identity proof in the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of Bihar's electoral rolls.

*Aadhaar is a 12 digit individual identification number which serves as proof of identity and proof of address for residents of India.*

### Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the electoral rolls

- **Article 324** of the Constitution gives the Election Commission (EC) the authority to oversee electoral roll preparation, while Article 326 grants voting rights to citizens aged 18 and above.
- Under the Representation of the People Act, 1950, non-citizens are disqualified (Section 16), and **voters must be 18 and ordinarily resident in a constituency (Sections 19–20)**.
- **The EC has initiated a Special Intensive Revision (SIR)** under Section 21 of the Act due to concerns about duplicate entries caused by urbanisation and migration. The aim is to ensure only eligible citizens are listed.
- The nationwide SIR begins with Bihar, where the last such revision was in 2003.

## NEWS IN SHORT

### FIRST INDIA-IRAN-UZBEKISTAN TRILATERAL MEETING

#### In News

- The **first India-Iran-Uzbekistan trilateral** meeting was held in Tehran focusing **on enhancing cooperation** against extremism and terrorism and promoting the use of **Chabahar Port by Uzbekistan for trade with India**.

#### About

- They also emphasized deeper connectivity via the International **North-South Transit Corridor (INSTC)**.
- **India-Iran-Armenia** also held a **trilateral focusing on INSTC and Chabahar use**. Kazakhstan and Tajikistan have shown interest in using Chabahar, while India is pursuing an early harvest FTA with the Eurasian Economic Union to boost trade and access rare earth minerals from the region.

#### Do you know?

- **Chabahar** is a **deep water port** in **Iran's Sistan-Baluchistan province**.
  - ♦ It is the Iranian port that is the **closest to India**, and is located in the open sea, providing easy and secure access for large cargo ships.

**Supreme Court's recent observation**

- Section 23(4) of the Representation of the People Act, 1950 permits **ECI officials to use Aadhaar to authenticate entries in the electoral rolls.**
- The Supreme Court directed the Election Commission (EC) to include Aadhaar as the **12th "indicative" document for identity verification.**
- The Court maintained that Aadhaar is part of the statutory voter verification framework.

Source :TH

**NATIONAL MAKHANA BOARD****Context**

- PM Modi launched the National Makhana Board in Purnea, **Bihar**, approving a development package of about **₹475 crore** for the makhana sector.

**What is Makhana?**

- Makhana (*Euryale ferox*), also known as fox nut, is an **aquatic crop** cultivated in **stagnant ponds and wetlands.**
  - ♦ This plant is found in freshwater ponds throughout **South and East Asia.**
- The edible part of the Makhana plant consists of **small, round seeds** that have an outer layer ranging from **black to brown.**
  - ♦ This has led to it being referred to as the **'Black Diamond.'**
- **Climatic conditions:** For optimal growth and development, Makhana requires a temperature range of **20-35°C**, relative humidity of **50-90%**, and annual rainfall between **100-250 cm.**
- **In India**, Bihar produces about **90% of the country's makhana**, particularly the regions of **Mithilanchal and Seemanchal.**
  - ♦ In smaller quantities it is cultivated in the states of **Assam, Manipur, West Bengal, Tripura, and Odisha**, as well as in neighboring countries like **Nepal, Bangladesh, China, Japan, and Korea.**
- **GI Tag to Mithila Makhana:** In **2022**, 'Mithila Makhana' was conferred a Geographical Indication tag.

Source: PIB

**BUREAU OF INDIAN STANDARDS (BIS)****Context**

- In the past three years, the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) has issued **84 Quality Control Orders (QCOs)** covering **343 products**, accounting for nearly 45 per cent of all 187 QCOs notified so far.

**What are Quality Control Orders (QCOs)?**

- QCOs are legal instruments issued under the **Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) Act, 2016.**
  - ♦ They make it mandatory for both domestic and imported products to conform to specified Indian Standards.
  - ♦ Products covered under QCOs cannot be sold in the Indian market without BIS certification, ensuring consumer safety, fair trade practices, and protection from substandard imports.

**Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS)**

- The Bureau of Indian Standards is the National Standards Body of India under the **Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution**, Government of India.
- It is established by the **Bureau of Indian Standards Act, 2016** which came into effect on **12 October 2017.**
- **Headquarters:** New Delhi.
- **Functions:**
  - ♦ **Formulation of Indian Standards (IS)** across many sectors.
  - ♦ **Product Certification Schemes**, both voluntary and compulsory.
  - ♦ **Release of Quality Control Orders (QCOs):** Making compliance with certain Indian Standards mandatory for some products.
- **The schemes operated by BIS are**, Product Certification (ISI mark), Management Systems Certification, Hall Marking of Gold and Silver Jewellery/Artefacts and Laboratory Services for the benefit of the industry and in turn aiming at consumer protection.

Source: IE

**POLYPROPYLENE****Context**

- The Prime Minister laid the foundation stone of a **polypropylene plant** at Numaligarh Refinery Limited (NRL) in Golaghat, Assam.

**About**

- Polypropylene (PP) is a **thermoplastic polymer** that belongs to the **polyolefin family**.
- It is one of the **most widely used plastics** in the world because it is lightweight, durable, and versatile.
- **Applications:** Polypropylene is used to manufacture carpets, ropes, bags, fibers, masks, medical kits, and textiles, and also plays a vital role in the automotive sector as well as in producing medical and agricultural equipment.
- Assam is known for its **traditional Gamosa and its renowned Eri and Muga silk**, the state's identity will now also include **textiles made from polypropylene**.

Source: AIR

## ENHANCED STERILE INSECT TECHNIQUE (ENHANCED-SIT)

**Context**

- In Naousa, northern Greece, scientists are testing an **Enhanced Sterile Insect Technique (Enhanced-SIT)** to control invasive fruit fly species threatening crops, especially peaches.

**About**

- **Project:** REACT (EU-funded, 6.65 million, 4 years, 12 countries incl. UK, Israel, South Africa).
- **Target Pests:**
  - ♦ Mediterranean fruit fly (*Ceratitis capitata*) – major local pest.
  - ♦ Oriental fruit fly (*Bactrocera dorsalis*) and Peach fruit fly (*Bactrocera zonata*) – invasive species from Asia, highly destructive globally.
- **Method:** Sterile male flies bred at University of Patras.
  - ♦ These are fed with bacterial supplements making them more resilient, longer-lived, competitive in mating.
  - ♦ Resulting in no offspring and gradual eradication of population.
- **Significance:**
  - ♦ Pesticide-free, eco-friendly, organic farming compatible.
  - ♦ First European field trial of improved sterile insect release on a small scale.
  - ♦ Early findings show measurable reduction in pest population.
  - ♦ Could serve as a model for Mediterranean and European pest control amid rising climate-linked threats.

Source: TH

## INDIAN NAVY'S 'ANDROTH'

**Context**

- The Indian Navy has received '**Androth**' an indigenously built **anti-submarine warfare shallow water craft (ASW-SWC)**.

**About the ASW-SWC**

- Named after **Androth island** (the largest island of the Lakshadweep archipelago), the warship is the **second of eight ASW-SWCs** being built by **Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE)**.
- Constructed in line with the **Indian Register of Shipping (IRS) classification rules**, the project—with over 80% indigenous content—embodies the vision of Aatmanirbhar Bharat.

Source: TH

## SIR M VISVESVARAYA

**Context**

- PM Modi paid homage to Sir Mokshagundam Visvesvaraya on his birth anniversary, observed nationwide as Engineers' Day.

**About**

- **Born on September 15, 1861**, Visvesvaraya is regarded as one of **India's greatest engineers** whose pioneering work revolutionised infrastructure development.
- He served as the **Diwan of Mysore** and **President of the All-India Manufacturers' Organisation**.
- He was conferred with the **Bharat Ratna in 1955**.

**Contributions of Sir M. Visvesvaraya**

- **Innovative Flood Management Systems:** After the **1908 Musi River** floods, Sir M. Visvesvaraya designed reservoirs like **Osman Sagar** and **Himayat Sagar** and proposed systematic flood control solutions.
- **Pioneering Dam Construction and Irrigation:** As Chief Engineer of Mysore, Sir Visvesvaraya built the **Krishna Raja Sagara (KRS) Dam in 1932**, creating Asia's largest reservoir.
  - ♦ His **automatic sluice gates** improved water regulation at multiple dams.
- **Literary Works:** Reconstructing India (1920), Planned Economy for India (1936), and Unemployment in India: Its Causes and Cure (1932).
  - ♦ **Autobiography:** Memoirs of my Working Life (1951)

Source: PIB