

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS (DCA)

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CHINA'S \$1 TRILLION TRADE SURPLUS: IMPACTS OVER WORLD & ON INDIA

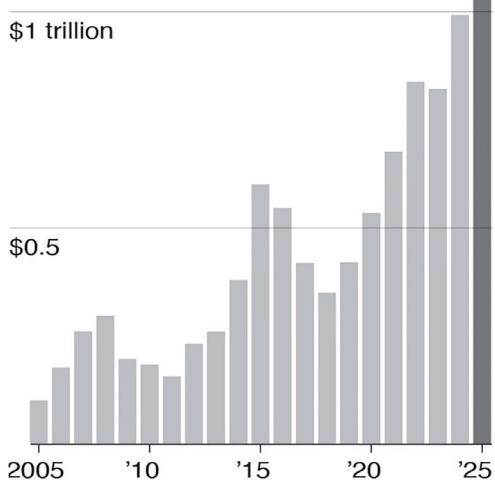
Context

- Recently, China's trade surplus **surpassed \$1 trillion** in the first eleven months of 2025, underscoring China's dominance in global manufacturing and exports.
 - It also reveals underlying economic vulnerabilities and global trade distortions.

Milestone and Its Meaning of \$1 Trillion Trade Surplus

- It is the culmination of **two decades of industrial scaling** and policy continuity of China including the tightly **integrated supply chains, infrastructure depth, and manufacturing ecosystem**.

China's Annual Trade Surplus



Note: Data for 2025 includes the first 11 months of the year. Sources: China General Administration of Customs; FactSet.

THE NEW YORK TIMES

- It is aided by **weaker Renminbi** (exchange rate effects), but the fundamental driver remains **production strength**.
- It comes amid **weak domestic demand and a volatile global trade environment**.

Behind the Trade Surplus

- China's Manufacturing Dominance:** According to a study, no nation since **the UK's Industrial Revolution** or **the US post-World War II** era has held such extensive control over global manufacturing like China.
 - The **global trade-to-GDP ratio** has more than **doubled since 1970**, from 25% to over 60% by 2022, amplifying the consequences of China's industrial strength.

- Over two decades, **Chinese manufactured exports have grown 25-fold**, powered by low labor costs, economies of scale, and state support.

- Export Composition:** It reveals a **decisive shift toward higher-value manufacturing**.
 - Strong sectors:** Automobiles, integrated circuits, and advanced electronics.
 - Weak sectors:** Labor-intensive industries such as apparel, textiles, and toys.
- Changing Trade Geography:** Shipments to the **United States fell 29% year-on-year**, largely due to **renewed tariffs** and softer American demand.
 - But, **overall exports surged** because China **diversified its markets**, primarily towards the **Global South** and **emerging economies**.
 - Transshipment** through **Southeast Asia**, reflecting firms' adaptive responses to tariff barriers.
 - It represents both strategic resilience and an evolving global trade map where **China's influence extends deeper into developing economies**.

Do You Know?

- First 'China Shock':** It reshaped global manufacturing **after China joined the WTO in 2001**.
 - Millions of Western industrial jobs vanished as cheap Chinese goods flooded markets.
- Second 'China Shock':** China's emergence in **advanced manufacturing and clean technology**, particularly in **electric vehicles, batteries, solar panels, and electronics**.

Policy Implications

- China's **Central Economic Work Conference (CEWC)**, the country's **annual economic policy meeting**, aims to interpret the record surplus both as a **success story and a warning signal**. It likely includes:
 - Rebalancing growth** toward stronger domestic demand.
 - Containing overcapacity** and mitigating involution.
 - Promoting technology upgrading** and green manufacturing.
 - Stabilizing confidence** amid global headwinds.
 - The central focus will remain on **structural reform, innovation, and sustainable growth** rather than headline surplus numbers, while trade tensions will frame discussions.

- The **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** attributes the surplus partly to a **real depreciation of the Yuan**, driven by **China's low inflation** relative to its trading partners.
 - ◆ The IMF urged China to **stimulate domestic consumption** and allow **greater exchange rate flexibility** to address these imbalances sustainably.

Global Implications of China's \$1 Trillion Trade Surplus

- **Overcapacity and Global Friction:** China's expanding surplus intensifies **domestic and international dilemmas**.
 - ◆ Trading partners accuse China of **dumping goods** and distorting markets, as recently **France signals unease over China's role** in industries such as electric vehicles and green tech.
- **Trade Imbalances and Currency Wars:** The US and EU face record deficits with China.
 - ◆ US deficit in 2025 projected at **\$480 billion**, leading to renewed **tariff escalation**.
- **Deflationary Pressures:** China's export-driven glut (EVs, steel, solar) depresses global industrial prices, raising risks of '**imported deflation**' in OECD economies.
- **Geoeconomic Repercussions:** China's surplus strengthens its **global liquidity dominance**, increased lending to Global South via Belt & Road and Yuan-denominated trade.
 - ◆ But Western powers interpret this as '**mercantilist aggression**', triggering **industrial policy retaliation** (e.g., EU's CBAM).
- **Asian Economies' Realignment:** ASEAN economies, Taiwan, and India benefit partially from supply chain shifts, but also face **price competition and dumping risks**.

Implications For India

- **Rising Trade Deficit and Manufacturing Pressure:** India's trade deficit with China reached **\$95 billion in FY2025**, as imports of electronics, solar components, and APIs surged.
 - ◆ Domestic manufacturing under 'Make in India' and **Production-Linked Incentive (PLI)** schemes faces intensified competition from **China's cost-efficient exports**.
- **Investment and Supply Chain Realignment:** Multinationals are diversifying from China. '**China+1**' strategy, benefiting **India, Vietnam, and Mexico**.
 - ◆ However, India lacks equivalent **logistics and infrastructure**, slowing relocation inflows.

- **Currency & Inflation Spillovers:** Yuan depreciation exerts **deflationary pressure** on global prices, including India's imports, which helps inflation control but hurts local producers.
- **Strategic Dependencies:** India's critical sectors (pharma APIs, electronics) remain dependent on Chinese imports.

India's Strategic Responses

- **Trade Diversification:** FTAs with UAE, EU in progress, but need to prioritize ASEAN & Africa markets.
 - ◆ India is pushing for **supply chain diversification** and **self-reliance (Atmanirbhar Bharat)** to reduce dependence on Chinese imports.
- **Manufacturing Incentives:** PLI in electronics, solar, semiconductors, and need to accelerate **value-chain localization**.
- **Geopolitical Leverage:** Need to use trade diplomacy to balance China's dominance, as India is an active partner in QUAD & IPEF.
- India's response to China's trade surplus needs to twofold:
 - ◆ **Short-term:** Tighten quality controls, incentivize domestic production, and monitor dumping practices.
 - ◆ **Long-term:** Invest in R&D, skill development, and infrastructure to build globally competitive industries.

Source: IE

INDIA'S NUCLEAR POWER GENERATION REACHES RECORD HIGH IN FY 2024-25

Context

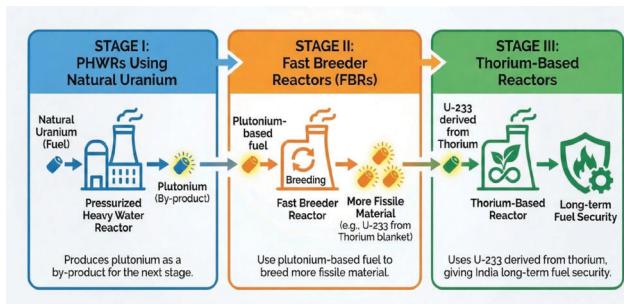
- According to the Department of Atomic Energy, NPCIL has, for the first time, crossed 50 billion units (BUs) of electricity generation in FY 2024-25.

Nuclear Power in India

- India operates **one of the world's most unique nuclear programmes** based on a **three-stage nuclear strategy** designed to utilise India's abundant thorium reserves.
- The current installed nuclear power capacity in the country is **around 8.78 GW**, spread across **24 nuclear power reactors**.
- As of July 2025, nuclear energy contributes around **3.1 % of total electricity generation**.

What is Nuclear Energy?

- Nuclear energy is the **energy released during nuclear reactions**, either through fission (splitting of atomic nuclei) or fusion (merging of atomic nuclei).
- In nuclear fission**, heavy atomic nuclei, such as those of uranium or plutonium, are split into lighter nuclei, releasing a large amount of energy.
 - This process is utilized in nuclear power plants to generate electricity.



Government initiatives for nuclear expansion

- Nuclear Energy Mission:** The government has set an ambitious target to increase the country's nuclear power capacity **to 100 GW by 2047**
 - India had announced a **Rs 20,000 crore** R&D mission for development of **small modular reactors (SMRs)**. India is also targeting the deployment of at least five of these indigenously developed reactors by 2033.
- NPCIL and National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC)** have signed a supplementary Joint Venture agreement to develop nuclear power facilities in the country.
 - The JV named **ASHVINI** will build, own, and operate nuclear power plants, including the upcoming **4x700 MWe PHWR Mahi-Banswara Rajasthan Atomic Power Project**.
- Unit 7 of the Rawatbhata Atomic Power Project** was connected to the Northern Grid and began commercial operations.
- The Atomic Energy Commission** approved pre-project activities for ten additional **700 MWe PHWRs**, beyond the 22.5 GW nuclear capacity planned by 2032.

Applications of Nuclear Technologies

- Agriculture and Food Processing:** DAE developed two new crop varieties: **TBM-9**, an early-maturing banana, and **RTS-43**, a high-yield sorghum.
- Advances in Strategic Sectors:**
 - The Heavy Water Board achieved **99.8% enrichment of Boron-11**, suitable for semiconductor applications.

- The first experimental run of India's dark matter search project, InDEEx, began at the **Jaduguda Underground Science Laboratory**.

Concerns Associated with Nuclear Technology

- High Capital Costs and Long Gestation Period:** Nuclear plants require massive upfront investment, making them costlier than solar or wind.
- Radioactive Waste Management:** Spent fuel remains hazardous for thousands of years. It requires secure storage, reprocessing, and long-term geological disposal.
- Safety Risks:** Catastrophic incidents (Chernobyl, Fukushima) show low-probability but high-impact risks.
 - Evacuation, contamination and long-term ecological impacts make public acceptance difficult.
- Water-Intensive Technology:** Nuclear reactors require large quantities of water for cooling.
 - Not suitable in drought-prone or water-stressed areas.

Way Ahead

- By promoting nuclear energy as a sustainable, scalable, and secure power source, the government aims to bolster energy security and meet the nation's long-term economic and environmental goals.
- The Nuclear Energy Mission for Viksit Bharat is poised to accelerate nuclear power development, positioning India as a global leader in advanced nuclear technology by 2047.

Source: DD NEWS

MEXICO IMPOSES UP TO 50% TARIFF ON IMPORTS FROM INDIA AND CHINA

Context

- Mexico has approved tariffs of up to 50% on imports from non-FTA partners, including India, effective from April 1, 2026.

What is Trade Protectionism?

- Trade protectionism** refers to policy measures, such as tariffs, quotas, import licensing, local content rules, aimed at shielding domestic industries from foreign competition.
- Drivers of the current wave of protectionism include:**
 - Slowing global growth and supply-chain vulnerabilities.

- **Strategic reshoring** by major economies like the U.S. and EU.
- Geopolitical tensions and pressure to **protect domestic jobs**.
- Concerns over dumping, subsidies, and unfair trade practices.

Background of Mexico's Tariff Measure

- In **2024**, Mexico imposed **5–50% tariffs** on a range of items imported from countries without a Free Trade Agreement (FTA).
- The measure targeted imports from Asian countries such as **India, China, and Thailand**. Now Mexico's Senate extended these tariffs to **remain in force beyond April 2026**.
- India currently does **not have an FTA or PTA Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA)** with Mexico, making it vulnerable to these duties.

Reasons Behind Mexico's Tariff Decision

- **Appeasing the United States under USMCA review:** It is observed that Mexico's extension of high tariffs on imports from non-FTA partners is aimed at placating the United States ahead of the upcoming review of the **United States–Mexico–Canada Agreement (USMCA)**.
 - Ensuring alignment with U.S. strategic preferences is seen as important for Mexico's trade stability under the trilateral pact.
 - The United States has been urging Latin American nations to limit their economic engagement with Asian economies, which it views as competitors in the region.
- **Revenue generation:** The tariff measures are also driven by Mexico's need to raise an estimated **\$3.76 billion** next year as part of efforts to narrow its fiscal deficit. Higher duties on imports present an immediate non-tax revenue source.

Impact on India's Automotive Sector

- **Erosion of Export Competitiveness:** Indian firms, especially in the passenger car, motorcycle, and auto-component segments, face strong competition from countries that enjoy FTA-based zero-duty access.
 - Mexico is **India's third-largest car export market** after South Africa and Saudi Arabia. It accounts for about **10%** of India's total auto and auto part exports and **12%** of motorcycle exports.
- **Risk to India's Growth Strategy:** Automotive exports support, employment in MSME supplier networks, manufacturing under Make in India, foreign exchange earnings etc. and protectionism threatens these linkages.

- **Supply Chain Disruptions:** Protectionist barriers slow integration into global value chains (GVCs). Automotive components, where India is building scale, are sensitive to even small tariff changes.

Way Ahead

- **Initiate Trade Negotiations:** The **Engineering Exports Promotion Council (EEPC)** has urged the Government of India to begin FTA or PTA talks with Mexico.
 - EEPC warns that continued tariffs may erode India's competitiveness and permanently reduce market share.
- **Safeguard Auto Sector Competitiveness:** Targeted support for affected exporters in automobiles, auto components, and engineering goods.
- **Enhance Export Resilience:** Promote quality upgrades, cost efficiency, and logistics improvements to absorb tariff shocks.
 - Explore local assembly or joint ventures in Mexico to bypass tariff barriers.

Brief on India- Mexico Relations

- **Political relations:** Mexico was the first country in Latin America to establish diplomatic relations with Independent India in 1950. The year **2025 will mark the diamond jubilee (75 years)** of bilateral diplomatic relations.
- **Bilateral Trade:** With a trade of USD 10.58 billion, India was Mexico's ninth largest trading partner in 2023. The bilateral trade in 2023 consisted of Indian imports of US\$ 2.54 billion and exports of US\$ 8.03 billion to Mexico.

Top 5 export items to Mexico in FY25



- **Indian Community:** The Indian community (PIOs/NRIs) in Mexico is small, numbering around **10,000** with about one fifth of them in Mexico City.

Source: TH

SAVINGS SHIFT RESHAPES INDIA'S MARKETS

Context

- **Domestic household savings** are replacing **Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs)** as the dominant market force in India.

About

- The latest NSE (National Stock Exchange) Market Pulse report shows **Foreign Portfolio Investor (FPI) ownership** of Indian equities at a **15-month low of 16.9% and 24.1% in the NIFTY 50**.
- Meanwhile, **domestic Mutual Funds (MFs)** are hitting new highs quarter after quarter.
 - **Systematic Investment Plans (SIPs)** are bringing in record inflows, and individual investors, through direct holdings and MFs, now own nearly **19% of the market**, the highest in over two decades.

Domestic Household Savings

- **Household saving** is the difference between a **household's net disposable income and its total consumption expenditure**, including taxes and debt repayments.
- **Household savings** form the largest component of total domestic savings in India **around 55–60%**.
- **Composition of Household Savings:**
 - **Financial Savings:** Bank deposits, Insurance and pension funds, Mutual funds and equities, Small savings schemes (PPF, NSC, Sukanya Samriddhi, Post Office schemes).
 - **Physical Savings:** Real estate (houses, land), Gold and jewellery and Durables.
- They are a key source of **capital formation, financing investment and supporting long-term economic growth**.
 - Domestic household savings provides a **stable alternative to volatile foreign capital flows**.
- **Recent Trends:**
 - Shift from physical to financial savings, especially among younger households.
 - Rise in retail participation in stock markets through SIPs, mutual funds, demat accounts.

Key Drivers of Financialisation of Household Savings

- **Structural Drivers:** Formalisation of economy GST, demonetisation gave push to the banking system.

- **Digital public infrastructure** such as the UPI, Aadhaar, e-KYC has enabled easy access to financial products.

- **Changing Consumption and Investment Patterns:** Post-Covid consumption revival led to increased borrowing for consumption, housing, and education.

- Households are now turning to higher-risk assets like equities and mutual funds. SIP contributions increased 8.5 times from 3,122 crore (2016) to 26,632 crore (2025).

- **Market & Policy Drivers:** Low returns from gold/real estate compared to equities & mutual funds.

- Rise of SIPs as a stable monthly investment tool.
- Regulatory reforms by regulatory bodies like SEBI, RBI, IRDAI, PFRDA boosting trust.
- Tax incentives under Section 80C, NPS, and small savings schemes encourage households to invest.

- **Behavioural Drivers:** Younger investors are having a higher risk appetite.

- Increased financial awareness via digital content, fintech apps.

Impacts on the Economy

- **Positive Impacts:**

- Stabilises capital markets by reducing dependence on foreign portfolio flows.
- Enhances capital formation for long-term growth (infrastructure, SMEs).
- Deepens financial markets leading to better resource allocation.
- Improves risk diversification and potential returns for households.

- **Macro Benefits:**

- Supports India's transition to a \$5 trillion economy.
- Aligns with Viksit Bharat 2047 by broadening domestic investment base.
- With less reliance on FPI flows, the central bank can prioritise stimulating bank credit growth and managing the growth-inflation trade-off, rather than defending the rupee from capital flight.

Concerns with Financialisation of Household Savings

- **Increased Exposure to Market Volatility:** Shift towards equities, mutual funds and market-linked instruments exposes households to greater risk.

- **Low Financial Literacy:** Many new retail investors do not fully understand risk-return trade-offs, asset allocation, or long-term investment principles.
 - ◆ It can lead to herd behaviour, excessive trading, and susceptibility to mis-selling by intermediaries.
- **Short-Term Speculative Investing:** Rise of online trading platforms and social media-driven tips encourages speculative, high-risk trading, not productive long-term savings.
- **Decline in Cushion of Physical Assets:** Physical assets like gold and property have traditionally provided inflation hedging and stability. Rapid shift to financial assets may reduce household ability to withstand shocks if markets underperform.
- **Limited Social Security Net:** India has a large informal workforce with minimal pension coverage. Over-reliance on market-based savings without adequate safety nets can increase retirement insecurity.
- **Regulatory Oversight Challenges:** Rapid growth in new products crypto, derivatives, high-risk funds strains regulators SEBI, RBI. Mis-selling and high-fee structures in some products reduce net returns.
- **Macroeconomic Concerns:** Excessive household exposure to financial markets can transmit market stress into broader consumption shocks, affecting economic stability.

Way Forward

- **Fiscal and Tax Reforms:** Rationalise capital gains tax and savings-related tax structures. Offer tax breaks or guaranteed returns on small savings schemes like PPF and KVP.
- **Expanding Financial Inclusion:** Universalise the National Pension System (NPS) with auto-enrolment for informal workers. Promote customised micro-savings products for rural and informal sector households.
- **Strengthen Regulatory Oversight:** Ensure transparency in digital lending, mutual funds, and insurance schemes. Tighten unsecured lending norms to curb procyclical credit growth.
- **Technology Innovations:** Leverage fintech platforms for micro-savings, AI-based financial advice, and blockchain for secure savings instruments.
- **Institutional Coordination:** Develop a National Strategy on Household Savings with measurable targets.

Source: TH

NEWS IN SHORT

SC WIDENS AMBIT OF POSH

In News

- The Supreme Court has expanded the jurisdiction of **Internal Complaints Committees (ICCs)** under the **Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 (POSH Act)**.
 - ◆ SC said that the complaints to be filed not just at the **accused's workplace but also at the complainant's workplace** or any employment-related site.

About POSH

- **Origin:** Enacted following the **Supreme Court's Vishaka v. State of Rajasthan judgment (1997)**, which laid down binding guidelines to fill the legislative vacuum on workplace sexual harassment.
- **Scope and Coverage:** The Act applies to all workplaces, including government offices, private sectors, NGOs, educational institutions, hospitals, sports bodies, and unorganized sectors, extending protection even to domestic workers in residences used for employment.
- **Institutional Framework:** Every organization with 10 or more employees must constitute an Internal Complaints Committee (ICC), with the presiding officer and at least half the members being women, including an external NGO expert.
 - ◆ For workplaces with fewer than 10 employees, District Officers form Local Complaints Committees (LCCs) at the district level to ensure accessibility.
- **Complaint and Inquiry Process:** Complaints must be filed within 3 months of the incident (extendable by another 3 months for sufficient cause) to the ICC or LCC, which conducts a time-bound inquiry within 90 days, maintaining confidentiality and natural justice principles.
 - ◆ Outcomes include conciliation, disciplinary action up to termination, or compensation, with appeals to courts within 90 days; false complaints also attract penalties.

Source: HT

SUPREME COURT'S RULING ON NARCO TESTS

In News

- The Supreme Court ruled that forced or involuntary narco tests are unconstitutional and invalid.

About Narco Test

- It is a process of investigation during which it is expected that the accused, undergoing such a test, would express the concealed facts.
- In this test the accused is sedated by administering a certain class of substances, such as **barbiturates**, for instance, **Sodium Pentothal**, to reduce a subject's inhibitions and reasoning ability.
- It is a non-violent method similar to those called **polygraphs or brain mapping**.

Legality of Narco Test

- The Supreme Court, referencing the Selvi guidelines, ruled that any test conducted **without free consent is unconstitutional** and its results cannot be used as evidence.
 - This upholds Article 20's protections against ex-post facto laws, double jeopardy, and self-incrimination.
 - Such tests also violate the **Right to Privacy under Article 21**, which, along with Articles 14 and 19—the "Golden Triangle"—safeguards personal liberty and democratic principles.
- In **Manoj Kumar Saini v. State of MP (2023)** and **Vinobhai v. State of Kerala (2025)**, courts held that narco test results alone do not prove guilt and must be corroborated with other evidence.
- The Supreme Court emphasized that consent must be informed, recorded before a magistrate, and conducted with medical, legal, and procedural safeguards.

Source :TH

INDIA'S 1ST HYDROGEN FUEL CELL PASSENGER VESSEL

In News

- India launched its first fully indigenous hydrogen fuel cell passenger vessel at Varanasi, marking a major step in green maritime transport.

India's 1st Hydrogen Fuel Cell Passenger Vessel

- It is Built by Cochin Shipyard Ltd and owned by the **Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI)**.
- Hydrogen fuel-cell systems based on **Proton Exchange Membrane (PEM) technology** represent a key frontier in India's clean energy and green mobility transition.
 - A **Proton Exchange Membrane Fuel Cell (PEMFC)** generates electricity through an **electrochemical reaction** between hydrogen and oxygen without combustion, making it a clean and efficient power source.

Importance

- The launch supports **India's net-zero by 2070 target** and aligns with **Maritime India Vision 2030** and Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047, promoting clean, sustainable waterways.
- The vessel offers noise-free, pollution-free travel, reduces road congestion, boosts tourism, and showcases fully indigenous green technology.

Source :PIB

RED-SHANKED DOUC MONKEYS

Context

- A passenger at the Kempegowda International Airport has been arrested for allegedly smuggling **two Red-Shanked Doucs Monkeys**.

About

- The red-shanked douc (Pygathrix nemaeus)** is a highly colorful Old World monkey species, often called the **"Queen of Primates"**.
- Scientific Name:** Pygathrix nemaeus
- Distribution:** It is an arboreal, diurnal primate native to the forests of **Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia**.
 - They live in the forest canopy in **evergreen and semi-evergreen forests** up to **2,000 meters (6,600 feet)** in elevation.
- Appearance:** They are known for their distinctive appearance including a gray body, maroon-red lower legs, white forearms and tail, and an orange-yellow face with light blue eyelids.
 - Males are distinguished by **white spots** on their rump.
- IUCN Status: Critically Endangered.**



Source: TH

SUBANSIRI LOWER HYDEL PROJECT

Context

- The Environment Ministry has turned down a NHPC proposal to use assets located on forest land as collateral to raise funds for the **Subansiri Lower hydel project**.

About the Project

- Location:**
 - On the **Subansiri River**, a tributary of the Brahmaputra.
 - Situated at Gerukamukh on the **Arunachal Pradesh-Assam border**.
- Capacity & Type:** It has a total installed capacity: **2,000 MW (8 x 250 MW)**.
 - It is one of India's **largest hydroelectric projects**.
- Strategic Importance:**
 - Enhances clean energy generation in the Northeast.
 - Strengthens grid stability and supports India's renewable energy goals.

Source: IE

- With its induction, the Indian Navy's capability in **diving support, underwater inspection, salvage assistance, and coastal operational deployment** will be substantially strengthened.

Source: PIB

CHAMPIONS OF THE EARTH AWARD

Context

- Supriya Sahu, a Tamil Nadu IAS officer honoured with the **UN Environment Programme's 2025 Champions of the Earth Award**.

Do you know?

- In 2000, she launched a campaign called **Operation Blue Mountain** to eliminate single-use plastic in the Nilgiris.
- She introduced **low-cost climate solutions**, from painting school roofs white under the Cool Roof Project to restoring mangroves, wetlands, and creating **65 new reserve forests**.
- Her nature-first approach has created **2.5 million green jobs** and contributed significantly to India's national emissions-reduction goals.

About the award

- Launched in **2005**, Champions of the Earth is the **UN's highest environmental honor**. It recognizes outstanding figures from the public and private sectors as well as civil society, whose actions have brought about a positive impact and a transformation on the environment.
- It is awarded across **five categories**: Policy Leadership, Entrepreneurial Vision, Science and Innovation, Lifetime Achievement, and **Inspiration and Action** (Supriya Sahu has been honored in this category).
- Past Indian recipients include:** Madhav Gadgil (2024), Narendra Modi (2018), Cochin International Airport (2018) and Afroz Shah (2016).

Source: Mint

