

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS (DCA)

Time: 45 Min

Date: 24-12-2025

Table of Content

Industrial Parks Emerging as Key Drivers of Smarter Infrastructure
Comprehensive Internship Policy to Build Next Generation of Sports Professionals
Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR)
External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar Visit Sri Lanka
National Consumer Day
Concentrated of India's Exports in Few States

NEWS IN SHORT

Thanjavur Painting
National Maritime Heritage Complex (NMHC) at Lothal in Gujarat
Kashiwazaki-Kariwa Nuclear Power Plant
China Overtakes OPEC+ as the Main Oil Price Maker
Financial Fraud Risk Indicator (FRI)
Evaluation Trials of Akash-NG
BlueBird Block-2 Satellite
Rhino Dehorning
Jnanpith Award Winner Vinod Kumar Shukla

INDUSTRIAL PARKS EMERGING AS KEY DRIVERS OF SMARTER INFRASTRUCTURE

In News/Context

- Industrial parks have emerged as a core instrument of India's industrial and innovation strategy, enabling faster manufacturing growth, higher investment, job creation and sustainable development.

What is an Industrial Park?

- An industrial park is a planned and demarcated area developed specifically for industrial use, with common facilities like power, water, internal roads, waste management, testing labs, logistics services and security.
- These parks are usually managed by a dedicated authority or developer responsible for allotment of plots, maintenance of infrastructure, regulatory compliances and long-term development of the industrial ecosystem.

Status of Industrial Parks in India

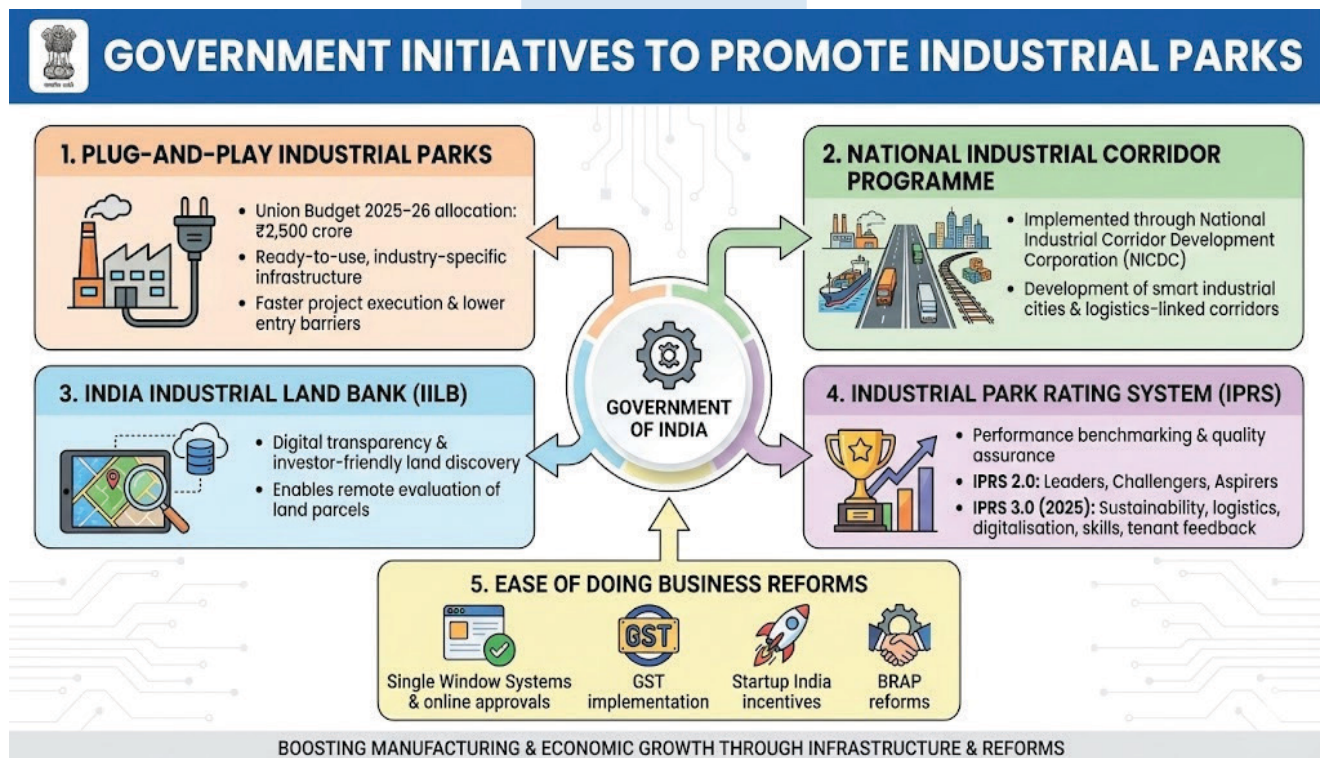
- The IILB, a GIS-enabled platform developed by DPIIT, has mapped around **4,500+ industrial**

parks across India, covering several lakh hectares, with substantial land still vacant for new investments.

- Under **Industrial Park Rating System (IPRS) 3.0**, parks are classified as **"Leaders"**, **"Challengers"** and **"Aspirers"** based on infrastructure quality, connectivity, services and industrial activity, giving a national snapshot of park performance.

Significance of Industrial Parks

- They reduce entry barriers and transaction costs by providing **ready-to-use land, common infrastructure and streamlined clearances**, thereby improving **ease of doing business and attracting both domestic and foreign investors**.
- Parks create clusters that promote **economies of scale, supply-chain integration, innovation spillovers and MSME participation**, strengthening India's manufacturing base and export potential.
- With growing emphasis on green infrastructure and resource efficiency, industrial parks are also becoming instruments for environmentally responsible industrialisation and inclusive, job-rich growth.



Key Challenges

- Uneven quality across parks:** Many parks suffer from poor last-mile connectivity, unreliable utilities, and inadequate social infrastructure compared to "Leader" parks under IPRS 3.0.
- Land and governance issues:** Delays in land acquisition, fragmented ownership, weak park-level management and coordination with urban/local bodies constrain optimal utilisation of existing parks.

- **Environmental and social concerns:** Non-compliance with pollution norms, inadequate common effluent treatment, and limited worker housing, safety and gender-sensitive facilities can trigger local resistance.

Way Ahead

- **Upgrade lagging parks by using IPRS 3.0 ratings** to prioritise investments in connectivity, utilities, digital systems and green infrastructure, especially in “Challenger” and “Aspirer” parks.
- **Deepen integration with skill ecosystems,** R&D institutions and startup clusters so that industrial parks become hubs of innovation, not just land banks for factories.
- **Strengthen governance through professional park management authorities,** transparent user-charge frameworks, and stronger environmental and social safeguards to ensure sustainable, inclusive industrialisation.

Source: PIB

COMPREHENSIVE INTERNSHIP POLICY TO BUILD NEXT GENERATION OF SPORTS PROFESSIONALS

Context

- Recently, the **Union Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports (MYAS)** has launched a **Comprehensive Internship Policy** designed to provide structured, hands-on experience to aspiring sports professionals, aligning with the broader goals of the **National Sports Policy** and the **Khelo Bharat Niti 2025**.

Policy Overview

- **Scope and Scale of the Internship Programme:** **452 internships** will be offered annually across **Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports (MYAS)** and its autonomous bodies, including:
 - ♦ Sports Authority of India (SAI)
 - ♦ National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA)
 - ♦ National Dope Testing Laboratory (NDTL).
- **Multi-Functional Domain:** The internships will cover more than **20 functional domains**, such as sports management, sports science, event operations, communications, IT, legal affairs, and international sports governance.
- **Target Participants:** The internship shall be open to **Indian Nationals only**.
 - ♦ **Undergraduate and postgraduate students** from recognized universities and sports institutes.
 - ♦ The **minimum age** for internship is 20 years, and the preferred **upper age limit is 25**

years. However, upper age relaxation may be considered for postgraduate, doctoral, or research scholars.

- ♦ Fields include **sports management, coaching, physiotherapy, sports analytics, nutrition, and event management.**
- **Internship Duration & Structure:** Typically ranges from **6 weeks to 6 months**.
 - ♦ Interns are assigned to **SAI regional centers, National Centres of Excellence (NCOE), and Khelo India schemes.**
- **Stipend & Certification:** Interns receive a **stipend** (varies by duration and posting).
 - ♦ Successful completion leads to a **certificate jointly issued by SAI and MYAS**, recognized for future government sports sector employment.
- **Focus Areas (Science, Anti-Doping, and Innovation):** The initiative promotes **digital fluency, innovation, and entrepreneurship** within the sports sector.
 - ♦ Interns at **NADA** will engage in **anti-doping awareness, legal compliance, and case management.**
 - ♦ Interns at **NDTL** will gain exposure to **laboratory testing, sample analysis, and research** on performance integrity.
- **Recruitment and Selection:** The internship will follow a **biannual recruitment cycle** in **January and July**, conducted through a **centralised online portal** to ensure **transparency and merit-based selection**.
- **Mentorship & Training:** Interns are mentored by **sports scientists, coaches, and administrators**.
 - ♦ Focus areas include **performance analytics, event logistics, athlete support services, and sports marketing.**
- **Structured Learning and Professional Exposure:** Interns will benefit from:
 - ♦ **Structured onboarding and mentorship** by domain experts;
 - ♦ **Exposure to policy formulation and implementation;**
 - ♦ **Hands-on experience** with flagship programmes like *Khelo India*, *Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS)*, and *Target Asian Games Group (TAGG)*.

Expected Outcomes

- Development of a **skilled sports workforce**.
- Strengthening of India's sports ecosystem through trained human capital.
 - ♦ Target to benefit over 4 crore youth in the next five years through placements in 500+ organizations.

- Enhancement of **sports science and analytics infrastructure** in India.
- Better alignment between **academic curricula and practical sports administration**.

Alignment with National Sports Vision

- The internship policy aligns closely with the **National Sports Policy** and **Khelo Bharat Niti 2025**, focusing on:
 - ♦ Youth empowerment and capacity building
 - ♦ Professionalisation of sports administration
 - ♦ Promotion of clean, transparent, and science-backed sporting practices;
- It supports India's ambition of creating a **future-ready sports ecosystem** capable of sustaining elite performance and hosting major international sporting events.

Source: News On AIR

MATERNAL MORTALITY RATE (MMR)

Context

- The Union Health Ministry recently said that the rate of institutional deliveries in the country has **increased to 89%**, which led to a significant reduction in the **Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR)**.

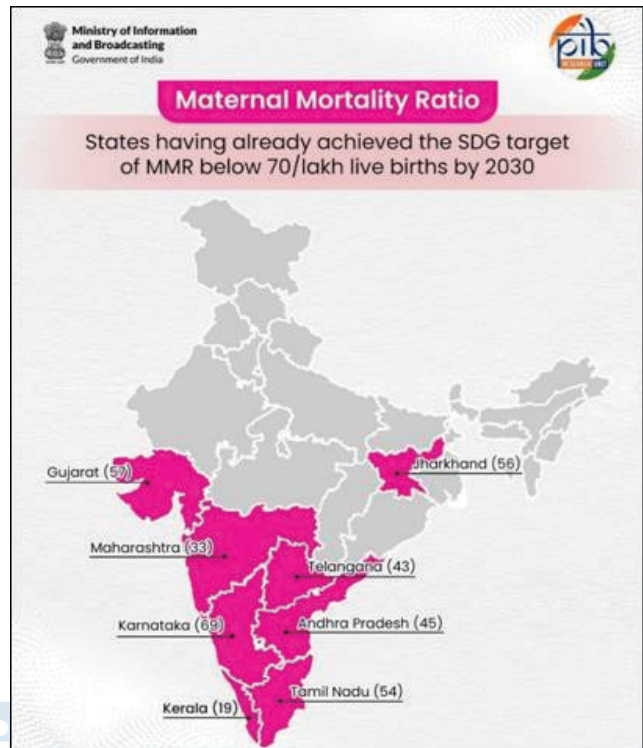
What is Maternal Mortality?

- **Maternal death** is the death of a **woman while pregnant or within 42 days of termination of pregnancy**, irrespective of the duration and site of the pregnancy, from any cause related to or **aggravated by the pregnancy** or its management but not from accidental or incidental causes.
- **Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR)** is the number of maternal deaths per **1,00,000** live births.
- **Maternal Mortality Rate:** This is calculated as maternal deaths to women in the ages **15-49 per lakh of women** in that age group, reported under **Sample Registration System (SRS)**.
- The **Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3.1** targets reducing the global maternal mortality ratio to less than **70 per 1,00,000 live births** by **2030**.

Progress Made by India

- In India the MMR declined **from 130 per 100,000 live births in 2014-16 to 97 per 100,000 live births in 2018-20**.
- **Institutional births have increased significantly** from 79% (2015-16) to 89% (2019-21) at the national level.
- **Institutional delivery is 100%** in Kerala, Goa, Lakshadweep, Puducherry and Tamil Nadu and more than **90% in eighteen other States/UTs**.

- **Even in rural areas**, approximately 87% of births are delivered in institutions, while 94% are delivered in urban areas.



Challenges Still Faced By India

- **High Out-of-Pocket Expenses (OOPE):** Despite policy efforts, families often bear the cost of diagnostics, medicines, and private services during emergencies.
- **Sociocultural Barriers:** Gender dynamics, low education levels, restricted decision-making power among women, and stigma around maternal care all delay early care-seeking.
- **Rise in High-Risk Pregnancies:** Trends such as delayed childbirth, obesity, hypertension, diabetes, and short inter-pregnancy intervals contribute to riskier pregnancies.
- **Weak Infrastructure in Remote Areas:** Rural, tribal, and hilly regions lack emergency obstetric care, reliable transport, and blood storage facilities.

Government Initiatives to Reduce MMR

- **Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY):** Launched in **2005** with the objective of reducing maternal and neonatal mortality, JSY promotes institutional delivery among pregnant women especially with weak socio-economic status.
- **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY),** is a maternity benefit program run by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India.

- The maternity benefit, of **Rs. 5000/-**, is available to a woman for the first living child of the family subject to fulfilment of conditionalities.
- Further under '**Mission Shakti**', the scheme (PMMVY 2.0) provides additional cash incentive for the second child, **if that is a girl child**.
- **Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan (PMSMA)**: Launched in 2016, PMSMA provides pregnant women a fixed day, free of cost assured and quality Antenatal Care on the **9th day** of every month.
- **LaQshya**: Launched in 2017, LaQshya aims to improve the quality of care in labour room and maternity operation theatres to ensure the quality care during delivery and immediate post-partum.
- **Capacity building** is taken-up for MBBS doctors in **Anesthesia (LSAS) and Obstetric Care including C-section (EmOC)** skills to overcome the shortage of specialists in these disciplines, particularly in rural areas.
- **Maternal Death Surveillance Review (MDSR)** is implemented both at facilities and at the community level. The purpose is to take corrective action at appropriate levels and improve the quality of obstetric care.
- **Monthly Village Health, Sanitation and Nutrition Day (VHSND)** is an outreach activity for provision of maternal and child care including nutrition.
- **Reproductive and child health (RCH) portal** is a name-based web-enabled tracking of pregnant women and new-born to ensure provision of regular and complete services to them including antenatal care, institutional delivery and post-natal care.

Innovations in Maternal Healthcare

- **Madhya Pradesh's 'Dastak Abhiyan'**: A community-driven campaign that focuses on early detection of maternal health risks and ensures timely medical intervention.
- **Tamil Nadu's Emergency Obstetric Care Model**: A robust referral system that ensures pregnant women receive timely emergency care, reducing maternal complications.

Way Ahead

- India has made significant progress in reducing maternal mortality, successfully achieving the National Health Policy (NHP) target of an MMR below 100 by 2020.
- However, continued efforts are required to reach the SDG target of MMR by 2030.

- Strengthening healthcare infrastructure, expanding maternal health programs, and addressing socioeconomic barriers will be critical in further reducing maternal mortality in the country.

Source: TH

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER S JAISHANKAR VISIT SRI LANKA

Context

- India has pledged a **reconstruction package of \$450 million** as part of India's First Responder activity under **Operation Sagar Bandhu to Sri Lanka**.

About

- The visit underscores **India's Neighbourhood First Policy**.
- As part of '**Operation Sagar Bandhu**', the High Commission of India in Colombo sourced and helped distribute humanitarian aid, relief supplies, and medical assistance to augment the Sri Lankan government's efforts.

India and Sri Lanka Relations

- **Diplomatic Ties**: Diplomatic relations established in **1948** after Sri Lanka's independence.
- **Trade Relations: India-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement (ISFTA)** in **2000** contributed significantly towards the expansion of trade between the two countries.
 - The merchandise trade between India and Sri Lanka amounted to **USD 5.54 billion in FY 2023-24**, with India's exports at USD 4.11 billion and Sri Lanka's exports at USD 1.42 billion.
 - India has traditionally been among **Sri Lanka's largest trade partners** and Sri Lanka remains among the largest trade partners of India in the SAARC.
 - India is also one of the **largest contributors to Foreign Direct Investment** in Sri Lanka.
- **Maritime Security and Defence Cooperation**: In 2011, a decision was taken to establish the **Colombo Security Conclave which aims to further promote maritime security in the Indian Ocean Region**.
 - India and Sri Lanka conduct a joint Military exercise named '**Mitra Shakti**', Trilateral Maritime Exercise "**Dosti**", and a Naval exercise named **SLINEX**.
- **Connectivity Projects**: Recently, the two sides adopted a **vision document to enhance maritime, energy and people to people connectivity**.

- ♦ There are plans to develop a **land bridge between the two countries** to provide India with land access to the ports of Trincomalee and Colombo to boost economic growth.
- **Development Cooperation:** India's grant assistance to Sri Lanka currently stands at around USD 780 million, which includes completed projects worth USD 390 million, ongoing projects worth over USD 210 million, and another USD 178 million worth of projects in the pipeline.
- **Multilateral Forum Collaboration:** India and Sri Lanka are member nations of several regional and multilateral organizations such as the **South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)**, South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme, South Asian Economic Union and BIMSTEC, working to enhance cultural and commercial ties.
- **Cultural relations:** The Cultural Cooperation Agreement signed in 1977 forms the basis for periodic Cultural Exchange Programmes between the two countries.
- **Tourism:** India has traditionally been Sri Lanka's **top inbound tourism market**, followed by China.
 - ♦ As per latest data from the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority, **India is the largest source for tourists** in 2023.

Areas of Concern

- **The Fishermen Issue:** Sri Lanka's proximity to Indian territorial waters has often blurred the line for fishermen on both sides in pursuit of fish stock.
 - ♦ Since 2016, a **Joint Working Group on Fisheries (JWG) mechanism** has been in place to address the immediate concerns of fishermen of both sides and to find a permanent solution to the issue.
- **Rising Chinese Presence:** China's increasing strategic investments in vital maritime ports in the IOR has been an area of concern.
 - ♦ There is a lack of transparency in implementation of projects and possible military use of ports by China.
- **Maritime Security Concerns:** Piracy, illegal fishing, and smuggling in the Palk Strait and surrounding waters.
 - ♦ Need for constant coordination on maritime borders to prevent incidents.
- **Domestic Instability in Sri Lanka:** Political unrest or changes in government affect continuity of agreements and development projects.

- ♦ Delays in infrastructure or economic projects due to internal instability.

Way Ahead

- India and Sri Lanka share deep historical, cultural, and strategic ties, reinforced by trade, defence, and development cooperation.
- While challenges such as Chinese influence, and economic instability persist.
- Enhanced economic and maritime collaboration, and strong people-to-people ties can ensure a resilient, mutually beneficial, and strategically vital partnership in the Indian Ocean.

Source: AIR

NATIONAL CONSUMER DAY

In News

- Recently, National Consumer Day was observed in India to highlight the significance of consumer rights and the broader framework of consumer protection.

National Consumer Rights Day and Consumer Protection Act

- It was established in India to commemorate the enactment of the **Consumer Protection Act of 1986**, which was approved by the President of India on December 24, 1986.
- Since then, **24th December** has been celebrated as **National Consumer Day**.
- The **Consumer Protection Act, 2019 replaced the Consumer Protection Act, 1986**.
- It was enacted to protect consumer rights, address grievances related to goods and services, and ensure fair treatment and access to justice for consumers.

Key Features

- The **Section 2(28) of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019** defines "misleading advertisement" in relation to any product or service which is falsely describes a product or service, gives false guarantees or misleads consumers about its nature or quality, makes deceptive implied claims amounting to unfair trade practice, or deliberately hides important information.
- **Section 21 of the Consumer Protection Act empowers the CCPA** to act against false or misleading advertisements by directing traders, manufacturers, endorsers, advertisers or publishers to discontinue or modify such advertisements if they are found harmful to consumers or violative of consumer rights.



Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA)

- It is India's **apex consumer watchdog**. It was established under Section 10(1) of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, and became operational on 24th July 2020.
- It is tasked with regulating matters related to the violation of consumer rights, unfair trade practices, and false or misleading advertisements that are prejudicial to the interests of consumers as a class and the public at large.
- It can **penalise manufacturers or endorsers of false or misleading advertisements** with fines up to 10 lakh and imprisonment up to two years, which may increase to 50 lakh and five years for repeat offences, and can also ban endorsers from future promotions for up to one year, extendable to three years for subsequent violations.

Other related steps

- The Department of Consumer Affairs in India has strengthened consumer protection through multiple initiatives:
 - Consumer Welfare Fund** – Provides financial support to States/UTs to promote consumer protection, with funding through corpus interest. Rs.38.68 crore released in 2024–25.
 - e-Jagriti Platform** – Launched in January 2025, it integrates multiple grievance systems for filing, tracking, and resolving complaints digitally. Over 1.35 lakh cases filed and 1.31 lakh disposed, benefiting domestic and NRI consumers.
 - National Consumer Helpline 2.0** – AI-enabled, multilingual platform handling over 12 lakh complaints annually, resolving many within 21 days, with digital channels accounting for 65% of filings.

- Jago Grahak Jago Portal & Apps** – Digital tools to detect dark patterns, provide verified e-commerce information, and allow consumers to report suspicious websites.
- Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS)** – Ensures product safety and quality through standards, certification, and hallmark verification via the BIS Care app.
- National Test House (NTH)** – Provides testing, calibration, and quality control services; modernising operations with digital systems and mobile apps; tested 45,926 samples in 2024–25.
- Legal Metrology Amendments (2025)** – Strengthens rules related to medical device labelling and packaging, mandates country-of-origin disclosure on e-commerce platforms, and tightens pricing norms for pan masala, with the objective of improving regulatory clarity, transparency, and consumer protection.

Source : PIB

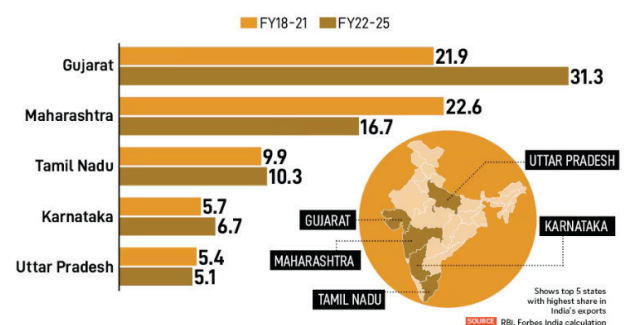
CONCENTRATED OF INDIA'S EXPORTS IN FEW STATES

Context

- The RBI Handbook of Statistics on Indian States 2024–25 reveals that export growth is increasingly concentrated in a few developed coastal and industrial States, masking deep regional and employment-related challenges.

Pattern in India's Exports

- Rising dominance of few States:** The top 10 States now account for over **91 percent** of India's exports in FY25, up from 84 percent in FY22.
- The top five States**, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh, together contribute nearly **70 percent** of national exports.
- Regional divergence:** Coastal western and southern States are integrating deeper into global supply chains.
- Large parts of northern and eastern India are gradually decoupling from the trade engine.



Reasons Behind Export Concentration

- **Infrastructure advantages:** Coastal States benefit from ports, industrial corridors, multimodal logistics and proximity to global markets.
- **Agglomeration economies:** Established industrial ecosystems attract capital, skilled labour, suppliers and ancillary industries, reinforcing dominance.
- **Shift from cost to complexity:** Global capital increasingly favours regions with high economic complexity, diversified export baskets and strong institutional capacity.
- **Global trade constraints:** WTO data shows global merchandise trade growth slowing to **0.5–3 percent**, while UNCTAD estimates suggest the top 10 exporters control around **55 percent** of global trade.
 - ♦ This intensifies competition and favours already-integrated regions.
- **Financial depth asymmetry:** High-export States like Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh record Credit–Deposit ratios above 90 percent, enabling local savings to fund local industry.

Impact of Export Concentration

- **Regional inequality:** Coastal western and southern States integrate deeper into global trade, while northern and eastern regions decouple.
- **Fragile export resilience:** Over-reliance on a few States and sectors heightens vulnerability to regional or sector-specific shocks.
- **Limited job creation:** Export growth no longer guarantees mass employment, weakening its role as a development lever.
- **Fiscal and social stress:** Persistent regional divergence strains cooperative federalism and inclusive growth objectives.

Government Initiatives to Improve Hinterland Export Competitiveness

- **Districts as Export Hubs (DEH):** It aims to transform each district into an export hub by focusing on infrastructure development (processing, testing, logistics) and capacity building of local producers.
 - ♦ It is integrated with **One District One Product (ODOP)** for decentralised and balanced export promotion.
- **Export Promotion Mission (EPM)** is India's new, unified **six-year program** (FY 2025-2031) to explicitly prioritises;
 - ♦ Non-traditional districts and landlocked States.
 - ♦ Labour-intensive and MSME-driven exports.

- **Agriculture Export Policy & APEDA Financial Assistance Scheme (FAS)** targets agricultural and processed food exports from rural and inland areas.
- **Towns of Export Excellence (TEE):** Identifies towns with sector-specific export potential (handicrafts, handlooms, textiles, leather). It provides financial assistance, technical upgradation, skill development, and export marketing support.
- **PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan & National Logistics Policy (NLP):** It aims to reduce India's logistics cost and improve trade efficiency. It benefits for hinterland regions with
 - ♦ Improved road, rail, inland waterway, and multimodal connectivity.
 - ♦ Development of dry ports, logistics parks and freight corridors.
 - ♦ Faster movement of goods from production centres to ports.

Way Ahead

- Strengthen district-level institutions, logistics, finance, and skill ecosystems to enable hinterland regions to enter medium- and high-complexity export value chains.
- Complement export growth targets with metrics on employment generation, regional dispersion, and value-chain integration to ensure inclusive and balanced trade-led development.

Source: TH

NEWS IN SHORT

THANJAVUR PAINTING

In News

- The Department of Posts successfully transported a priceless **Thanjavur-style painting** of the divine Shri Ram from Bengaluru to Ayodhya.

About Thanjavur Painting

- **Thanjavur Painting** (also called Tanjore Painting) is a classical South Indian painting style known for its rich colours, surface relief work, and extensive use of gold foil.
- It was developed during the **Nayaka and Maratha rule (16th–18th century)** in Thanjavur.
- It primarily depicts Hindu deities, especially **Krishna, Rama, Lakshmi, Saraswati and scenes from Puranas**.
- They feature bright colours, bold outlines and a flat perspective, with Hindu deities—especially Krishna—at the centre.

- Traditionally made on wooden planks with cloth backing, the paintings use gold foil and decorative stones or beads, giving them their distinctive luminous look.
- It has also received the **Geographical Indications (GI) tag**.

Source: DD News

NATIONAL MARITIME HERITAGE COMPLEX (NMHC) AT LOTHAL IN GUJARAT

Context

- India and the Netherlands have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to strengthen cooperation in maritime heritage, marking a step toward the development of the **National Maritime Heritage Complex (NMHC)** at Lothal, Gujarat.

About National Maritime Heritage Complex (NMHC)

- The NMHC is a comprehensive cultural and heritage project aimed at presenting India's long and continuous maritime tradition.
- It is being developed near **Saragwala village**, close to the archaeological site of Lothal in Gujarat.
- **Key Components of the NMHC include;**
 - ♦ A museum featuring 14 galleries,
 - ♦ A Lothal Town and Open Aquatic Gallery,
 - ♦ A Lighthouse Museum, a Bagicha Complex, Coastal State Pavilions, and the Recreation of Lothal City.
- The **Ministry of Ports, Shipping & Waterways (MoPSW)** is the nodal ministry for the project.
 - ♦ The **Indian Ports Association (IPA)** has been appointed as the nodal agency.

Historical Significance of Lothal

- Lothal, meaning **"the mound of the dead,"** dates back to around **2400 BCE**.
- It was one of the prominent urban centres of the **Harappan (Indus Valley) Civilization**.
- Lothal emerged as a thriving **port city and trading hub**, facilitating inland and overseas commerce.
- **Major Archaeological Features;**
 - ♦ Discovery of the **world's oldest known artificial dockyard**, over **5,000 years** old.
 - ♦ The dock was connected to an ancient course of the **Sabarmati River**.
 - ♦ Evidence of advanced urban planning, including, an acropolis and a lower town, warehouses and a bead-manufacturing factory.

Source: DD News

KASHIWAZAKI-KARIWA NUCLEAR POWER PLANT

Context

- Japan is set to resume operations at the world's largest **nuclear plant (Kashiwazaki-Kariwa)** for the first time since the **2011 Fukushima disaster**.

About

- **Location:** It spans the towns of Kashiwazaki and Kariwa in **Niigata Prefecture**, (Island of **Honshu**) Japan, on the coast of the **Sea of Japan**.
- **Capacity:** Approximately **8,200 MW**, making it the largest nuclear power plant globally.
- **Operator:** Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO).

Japan's Focus on Nuclear Energy

- **Japan is the world's fifth-largest single-country emitter of carbon dioxide**, after China, the United States, India and Russia, and is heavily dependent on imported fossil fuels.
 - ♦ **Nearly 70% of Japan's power needs in 2023** were met by power plants burning coal, gas and oil.
- Before the 2011 quake and tsunami, nuclear power generated **about a third of Japan's electricity**.
 - ♦ Fourteen reactors, mostly in western and southern regions, have resumed operation since the post-Fukushima shutdown after strict safety standards were imposed.
- Japan aims to make renewables its top power source by **2040**.
 - ♦ Under the plan, nuclear power will account for around 20% of Japan's energy supply by 2040 – up from 5.6% in 2022.

Source: TH

CHINA OVERTAKES OPEC+ AS THE MAIN OIL PRICE MAKER

Context

- **China, not OPEC+**, emerged as the **key stabiliser of global crude oil prices in 2025**.

About

- China challenged OPEC+ control over oil prices in 2025 by **using its position as the world's largest crude oil importer**.
- **China consistently bought more oil when prices fell** and reduced buying when prices rose, effectively creating a price floor and **ceiling for global crude prices**.

- **China's stockpiling helped** keep Brent crude prices stable around \$65 per barrel during the second half of 2025, despite geopolitical tensions and fears of an oil glut.

About OPEC

- The **Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)** is an intergovernmental organisation established in **1960** at the **Baghdad Conference** by **Saudi Arabia, Iran, Venezuela, Kuwait and Iraq**.
- Currently, it has **12 members**, viz. Algeria, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Venezuela.
- The **objective of the organisation** is to coordinate policies with respect to petroleum demand and supply to ensure fair and stable prices and ensure a steady income to oil producing countries.
- It is **headquartered** in Vienna, Austria, although **Austria is not an OPEC member state**.

OPEC+

- **OPEC+ has 22 members**, made up of **10 major oil producing countries** (Russia, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Brunei, Bahrain, Mexico, Oman, South Sudan, Sudan and Malaysia), **along with the 12 OPEC members**.
- The **OPEC+ was formed in 2016** after the adoption of the '**Algiers Accord**' by OPEC countries in 2016 and signing of the '**Vienna Agreement**' in 2016 between OPEC and other major oil exporting countries.
- The move was largely a response to sharply falling oil prices caused by a surge in U.S. shale oil production.

Source: TH

FINANCIAL FRAUD RISK INDICATOR (FRI)

Context

- The Government has prevented six hundred sixty Crore Cyber Fraud Losses in just 6 months with the help of the **Financial Fraud Risk Indicator (FRI)**.

What is the Financial Fraud Risk Indicator (FRI)?

- FRI is a **risk-based metric** that classifies a suspected mobile number to have been associated with **Medium, High, or Very High risk of financial fraud**.
- This classification is an **outcome of inputs obtained from various stakeholders** including reporting on Indian Cybercrime Coordination

Centre (I4C's) **National Cybercrime Reporting Portal (NCRP)**, DoT's **Chakshu platform**, Intelligence shared by banks and financial institutions, TSPs, etc.

- It **empowers stakeholders-especially banks, NBFCs, and UPI service providers** to take additional customer protection measures in case a mobile number appears as part of the FRI.

Source: AIR

EVALUATION TRIALS OF AKASH-NG

In News

- Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has successfully completed the User Evaluation Trials (UET) of **Next Generation Akash missile (Akash-NG) system**.

Akash-NG

- Akash-NG is a **Surface-to-Air Missile (SAM) system** designed to provide area air defence against a wide range of aerial threats across different altitudes and speeds.
- It is equipped with indigenous **Radio Frequency seeker** and propelled by a **solid rocket motor**.
- It is a potent system for ensuring air defense against different types of aerial threats.

Source :Air

BLUEBIRD BLOCK-2 SATELLITE

In News

- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) launched the **LVM-3 rocket carrying the BlueBird Block-2 satellite**.

BlueBird Block-2 satellite

- The BlueBird Block-2 satellite is the largest-ever commercial communications satellite to be deployed in low Earth orbit (LEO).
 - ♦ As the name suggests, LEO is an orbit that is relatively close to Earth's surface. It is normally at an altitude of less than 1,000 km.
- It was designed by the US company AST SpaceMobile and will be part of an LEO constellation.
- It is among the heaviest commercial satellites, weighing around 6.5 tonnes.

Applications

- It will provide direct-to-mobile connectivity, allowing satellites to communicate directly with smartphones without ground stations.
- It will enable 4G and 5G calls, messages, streaming, and data services anytime and anywhere.

Importance

- The BlueBird Block-2 mission marks ISRO's third commercial launch using the LVM-3, following OneWeb satellite launches in 2022 and 2023, after India emerged as a key launch option due to Russia's withdrawal and the retirement of ESA's Ariane-5.
- Through this launch, ISRO aims to demonstrate its ability to conduct heavy-lift missions at a lower cost than competitors like SpaceX's Falcon-9 and Ariane-6.

ISRO's efforts towards engine optimisation

- ISRO is advancing engine optimisation to enhance safety for the Gaganyaan mission and boost lift-off capacity for the planned Bharatiya Antariksh Station.
- Key efforts include upgrading the cryogenic upper stage from the current C25 (28,000 kg propellant, 20-tonne thrust) to the new C32 stage (32,000 kg propellant, 22-tonne thrust), which provides nearly half the velocity needed for geosynchronous transfer orbits.
- ISRO is also developing a semi-cryogenic second stage using refined kerosene and liquid oxygen to replace the current liquid propellant, increasing payload capacity to low Earth orbit from 8,000 kg to about 10,000 kg while reducing costs.

Source :DD

RHINO DEHORNING**Context**

- As of 2024, fewer than **28,000 rhinos** remain on the **planet, all five species combined**.

About

- **Greater Kruger**, the **southern African reserves** protecting the **world's largest rhino population**, alone lost 1,985 black and white rhinos between **2017 and 2023**.
- There are currently **five species of Asian and African rhinoceros** left in the world: **Black, Javan, white, Sumatran, and Great one horned**.
 - ♦ **Three of the five** are **critically endangered**: Black, Javan, and Sumatran.

Illegal rhino horns

- Rhinoceroses are the **world's second-largest** land mammals after elephants. They adorn themselves with horns **made of not bone but keratin**.

- **Why are Rhino Horns in Demand?** People perceive rhino horns as status symbols to display wealth and success. The result is a multi-hundred-million-dollar global black market driven by high demand and high prices.
 - ♦ Rhino horns have been used in **traditional medicine** in Asian countries, especially Vietnam and China.
- **Poachers** often operate under intense pressure, and killing the rhino allows them to remove the entire horn quickly and without resistance.

Dehorning against poaching

- Reserves that **removed the horns** reported a **75% drop** in poaching compared to pre-dehorning levels.
- At an individual level, **dehorned rhinos faced a 95% lower risk of being poached** compared to those with intact horns, highlighting the **strong deterrent effect of dehorning**.

Great One-horned Rhinoceros

- The greater one-horned rhino (or "Indian rhino") is the **largest of the rhino species**.
- **Appearance:** Indian Rhinos are brownish-grey in colour and are hairless.



- **Habitat:** Grasslands and shrublands on the southern base of the Himalayas.
- **Distribution:** India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Myanmar.
 - ♦ In India, they are found in **Assam, West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh**.
- **Conservation Status:**
 - ♦ **IUCN Status:** vulnerable.
 - ♦ **CITES:** Appendix I (I includes species threatened with extinction. Trade in specimens of these species is permitted only in exceptional circumstances).

Source: TH

JNANPITH AWARD WINNER VINOD KUMAR SHUKLA

In News

- Eminent Hindi litterateur and Jnanpith Award winner Vinod Kumar Shukla passed away.

Vinod Kumar Shukla

- He was a renowned poet, novelist, and experimental writer.
- He was the first from Chhattisgarh to receive the Jnanpith Award, India's highest literary honour.
- He was known for his simple, sensitive style portraying everyday life.
- His notable works include **Naukar Ki Kameez** and **Deewar Mein Ek Khidki Rahti Thi** and *Khilega To Dekhenge*,

Jnanpith Award

- It is the **highest literary honour of India** given to writers who have excelled in literature in different Indian languages.
- It was instituted in 1961 by the **Bharatiya Jnanpith Trust** to recognise outstanding contributions to Indian literature.
- Initially awarded for the best literary work, it later shifted to honouring an author's entire literary contribution across Indian languages, including English.
- The selection process involves Language Advisory Committees and an independent Selection Board, ensuring objectivity and national representation.

Source :IE

■■■■

