

## DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS (DCA)

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## OFFICIAL VISIT OF THE UK PRIME MINISTER TO INDIA

### In News

- The Prime Ministers of India and the UK have reaffirmed the **India-UK Comprehensive Strategic Partnership** during the **recent official UK PM visit to India**, announcing significant progress across multiple sectors.

### Key Outcomes

- Economic & Trade:** Strengthening of the **UK-India Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA)**, expected to boost market access, reduce tariffs, and generate jobs.
  - 64 Indian investment projects** worth **£1.3 billion**, creating 6,900 UK jobs across engineering, tech, and creative sectors.
- Climate & Energy: Establishment of advanced R&D centres** in AI and climate change, and launch of Phase 2 of the Critical Minerals Supply Chain Observatory, including a new campus at IIT-ISM Dhanbad.
  - Agreed to cooperate on Offshore Wind and through the Global Clean Power Alliance (GCPA).
    - Launched the India-UK Climate Finance Initiative.
- Defence and Security:** Enhanced cooperation on maritime security in the Indo-Pacific, including establishing a **Regional Maritime Security Centre of Excellence (RMSCE)** under India's Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative.
  - Agreement for Government-to-Government supply of **Lightweight Multirole Missile systems** to strengthen India's air defense.
- Education, Culture, and People-to-People Exchange:** Authorization for Queen's University Belfast and Coventry University to open campuses in GIFT City, Gujarat, promoting transnational education and skill development.
- Technological Cooperation:** Expansion of the Technology Security Initiative (TSI) with new joint entities:
  - India-UK Connectivity and Innovation Centre
  - UK-India Critical Minerals Supply Chain Observatory
  - UK-India Critical Minerals Processing and Downstream Collaboration Guild

### Significance

- The 2025 visit marks deepened strategic ties, reinforcing India as a key UK partner post-Brexit.

- Extends the India-UK Vision 2035 with new cooperation pillars on critical minerals, defence co-production, and digital economy.
- Aligns both countries' Indo-Pacific policies for regional security and strengthens resilient global supply chains.

Source: TH

## SUPREME COURT ON RETROSPECTIVE APPLICATION OF SURROGACY ACT

### In News

- In a landmark judgment, the Supreme Court ruled that the age restrictions under the **Surrogacy (Regulation) Act, 2021, cannot be applied retrospectively** to couples who had frozen embryos and initiated the surrogacy process before the Act came into force.

### SC Observations

- Doctrine of Fairness:** Retrospective laws that impair vested rights or impose new burdens violate the principle of fairness and legal certainty.
- Right to Privacy and Bodily Autonomy:** Derived from K.S. Puttaswamy (2017), reproductive decisions fall within the private domain of individuals as reproductive autonomy is a part of the fundamental right to life and personal liberty under Article 21
- Gender and Equality Lens:** Restrictive interpretation disproportionately affects women, who already face biological and social constraints in reproductive choices.

### About the Surrogacy (Regulation) Act, 2021

- Objective:** To regulate surrogacy procedures in India and permit only altruistic surrogacy; commercial surrogacy is prohibited.
- Intending couple eligibility (prospective):** Indian citizens, married  $\geq 5$  years; woman 23–50, man 26–55; medical infertility required.
- Surrogate eligibility:** A married woman with at least one child of her own and should be aged 25–35 years.
- Institutional architecture:** National/State Surrogacy Boards; Appropriate Authorities for licensing, compliance, and ethics.
- Penalties:** Commercial surrogacy, embryo/gamete sale can attract up to 10 years' imprisonment and fines up to ₹10 lakh.

Source: TH

## WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY

### Context

- On October 10, every year, **World Mental Health Day** highlights the extent of mental illness in the world.

### About

- Global Mental Health Issue (as per WHO):** More than a billion people are living with mental health disorders.
  - An estimated 727,000 people across all ages lost their lives to suicide in 2021, with one suicide death happening in over 20 suicide attempts.
  - Suicide accounts for one in every 100 deaths globally.

The global prevalence of mental disorders in 2021



- Most Common Mental Health Disorders:** **Anxiety and depressive disorders** together accounted for **more than two-thirds** of all mental health conditions in 2021.
  - Between 2011 and 2021, the number of people living with mental disorders increased faster than the global population.
- Mental Health in India:** India has a **13.7% lifetime prevalence** of mental disorders in the country.
  - According to the latest NCRB data, **1,71,418 suicides** were reported in India in 2023, a 0.3% increase from 2022, with **Maharashtra** recording the highest number.
  - Even more alarming, **student suicides** reached 13,892, a **64.9% rise** over the past decade.
- Lack of family engagement:** Weak social support systems negatively impact emotional well-being.
- Hostile workplaces & long working hours:** Cause burnout, stress, and reduced productivity.
- Unhealthy lifestyle choices:** Ultra-processed foods and lack of physical activity worsen mental and physical health.

### Challenges in Psychiatric Healthcare in India

- Poor Conditions in Psychiatric Hospitals:** Often associated with cruelty, neglect, abuse, and substandard living conditions.
  - Reflects systemic neglect and inadequate accountability mechanisms.
- Scant Funding:** Mental health receives extremely low budget allocation, about 1% of the total health budget, with most going to institutions rather than community-based care.
- Shortage of Trained Personnel:** India's mental health workforce remains scarce; with only 0.75 psychiatrists and 0.12 psychologists for a 1,00,000 population, India falls short of World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines requiring at least three psychiatrists for 1,00,000 people.
- Disproportionate distribution:** Few psychiatrists at district HQs, almost none in towns/villages.
  - This leads to an urban-rural mental healthcare divide.
- Accessibility & Economic Barriers:** Medicines are unavailable in rural/interior areas.
  - Travel to seek care leads to loss of wages, unaffordable for poor families.
  - Patients with severe mental illness are usually non-earning members, worsening their financial strain.

### Key Initiatives by the Government of India

- Mental Healthcare Act, 2017:** The act **decriminalised suicide attempts** in India and also included WHO guidelines in the categorisation of mental illnesses.
  - The most significant provision in the act was "**advance directives**", which allowed individuals with mental illnesses to decide the course of their treatment.
  - It also **restricted the use of electro-convulsive therapy (ECT)** and banned its use on minors, finally introducing measures to tackle stigma in Indian society.
- Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2017:** The Act acknowledges mental illness as a disability and seeks to enhance the Rights and Entitlements of the Disabled.
- In Sukdeb Saha vs State of Andhra Pradesh,** the Supreme Court of India reinforced mental

### Rise in Mental Health Issues Among Youth

- Excessive internet & social media use:** Leads to anxiety, sleep disorders, and attention issues.

### Understanding Mental Wellbeing

- The India's National Mental Health Survey defines mental well-being as a multidimensional concept that includes:
  - Emotional health:** Managing stress and emotions effectively.
  - Social health:** Building healthy relationships and a supportive community.
  - Cognitive health:** Enhancing focus, decision-making, and problem-solving abilities.
  - Physical health:** Maintaining overall fitness through a healthy lifestyle.



health as a **fundamental right under Article 21**, thereby legally binding the government to ensure accessible, affordable and quality mental health care.

- **District Mental Health Programme (DMHP):** Delivered in 767 districts, offering services like suicide prevention, stress management, and counseling.
- **National Tele Mental Health Programme (NTMHP):** Launched in 2022 to provide access to mental health services through 53 Tele MANAS Cells across 36 states/UTs.
- **Expansion of Mental Health Capacity:** Strengthening mental health services and educational resources in medical colleges and hospitals.

#### Reform Measures Needed

- Raise mental health spending to 5% of total health expenditure (WHO benchmark).
- Train and deploy mid-level mental health providers to strengthen rural access.
- Integrate mental health fully into primary care and universal insurance schemes.
- Establish monitoring and evaluation systems with district-level accountability.
- Expand anti-stigma and awareness campaigns, especially in schools and workplaces.
- Improve coordination among ministries to ensure a unified mental health strategy.

#### Conclusion

- India's mental health ecosystem faces a triple deficit — in funding, workforce, and governance.
- Bridging these gaps requires policy integration, decentralised service delivery, and social destigmatisation, aligning with global best practices and WHO guidelines.

Source: TH

## UNEMPLOYMENT OF THE EDUCATED INDIAN

#### In Context

- India faces a surge in educated unemployment, with degree holders applying for low-skilled jobs, revealing deep labor market distress and the issue reflects mismatch between education and job market needs.

#### Current Trends

- **Mass overqualification:** Degree-holders applying for sanitation and peon roles indicate scarcity of dignified entry-level formal work.

- **Campus placement stress:** A substantial share of graduates at elite institutes remain unplaced, reflecting weak high-skill absorption across sectors.
- **Wage stagnation:** Fresher pay clustered near ₹3–4 lakh per annum for years amid higher inflation, compressing real earnings.
- **Human costs:** Reported suicides among unemployed highlight mental health externalities and social fragility.

#### Major Causes

- **Skill Mismatch:** About 33% of graduates state their skills do not align with industry needs. For example, engineering colleges often produce coders lacking practical project exposure, making them unemployable in start-ups or tech firms.
- **Jobless Growth & Low Employment Elasticity:** Despite services contributing over 54% to GDP, they generate less than 30% of jobs. Manufacturing growth, which historically employs large workforces, remains muted due to policy and infrastructure gaps.
- **Weak Industry-Academia Linkages:** Only 12% of surveyed job seekers report any campus recruitment or placement support. Many institutions focus on theoretical knowledge over employable skills or internships.
- **Gender Disparity:** Female graduate unemployment exceeds 30%, constrained by cultural biases, safety concerns, and limited access to private-sector jobs or night shifts. For instance, women in Bihar face social restrictions that limit job options.
- **Regional Imbalances:** Educated unemployment surpasses 35% in Bihar and Jharkhand, while metropolitan areas like Bangalore and Mumbai attract urban youth, intensifying regional disparities and urban-rural migration pressures.

#### Economic & Social Impact

- **Increased Social Inequality:** Prolonged educated unemployment exacerbates income and opportunity disparities between urban and rural areas, and among social groups, fueling social tensions and grievances.
- **Rising Crime and Social Unrest:** Joblessness among youth often correlates with higher crime rates, substance abuse, and participation in protests or extremist movements, destabilizing communities.
- **Erosion of Skills and Human Capital:** Extended periods of unemployment lead to skill atrophy and lower future employability, creating a vicious cycle of joblessness and underutilization of talent.

- **Family and Household Strain:** Loss of expected income from educated members increases economic stress in families, leading to delayed marriages, reduced investments in children's education, and poorer health outcomes.
- **Pressure on Informal Sector:** Displaced graduates increasingly take up informal, low-security jobs without social protections, perpetuating precarious livelihoods and tax revenue losses.
- **Delayed Urban Infrastructure Development:** Migration pressures from unemployed youth to metro areas strain housing, transport, and sanitation systems, undermining quality of life.
- **Mental Health and Suicide Clusters:** Beyond individual cases, certain regions show clusters of unemployment-related suicides, indicating localized socio-economic distress requiring targeted interventions.

#### Policy Gaps and Reform Imperatives

- Existing schemes (Atmanirbhar Bharat Rozgar Yojana, PM Kaushal Vikas Yojana, Startup India) have improved opportunity access but remain insufficient in scale and depth.
- India requires:
  - ♦ **Demand-Driven Education:** Integrate job-linked apprenticeships and applied skills as envisioned in NEP 2020.
  - ♦ **Labour-Intensive and Green Growth:** Prioritize sectors like manufacturing, renewable energy, and allied services for job creation.
  - ♦ **Women-Focused Policies:** Enhance safe urban transportation, flexible work environments, and protection against workplace harassment.
  - ♦ **Transparent and Disaggregated Data:** Reform labour surveys to include detailed metrics on graduate unemployment and job quality at state levels.

Source: IE

## SOLAR DIMMING IN INDIA

### Context

- A recent joint study published in Nature's Scientific Reports shows **India's sunlight hours are shrinking** due to **pollution and cloud buildup** threatening the country's solar energy ambitions.

### What is Solar Dimming?

- Solar dimming refers to the observed decrease in surface solar radiation reaching the earth, It's caused primarily by:

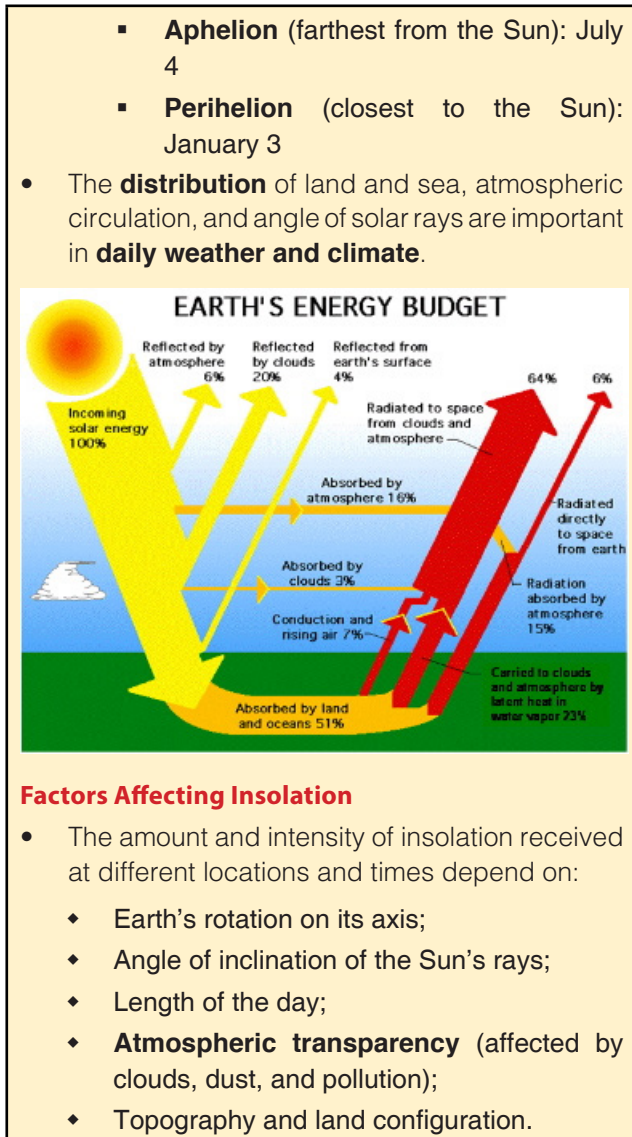
- ♦ **Aerosol pollution** from industrial emissions, vehicular exhaust, and biomass burning.
- ♦ **Persistent cloud cover**, especially during monsoon months.
- ♦ **Urban haze and humidity**, which scatter and absorb sunlight.

### Key Findings of the Study on India

- **Decline in Sunshine Hours:** The North Indian plains experienced the steepest reduction, losing about 13.1 hours of sunshine per year on average over the last three decades.
  - **Twomey Effect:** The study highlighted the Twomey effect, where increased anthropogenic aerosol emissions (from factories, vehicles, biomass burning) lead to a higher number of smaller cloud droplets.
  - **Major Factor of Decline:** The primary cause of long-term solar dimming is the rise in aerosol concentrations largely due to industrial outputs, vehicular emissions, and biomass burning.
  - ♦ **Aerosols act as tiny seeds for cloud formation**, keeping skies overcast longer and reducing the sunlight that reaches the ground.
  - ♦ There are two types of aerosols namely **primary and secondary**. **Primary aerosols** are directly emitted particles like sea salt, dust, and soot, while **secondary aerosols** form in the atmosphere through chemical reactions of gases such as SO<sub>2</sub>, NO<sub>x</sub>, and VOCs into sulphates, nitrates, or organic aerosols.
- ### Implications: Energy, Agriculture, and Climate
- **Renewable Energy:** Reduced sunlight threatens India's solar power potential.
    - ♦ Up to a **7% decline in solar energy output**, jeopardizing **2030 clean energy goals**.
  - **Agriculture:** Crops like rice and wheat, which depend heavily on photosynthesis, are showing reduced yields due to lower light intensity.
  - **Environment:** Dimming sunlight contributes indirectly to the **melting of Himalayan glaciers**, disrupting water cycles and regional ecosystems.

### Incoming Solar Radiation (Insolation)

- It refers to the **solar energy received by the Earth's surface** in the form of **shortwave radiation**.
- It is the **primary source of heat and energy** for our planet and drives atmospheric and climatic processes.
  - ♦ Earth receives **1.94 calories per cm<sup>2</sup> per minute** at the **top of the atmosphere**.
  - ♦ It varies slightly throughout the year due to the Earth's elliptical orbit:



Source: TOI

## NEWS IN SHORT

### ATACAMA DESERT

#### In News

- A rare burst of winter rains has triggered the **"desierto florido" phenomenon in Chile's Atacama Desert**, turning one of Earth's driest landscapes into sweeping carpets of **fuchsia wildflowers** visible from space.

#### About the Atacama Desert

- The Atacama Desert is the world's driest non-polar desert, located in northern Chile, stretching approximately 1,000–1,100 km between the **Pacific Ocean and the Andes Mountains**.
- The Atacama is **used by NASA and ESA** as an Earth analog for Martian terrain due to its extreme

aridity, hyper-arid soils, and high ultraviolet radiation.

#### The Fuchsia Flower Bloom (Desierto Florido)

- Native to Chile's Atacama Desert, where it is locally known as **"pata de guanaco"**. It thrives in one of the **driest places on Earth**.
- **Cistanthe longiscapa** is an annual herb that completes its life cycle rapidly following sporadic rains. Seeds **remain dormant underground for years**, germinating quickly after rare precipitation, enabling it to take full advantage of brief moisture availability.
- The species employs **Crassulacean Acid Metabolism (CAM) photosynthesis**, a highly efficient water-conserving process. Unlike typical plants, it opens its stomata at night to capture carbon dioxide and stores it as malic acid.

Source: TH

### APPOINTMENT OF DISTRICT JUDGES

#### Context

- The Supreme Court unanimously held that **judicial officers** who have completed **seven years of practice as advocates before joining the service** will be eligible for **direct recruitment as District Judges under Article 233**.

#### Eligibility Expansion for District Judges

- Previously, only practising lawyers with seven years' experience could be directly appointed; **in-service judicial officers were excluded**.
- The Court held that **Article 233(2)** provides for qualification for advocates but does not specify any separate qualification for in-service candidates.

#### Appointment of District Judges

- **Authority of Appointment:** District judges are appointed by the Governor of the State, but only after consulting the High Court of that state.
  - ♦ This ensures judicial independence, giving the High Court a significant role in selection.
- **Eligibility:** Traditionally, appointments were made from:
  - ♦ Members of the State Judicial Service (subordinate judicial officers), or practising advocates with a minimum of 7 years' experience.
  - ♦ Recent judicial interpretations have clarified that judicial officers with 7 years of prior Bar experience before joining the judicial service are also eligible for elevation to District Judge.

Source: TH



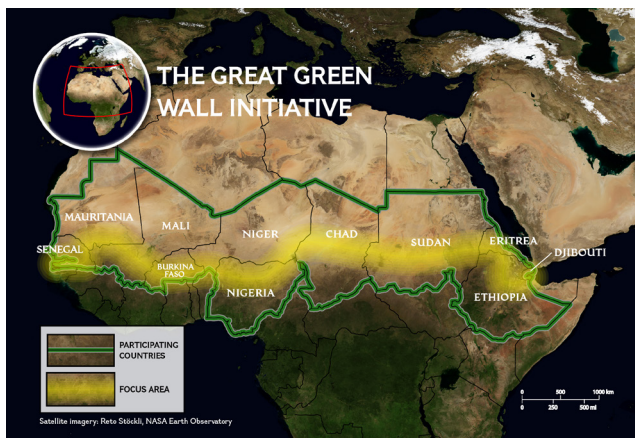
## AFRICA'S GREAT GREEN WALL PROJECT

### Context

- Despite ambitious goals to restore 100 million hectares of land across Africa, the **Great Green Wall project** faces significant challenges in Senegal.

### About Great Green Wall Project

- Launched:** 2007 by the **African Union**.
- Objective:** Prevent the Sahara Desert from advancing southwards; restore 100 million hectares of degraded land across 11 Sahel countries (from Senegal to Djibouti and Ethiopia).



- Length:** Planned to extend 6,000 km.
- Broader Aim:** Tackle climate change, poverty, and extremism through ecosystem restoration and livelihood creation.
- The GGW initiative's ambition is to restore 100 million hectares of currently degraded land; sequester 250 million tons of carbon and create 10 million green jobs by 2030.

### African Union

- The African Union (AU)** is a continental body consisting of the **55 member states** that make up the countries of the African Continent.
- It was officially launched in **2002** as a successor to the Organisation of African Unity (OAU, 1963-1999).
- Aim:** To realise Africa's potential and to focus towards increased cooperation and integration of African states to drive Africa's growth and economic development.

Source: DTE

## UN TO CUT 25% OF ITS GLOBAL PEACEKEEPING FORCE

### In News

- The United Nations is going to reduce its global peacekeeping operations by 25%, with 13,000–

14,000 personnel expected to withdraw from nine missions due to significant U.S. funding cuts.

### UN Peacekeeping

- It is a key mechanism used by the United Nations to maintain global peace and security.
- It operates alongside other UN efforts, including conflict prevention, peacemaking, peace enforcement, and peacebuilding.



- Origin :** It began in 1948 with the creation of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) to monitor ceasefires in the Middle East.
- Initially unarmed and focused on observation, missions remained limited during the Cold War due to global tensions.
- Expansion :** The 1990s saw a major expansion, with the UN deploying multidimensional operations that integrated military, political, and humanitarian efforts to address civil conflicts, support governance, and protect human rights.
- Women in Peacekeeping:** Women are vital to conflict resolution and peacebuilding, as they foster community trust, prevent sexual violence, and promote inclusive, sustainable peace by engaging effectively with local populations, especially women and children.

### India's Contributions

- India has played a significant role in **UN peacekeeping** since its participation in the **Korean operation in 1953**, reflecting its deep-rooted commitment to non-violence and global peace, inspired by Mahatma Gandhi and the ancient principle of "**Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam**"—the belief that the world is one family.
- India has been a key contributor to global peace and security, with over 2,90,000 peacekeepers serving in more than **50 UN missions**.
- India has led the way in integrating women into UN peacekeeping, notably deploying the first all-female Formed Police Unit to Liberia in 2007, which boosted local security and empowered women.

- As of February 2025, over 150 Indian women peacekeepers serve in six key missions, reflecting India's strong commitment to gender parity and the crucial role of women in global peace and security.

Source :TH

## PLUTONIUM MANAGEMENT AND DISPOSITION AGREEMENT (PMDA)

### Context

- Russia's lower house of parliament approved withdrawal from the **Plutonium Management and Disposition Agreement (PMDA)** with the United States.

### About PMDA

- Signed in **2000** and effective from **2011**, the agreement required both countries to dispose of **34 tonnes of weapons-grade plutonium each** — enough for around **17,000 nuclear warheads**.
- The goal was to convert weapons-grade plutonium into safer forms, such as **mixed oxide (MOX) fuel** or irradiating it in **fast-neutron reactors** for electricity production.
- Russia had already suspended implementation in **2016**, claiming the U.S. did not adhere to the agreement.

Source: TH

## SAKSHAM

### In News

- The Indian Army has initiated the procurement of **SAKSHAM (Situational Awareness for Kinetic Soft and Hard Kill Assets Management)**.

### About

- It is an indigenously developed **Counter-Unmanned Aerial System (CUAS) Grid System**, to bolster operational readiness against emerging drone threats.
- It is a **modular Command and Control (C2) system** that integrates real-time sensor data, AI-driven analytics, and counter-drone capabilities

to secure the **Tactical Battlefield Space (TBS)**.

- TBS is an airspace domain extending up to 3,000 metres (10,000 feet) above ground level.
- It was developed in collaboration with **Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL)**.

Source :TH

## NOBEL PRIZE IN LITERATURE, 2025

### In News

- The **2025 Nobel Prize in Literature** was awarded to **Hungarian writer László Krasznahorkai** for his "compelling and visionary oeuvre that, in the midst of apocalyptic terror, reaffirms the power of art."
- His major works include *Satantango* (1985), *The Melancholy of Resistance* (1989), *War & War* (1999), *Seiobo There Below* (2008), and *Baron Wenckheim's Homecoming* (2016).

### Do you know?

- In 1913, Rabindranath Tagore became the first and only Indian to win the Nobel Prize in Literature for *Gitanjali*.

### About the Nobel Prize

- Founder:** The Nobel Prize was established by Alfred Nobel, a Swedish chemist, inventor, and industrialist, who is best known for inventing dynamite.
- First Awarded:** The inaugural Nobel Prizes were awarded in 1901, five years after Nobel's death.
- Administering Body:** The prizes are managed by the Nobel Foundation, established in 1900 to oversee the finances and administration of the awards. The Foundation invests Nobel's endowment to fund the prizes perpetually.
- Categories (6):** Peace, Physics, Chemistry, Medicine, Literature & Economic Sciences.
- Rewards:** It carry a cash award of 11 million Swedish kronor (approximately ₹1.03 crore)

Source :TH

