

## DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS (DCA)

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## THE TRAJECTORY OF ANTI-RAPE LAWS IN INDIA

### Context

- **Chief Justice of India B. R. Gavai** highlighted **India's evolving legal reforms** aimed at better protecting sexual assault survivors and redefining consent.

### Background

- **Tukaram vs State of Maharashtra, 1979:** Chief Justice of India B. R. Gavai recently termed the 1979 Supreme Court judgment an “**institutional embarrassment**”.
- **The Supreme Court's 1979 ruling showed three major failures:**
  - ♦ **Misunderstanding of consent:** The Court treated absence of injuries as proof of consent, ignoring power imbalance and custodial coercion.
  - ♦ **Ignoring socio-economic vulnerability:** The Court did not consider the victim's age, tribal background, poverty, and fear of authority.
  - ♦ **Silence on police abuse & illegal detention:** No condemnation of the police calling a minor girl at night or using a police station as a site of assault.
- A public letter highlighted the **difference between consent and submission**. It noted that the **absence of resistance is not equal to consent**. The letter triggered national outrage, galvanising legal reform.

### Evolution of Legal Reforms

- **Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1983:** Introduced custodial rape as a specific offence under Section 376 IPC.
  - ♦ Shifted burden of proof onto the accused when sexual intercourse in custody is established.
  - ♦ First major recognition of power-based sexual assault.
- **Vishaka Guidelines (1997):** Laid foundation for workplace sexual harassment law.
- **Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013:** In response to the 2012 Nirbhaya case, the amendments broadened the definition of rape as in Section 375 to include acts other than forcible sexual intercourse.
  - ♦ Most importantly, it clarified that silence or a feeble no by a woman cannot be translated as a 'yes'.

- ♦ Besides, the amendments raised the age of consent from 16 to 18 years.
- ♦ It made non-registration of FIR by police punishable.
- ♦ Introduced penalties for hospitals denying treatment.
- ♦ Provided the death penalty for extreme cases.
- **Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2018:** Death penalty for rape if the victim is a girl below 12 years.
  - ♦ Minimum 20 years of penalty if the victim is a girl below 16 years.
  - ♦ Fast-track investigation & trial timelines (2 months for investigation, 2 months for trial, 6 months for appeals).
- **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023:** Made sexual offences gender-neutral for victims and perpetrators.
  - ♦ Uniform death penalty/life imprisonment for gang rape if the victim is a women below 18.
  - ♦ Introduced offences like:
    - Sexual intercourse under false pretences.
    - Expanded definition of sexual harassment.

### Significance

- **Intervention by Parliament:** The Mathura case is one of the clearest examples in India where a judicial misstep forced Parliament to intervene, correct course, and rebuild public trust in the justice system.
- **Legislature acts as a democratic safety net:** The evolution showed that the Parliament is responsive to public emotion and societal morality.
- **Law evolves through Society Intervention:** Reform came not because the system wanted it, but because citizens demanded it.
- **Institutional checks and balances:** The judiciary interprets law but when interpretation becomes unjust, the legislature intervenes with statutory change. This maintains public trust and systemic legitimacy.

Source: TH

## INDIA-EURASIAN ECONOMIC UNION (EAEU)

### In News

- India and Russia reiterated their resolve to achieve \$100 billion bilateral trade by 2030 in Moscow and

reviewed steps for the India-Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) free trade agreement in goods.

#### About Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU)

- The EAEU is an **international economic union and free trade zone** comprising Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Russia, established by the Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union in 2014 and effective since January 2015.
- The Union pursues the **free movement of goods, services, capital, and labour, coordination** of economic policies, elimination of non-tariff trade barriers, and harmonization of regulations among members.
- The **EAEU covers a market of nearly 200 million people**, with a combined **GDP of \$6.5 trillion**, and is managed by its Supreme Eurasian Economic Council and Eurasian Economic Commission.

#### Significance of Eurasian Economic Union for India

- **Market Access:** The EAEU offers access to a vast market, benefiting Indian exporters across textiles, pharmaceuticals, engineering goods, and electronics, as well as MSMEs.
- **Trade Diversification:** Engagement with the EAEU enables India to reduce dependency on US/EU markets, addressing vulnerabilities from global tariff disputes.
- **Energy Security:** Russia, as the largest EAEU member, is a key supplier of crude oil and natural gas to India; a stronger EAEU partnership supports long-term energy contracts.
- **Connectivity:** EAEU cooperation complements initiatives like the International North–South Transport Corridor (INSTC) and the Chennai–Vladivostok maritime route, reducing logistics costs.
- **Geopolitical Importance:** Strengthening ties with the Russia-led EAEU supports India's policy of "multi-alignment" and bolsters its strategic autonomy.

#### Challenges in India–EAEU Engagement

- **High Trade Deficit with Russia:** India's trade deficit with Russia has widened significantly (from USD 6.6 billion in 2021 to USD 58.9 billion in 2024–25), primarily due to hydrocarbon imports, impacting balanced growth.
- **Geopolitical Sensitivities:** Closer economic ties with a Russia-led bloc raise concerns among India's Western partners (NATO, US, EU), requiring careful diplomatic balancing—

especially in the context of global sanctions and security.

- **Non-Tariff Barriers:** Indian exporters face bureaucratic delays, complex customs procedures, and regulatory inconsistencies within the EAEU, increasing costs and reducing competitiveness.
- **Sanitary and Phytosanitary Standards:** Strict SPS standards in EAEU countries limit Indian agricultural exports and require regulatory harmonization.
- **Underutilization of FTAs:** India's FTA utilization rate is low, signaling the need for improved trade facilitation and domestic industry preparedness to leverage future agreements.

#### Conclusion

- The EAEU presents a strategic opportunity for India to diversify trade, secure energy supplies, and promote connectivity while navigating economic, regulatory, and geopolitical hurdles. Addressing trade deficit, regulatory barriers, and balancing international relations will be vital for a robust India–EAEU partnership.

Source: PIB

## PROPOSED REFORMS AT SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE BOARD OF INDIA'S (SEBI)

#### Context

- Recently, the **High-Level Committee (HLC)** of Securities and Exchange Board of India's (SEBI) has proposed a comprehensive set of reforms aimed at reinforcing transparency, ethical governance, and investor confidence.

#### High-Level Committee (HLC): Background and Purpose

- It was constituted in **March 2025** against the backdrop of allegations made by **Hindenburg Research** against former SEBI chairperson, **relating to potential conflicts of interest** involving offshore funds.
- It was **tasked** with **assessing SEBI's current framework** on conflicts of interest and **recommending improvements** to ensure higher standards of accountability and integrity within the regulator.
- It is chaired by **Pratyush Sinha**, former Chief Vigilance Commissioner (CVC).



### What Is the Conflict of Interest Framework?

- It governs how officials at the SEBI manage **personal and professional interests** that could compromise their regulatory duties.
- It ensures that decisions are made impartially, without undue influence from financial or non-financial interests.

### Key Recommendations of Committee

- **Public Disclosure of Assets and Liabilities:** The Committee recommended a **multi-tier disclosure regime**, designed to enhance transparency and public trust in SEBI's top decision-makers, under which:
  - ♦ The **Chairman, Whole-Time Members (WTMs)**, and **SEBI employees** at the level of **Chief General Manager (CGM)** and above will be required to publicly disclose their **assets and liabilities**.
  - ♦ Applicants for senior positions must declare **actual, potential, and perceived conflicts of interest**, both financial and non-financial.
- **Uniform Investment Restrictions:** The committee proposed that **investment and trading restrictions** under the **SEBI (Employees' Service) Regulations, 2001** should apply uniformly to the **Chairman** and **WTMs**.
  - ♦ Key recommendations include:
    - Inclusion of these senior officials under the **definition of 'insider'** in the **SEBI (Prohibition of Insider Trading) Regulations, 2015**.
    - Mandatory choices upon assuming office: **liquidate, freeze, or sell** investments, with prior approval.
    - Part-time members (PTMs) will remain exempt but must still make appropriate disclosures and refrain from trading on **unpublished price-sensitive information**.
- **Managing Conflicts of Interest: Redefining "Family":** The committee proposed **expanding the definition of 'family'** in SEBI's Code of Conduct to align with the **Employees' Service Regulations (ESR)** and global best practices.
  - ♦ The new definition includes:
    - Spouses, children, and dependent relatives.
    - Any person for whom the member acts as a **legal guardian**.
- Individuals **related by blood or marriage** who are **substantially dependent** on the employee.
- **Strengthening the Recusal and Whistleblower Systems:**
  - ♦ **Robust Recusal Framework:** A **formalized recusal process** for the Chairman, WTMs, PTMs, and senior SEBI employees.
    - **Annual publication** of recusals in SEBI's **Annual Report**, a practice not currently followed.
  - ♦ **Secure Whistleblower Mechanism:** Establishing a **confidential, anonymous whistleblower system** allows employees, board members, and even external stakeholders to report conflicts of interest or ethical breaches.
    - Strong safeguards will protect whistleblowers from retaliation.
- **Post-Retirement Restrictions:** The Committee suggested a **two-year cooling-off period** for all former SEBI members, employees, consultants, and advisors.
  - ♦ They would be barred from appearing before or against SEBI in any recognition, adjudication, or settlement matters during this period.
- **Ethical Conduct and Governance Infrastructure:** The committee emphasized building a **culture of ethics** through institutional mechanisms:
  - ♦ **Prohibition on accepting gifts**, directly or indirectly, from entities with current or potential official dealings.
  - ♦ Creation of an **Office of Ethics and Compliance (OEC)** and an **Oversight Committee on Ethics and Compliance (OCEC)** to oversee adherence to ethical standards.
  - ♦ Implementation of an **AI-driven monitoring system** to detect, prevent, and manage conflicts of interest using data analytics and predictive algorithms.

### Why Do Recommendations Matters?

- **Restoring Investor Confidence:** Retail investors need assurance that market regulation is fair and impartial, with over 170 million demat accounts across India.
- **Preventing Regulatory Capture:** SEBI can reduce the risk of officials favoring entities they have ties to, by enforcing disclosures.

- **Institutional Credibility:** Amid internal dissent and allegations of toxic work culture, these reforms signal SEBI's commitment to ethical governance.
- **Aligning With Global Standards:** Similar frameworks exist in regulators like the US SEC and UK's FCA, where asset disclosures and conflict audits are routine.

#### Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)

- It was constituted as a **non-statutory body in 1988** through a resolution of the Government of India and was **established as a statutory body** under the provisions of the **Securities and Exchange Board of India Act, 1992**.
- **Objectives:**
  - ♦ **Investor Protection:** Safeguarding the interests of investors in securities.
  - ♦ **Market Development:** Promoting the development of a robust and efficient securities market.
  - ♦ **Market Regulation:** Regulating the business of stock exchanges, intermediaries, and other market participants.

Source: IE

## SUPREME COURT PROHIBITED TIGER SAFARIS IN CORE TIGER HABITATS

### Context

- The Supreme Court has issued directions to **prohibit tiger safaris in the core or critical tiger habitat**.
  - ♦ A PIL was filed complaining about the **various violations at the Corbett reserve for commercial exploitation in the name of tourism**.

### Directions By SC

- **Sensitive Zones:** SC directed all states to **notify the buffer and core areas** of the tiger reserve **within six months**.
  - ♦ Notify **eco-sensitive zones (ESZs)** around all tiger reserves, including buffer and fringe areas, no later than one year from the date of judgement.
- **TCP Plans:** The bench noted that from nine tiger reserves in 1973, the expanse of Project Tiger has increased to **58 reserves across India**.
  - ♦ Directions were given to prepare a **Tiger Conservation Plan (TCP) within three months**.

- ♦ **The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)** shall monitor the TCPs are put in place and whether the Steering Committees have been meeting **at least twice a year**.
- **Tiger Safaris:** The Supreme Court has **prohibited tiger safaris in core tiger habitats**, mandating them only on non-forest land with rescue centers for conflict animals and using electric vehicles.
- **Designating HAC as Natural Disaster:** SC suggested the states to actively consider classifying human-wildlife conflict as "natural disaster" and to ensure payment of Rs 10 lakh as ex gratia for every human death caused in such incidents.
  - ♦ **Uttar Pradesh** has already notified the human-wildlife conflict as a natural disaster.
  - ♦ It would enable faster disbursement of funds, immediate access to disaster management resources and clearer administrative accountability.
- **Guidelines for HAC:** It directed the NTCA to frame model guidelines on human-wildlife conflict within six months.
  - ♦ It fixed a six-month timeline for the states to implement the guidelines.
- **Prohibited Activities:** In the buffer and fringe areas of a tiger reserve it banned:
  - ♦ commercial mining, setting up of saw mills, industries causing pollution, establishment of major hydroelectric projects and activities related to tourism.
- **Activities Allowed:** Regulated activities such as:
  - ♦ establishment of hotels and resorts as per approved tourism prescriptions,
  - ♦ commercial use of natural water resources including ground water harvesting,
  - ♦ fencing of premises of hotels and lodges, widening of roads,
  - ♦ and movement of vehicular traffic at night.

### Core Zone & Buffer Zone of Biosphere Reserves

- It is a large area of land or water that is recognised and protected by **UNESCO**.
- The main objective of a biosphere reserve is to promote sustainable development through the conservation of biodiversity, cultural heritage, and sustainable use of natural resources.
- A biosphere reserve may cover multiple **national parks and sanctuaries**.

- The biosphere reserve typically includes **three zones**:
  - ♦ **Core zone**: A strictly protected area where human activities are not allowed.
  - ♦ **Buffer zone**: An area where limited human activities are allowed, including research and eco-tourism.
  - ♦ **Transition zone**: An area where sustainable development is encouraged, such as farming, forestry, and other human activities.

#### Human-Wildlife Conflict

- Human-wildlife conflict is when encounters between humans and wildlife lead to negative results, **such as loss of property, livelihoods, and even life.**

#### Reasons/ Factors causing Human-Animal conflict

- Urbanisation & Development
- Lack of Protected areas
- Population explosion
- Deforestation
- Agricultural expansion
- Climate change
- Invasive species
- Increase in eco-tourism
- Substantial increase in the population of prolific breeders like wild boars and peacocks.

#### Impacts of Human-Animal conflict

- Decline and potential eradication of species.
- Financial losses and threats to health and safety, livelihoods, food security, and property.
- Displacement and forced migration.
- Increase in road and railway accidents due to infrastructure development in forested areas.

Source: TP

## NEWS IN SHORT

### REMEMBERING BATUKESHWAR DUTT

#### In News

- Recently, the birth anniversary of **Batukeshwar Dutt** was observed.

#### Batukeshwar Dutt

- He was an Indian revolutionary and a freedom fighter in the early 1900s.

- He was born in 1910 in Bengal.
- He was Bhagat Singh's comrade in the 1929 Central Assembly bombing, an act meant to "make the deaf hear" against colonial rule.

#### Role in Freedom Struggle

- He was a member of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association.
- He was convicted in the Delhi Assembly Bomb Case.
- He spent nine years in prisons across India, enduring long hunger strikes for humane treatment of political prisoners.
- He was arrested during Quit India in 1942 and he spent another four years in jail.
- He maintained close ties with Bhagat Singh's family and comrades, and disapproved of commercialized films on Singh, endorsing only Manoj Kumar's Shaheed (1965).

Source: TH

### SYSTEMATIC OBSERVATIONS FINANCING FACILITY (SOFF)

#### In News

- The **Systematic Observations Financing Facility (SOFF)** provides grants for the collection of weather and climate data.

#### About

- The Systematic Observations Financing Facility (SOFF) is a specialised **UN climate fund** established by the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).
- SOFF works with nations who have the most severe observation gaps, with a focus on **Least Developed nations and Small Island Developing States**. SOFF contributes to the worldwide public good by offering long-term financial and technical help.
- SOFF intends to promote and accelerate the ongoing collection and international exchange of the most important surface-based weather and climate observations in accordance with the globally agreed-upon Global Observing Basic Network.

Source: IE

## NATIONAL GOPAL RATNA AWARDS (NGRA) 2025

### Context

- The Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying has announced the winners of the **National Gopal Ratna Awards (NGRA) 2025**.

### About

- The NGRA is one of the **highest national honours** in the **livestock and dairy sector**.
- These awards will be presented on **26th November 2025** as part of the **National Milk Day celebrations**.
- Launched in 2014**, the **Rashtriya Gokul Mission (RGM)** focuses on the **scientific conservation and development of indigenous bovine breeds**.
- Since 2021**, the Department has been conferring the **National Gopal Ratna Awards (NGRA) annually** to encourage milk-producing farmers, **dairy cooperative societies/MPCs/FPOs, and Artificial Insemination Technicians (AITs)**.
- The awardees will get** a certificate of merit and a memento and cash price of ₹5,00,000, ₹3,00,000 and ₹2,00,000 for the first, second and third categories respectively.

Source: PIB

## UNESCO'S NEW GUIDELINES FOR THE USE OF NEUROTECHNOLOGY

### Context

- UNESCO has issued the **first** global normative framework on the **ethics of neurotechnology**.

### Neurotechnology:

- Neurotechnology** refers to devices and procedures that access, assess, and act on neural systems, including the human brain.
  - If the brain were a radio station, neurotechnology is the set of devices to help to tune in.
- It merges advances in** neuroscience, engineering, and advanced computing to evolve solutions that **improve brain function** and enhance human capabilities.
- Concerns:** Neurotechnology allows neurodata — a.k.a. neural or brain data — to be decoded, giving rise to concerns about user privacy, protection against misuse, and informed consent among users.

### UNESCO Framework

- Aim:** To uphold human dignity, rights, gender equality, social justice, and sustainable development.

- The recommendations are based on a **three-pronged strategy**:

- defining the nature and scope of neurotechnology and neurodata;
- identifying the values, principles and offering directions to nations to incorporate the recommendations with a focus on particular sectors (health and education, among others);
- and considerations for vulnerable populations such as children and older adults.
- It prohibits **any use of neural or non-neural data** for manipulative or deceptive purposes, including in political, medical and commercial contexts.
- They also heighten attention towards the principles of autonomy, free will, and informed consent in any valid uses of neurotechnology.

### Significance

- The framework promotes a Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) model in neurotechnology across public and private sectors.
- It contributes to a long-standing need for an ethical framework to govern neurotechnology innovation.

Source: TH

## RHESUS MONKEYS

### In News

- The National Board for Wildlife has recommended reinstating Rhesus Macaques under Schedule II of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, restoring statutory protection to enable scientific management, prevent trafficking and cruelty, and empower forest departments in conflict resolution.

### Rhesus Macaque(Macaca mulatta)

- Habitat:** It is a diurnal, omnivorous species that lives both in trees and on the ground, occupying a wide range of habitats—from coniferous, deciduous, bamboo, and mixed forests to mangroves, scrublands, rainforests, and even areas near human settlements.
- Distribution:** It is found throughout most of southern Asia, in eastern Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China and India.
- Ecological Roles:** It is vital seed dispersers, aiding forest regeneration and biodiversity, making their protection essential for both ecological balance and sustainable coexistence.
- Threats :** It is generally unthreatened, though its original habitat is increasingly being lost to development



- **Protection status :** It is listed as **Least Concern** by the IUCN.
  - ♦ It is listed on **CITES Appendix II**.

Source: IE

## INDIA TO SOURCE 10% LPG IMPORTS FROM US IN 2026

### In News

- India has signed its first structured contract to import liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) from the United States.

### Background of the deal

- The deal comes amid **India–US trade pact negotiations**, with New Delhi seeking to reduce its trade surplus with Washington after US tariffs on Indian goods, and signals India's willingness to step up American energy imports.
- The Trump administration imposed **50% tariffs on many Indian goods**.

#### LPG

- It is a group of hydrocarbon gases—mainly propane, normal butane, and isobutane—produced from crude oil refining or natural gas processing.
- It can be sold separately or blended, and is easily liquefied under pressure (without cryogenic cooling) for convenient transport and storage.

#### Status In India

- India, the **world's third-largest consumer of crude oil**, relies on imports for about 88% of its crude needs and meets nearly half of its natural gas demand through LNG imports.
- The US has emerged as a key energy partner, ranking as the fifth-largest supplier of crude oil and the second-largest supplier of LNG to India.
- LPG, largely used as cooking fuel in India, is heavily subsidised and over 60% of demand is met through imports, with the government expanding access to rural households to reduce reliance on polluting fuels.

### Key Highlights of recent deal

- Public sector refiners IOC, BPCL, and HPCL awarded a one-year deal for 2.2 million tonnes per annum—about 10% of India's annual LPG imports—for 2026 from the US Gulf Coast.
- The agreement hailed as a "historic first," marking diversification away from traditional West Asian

suppliers such as Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, and Kuwait.

- It marks a major step in deepening energy trade with the United States amid ongoing trade pact negotiations.

Source :IE

## AJEYA WARRIOR-25

### Context

- The **8th edition** of the India–United Kingdom (UK) Joint Military Exercise "AJEYA WARRIOR-25" commenced in **Rajasthan**.

### About the Exercise

- Conducted under a **United Nations mandate**, the exercise focuses on counter-terrorism operations in semi-urban environments.
- Held **biennially since 2011**, AJEYA WARRIOR has evolved into a flagship engagement between the **Indian Army and the British Army**.

### Do you Know?

- **KONKAN** is a bilateral **naval exercise** conducted between the Indian Navy and the Royal Navy (UK).
- **Indradhanush** is a bilateral **air exercise** conducted between the Indian Air Force (IAF) and the Royal Air Force (RAF).

Source: PIB

## SENTINEL-6B

### Context

- **Sentinel-6B** has been successfully launched from the **Vandenberg Space Force Base** in California, USA.

### About Sentinel-6B

- It is an ocean-tracking satellite with **six** onboard science instruments that will measure the **rising sea levels** and its impacts on the planet.
- It will orbit Earth at a speed of **7.2 km per second**, completing one revolution every 112 minutes.
- The mission is a **joint collaboration** between **NASA, NOAA**, and the **European Space Agency (ESA)**.
- Along with its twin satellite, **Sentinel-6 Michael Freilich** (launched in 2020), it will provide **high-precision sea-level data**—accurate to **around 1 inch**—covering **over 90% of global oceans**.