

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS (DCA)

Time: 45 Min

Date: 15-01-2026

growth

The global economy is recovering

from the slowdown in 2022

and is expected to grow

at a rate of 5.7% in 2023

and 5.9% in 2024

according to the latest

forecast by the International

Monetary Fund (IMF).

The Fund's latest

forecast cut to 6.7% medium-term recovery seen from govt's reforms

Table of Content

Ministry of Rural Development Launches National Campaign on Entrepreneurship

Global Risk Report 2026 Released

UGC Brings out New Rules Against Caste Discrimination

Employment and Social Trends 2026 Report: ILO

Delhi to Earn Revenue from 'Carbon Credits'

India Position on Futuristic Marine and Space Biotechnology

NEWS IN SHORT

Kashi-Tamil Sangamam

Export Preparedness Index (EPI) 2024

Jathiya Devi

Kuki-Zo Council and Demand for Union Territory

Kurinji Rajkumar

MINISTRY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT LAUNCHES NATIONAL CAMPAIGN ON ENTREPRENEURSHIP

In News

- A **National Campaign on Entrepreneurship** was launched to strengthen non-farm livelihoods for rural women under **Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM)**.
 - The campaign aims to train **50,000 Community Resource Persons (CRPs)** on enterprise promotion and impart Entrepreneurship Development Programme (EDP) training to **50 lakh SHG members**.

Importance of Rural Entrepreneurship

- **Reducing Overdependence on Agriculture:** Agriculture still employs 45% of India's workforce but contributes only 18% to GDP. Non-farm rural enterprises help absorb surplus labour.
- **Employment and Income Generation:** MSMEs contribute 30% of India's GDP and 45% of exports. Rural enterprises expand MSME base beyond urban centres.
- **Women-Led Development:** SHG-based enterprises improve female labour force participation, which remains around 25%. Income

control by women improves nutrition, health, and education outcomes.

- **Migration Reduction:** Local enterprises reduce seasonal and distress migration to urban areas.

Government Steps To Foster Rural Entrepreneurship

- **Pradhan Mantri Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP):** Implemented by KVIC, it provides subsidies up to 35% on project costs (higher in rural areas) for new micro-enterprises in manufacturing and services, targeting unemployed youth and artisans with loans up to Rs. 25 lakh.
- **ASPIRE Scheme:** Launched by MSME, it funds Livelihood Business Incubators (LBIs) in rural areas with up to Rs. 1 crore for infrastructure, skill programs, and innovation support to nurture agro-rural startups.
- **Lakhpatti Didi Initiative:** "Lakhpatti Didi" designates SHG women achieving 1 lakh+ annual household income (10,000+ monthly) over four seasons/cycles via farm/non-farm activities.
- **NABARD's Role:** NABARD supports rural non-farm sectors via refinancing, infrastructure (e.g., rural haats), capacity-building for SHGs/FPOs, and programs like MEDPs/LEDPs.

Challenges in Rural Entrepreneurship



About DAY-NRLM

- **Launch:** 2011 (restructured from Swarnajayanti Gram Swarojgar Yojana (SGSY)). NRLM was renamed as DAY-NRLM in 2016.
- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Rural Development
- **Funding Pattern:** Centrally Sponsored Scheme (60:40; 90:10 for NE & Himalayan states)

- Objective:** Reduce poverty by enabling poor rural households to access sustainable livelihoods and enhanced incomes.
- Core Strategy:**
 - Universal mobilisation of rural poor women into Self-Help Groups (SHGs)
 - Capacity building, access to credit, and livelihood diversification
- Key Focus Areas:**
 - Farm livelihoods
 - Non-farm livelihoods and enterprises
 - Financial inclusion and social empowerment

Source: PIB

GLOBAL RISK REPORT 2026 RELEASED

In News

- The World Economic Forum (WEF) released the **21st edition of the Global Risks Report (2026)**, warning that geo-economic confrontations pose the biggest risk to major powers.

Global Risks for 2026

- Geoeconomic Confrontation:** Rated as the top risk for 2026. This includes the “weaponization” of trade, finance, and technology through sanctions and tariffs (such as the US tariffs imposed by the US, banning critical minerals by China etc).
- State-Based Armed Conflict:** This is the second highest risk, fueled by ongoing wars like the conflict in Ukraine and recent volatility in regions like Venezuela and the Middle East.
- Extreme Weather:** While environmental risks remain the top priority for the next decade, they have slipped to third place (8%) in the immediate two-year outlook due to the urgency of economic and military conflicts.
- Societal Risks:** Polarization, misinformation,

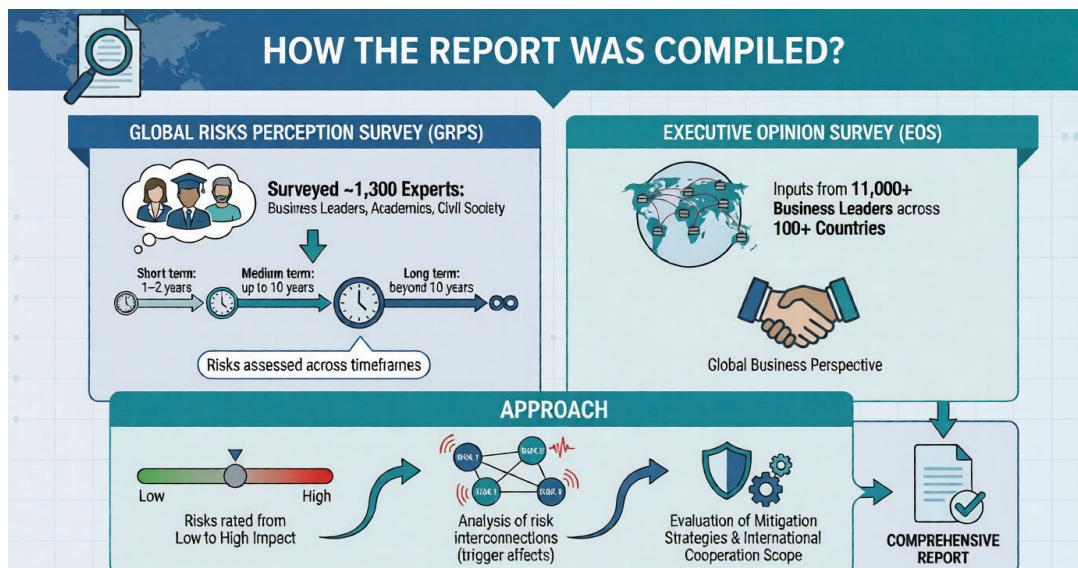
and AI-generated deepfakes are cited as major threats to social stability, especially during election cycles.

Biggest Risks to India

- Cybersecurity:** This is ranked as the top risk for India and India is going more towards digital payments.
- Wealth Inequality and Social Safety Nets:** Lack of robust social welfare schemes combined with rising income inequality poses a significant threat to internal stability.
- Economic External Shocks:** India is susceptible to domestic slowdowns caused by global supply chain disruptions and international tariffs.
- Critical Infrastructure & Resource Security:** The report highlights “water security” as a potential flashpoint, specifically noting that the Indus River Basin remains a point of contention between India and Pakistan, especially following the suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty.

Implications

- Fragmentation of global trade, disruption of supply chains, higher inflation and growth slowdown, social unrest & reduced trust in multilateralism.



Source: Firstpost

UGC BRINGS OUT NEW RULES AGAINST CASTE DISCRIMINATION

Context

- The University Grants Commission (UGC) has notified **new regulations** to address **caste-based discrimination** in higher education institutions across the country.

Evolution from Draft to Final Regulations

- A draft version released in February 2024 invited public criticism for:**
 - Excluding Other Backward Classes (OBCs) from the ambit of caste-based discrimination.
 - Proposing penalties to “discourage” false complaints, potentially deterring genuine grievances.
 - Ambiguity in defining discrimination.
- The final regulations addressed these concerns by:**
 - Explicitly including OBCs.
 - Removing provisions related to false complaints.
 - Expanding the definition of discrimination.

Need for New Regulations

- The UGC notified the Promotion of Equity in Higher Education Institutions Regulations, 2026 to **strengthen the framework against caste-based discrimination** in universities and colleges.
- Persistent reports of discrimination in higher education** highlighted the need for clearer definitions, stronger institutional mechanisms and enforceable penalties.

Major Highlights

- Caste-based discrimination:** It applies specifically to **Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Other Backward Classes (OBCs)**.
 - This marks an important shift by formally recognising OBCs within the anti-discrimination framework.
- Definition of Discrimination:** Discrimination includes any unfair, differential or biased treatment.
- Grounds of discrimination include:** Religion, race, caste, gender, place of birth and disability, individually or in combination.
 - The definition emphasises impact over intent, covering acts that nullify or impair equality of treatment in education.
 - The regulations omit specific prohibitions earlier present in the 2012 rules, such as bans on separate educational systems based on caste or religion.

- Equal Opportunity Centres (EOCs):** Every higher education institution is mandated to establish an Equal Opportunity Centre (EOC). **Objectives of EOCs:**

- Promote equity and equal opportunity.
- Foster social inclusion within campuses.
- EOCs act as the primary institutional mechanism for addressing discrimination-related concerns.

- Equity Committees under EOCs:** Each institution must constitute an Equity Committee under the EOC. **Key features:**

- These equity committees, chaired by the head of the institution must have the representation of OBCs, persons with disabilities, SCs, STs, and women
- The committee **must meet at least twice a year**, ensuring regular review rather than ad-hoc functioning.

- Reporting and Review Mechanisms:** EOCs are required to submit bi-annual reports on their functioning.

- Institutions must submit annual reports to the UGC.
- These reports enable the UGC to conduct periodic reviews and assess institutional compliance.

- National-level Monitoring Mechanism:** The UGC will constitute a National Monitoring Committee.

- Composition:** Representatives from statutory professional councils, commissions and civil society organisations.

- Functions:** Monitor implementation of the regulations.
 - Examine issues of discrimination.
 - Recommend preventive and corrective measures.
 - The committee is required to meet at least twice a year.

- Enforcement and Penalties:** For non-compliance, the UGC may:

- Debar institutions from UGC schemes.
- Prohibit them from offering degrees, distance learning or online programmes.
- Remove them from the UGC's list of recognised higher education institutions.

Significance:

- Strengthens the social justice framework in higher education.
- Aligns with constitutional mandates under Articles 14, 15 and 46.
- Enhances accountability through monitoring and sanctions.

Conclusion

- The 2026 regulations mark a step forward in institutionalising equity and inclusion in higher education.
- While they improve normative coverage and enforcement mechanisms, sustained impact will depend on robust monitoring, transparent reporting and genuine institutional commitment beyond formal compliance.

The University Grants Commission (UGC)

- Established in **1956**, it provides funding to universities and colleges, sets guidelines for academic programs, and promotes research in institutions of higher learning.
- Key functions of the UGC include:**
 - Accrediting universities:** It grants recognition to universities in India.
 - Funding:** Provides financial assistance to universities and colleges for development, research, and other academic purposes.
 - Regulating standards:** Sets quality standards in teaching, research, and infrastructure in higher education institutions.
 - Promoting academic growth:** Encourages research, innovation, and the development of new courses in various fields.

Source: TH

EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL TRENDS 2026 REPORT: ILO

Context

- Recently, the **International Labour Organization (ILO)** released its latest **World Employment and Social Outlook (WESO) Report** highlighting persistent inequalities in the global labor market.

Key Findings of Report

- Global Unemployment:** The **global unemployment rate** is projected to remain at **4.9% in 2026**, equivalent to **186 million people**.
 - However, **progress toward decent work has stagnated**, with millions still lacking access to quality, secure employment.
- Persistent Poverty Despite Economic Growth:** **Nearly 300 million workers** live in **extreme poverty**, earning less than **US\$3 per day**.
 - Informality** is increasing, about **2.1 billion workers** aim to hold **informal jobs** by 2026, largely concentrated in **Africa and Southern Asia**.

- Low-income countries** face severe challenges in transitioning to **higher-value industries**, limiting productivity and job security.
- Youth Employment Crisis Deepens:** Youth **unemployment** rose to **12.4% in 2025**.
 - Around **260 million young people** are **Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET)**, a rate of **27.9% in low-income countries**.
 - AI and automation** threaten to intensify challenges for young job seekers, especially educated youth in high-income economies.
- Persistent Gender Gaps:** Women make up **only two-fifths (40%) of global employment**.
 - They are **24% less likely than men** to participate in the labour force.
 - Gender equality progress has stalled**, driven by social norms and structural barriers.
- Demographic Shifts Reshaping Labour Markets:** **Ageing populations** in rich countries are slowing labour force growth.
 - Rapid population growth** in poor nations is not translating into productive jobs.
 - Projected employment growth for 2026:
 - 0.5%** in upper-middle-income countries;
 - 1.8%** in lower-middle-income economies;
 - 3.1%** in low-income countries;
 - Weak labour productivity** in poorer regions is widening global inequalities.
- Trade Uncertainty Threatens Job Stability:** **Global trade disruptions** and **supply chain bottlenecks** are cutting into wages, especially in **Asia and Europe**.
 - Trade supports **465 million jobs worldwide**, with over half in **Asia and the Pacific**.
 - Digitally delivered services** now make up **14.5% of global exports**.
 - Trade remains a powerful driver** of decent work but unevenly benefits regions.
- Inequality Between Regions Widening:** Productivity gaps between advanced and developing economies are deepening.
 - Low-income countries are at risk of **missing their demographic dividend** due to weak job creation and limited investment.
- Regional Labour Market Variations:** The ILO forecasts that **Latin America and the Caribbean** may continue reducing unemployment rates in the medium term, while **Northern America** could face worsening conditions.
 - The broader **labour underutilisation** (jobs gap) is projected at **408 million people** in 2026, indicating widespread **hidden**

unemployment and underemployment beyond official figures.

Key Policy Recommendations By ILO

- **Investing in skills, education, and infrastructure** to boost productivity and job quality.
- **Addressing gender and youth gaps** through inclusive participation and responsible technology adoption.
- **Strengthening trade and decent work outcomes**, ensuring global benefits are shared equitably.
- **Mitigating risks** from debt, AI disruption, and trade volatility via coordinated global and domestic policies.

About the International Labour Organization (ILO)

- **Founded:** 1919; became the **first specialized UN agency in 1946**.
- **Headquarters:** Geneva, Switzerland.
- **Mandate:** Promote rights at work, encourage decent employment opportunities, enhance social protection, and strengthen dialogue on work-related issues.
- **Tripartite Structure:** Brings together governments, employers, and workers from member states.

Other Key Flagship Reports Published by the ILO

- Global Wage Report
- Global Employment Trends for Youth
- Social Protection Reports
- World Social Protection Report.

Source: TH

DELHI TO EARN REVENUE FROM 'CARBON CREDITS'

Context

- Delhi government has announced that it has approved a framework for **carbon credit monetisation**.
 - ◆ The government has not released much details in the public domain regarding the framework or how and when it will be implemented.

About

- **Delhi government activities** such as operating electric buses, plantation drives, promoting solar energy and waste management, **will be used to generate carbon credits under the new policy**.

- ◆ The reduction in emissions through these initiatives will be **scientifically measured**, registered as carbon credits, and **sold in national and international carbon markets** to generate revenue.

- **A specialised agency** will be selected to handle documentation and registration as per international norms.
 - ◆ The model is based on **revenue-sharing**, with no upfront cost to the government.
 - ◆ All proceeds will be deposited in the **Consolidated Fund of the State**.
- **Delhi is one of the pioneers** among states to approve such a policy.
 - ◆ **Maharashtra** has approved one such policy four-five months ago.
 - ◆ This mechanism creates a **direct financial incentive** for the government to engage in activities which reduce carbon emissions.

Carbon Markets

- Carbon markets are **trading systems** in which **carbon credits are sold and bought**.
- Companies or individuals can use carbon markets to **compensate for their greenhouse gas emissions** by purchasing carbon credits from entities that remove or reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- **One tradable carbon credit equals one tonne of carbon dioxide** or the equivalent amount of a different greenhouse gas reduced, sequestered, or avoided.
- When a credit is used to reduce, sequester, or avoid emissions, **it becomes an offset and is no longer tradable**.
- There are broadly **two types of carbon markets: compliance and voluntary**.
 - ◆ **Compliance markets** are created as a result of any national, regional, and/or international policy or regulatory requirement.
 - ◆ **Voluntary carbon markets** – national and international – refer to the issuance, buying, and selling of carbon credits voluntarily.

India's Position in the Global Carbon Pricing Landscape

- India is moving towards a **rate-based Emissions Trading System (ETS)** with the adoption of the **Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS) in 2024**.
 - ◆ Rate-based ETS refers to a system where total emissions are not capped, but **individual entities are allocated a performance benchmark** that serves as a limit on their net emissions.

- The national ETS will initially cover **nine energy-intensive industrial sectors**.
- The scheme focuses on **emissions intensity, not absolute emissions caps**.
- Credit Certificates** will be issued to facilities that outperform benchmark emissions intensity levels.

Country	ETS Type	Coverage Sectors	Operational Status
India	Rate-based	9 industrial sectors	Regulatory stage
China	Rate-based	Power, cement, steel, aluminum	Operational
Brazil	Cap-based	All sectors except agriculture	Law passed in Dec 2024
Indonesia	Rate-based	Sectors expanded in 2024 to include Grid-connected coal/gas power plants	Operational

Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS)

- It involves two key elements:** a compliance mechanism for obligated entities (primarily industrial sectors) and an offset mechanism for voluntary participation.
- The CCTS aims to incentivize and support entities in their efforts to decarbonize the Indian economy.
- CCTS laid the foundation for the Indian Carbon Market (ICM) by establishing the **institutional framework**.

Government Steps to Strengthen Carbon Market Readiness

- As highlighted during the COP 27, India balances its developmental needs with lower carbon emissions through **Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDR-RC) principles**.
- India's efforts include:**
 - Mission LiFE and the Green Credit Program to promote a sustainable lifestyle.
 - Creation of the National Steering Committee for the Indian Carbon Market (NSCICM) and the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) under the Ministry of Power.
 - Incentives for private sector participation.

Conclusion

- As global markets evolve and instruments like CBAM create external pressures, India is aligning its policies to maintain competitiveness while achieving climate goals.
- By focusing on emissions intensity rather than absolute caps, India's rate-based ETS offers a pragmatic and flexible path forward, particularly for an economy balancing development with decarbonization.

Source: IE

INDIA POSITION ON FUTURISTIC MARINE AND SPACE BIOTECHNOLOGY

In News

- Futuristic space and marine biotechnology research focuses on using underexplored environments, such as the deep oceans and outer space, to develop new biological knowledge, materials, and manufacturing processes.

What are Marine biotechnology and Space biotechnology?

- Marine biotechnology:** It involves studying microorganisms, algae, and other marine life to discover bioactive compounds, enzymes, biomaterials, food ingredients, and biostimulants.
 - These organisms have evolved to survive high pressure, salinity, low light, and nutrient-poor conditions making them valuable for industrial and climate-resilient applications.
- Space biotechnology:** It studies how microbes, plants, and human biological systems behave under microgravity and radiation.
 - This includes microbial biomanufacturing for food, materials, and life-support systems, as well as research on astronauts' microbiomes to develop health and probiotic interventions for long-duration missions.

Progress across the globe

- The **European Union** funds large-scale programmes on marine bioprospecting, algae-based biomaterials, and bioactive compounds, supported by shared research infrastructure such as the European Marine Biological Resource Centre.
- China** has rapidly expanded seaweed aquaculture and marine bioprocessing integrating deep-sea exploration with industrial applications in food, pharmaceuticals, and biomaterials.

- ♦ Other countries with vast marine resources such as the United States and Australia also support marine biotech initiatives.
- In **space biotechnology**, the U.S. leads through NASA and the International Space Station, where research on microbial behaviour, protein crystallisation, stem cells, and closed-loop life-support systems informs drug discovery, regenerative medicine, and long-duration human missions.
- The **European Space Agency**, China's Tiangong programme, and Japan's JAXA conduct experiments on plant growth, microbiomes, and biomaterials generation in microgravity.

Importance for India

- India's 11,000-km coastline and 2-million-sq-km Exclusive Economic Zone provide access to rich marine biodiversity, but the country's share of global marine output remains low.
 - ♦ Therefore, investing in marine biomanufacturing could unlock new sources of food, energy, chemicals, and biomaterials while easing pressure on land, freshwater, and agriculture.
- Space biotechnology is critical for India's long-term ambitions in space exploration, enabling safe food production, human health management, and biological manufacturing in extreme environments.
- Together, futuristic marine and space biotechnology **can strengthen India's bioeconomy, enhance strategic autonomy**, and position India as a leader in next-generation biomanufacturing.

Present status

- India's domestic production of marine biomass such as seaweed remains modest, with an annual cultivated output of around 70,000 tonnes.
- As a result, India continues to import seaweed-derived components such as agar, carrageenan, and alginates for use in food, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, and medical applications.
 - ♦ Targeted initiatives under the Blue Economy agenda, the Deep Ocean Mission, and, more recently, the BioE3 are pushing the sector toward integrated marine biomanufacturing, linking cultivation, extraction, and downstream applications.
 - ♦ A small number of private players are exploring pathways to scale marine biomass into high-value ingredients, and bio-based products.

- In **space biotechnology**, ISRO's microgravity biology programme is conducting experiments on microbes, algae, and biological systems to study food production, life-support regeneration, and human health in space.
- Research on microbial behaviour and astronaut microbiomes is gaining relevance as India prepares for longer-duration human spaceflight missions.

Challenges

- Marine and space biotechnology remain relatively unexplored frontiers, where early movers are likely to gain lasting strategic and technological advantages.
- The primary risk lies in slow and fragmented progress in research and development.
- The private-sector participation is limited as these technologies are still nascent.

Suggestions and Way Forward

- India's rich and diverse marine ecology positions it well to emerge as a leader in marine biotechnology.
- India's ambitions as a space-faring nation require the development of biological technologies that account for the genetic, nutritional, and health profiles of Indian populations, rather than relying solely on externally developed solutions.
- A dedicated roadmap that defines timelines and outcomes for marine and space biotechnology would help align investments, coordinate institutions, and channel resources more effectively.

Source :TH

NEWS IN SHORT

KASHI-TAMIL SANGAMAM

Context

- PM Modi hailed the **Kashi-Tamil Sangamam** in strengthening cultural understanding, fostering academic and people-to-people exchanges and creating lasting bonds.

Kashi-Tamil Sangamam

- **Organized by:** Ministry of Education.
- **Launched in:** 2022.
- **Kashi Tamil Sangamam 4.0 began** on December 2, 2025, carrying forward the cultural and civilisational link between Tamil Nadu and Kashi.

- **Universities:** IIT Madras and Banaras Hindu University (BHU).
- **Aim:** To rediscover, reaffirm, and celebrate the age-old links between Tamil Nadu and Kashi.
 - ◆ It is in sync with NEP 2020's emphasis on integrating the Indian Knowledge Systems with modern systems of knowledge.
 - ◆ It provides an opportunity for scholars, students, philosophers, and artists from the two regions to share their knowledge.
 - ◆ It also aims to make the youth aware and experience cultural oneness.
- **Both Kashi and Chennai** have been recognised by UNESCO as 'Creative Cities of Music'.

Source: TH

EXPORT PREPAREDNESS INDEX (EPI) 2024

Context

- NITI Aayog released the **Export Preparedness Index (EPI) 2024**.

About

- It is a **comprehensive assessment of export readiness** across India's states and union territories.
- **The first edition** of the EPI was published in **2020** and this is the **4th edition**.
- **EPI provides an evidence-based framework** to evaluate the strength, resilience, and inclusiveness of sub-national export ecosystems.

Pillars of Export Preparedness Index (EPI) 2024

Export Infrastructure	Business Ecosystem	Policy & Governance	Export Performance
Trade & Logistics Infrastructure	Access to Finance	State Export Policy	Export Outcomes
Connectivity & Utilities	Human Capital	Institutional Capacity	Export Diversification
Industrial Infrastructure	MSME Ecosystem	Trade Facilitation	Global Integration

- **Top Performers:** In 2024, Maharashtra, along with Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh, are leading performers among large states.
 - ◆ Uttarakhand, Jammu and Kashmir, Nagaland, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu, and Goa are listed as leading performers in the category of small states, northeastern states and union territories.

Source: AIR

JATHIYA DEVI

In News

- Recently, Jathiya Devi has been identified for an ambitious urban development project to be executed by the Himachal Pradesh Housing and Urban Development Authority (HIMUDA).

About

- Jathiya Devi is Located about 14 km from Shimla city and derives its name from the existence of an old Jathiya Devi shrine in the area.
- The project is envisioned as a planned satellite mountain township to ease pressure on Shimla, create new economic hubs, and promote sustainable, disaster-resilient urban growth.
- **Concerns:** The Social Impact Assessment (SIA) acknowledges possible displacement and loss of assets such as temples, schools, shops, canals, and homes, but highlights benefits including employment, improved services, economic integration, skill development, and environmental sustainability.

Source :IE

KUKI-ZO COUNCIL AND DEMAND FOR UNION TERRITORY

Context

- The **Kuki-Zo Council (KZC)**, the apex civil body representing the **Kuki-Zo people**, has reiterated its demand for the creation of a **Union Territory for Kuki-Zo tribes in Manipur**.

Background

- An **ethnic conflict** erupted in **May 2023** between:
 - ◆ The **Meitei community**, which predominantly inhabits the **Imphal Valley**, and
 - ◆ The **Kuki-Zo community**, which largely resides in the **surrounding hill areas**.
- The conflict was triggered by the **Meitei demand for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status**, which was opposed by the Kuki-Zo groups due to concerns over land rights and political representation.
- The **Kuki-Zo Council (KZC)** was formed in **October 2024**, following nearly **18 months of violence (2023–2025)**, during which the Kuki-Zo community alleged bias.

Who are the Kuki-Zo Groups?

- The **Kuki-Zo people** are an ethnic community spread across **Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Assam, and Myanmar**.
- They share close ethnic and cultural ties with other **Chin–Mizo groups of Myanmar and Mizoram**.

- Since the **1980s–90s**, several Kuki-Zo insurgent groups have emerged, primarily demanding:
 - Greater autonomy and self-determination**,
 - Protection of tribal land and rights**, and
 - In some cases, **separate statehood**.



Source: TH

KURINJI RAJKUMAR

In News

- G. Rajkumar, a former bank employee and environmentalist known as "Kurinji Rajkumar," passed away in Thiruvananthapuram.

Neelakurinji

- It is a purplish flowering shrub, which blooms once in 12 years in the hills of the Western Ghats and Himalayan hills.
 - It is said that Nilgiris gets its name due to the magical blue hue imparted by these stunning flowers.
- It is an endemic shrub species seen only in the natural high-altitude montane grasslands of southwest India, with an altitude ranging from 1,340 to 2,600 m.
- It is predominately found in the valley of **Western Ghats and Nilgiri Hills of South India (Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu)**
- It has most recently been assessed for The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species in 2024 and listed as **Vulnerable** emphasising the need for its conservation."

Major Contributions of "Kurinji Rajkumar,"

- He was the driving force behind the Save Kurinji Campaign, which played a key role in raising awareness about the conservation of the Neelakurinji (*Strobilanthes kunthiana*) and its fragile grassland ecosystem.
- His commitment began after witnessing the mass flowering in 1982, leading to treks and awareness efforts that evolved into a major environmental movement.
- He later focused on campaigns in the Munnar region, culminating in the establishment of the 32-sq km Neelakurinji Sanctuary in 2006, fulfilling his lifelong dream.

Source :TH

