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CORRUPTION IN THE GOVERNANCE OF PRADHAN MANTRI KAUSHAL VIKAS YOJANA (PMKVY)

In News

- The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) recently blacklisted 178 Training Partners (TPs) and Training Centres (TCs) for **large-scale irregularities under the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY).**
  - The issues included **fake documentation, absentee students, inflated bills, and non-existent centres.**

About PMKVY

- **Launched:** 2015 under the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE).
- **Implementing Agency:** National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC).
- **Objective:** To provide skill training and certification to youth to enhance employability.
- **Beneficiaries (till June 2025):** Over 1.64 crore youth trained.
- Budget (FY 2024–25): 1,538 crore.
- **Latest Phase:** PMKVY 4.0 (2022–2026) – focuses on industry-linked courses, digital monitoring, and local-level skill hubs.

Example

- Similar corruption patterns were seen earlier in **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan ghost schools and MGNREGA fake job cards** — showing a broader structural problem in scheme governance.

Governance and Ethical/Administrative Concern

- **Integrity & Accountability:** Public funds meant for youth empowerment were diverted for private gain, breaching fiduciary trust.
- **Transparency:** Denial of information under RTI citing "confidentiality" reflects opacity in public administration.
- **Public Interest vs Private Profit:** The PPP model turned exploitative without adequate checks, violating the principle of public service orientation.
- **Professional Ethics**: Officials and partners ignored due diligence, honesty, and fairness—core civil service values.
- **Justice and Equity:** Genuine trainees were deprived of opportunities due to diversion of resources to fake beneficiaries.
- **Moral Hazard:** Weak punishment mechanisms encouraged repetition of misconduct.

Implications

- **Economic:** Wastage of taxpayer money; failure to bridge India's skill gap.
- **Social:** Erosion of trust among youth and employers in government certifications.
- **Administrative:** Freeze on training activities in several districts; disruption of employment pipeline.
- **Reputational:** Weakens India's Skill India Mission and undermines the Viksit Bharat 2047 vision.

Way Forward

- **Strengthening Monitoring and Evaluation:**
  - Introduce Aadhaar-based biometric attendance and geo-tagging of trainees.
  - Third-party audits of TCs by independent agencies like CAG-empanelled firms.
- **Reforming the NSDC Governance Structure:**
  - Separate implementation and regulation wings to avoid conflict of interest.
  - Ensure parliamentary oversight and annual performance audits.
- **Promoting Transparency:**
  - Make public disclosure of blacklisted entities, inspection reports, and fund recovery status.
  - Strengthen RTI compliance and digital dashboards.
- **Linking Funds to Outcomes:**
  - Adopt an Outcome-Based Funding Model – release payments only after verified placement and skill certification.

Source: TH

INDIA'S NEW AI GOVERNANCE GUIDELINES

Context

- The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) released the **India AI Governance Guidelines.**

About

- These guidelines **present a governance framework** that seeks to advance technical progress and mitigate the potential risks of AI to society, while being firmly grounded in the needs and aspirations of India.
- **A drafting committee** was constituted by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) in July 2025.
  - Its mandate was to draw on available literature, review existing laws, study global

developments, and develop suitable guidelines for AI governance in India.

Major Highlights

- **Seven principles** have been adapted for application across sectors and aligned with national priorities.

01 Trust is the Foundation
Without trust, innovation and adoption will stagnate.

02 People First
Human-centric design, human oversight, and human empowerment.

03 Innovation over Restraint
All other things being equal, responsible innovation should be prioritised over cautionary restraint.

04 Fairness & Equity
Promote inclusive development and avoid discrimination.

05 Accountability
Clear allocation of responsibility and enforcement of regulations.

06 Understandable by Design
Provide disclosures and explanations that can be understood by the intended user and regulators.

07 Safety, Resilience & Sustainability
Safe, secure, and robust systems that are able to withstand systemic shocks and are environmentally sustainable.

- **Key Recommendations:** It examines key issues in AI governance from India's **perspective & makes recommendations across six pillars:**

  - **Infrastructure:** Enable innovation and adoption of AI by expanding access to foundational resources such as data and compute, attract investments, and leverage the power of digital public infrastructure.

  - **Capacity Building:** Initiate education, skilling, and training programs to empower people, build trust, and increase awareness about the risks and opportunities of AI.

  - **Policy & Regulation:** Adopt balanced, agile, and flexible frameworks that support innovation and mitigate the risks of AI. Review current laws, identify regulatory gaps in relation to AI systems, and address them with targeted amendments.

  - **Risk Mitigation:** Develop an India-specific risk assessment framework that reflects real-world evidence of harm.

  - **Accountability:** Adopt a graded liability system based on the function performed, level of risk, and whether due diligence was observed.

  - **Institutions:** Adopt a whole of government approach where ministries, sectoral regulators, and other public bodies work together to develop and implement AI governance frameworks.

- **An institutional framework** to implement the AI governance guidelines has also been suggested:

  - High-level body (AI Governance Group) Government agencies (MeitY, MHA, MEA, DoT, etc.)

  - Sectoral regulators (RBI, SEBI, TRAI, CCI, etc.)

  - Advisory bodies (NITI Aayog, Office of PSA, etc.)

  - Standards bodies (BIS, TEC, etc.).

- **Action Plan:** The Action Plan identifies outcomes mapped to **short, medium, and long-term timelines.**

Timeframe	Key Priorities
Short-term	• Establish key governance institutions • Develop India-specific risk frameworks • Adopt voluntary commitments • Suggest legal amendments • Develop clear liability regimes • Expand access to infrastructure • Launch awareness programmes • Increase access to AI safety tools
Medium-term	• Publish common standards • Amend laws and regulations • Operationalise AI incidents systems • Pilot regulatory sandboxes • Expand integration of DPI with AI
Long-term	• Continue ongoing engagements (capacity building, standard setting, access and adoption, etc.) • Review and update governance frameworks to ensure sustainability of the digital ecosystem. • Draft new laws based on emerging risks and capabilities

Conclusion

- Together, these guidelines create a balanced, agile, flexible, pro-innovation, and future-ready governance framework, enabling India to unlock AI's benefits for growth, inclusion, and competitiveness, while safeguarding against risks to individuals and society.

Source: TH

AMUL RANKED WORLD'S NUMBER 1 COOPERATIVE, IFFCO SECOND

Context

- Amul's parent company, **Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation Ltd**, is ranked as the **top co-operative in the world** in the **ICA World Cooperative Monitor 2025 rankings.**

About

- The ranking is based on the ratio of turnover over gross domestic product (GDP) per capita.

- **Amul** has a **three-tier cooperative structure,** encompassing more than 18,600 village dairy cooperatives and 36 lakh milk producers, the majority of whom are women.

  - Amul is a brand owned entirely by farmers. They manage everything from milk collection and manufacturing to marketing.

- **The Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative Limited (IFFCO)** has been ranked second in the ICA World Cooperative Monitor 2025 rankings.

  - IFFCO has maintained its No. 1 rank for several years, which is a testament to IFFCO and its management's cooperative principles.

  - Founded in **1967**, IFFCO is one of the world's largest cooperative fertiliser producers.

The World Cooperative Monitor

- It is a project designed to collect robust economic, organizational, and social data about cooperatives worldwide.

- The publication reports on the world's largest cooperatives including rankings of the Top 300 and sectoral analysis.

International Cooperative Alliance

- It is a non-profit international association established in **1895** to advance the cooperative social enterprise model.

- The ICA works with global and regional governments and organizations to create legislative environments that allow cooperatives to form and grow.

What are Cooperatives?

- A cooperative (or co-op) is an **organization or business** that is **owned and operated by a group of individuals** who share a common interest, goal, or need.

- These **individuals**, **known as members**, participate in the cooperative's activities and **decision-making process**, typically on a one-member, one-vote basis, regardless of the amount of capital or resources each member contributes.

- The main purpose of a cooperative is **to meet the economic, social, or cultural needs of its members,** rather than to maximize profits for external shareholders.

- The **UN SDGs recognize cooperatives as crucial drivers of sustainable development**, particularly in reducing inequality, promoting decent work, and alleviating poverty.

97th Constitutional Amendment Act 2011

- It established the right to form cooperative societies as a **fundamental right (Article 19).**

- It included a **new Directive Principle of State Policy** on the **Promotion of Cooperative Societies (Article 43-B).**

- It added a new **Part IX-B to the Constitution** titled **"The Co-operative Societies" (Articles 243-ZH to 243-ZT).**

- It authorizes the **Parliament to establish relevant laws** in the case of **multi-state cooperative societies (MSCS)** and state legislatures in the case of other cooperative societies.

Benefits of Cooperatives

- **Democratic Control:** Members have a voice in decision-making.

- **Economic Participation:** Profits are distributed based on usage or contribution, not capital invested.
- **Community Focus:** Co-ops often aim to benefit local communities by keeping resources and profits within the group.
- **Better Services/Prices**: By pooling resources, cooperatives often offer better services or prices than for-profit businesses.

Challenges Faced:

- **Weak Governance:** There are issues of poor management, corruption, and political interference, leading to inefficiency and lack of transparency.
- **Limited Access to Credit:** Many cooperatives struggle with access to financing, which hinders their ability to expand or improve their operations.
- **Competition from Private Sector:** Cooperatives often face stiff competition from large private enterprises and multinational corporations, especially in sectors like retail and agriculture.
- **Technological Gaps:** Many cooperatives, especially in rural areas, lack access to modern technology or are slow to adopt new systems that could improve efficiency.

Legal Framework and Support for Cooperatives:

- In India, cooperatives are governed by the **Cooperative Societies Act,** which is implemented at both the state and national levels.
    - **The Multi-State Cooperative Societies Act (2002):** This law regulates cooperatives that operate in more than one state.
    - **The National Cooperative Policy (2002):** Aimed at creating an enabling environment for the cooperative movement, it focuses on improving governance, member participation, and financial sustainability.
    - **The Ministry of Cooperation:** Established in 2021, this ministry focuses on supporting the growth of cooperatives in India, including reforming their governance and providing financial support.

Way Ahead

- Cooperatives in India have proven to be an essential tool for economic empowerment, especially for marginalized groups, and contribute significantly to rural development.
- With the right support and reforms, cooperatives can continue to contribute to inclusive growth and social development in India.

Source: LM

INDIA'S LARGEST GEOTHERMAL ENERGY TECHNOLOGY PILOT PROJECT

Context

- Recently, **Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL)** has announced plans to establish **India's largest geothermal energy technology** pilot project in **Araku Valley and Visakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh.**

> **About Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL)**
>
> - It is a **joint venture** of four public sector undertakings (PSUs) like NTPC Limited, Power Finance Corporation (PFC), Rural Electrification Corporation (REC) and Power Grid Corporation of India under the **Union Ministry of Power**.
> - It was established **to lead large-scale energy efficiency projects** across India, acting as a '**Super ESCO' (Energy Service Company).**
> - **Other Key Initiatives By EESL:**
>   - **UJALA**: Distribution of LED bulbs and appliances;
>   - **Smart Metering:** Deployment of advanced metering infrastructure;
>   - **National Efficient Cooking Programme (NECP):** Promoting induction cookers to reduce cooking costs;
>   - **Energy Efficient Fans Programme (EEFP):** Distribution of BLDC fans nationwide.
>
> **Araku Valley**
>
> - It is located in the **Alluri Sitharama Raju (ASR) district of Andhra Pradesh** in Eastern Ghats.
> - Galikonda Hill is located in it.

About Geothermal Energy (Geo = Earth, Thermal=Heat)

- It is the heat stored **within the Earth's crust,** and comes from the **natural heat of the Earth** primarily **due to the decay** of the naturally **radioactive isotopes** of uranium, thorium and potassium.
- On average, the **temperature of the Earth increases with depth**, about **25–30°C/km** above the surface ambient temperature (geothermal gradient).
- The heat is transferred from the interior towards the surface **mostly by conduction.**
- **Types:**
    - **High-enthalpy Resources:** Often associated with volcanic regions, geysers and hot springs are **primarily used for electricity generation.**

- ◆ **Low to Medium-enthalpy Resources:** Such as hot rocks and shallow ground layers, are better suited for **direct-use applications** and **geothermal heat pumps.**
- Geothermal plants offer **high capacity utilization (>80%)**, reliable baseload supply, and **no recurring fuel costs**, making them economically viable in the long term.
  - ◆ These are **capital-intensive and site-specific**, requiring high upfront investment in exploration, drilling, and infrastructure.
- **Global Geo-Thermal Capacity** (15.4 GW): United States, followed by Indonesia, the Philippines, Turkey, and New Zealand.

Geothermal Potential Sites in India

- The **Geological Survey of India (GSI),** since 1973, has **identified 381 hot springs** with surface temperatures ranging from 35°C to 89°C.
  - ◆ It can be utilized effectively, with advancements in **Enhanced Geothermal Systems (EGS)** and **Advanced Geothermal Systems (AGS).**
- **India** falls **within a medium to low heat enthalpy zone (100–180°C),** spread across **10 geothermal provinces.**
- **'Geothermal Atlas of India, 2022'** estimated the potential of about 10,600 MW of geothermal power in India.

Geothermal Map of India
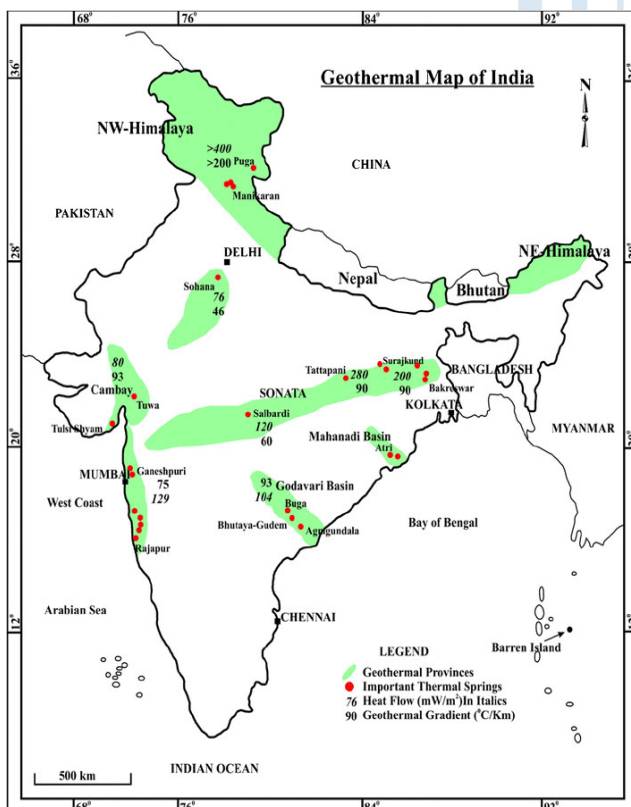
Source: TH

NEWS IN SHORT

BALIYATRA FESTIVAL

In News

- The President extends greetings on the occasion of the historic 'Baliyatra' festival to the people of Odisha.

About

- Baliyatra is an annual festival celebrated in coastal Odisha on the day of Kartika Purnima, commemorating the ancient maritime trade and cultural links between Odisha (ancient Kalinga) and Southeast Asian countries like Bali, Java, and Sumatra.
- The festival is associated with the legend of 'Taapoi' and includes rituals such as 'Bhalukuni Osha' (or 'Khudurukuni Osha') and 'Bada Osha'.
- During Baliyatra, people traditionally float miniature boats with lamps on the Mahanadi River, symbolizing the sea voyages made by their ancestors.

Source: TH

GOGABEEL LAKE

In News

- Gogabeel Lake has been officially designated as **India's 94th Ramsar site.**

About Gogabeel Lake

- Gogabeel Lake is a naturally formed oxbow wetland situated in the riverine landscape of the Katihar district of Bihar.
- Its strategic location between the Ganga and Mahananda rivers makes it a critical hydrological and ecological buffer zone.
- The addition of Gogabeel Lake highlights India's commitment to the Ramsar Convention, which was signed in Ramsar, Iran, in 1971 to promote the conservation and wise use of wetlands worldwide.

Source: TOI

UMNGOT RIVER

In News

- **Meghalaya's Umngot river** has turned unusually murky, sparking concerns over pollution from highway construction activities.

About Umngot River

- Umngot River, also called **Dawki or Wah Umngot**, flows through **Dawki in Meghalaya's**

West Jaintia Hills and is famed for its crystal-clear, transparent waters that reveal the riverbed below.

- It runs along the India–Bangladesh border, serving both as a natural boundary and a key cross-border trade route.

- The discoloration, typically seen only during monsoons, is being linked to construction activities for the Shillong-Dawki road upgrade.

Source :IE

STARLINK SIGNS FIRST DEAL WITH MAHARASHTRA

Context

- Maharashtra has become the **first Indian state** to **formally collaborate** with **Starlink** to **deliver satellite-based internet connectivity** across remote and underserved regions.

About

- Under the partnership, satellite internet will be **deployed in government institutions, public infrastructure and underserved districts.**

- The move is part of the **state's Digital Maharashtra mission** and aims to strengthen **digital connectivity** in areas with limited network access.

Starlink

- Starlink, owned by Elon Musk's **SpaceX**, provides internet through a **constellation of low-Earth orbit (LEO) satellites** that beam **signals directly to users on the ground.**

- Unlike traditional broadband that depends on cables or mobile towers, Starlink's system can reach regions **where laying fibre or building towers is difficult** or uneconomical.

- **Significance:**
  - **Satellite internet** can **support essential services** such as online education, telemedicine, digital payments, and e-governance.
  - It can also **maintain communication during disasters** when ground infrastructure fails.

Source: IE

VAISHVIK BHARTIYA VAIGYANIK (VAIBHAV)

Context

- Minister of State for Science and Technology interacted with **Vaishvik Bhartiya Vaigyanik (VAIBHAV)** fellows from across the world.

About

- **Launched:** VAIBHAV fellowship was launched in **2023** and is implemented by the **Department of Science & Technology,** Ministry of Science and Technology.

- **Aim:** The goal is to create an ecosystem of Knowledge and Innovation in the country through global outreach.

- **Eligibility:** Non-Resident Indian (NRI), Persons of Indian Origin (PIO), and Overseas Citizen of India (OCI), currently working abroad.

- **Implementation: Collaboration between scientists of the Indian Diaspora** with Indian Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs), Universities and/or Public Funded Scientific Institutions.
  - The VAIBHAV Fellow would identify an Indian Institution for collaboration and may spend up to two months in a year for a maximum of 3 years.

- **Fellowship** is ₹4,00,000/- for a minimum of 1 month and a maximum of up to 2 months per year for a period of a maximum of 3 years.

- **Institutional Financial Support:** The financial support (up to 5 Lakhs per year for 3 years) will be given to the host institution to facilitate the VAIBHAV fellow.

Source: AIR

PROJECT SUNCATCHER

In News

- Google launches **Project Suncatcher** to test **AI data centres in space.**

About

- The initiative envisions a constellation of compact satellites, each **carrying Google's custom-built Tensor Processing Unit (TPU) chips** (processors designed specifically for machine learning and AI applications).

- Each satellite will feature **high-efficiency solar panels** for power and will be connected through free-space optical communication beams, enabling them to **relay data between satellites and back to Earth.**

- In its initial phase, Google intends to launch **two prototype satellites by early 2027** to test TPU operations in orbit.

Source: BS

GW250114 & HAWKING'S LAW

In News

- A network of detectors, Laser Interferometer Gravitational-wave Observatories (LIGO), Virgo (Italy) and KAGRA (Japan) detected **GW250114.**

About

- In September, 2015, LIGO in the U.S. made the first-ever **detection of gravitational waves**, a century after Einstein predicted them.

- For building LIGO, Rainer Weiss, Kip Thorne, and Barry Barish won the **2017 Nobel Prize in Physics.**

- Gravitational waves are **ripples in spacetime caused by accelerating massive objects**, such as colliding black holes or neutron stars, and can travel across billions of light-years.

GW250114 : Latest Observations

- It is the clearest gravitational wave signal to date, from merging black holes 1.3 billion light-years away.

- It allowed researchers to test fundamental physics, including **Hawking's black-hole area theorem and Kerr's solution for rotating black holes.**

  - Advances in detector sensitivity, like lower laser noise and cleaner mirrors, helped capture the signal.

- **Hawking's black-hole area theorem** states that the total surface area of black holes should never decrease, referring to the sum of the areas of the event horizons.

  - The detection confirmed that the total area of black holes increases after a merger and revealed the resulting black hole's vibrations, behaving as a rotating black hole.

Importance

- Ongoing gravitational wave detections are helping scientists build a growing catalogue of black-hole mergers, refine understanding of black hole formation, and test predictions of relativistic physics, marking significant milestones in gravitational-wave science.

Source :TH

QS ASIA UNIVERSITY RANKINGS

In News

- The QS World University Rankings: Asia 2026 has been released.

About the Rankings

- It features a record 1,526 universities from 25 locations, including 557 new entries.

- It is designed to offer a more region-specific view of higher education and incorporates unique indicators such as 'Staff with a PhD' and 'Exchange Students', with adjusted weightings to reflect Asian academic priorities.

Top 10 Asian Universities 2026	
2026 Rank	**Institution**
1	The University of Hong Kong
2	Peking University
=3	National University of Singapore
=3	Nanyang Technological University
5	Fudan University
6	The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology
=7	The Chinese University of Hong Kong
=7	City University of Hong Kong
9	Tsinghua University
10	The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

- It evaluates universities based on academic and employer reputation, faculty-student ratio, research output and impact, staff with PhDs, international faculty and students, and student exchange programs.

- **Ranking:** QS notes that East and Southeast Asian countries are outperforming India in research impact, faculty resources, and internationalisation, with South Korea and Malaysia showing strong upward mobility due to strategic investments in higher education.

  - Universities in China, Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, and Malaysia dominated the top ranks, with The University of Hong Kong taking first place.

- **India Specific Data:** It reveals a sharp decline in rankings for nine of the top 10 Indian institutions, including seven IITs, despite improvements in their overall scores.

  - IIT Delhi, India's highest-ranked institution, fell from 44th to 59th, while IIT Bombay dropped 23 places to 71st—its lowest in recent years.

  - The only Indian institution to improve was Chandigarh University, rising to 109th.

Source :IE

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