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EAM VISIT TO EUROPE

Context

- External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar's **first official visit for 2026 began in Europe**, with a visit to **Paris and Luxembourg**, against the **backdrop of major shifts in global politics**.

About

- In Paris, the Minister met his French, German and Polish counterparts for the **India-Weimar Triangle meeting**.
 - The **Weimar Triangle format** was launched in 1991 as an initiative of **Germany and it includes France and Poland**.
 - It was the first time a **non-European partner** had been invited to the Weimar Triangle meeting format at the Foreign Minister level.
 - India's inclusion marks recognition of the country as a **critical geopolitical actor essential to European strategic calculations**.
- In the coming weeks, **India is set to host several top leaders** including German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, French President Emmanuel Macron, and top leaders from the European Union, **highlighting India's growing engagement with Europe**.
- The external affairs minister said **Europe is an important player in global politics** and it is necessary that India strengthens its relationship with it.

India-EU Relations

- Political cooperation:** India-EU relations date to the early **1960s**, and a cooperation agreement signed in **1994** took the bilateral relationship beyond trade and economic cooperation.
 - The first India-EU Summit, in 2000**, marked a landmark in the evolution of the relationship.
 - At the **5th India-EU Summit at The Hague in 2004**, the relationship was upgraded to a '**Strategic Partnership**'.
- Economic cooperation :** India's bilateral trade in goods with the **EU was USD 137.41 billion in 2023-24**, making it the largest trading partner of India for goods.
 - EU is India's largest trading partner** for goods, 17% of India's exports go to the EU and 9% of EU exports come to India.
- India-EU Free Trade Agreement (FTA) Negotiations:** Its objective is to finalize a comprehensive trade agreement covering goods, services, investments, and geographical indications.

- The EU and India are working to announce a **'Free Trade' Agreement (FTA)** during the visit of E.U. leaders Republic Day later this month.
- Other areas of cooperation:**
 - The India-EU Water Partnership (IEWP)**, established in 2016, aims to enhance technological, scientific, and policy frameworks in water management.
 - In **2020**, there was an **agreement for research and development cooperation** in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy between the **European Atomic Energy Community and the Government of India**.
 - India and the EU established the **Trade and Technology Council (TTC)** in 2023. The TTC is a forum for the two parties to collaborate on trade, technology, and security. The TTC's goals.
- India's Two Levels of Engagement**
 - EU as a bloc:** Regular summits, strategic dialogues on trade, tech, security, foreign policy.
 - Bilateral with major EU members:** Deepening ties with France, Germany, Nordic and Eastern European countries.

Factors Shaping India-Europe Relations:

- Geopolitical Shifts and Strategic Autonomy:** Return of war in Europe (Russia-Ukraine) and the global erosion of multilateralism.
 - Europe is seeking greater strategic autonomy from the US especially post-Trump era.
 - India aims to maintain a multipolar world order while diversifying its partnerships beyond the US, Russia, and China.
- US Uncertainty:** The Trump administration's unpredictability regarding European security commitments has forced Europe to seek alternative partnerships and alliances. India, as a stable democracy with proven reliability, becomes strategically valuable.
- Trade and Economic Cooperation:** EU is one of India's largest trade and investment partners.
 - India and EU are keen on concluding India-EU Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and Investment Agreement.
 - IMEC (India-Middle East-Europe Corridor) provides opportunities for strategic connectivity and trade.
- Technology and Digital Sovereignty:** Both have the shared interest in promoting digital technologies as public goods.
 - India can benefit from Europe's strengths in deep tech, semiconductors, and digital manufacturing.

- **Defence and Strategic Cooperation:** Europe is a key arms supplier to India.
 - ◆ India seeks joint development, co-production, and technology transfer.
- **Indo-Pacific and Maritime Strategy:** Europe increasingly views the Indo-Pacific as a strategic priority.
 - ◆ India is working with France, Germany, and others to promote free and open Indo-Pacific.

Challenges in the India - EU Relations

- **India's Stand on Ukraine War:** Europe expects India to be more critical of Russia; India maintains strategic neutrality.
- **EU's Stand on Pakistan and Terrorism:** India expects the EU to hold Pakistan accountable for state-sponsored terrorism.
- **Slow Progress on Trade Agreements:** The India-EU Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations have faced multiple deadlocks.
- **Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM)** imposed by the EU creates additional trade barriers for India.
- **Human Rights and Normative Pressure:** EU often adopts a prescriptive stance on India's internal matters.
 - ◆ India views this as interference in domestic affairs, causing diplomatic friction.
- **Regulatory and Standards Barriers:** EU's strict regulations on data privacy, digital taxation, environmental standards, and labour laws are hurdles for Indian exporters and tech firms.
- **Media stereotypes and limited public awareness in Europe with respect to India** hinder people-to-people ties.

Way Ahead

- **Fast-Track Trade and Investment Agreements:** EU and India must conclude the long-pending India-EU Free Trade Agreement and Investment Protection Agreement.
- **Deepen Strategic and Defence Cooperation:** Move beyond buyer-seller relationship to joint development and co-production of defence technologies.
- **Expand Mobility and Education Partnerships:** Finalise a comprehensive mobility agreement for skilled professionals, students, and researchers.
- **Build Resilient Supply Chains:** Diversify away from China by promoting trusted, transparent supply chains.
 - ◆ Leverage initiatives like IMEC (India-Middle East-Europe Corridor) for logistics, energy, and trade.

- **Enhance People-to-People and Cultural Ties:** Promote tourism, media engagement, and cultural exchanges to break stereotypes and deepen mutual understanding.

Conclusion

- The EAM's first official visit of 2026 to Europe signals that India has made a **conscious strategic choice** to elevate Europe from a secondary economic and political relationship to a **centerpiece of its foreign policy**.
- The FTA conclusion would create a trade corridor with deepened defense, technology, and supply chain integration.
- The visit affirms **India's vision of a multipolar world order** where emerging powers like India exercise **strategic autonomy**, not subordinated alignment to Western or any other bloc.

Source: TH

INDIA OPENS MONUMENT CONSERVATION TO PRIVATE AGENCIES

Context

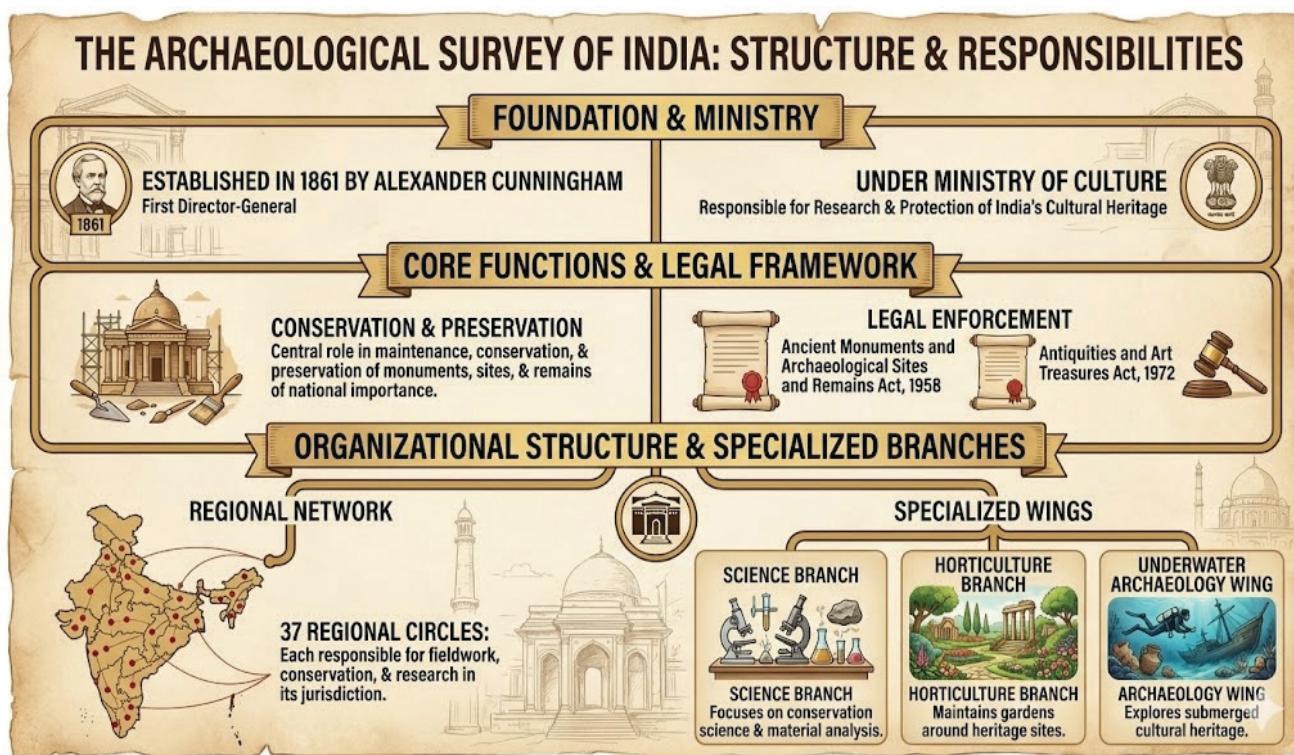
- The Union Ministry of Culture is set to allow private agencies to undertake core conservation work at centrally protected monuments, ending the Archaeological Survey of India's (ASI) exclusive mandate in this domain.

Rationale Behind the Decision

- **Capacity Augmentation:** Address human resource and expertise limitations of ASI.
- **Time-bound Execution:** Private participation enables adherence to strict project timelines.
- **Creation of a National Talent Pool:** Encourages professionalisation of heritage conservation.
- **Efficient Fund Utilisation:** Reduces delays in deploying CSR and donor funds.
- **Global Best Practices:** Many countries use regulated private conservation firms under state oversight.

New Public-Private Partnership Model

- The new initiative aims to introduce a **public-private partnership (PPP) model** in heritage conservation. The move seeks to:
 - ◆ **Enhance capacity** for conservation work.
 - ◆ **Accelerate project timelines** that have historically been slow under ASI's single-agency approach.
 - ◆ **Encourage private participation** while maintaining professional and regulatory oversight.



- All conservation projects will continue to be supervised by the ASI and must comply with the **National Policy for Conservation (2014)**.

Checks, Balances, and Eligibility

- Only qualified conservation architects** with proven track records will be empanelled.
- Implementing agencies need to demonstrate prior experience in restoring structures **over 100 years old**.
- Initially, **a list of 250 monuments** needing urgent conservation will be published.
 - Donors may choose from this list or request specific sites based on regional or thematic interests.

Framework and Implementation

- Role of the National Culture Fund (NCF):** Funds for all projects will be routed through the NCF, established in **1996** with a government corpus of **₹20 crore**.
 - The NCF's structure allows donors to contribute funds directly for conservation projects while receiving **100% tax exemptions** under CSR initiatives.
- Empanelment of Conservation Architects:** The Union Ministry of Culture aims to issue a **Request for Proposal (RFP)** to empanel more than a dozen conservation architects across India, as the first step.
 - Donors will select from this panel to guide their conservation projects.

- The architect and donor will jointly hire external implementing agencies with experience in heritage conservation.
- The Detailed Project Report (DPR)** for each project needs to be approved by the ASI.
- It effectively means that while the ASI retains its supervisory role, **private players can now become implementing agencies**.

Comparison with 'Adopt a Heritage' Scheme

- Earlier, the government's 'Adopt a Heritage' initiative allowed corporate bodies to **act as monument mitras**, focusing on developing tourist amenities such as cafes, ticket counters, and restrooms.
- The new plan, however, goes further, **allowing private participation in core conservation work**, marking a major policy shift in heritage management.

Global parallels

- The United Kingdom** has set up the **Churches Conservation Trust**, managing historic buildings with robust private involvement.
- The United States** also involves private sector funding and organisations in protecting cultural and natural heritage.
- Germany and the Netherlands** have also established various foundations to manage historic buildings, supported by private funding.

Safeguarding Jurisdictions: Constitutional Mandates

- **Union (Entry 67):** The Union has exclusive jurisdiction over ancient and historical monuments and archaeological sites and remains declared by Parliament to be of **national importance**.
- **State (Entry 12):** States have jurisdiction over ancient and historical monuments **not declared** to be of national importance by Parliament.
- **Concurrent List (Entry 40):** Both the Union and States have concurrent powers over archaeological sites and remains **other than those declared** of national importance.
- **Article 253:** Empowers Parliament to legislate for implementing **international treaties, conventions, or agreements**, even on subjects in the State List, overriding federal distribution when required for international obligations (e.g., UNESCO conventions).

Source: IE

PRAVASI BHARATIYA DIVAS (PBD)

Context

- The Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) is celebrated **once in two years** on **9th January**.
 - ◆ The 18th edition took place in 2025 and the 19th is expected in 2027.

About

- It is a significant event that **honors the contributions** of the **Indian diaspora to their homeland**.
- January 9th **commemorates the day in 1915** when **Mahatma Gandhi**, the greatest Pravasi, **returned to India from South Africa** to lead the country's freedom struggle.
- The Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) Convention was first established in **2003**, it is the flagship event of the **Ministry of External Affairs**.
- **Since 2015**, it has evolved into a **biennale event**, with theme-based conferences held in the intervening years.

Indian Diaspora

- The diaspora encompasses a group of people who can **either trace their origins to India or who are Indian citizens living abroad, either temporarily or permanently**.
- **As per the Indian Ministry of External Affairs [2024]**, the global Indian diaspora numbers approximately 35.42 million, consisting of 15.85

million non-resident Indians (NRIs) and 19.57 million people of Indian origin (PIOs).

- **Top 5 countries where the Indian diaspora resides:** United States of America (USA): 5.4Mn, United Arab Emirates (UAE): 3.6Mn, Malaysia: 2.9Mn, Canada: 2.8Mn and Saudi Arabia: 2.4Mn.
- **India is the origin of the largest number of international migrants** in the world, touching nearly 18 million, according to the UN World Migration Report 2024.

Importance of the Diaspora

- **Remittances:** In 2024, India received an estimated \$129.1 billion worth of remittances, the highest ever for a country in any year.
 - ◆ India's share in global remittances was 14.3% in 2025, the highest such share since the turn of the millennium for any country.
 - ◆ These contribute significantly to foreign exchange reserves and rural household incomes.
- **Investment & Trade:** NRIs and PIOs invest in Indian real estate, startups, and infrastructure, and act as trade facilitators between India and their countries of residence.
- **Tech & Innovation:** Indian-origin professionals in Silicon Valley, academia, and global corporations contribute to knowledge transfer, mentorship, and innovation linkages.
- **Cultural Ambassadors:** The diaspora promotes Indian languages, yoga, cuisine, Cinema, and festivals globally.
- **Policy Advocacy:** Diaspora communities often influence foreign policy decisions in host countries in favor of India.
- **Citizen Diplomacy:** Diaspora involvement helps India manage relations during bilateral tensions or negative media coverage.
- **Global Recognition:** Their achievements enhance India's image as a land of talent and opportunity.

Challenges Faced by the Indian Diaspora

- **No Dual Citizenship:** India does not allow dual citizenship, limiting political rights and emotional bonding with the homeland.
- **Racism & Xenophobia:** Rising racial attacks in countries like the USA, UK, Australia, and South Africa.
- **Legal and Immigration Issues:** Countries have restrictive visa regimes, deportations, and uncertainties around work permits.

- **Low-Wage Migrant Workers:** Many Indian workers in Gulf countries face exploitative contracts, wage delays, unsafe housing, and long working hours.
- **Struggle to Preserve Identity:** Indian-origin youth in Western countries often face a crisis of identity and cultural alienation.
- **Anti-Immigrant Sentiment:** Rise in anti-immigrant sentiments during economic downturns and political polarisation.

Government Initiatives to Engage Diaspora

- **Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI) Card:** It offers lifelong visa-free entry, property rights (except agriculture), and economic privileges to eligible PIOs up to 4th generation (excluding Pakistan/Bangladesh origin).
- **Know India Programme (KIP):** Short-term orientation programme for diaspora youth (21-35 years) to connect with Indian culture, institutions, and states.
- **Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR):** Promotes Indian culture abroad through cultural exchanges, academic chairs, and artist delegations.
- **e-Migrate System:** Online platform to protect Indian workers abroad by streamlining recruitment, employment contracts, and grievance redressal.
- **Bharatiya Pravasi Samman Award:** Highest honor given by the Indian government to eminent diaspora members for their outstanding contributions.
- **Madad Portal:** Online grievance redressal platform by MEA for Indians abroad seeking help with passports, consular services, and legal issues.
- **VAJRA Scheme:** Invites Indian-origin scientists abroad to collaborate with Indian institutions in advanced research projects.
- **Global Pravasi Rishta Portal & App:** A digital platform to connect diaspora with Indian missions for registration, communication, and outreach activities.

Source: PIB

CENTRE ISSUES NOTIFICATION FOR FIRST PHASE OF CENSUS OF INDIA 2027

In News

- The Centre has issued the notification for the **first phase of the Census of India 2027**.

About the Census

- The census is the systematic process of **collecting, compiling, and analyzing a country's population**. Historical references to population counts can be found from Kautilya's Arthashastra to Akbar's Ain-i-Akbari.
- The modern synchronous census, where data is collected simultaneously across the country, began in **1881 during British rule, with W. C. Plowden as India's first Census Commissioner**.
- Information was recorded in census schedules, which evolved over time but generally included questions on **age, sex, mother tongue, literacy, religion, and caste**.
- The **Census is a Union list subject while the Census Act, 1948** is the key legislation governing the Census process. It authorises the Central government to undertake Census operations and appoint a Census Commissioner to supervise the entire exercise.
- The Union Cabinet has approved the census at a cost of ₹11,718.24 crore, and caste enumeration will also be included in Census 2027.
 - ◆ **This will be India's first fully digital census**, using mobile applications on Android and iOS.

How is the Census conducted?

- The process is carried out in **two broad phases**: the House-listing and Housing Census, followed by the Population Enumeration.
- **House-listing phase:** Every building is surveyed to record details about households and housing, including structure type, ownership, number of rooms, construction materials, access to water, electricity, toilets, cooking fuel, and household assets. This phase provides an overview of housing conditions and access to basic amenities and is expected to be conducted in 2026.
- **Population enumeration phase:** Conducted after house-listing, it collects individual-level data such as age, sex, education, occupation, religion, caste/tribe, disability, and migration history for every person, including the homeless. This forms the core demographic and socio-economic Census data.
- **Data processing:** Information is centrally processed and released in stages, starting with provisional population figures, followed by detailed tables, with quality checks and audits ensuring accuracy.

Importance

- **Policy & Planning:** Provides baseline data for schemes in health, education, housing, and employment.

- **Resource Allocation:** Determines distribution of funds to states and local bodies.
- **Representation:** Forms the basis for delimitation of constituencies and reservation policies.
 - ◆ The 2027 Census is especially significant as it will enumerate caste for all Hindus, enable delimitation of seats in legislatures, and inform the one-third reservation of seats for women.
- **Digital Transformation:** Use of mobile apps and self-enumeration enhances efficiency, transparency, and speed of data release.

Issues and Concerns

- **Challenges to Digital Governance:** Digital ensuring participation from rural, remote, and marginalized communities with limited internet access is challenging.
- **Data Concerns:** There are concerns about safeguarding sensitive demographic and caste data against misuse or breaches.
- **Coordination issue:** Coordinating across all States and Union Territories within tight timelines.
- **Urban Complexity:** Migrant populations, informal housing, and rapid urbanization complicate accurate enumeration.

Conclusion and Way Forward

- The Census 2027 is a landmark exercise in India's governance, combining tradition with digital innovation.
- Its success will depend on bridging the digital divide, ensuring robust data protection, and fostering public trust. While challenges remain, the census offers an unprecedented opportunity to create a comprehensive, inclusive, and timely demographic profile of India.
- This will be vital for shaping policies in the coming decades, aligning national development with the realities of a diverse and dynamic population.

Source :Air

10-MINUTE DELIVERY MODEL IN INDIA'S QUICK-COMMERCE SECTOR

Context

- The rise of the **10-minute delivery model** in **India's quick-commerce sector** promises unparalleled convenience for consumers, questioning its **necessity and sustainability**.
 - ◆ Recently, more than a **lakh gig and platform workers** across the country went on strike, demanding an end to the **10–20-minute delivery system** that dominates the quick commerce sector.

About Quick Commerce Sector

- The **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)** recognizes quick-commerce as a '*transformative innovation in last-mile logistics and urban consumer retail*'.
- It has evolved rapidly, blending **e-commerce, logistics tech, and gig economy structures** to deliver essentials within **10 to 20 minutes**.
- According to the **NITI Aayog Digital Economy Report (2024)**, '*quick-commerce models represent the convergence of data analytics, AI logistics, and on-demand consumer ecosystems*'.
- **10-Minute Delivery Model** integrates **AI-driven demand forecasting, micro-warehousing, and urban routing optimization**.

Market Overview

- The Indian Q-commerce market reached **₹25,300 crore (USD 3.1 billion)** in FY2024–25.
 - ◆ Projected growth rate: **49% CAGR** through 2028.
- **Between 2024 and 2027:** Quick Commerce industry is projected to grow **threefold**, reaching **₹1 – 1.5 lakh crore**, with a **28% annual growth rate**.
- Over **600 dark stores** operate nationwide, concentrated in **Delhi NCR, Mumbai, Bengaluru, and Hyderabad**.

Employment & Labour Participation

- According to the **Ministry of Labour & Employment (Annual Gig Work Bulletin, 2024–25)**:
 - ◆ **Over 3.5 lakh** individuals are employed in Q-commerce delivery.
 - ◆ **60%** are part-time gig workers, with **daily average earnings between ₹700–₹1,200**.
- According to **NITI Aayog**, India's gig workforce could reach **2.35 crore by 2029–30**.

Core Issue In 10-Minutes Delivery Model

- **Issue of Employment:** Nearly **20 million new job-seekers** enter the market each year, while **only about 2 million formal jobs** are created.
 - ◆ In this vacuum, gig platforms have provided a **vital employment bridge** for millions of **low-skill workers**.
- **Human Pressure over Technology:** The '10-minute delivery' is not powered solely by algorithms; it depends on a **massive human workforce** operating under unstable wages, opaque rules, and the constant threat of app deactivation.

- **Economic Imbalance:** Labour remains the **adjustable variable**, while **tech and marketing costs are protected**.
 - ◆ Fast delivery benefits consumers marginally but extracts immense costs from workers' well-being.
- **Ethical Contradiction:** Society does not accept unsafe shortcuts in other industries like child labour or ignoring factory safety just to reduce costs.
 - ◆ Similarly, exploiting human speed for consumer convenience should not be normalized.
- **Labour Codes and Their Limitations:** India's new **Labour Codes**, while extending **nominal recognition to gig workers**, fall short of offering **mandatory social security**. Key shortcomings include:
 - ◆ **Non-Mandatory Provisions:** Benefits like accident insurance and maternity support depend on **future government notifications** and funding availability.
 - ◆ **Exclusion From Core Labour Rights:** Gig workers are **not classified as employees**, excluding them from minimum wage, paid leave, and collective bargaining rights.
 - ◆ **Algorithmic Blind Spots:** The Codes ignore **algorithmic control**, the opaque systems that dictate **worker allocation, ratings, and income fluctuations**.
- **Other Concerns:**
 - ◆ **Safety:** Rising delivery accidents prompted the Labour Ministry's **Safe Miles Initiative (2025)**.
 - ◆ **Urban Congestion:** The **Urban Development Ministry** warns that 'dark-store proliferation' requires new zoning norms.
 - ◆ **Data Privacy:** The **Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023**, now fully enforced, regulates customer location and behavioral data analytics.

Related Efforts & Initiatives

- **Social Security Code for Gig & Platform Workers (2025 Draft):** It includes mandatory accident insurance, health coverage under *Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission*, and data transparency in pay algorithms.
- **Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC):** It has piloted '**Quick Retail Nodes**', integrating Q-commerce sellers into a unified digital infrastructure.
- **Consumer Protection (E-Commerce) Rules, 2020 (Amendment, 2024):** It mandates transparency in delivery time claims; disclosure

of delivery agent working conditions; and accountability for false '10-minute' marketing promises.

- **Sustainable Packaging Compliance:** MoEF&CC mandates **sustainable packaging compliance**, requiring all Q-commerce players to transition to **100% recyclable material by 2026**.

Way Forward: Beyond Quick Commerce

- The **NITI Aayog Digital Logistics Vision (2025–2030)** forecasts:
 - ◆ Expansion to **Tier-II and Tier-III** cities through ONDC integration.
 - ◆ **Predictive Commerce** powered by AI to pre-position goods near high-demand areas.
 - ◆ Stronger collaboration between **state governments, DPIIT, and startups** for safe, sustainable Q-commerce ecosystems.
- Sustainable solutions lie in revitalizing **labour-intensive sectors** like **manufacturing, construction, and textiles**. To ensure inclusive growth, India needs to:
 - ◆ Strengthen **social safety nets** for all forms of work;
 - ◆ Reform labour laws to include **digital-era protections**;
 - ◆ Promote **responsible AI governance** in the platform economy.

Source: TH

MODERN WARFARE AND INDIA'S EMERGING SECURITY CHALLENGES

Context

- The Chief of the Army Staff during his address to the UAE National Defence College (NDC) highlighted the changing character of **modern warfare**, marked by the convergence of conventional and non-conventional threats.

What Is Modern Warfare?

- Modern warfare refers to **contemporary conflict conducted simultaneously** across land, sea, air, cyber, space, and information domains.
- It is characterised by the integration of conventional military power with **hybrid, asymmetric, and grey-zone tactics**, often employed below the threshold of declared war.

Key Technologies Shaping Modern Warfare

- **Artificial intelligence** enables real-time intelligence processing, **predictive battlefield analysis, automated logistics**, and decision-support systems.

- ◆ Data dominance has emerged as a **force multiplier**, with militaries relying on big data, machine learning, and sensor fusion for situational awareness.
- **Unmanned and Autonomous Systems:** Drones, loitering munitions, and unmanned ground and naval platforms have transformed surveillance and strike capabilities.
- **Cyber and Information Warfare:** It targets critical infrastructure, command-and-control systems, and military networks, often during peacetime.
 - ◆ Information warfare includes **disinformation campaigns, psychological operations, and narrative control**, aimed at shaping public perception and political outcomes.
- **Counter-Space Capabilities:** Space-based assets are central to **navigation, missile guidance, surveillance**, and secure communications.
 - ◆ **Anti-satellite weapons**, electronic interference, and space debris risks have made space a contested and weaponised domain.
- **Precision-guided munitions and hypersonic weapons** allow stand-off attacks with minimal warning time, challenging traditional deterrence and air defence systems.
 - ◆ **Long-range fires** enable influence deep into adversary territory without physical occupation.

Threats Posed by Modern Warfare to India

- **Hybrid and Grey-Zone Challenges:** India faces persistent grey-zone tactics, including cyber intrusions, disinformation campaigns, and proxy violence.
 - ◆ The **Doklam (2017) and Ladakh standoff (2020)** illustrate how coercion can occur without full-scale war.
- **Cyber and Information Vulnerabilities:** India ranks among the top five countries targeted by **cyber attacks**, according to **CERT-In assessments**.
 - ◆ Disinformation campaigns risk undermining social cohesion, electoral processes, and institutional trust.
- **Maritime and Space Security Risks:** Over **90%** of India's trade by volume moves through sea routes, making maritime security vital.
 - ◆ Dependence on space-based assets exposes India to counter-space threats affecting both civilian services and military operations.

India's Institutional and Strategic Response

- **Military Modernisation and Indigenisation:** India's defence capital outlay for 2025–26 was

around **₹1.8 lakh crore**, with over **75%** earmarked for domestic procurement.

- ◆ Indigenous platforms such as **Tejas, Akash, Pinaka**, and armed UAVs enhance self-reliance and operational flexibility.
- **Structural Reforms:** The creation of the **Chief of Defence Staff (CDS)** following the **Shekatkar Committee** recommendations aims to enhance joint planning and integration.
 - ◆ **Proposed Integrated Theatre Commands** are designed to enable unified multi-domain operations.
- Establishment of the **Defence Cyber Agency (DCA)** and **Defence Space Agency (DSA)** institutionalises emerging warfighting domains.
 - ◆ India's **Defence Space Doctrine (2023)** outlines the role of space in national security.
- **India's Mission Shakti (2019)** demonstrated anti-satellite capability, reflecting growing space militarisation.

Way Ahead

- Modern warfare demands a shift from **platform-centric approaches to capability-based, technology-driven force** planning. India must accelerate **AI adoption, cyber resilience, space security**, and jointness reforms.
- Sustained investment in human capital, defence innovation, and strategic partnerships will be crucial to maintain credible deterrence.
- Adapting to the evolving character of warfare is essential for safeguarding India's **sovereignty, stability, and strategic autonomy** in a rapidly changing global order.

Source: TH

NEWS IN SHORT

PANKHUDI PORTAL

In News

- The Ministry of Women and Child Development launched **PANKHUDI Portal**.

PANKHUDI Portal

- It is an integrated Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and partnership facilitation digital portal.
- It is aimed at strengthening coordination, transparency, and structured stakeholder participation in initiatives for women and child development.

Features

- PANKHUDI is developed as a single-window digital platform that brings together individuals,

Non-Resident Indians (NRIs), Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) contributors, corporate entities, and government agencies working in the domain of women and child development.

- It streamlines and unifies voluntary and institutional contributions across key thematic areas including nutrition, health, Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), child welfare, protection and rehabilitation, and women's safety and empowerment.
- It supports and strengthens the implementation of the Ministry's flagship missions—Mission Saksham Anganwadi & Poshan 2.0, Mission Vatsalya, and Mission Shakti—through a structured and transparent digital mechanism.

Importance

- The PANKHUDI portal uses digital technology to strengthen CSR partnerships and improve infrastructure and services for women and children across India, enhancing service delivery through key institutions and benefiting millions of citizens.

Source :PIB

GRAHAM-BLUMENTHAL SANCTIONS BILL

Context

- U.S. President Donald Trump has given his nod to the Graham-Blumenthal sanctions bill that will authorise the US President to **levy up to 500% tariffs** on nations that knowingly purchase Russian oil or uranium.

About

- This Bill would give the US tremendous leverage against countries like **China, India, and Brazil** to incentivise them to stop buying the cheap Russian oil.
- In 2018**, under similar pressure from the previous Trump administration, India had **“zeroed out” its oil imports from Iran and Venezuela as well.**
- Tariffs on India:** The United States has imposed high tariffs on Indian goods, up to **50%**.
 - Part of this tariff is connected to **India's continued purchase of Russian oil.**
- India's Stand:** India says the decision to buy oil from Russia is based on national interest. It wants to ensure energy security and keep fuel prices affordable for its people.

Source: TH

SPINA BIFIDA

Context

- Many countries launched national awareness campaigns and programs to prevent **spina bifida** through folic acid supplementation.

What Is Spina Bifida?

- Spina Bifida is a **congenital defect of the spinal cord** caused by **improper closure of the neural tube** during early pregnancy.
- The condition results in varying degrees of **paralysis**, ranging from mild weakness of the feet to complete paralysis of the lower limbs.
- Many affected children also suffer from **hydrocephalus, urinary and bowel incontinence, and orthopaedic deformities** such as clubfoot.
- Role of Folic Acid in Prevention:** Periconceptional folic acid intake prevents over 70% of Spina Bifida cases.
 - Folic acid is a **B-complex vitamin** that supports neural tube development in the embryo.

Source: TH

U.S. WITHDRAW FROM INTERNATIONAL SOLAR ALLIANCE

Context

- The United States has announced its withdrawal from the **International Solar Alliance (ISA)**.

About International Solar Alliance

- Genesis: India and France** jointly launched the International Solar Alliance (ISA) during **21st Conference of Parties (COP21)** to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) held in **Paris in 2015**.
- Aim:** To contribute to the implementation of the Paris Climate Agreement through the rapid and massive deployment of solar energy.
- Secretariat:** Gurugram.
- Governance:** The ISA's governance structure integrates decision-making across **Regional Committees, the Standing Committee, and the ISA Assembly**, ISA's apex decision - making body
- Members:** Member Countries are countries which have signed and ratified the Framework Agreement of the ISA.
 - At present, **more than 120 countries** are signatories to the ISA Framework Agreement.

Source: TH

SATELLITE TAGGING OF SEA TURTLES AIMS TO AID CONSERVATION

Context

- In a first-of-its-kind initiative, Olive Ridley sea turtles nesting on Chennai's coast have been satellite-tagged and released as part of a two-year telemetry study (2025–27) to strengthen conservation efforts.
 - ◆ It will track turtle movements, nesting behaviour, migratory routes, and interactions with fishing activities across key sites.

About Olive ridley turtles (*Lepidochelys olivacea*)

- **Olive ridley turtles (*Lepidochelys olivacea*)** are the smallest and most abundant of all sea turtles in the world.
- They get their name from the olive green colour of their heart-shaped shell, and inhabit warm waters of the Pacific, Atlantic, and Indian oceans.
- These are **carnivores** and feed mainly on jellyfish, shrimp etc.
- These turtles are best known for their unique mass nesting **called Arribada**, where thousands of females come together on the same beach to lay eggs.
- Major nesting sites in India are **Rushikulya rookery coast (Odisha)**, **Gahirmatha beach (Bhitarkanika National park)** and the mouth of the **Debi River**.

- Odisha is the largest mass nesting site for Olive Ridleys in the world.
- **Protection status:** IUCN Red List: Vulnerable
 - ◆ CITES: Appendix I

Source :TH

BIO-BITUMEN

Context

- India has become the **first country in the world to commercially produce bio-bitumen in road construction**.

About

- Bitumen is a **black, viscous mixture of hydrocarbons** produced by the **fractionation of crude oil**, and it serves as a **crucial binder in road construction**.
 - ◆ The process of making bio-bitumen involves **collection of post-harvest rice straw, palletisation, pyrolysis to produce bio-oil, and subsequent blending with conventional bitumen**.
- India currently **imports nearly 50% of its bitumen requirement**, and innovations like bio-bitumen would **significantly reduce foreign dependence** while strengthening domestic capabilities.
- The initiative will help in **reducing pollution** from crop residue burning.

Source: PIB