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REPORT ON SEVERITY OF ROAD ACCIDENT FATALITIES

Context

- The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) and the NGO SaveLIFE Foundation released the **joint report on India's top 100 districts in terms of severity of road accident fatalities.**

Major Findings

- **Uttar Pradesh** accounted for most of the top 20 districts in fatalities.
    - **Tamil Nadu has 19** "severe" districts in terms of fatalities, followed by 11 districts in Maharashtra, nine districts in Karnataka and eight in Rajasthan.
- **Most accidents are concentrated in known locations,** such as specific road stretches, crash-prone spots, and police station areas.
- **63% of the total road crash fatalities** occur outside of the National Highways.
- **Around 54% of all fatalities** were reported on **18 target corridors** of the National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) and state Public Works Department (PWD) roads.
- **Factors Responsible: 59%** of all road accident fatalities **do not involve any traffic violation**, indicating that **road engineering** is one of the biggest contributory factors for deaths.
    - Rear-end, head-on and pedestrian crashes were responsible for **72% of all fatalities.**
    - On violations contributing to crashes, speeding accounted for 1**9% of deaths,** followed by **rash driving (7%) and dangerous overtaking (3%).**
- **Recommendations:**
    - NHAI and state PWDs should **conduct a comprehensive Road Safety Survey** on each corridor and identify the prevalence of engineering issues.
    - It has recommended **upgrading the critical police stations with adequate manpower** for undertaking enforcement activities, auditing all **108 ambulances** for compliance with the **National Ambulance code.**
    - **Existing government schemes** must be utilised effectively, with **better coordination among key departments** — police, hospitals, and road agencies.
    - **The current budget** should be aligned for engineering, enforcement resources and health capacity.

Road Accidents in India

- **India ranks first** globally in terms of the number of annual road accident fatalities.
    - Its numbers are far ahead of **second and third-ranked countries:** China accounts for just 36% of India's total road deaths, and the United States for 25%.
- The number of road accident fatalities in India **rose 2.3% to over 1.77 lakh in 2024,** resulting in the death of **485 persons every day.**
- **As per the World Road Statistics 2024,** the fatality rate per lakh population is 4.3 in China, and 12.76 in the United States of America, as compared to India, where it is 11.89.

Do you know?

- **In September 2020,** the UN General Assembly launched the **Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021-2030** which aims to reduce road traffic deaths and injuries by **at least 50% by 2030.**
- The 2nd Global High-Level Conference on Road Safety was held in **Brazil**, which declared **2011-2020 as the 1st decade of action for Road Safety**.
    - In the **Brasilia Declaration**, the participating countries set targets under the **Sustainable Development Goals** and pledged to reduce road crash **fatalities by 50% in the next 5 years.**

Government Initiatives

- **National Road Safety Policy India, 2010:** It emphasized the need for better road infrastructure, stricter enforcement of traffic rules, enhanced emergency medical services, public awareness campaigns, and improved post-crash care.
- **Electronic Detailed Accident Report (e-DAR)/ Integrated Road Accident Database (iRAD):** Centralized system for reporting, managing, and analyzing road accident data to improve safety.
- **Speedy Assistance to Accident Victims:**
    - Award ₹25,000 for Good Samaritans who help accident victims.
    - Faster compensation: ₹2.5 lakh for grievous hurt, ₹5 lakh for death.
    - Enhanced compensation for hit-and-run victims: ₹2 lakh for death, ₹50,000 for grievous hurt.
    - Simplified procedures for third-party insurance, including hired drivers.

- **Vehicle Fitness:** Old, unfit vehicles contribute to accidents. The Ministry is setting up model Inspection and Certification Centers across States/UTs (28 States/UTs covered by 2024).

- **IIT Madras Collaboration:** Establishing a Center of Excellence for Road Safety to develop new products, conduct research, and promote safety initiatives.

- **Accident Blackspot Rectification:** Priority on identifying and improving accident-prone spots on National Highways through engineering measures.

- **Road Safety Audits:** Mandatory audits for all highway projects at design, construction, and operation stages.

- **Brasilia Declaration**: India was one amongst the initial 100+ countries to have signed the Brasilia Declaration in 2015 committing to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal 3.6 i.e.to half the number of global deaths and injuries from road traffic crashes by 2030.

- **Motor Vehicles Amendment Act, 2019**: The act brought about higher penalties for traffic violations, including speeding, drunk driving, and not wearing helmets or seat belts.

Way Ahead

- Global best practices show that countries that adopted a **Systems Approach** have been able to achieve their targets of 50% reduction in fatalities or are close to achieving it.

- India has done substantial research on road safety through premiere institutions like Indian Institute of Technology (IITs) and Central Road Research Institute (CRRI).

  - The government can collaborate with these institutes to improve policies and action plans.

- **The corporate sector can play a role** in helping strengthen road safety by funding research, spreading awareness.

Source: TH

ACHIEVING EFFICIENCIES IN MSME SECTOR THROUGH CONVERGENCE OF SCHEMES: NITI AAYOG

Context

- The **NITI Aayog** has released a report titled 'Achieving Efficiencies in MSME Sector through Convergence of Schemes', presenting a detailed framework to strengthen the effectiveness of government interventions in the MSME sector.

Need for Convergence of Schemes

- **Avoid duplication and inefficiency:** The Ministry of MSME currently oversees 18 schemes with overlapping objectives, leading to fragmented implementation and reduced outreach.

- **Enhance efficiency and outcomes:** Convergence simplifies access for beneficiaries, reduces administrative complexity, and ensures resources translate into measurable results.

Framework for Convergence (Two-pronged Convergence Model)

- **Information Convergence:** Integration of data across central and state levels to:

  - Enable **informed policy decisions;**
  - Improve **inter-ministerial coordination;**
  - Strengthen **governance and monitoring**

- **Process Convergence:** Streamlining scheme structures to:

  - Merge **similar or overlapping programmes;**
  - Combine **common operational components;**
  - Encourage **collaboration across ministries and states**

Key Recommendations

- **Centralized Digital Portal:** An **AI-powered MSME portal** integrating all schemes, compliance mechanisms, finance options, and market intelligence.

  - Features include unified access to scheme details, AI chatbots and dashboards for guidance, real-time mobile accessibility, and data-driven decision support.

- **Cluster Development Scheme Integration:** Proposes merging Scheme of Fund for Regeneration of Traditional Industries (**SFURTI**) with the Micro and Small Enterprises – Cluster Development Programme (**MSE-CDP**).

  - Key elements include a dedicated sub-scheme for traditional industries, unified governance under MSE-CDP, and consolidated funding for scale and efficiency.

- **Skill Development Convergence:** Rationalisation of skill programmes into a **three-tier structure**:

  - Entrepreneurship and business management;
  - MSME technical and digital skills;
  - Training for rural and women artisans;
    - It enhances coordination, retains inclusivity, and promotes traditional and local crafts.

- **Dedicated Marketing Assistance Wing:** Creation of a **Marketing Wing** with two divisions:
  - ◆ **Domestic Wing:** Facilitating participation in trade fairs, buyer-seller meets, and national exhibitions.
  - ◆ **International Wing:** Supporting global market access through overseas trade fairs and B2B events.

- **Integration of Innovation and ASPIRE Schemes:** Integration of **ASPIRE** (A Scheme for Promoting Innovation, Rural Industry & Entrepreneurship) into **MSME Innovative** to form a unified innovation framework for **agro-rural enterprises**.
  - ◆ Existing ASPIRE funds will continue, while future budgets will earmark a portion for rural incubation.

- **Safeguarding Targeted Initiatives:** The report emphasizes the preservation of focused programmes, including:
  - ◆ **National SC/ST Hub;**
  - ◆ **Promotion of MSMEs in the North Eastern Region (NER);**
  - ◆ **PMEGP** and **PM Vishwakarma**, which are to remain independent due to their scale and strategic importance.

Implementation Strategy and Governance

- The convergence strategy advocates a **cautious and phased approach**, merging schemes with overlapping objectives while maintaining the identity of flagship and targeted initiatives.

- Where mergers are not feasible, the report recommends:
  - ◆ Joint workshops for inter-ministerial coordination;
  - ◆ Shared capacity-building initiatives;
  - ◆ Continuous tracking of outcomes to ensure sustained impact;

- The overarching goal is to **improve governance efficiency**, **reduce administrative burden**, and **maximize the economic contribution** of India's MSMEs.

About the MSMEs & Indian Landscape

- According to the World Bank**,** MSMEs account for around **90% of formal businesses** and **nearly 50% of global employment**, underscoring their critical role in shaping resilient and diversified economies.

- India's MSME sector is among the world's largest, comprising **over 74 million registered enterprises**, including **29 million women-led businesses**, and providing employment to **over 320 million people**.

- MSMEs contribute substantially to **India's GDP (**approx**. 30%), manufacturing output (**approx**. 45%) and exports (**approx**. 40%)**, reinforcing the nation's emergence as a global manufacturing and innovation hub.

- MSMEs are **classified based on their investment** in plant and machinery or equipment and annual turnover:
  - ◆ **Micro Enterprises:** Investment ≤ ₹1 crore and turnover ≤ ₹5 crore;
  - ◆ **Small Enterprises:** Investment ≤ ₹10 crore and turnover ≤ ₹50 crore;
  - ◆ **Medium Enterprises:** Investment ≤ ₹50 crore and turnover ≤ ₹250 crore;
    - ▪ This classification was **revised in 2020** to provide a **more inclusive and growth-oriented framework**.

Source: PIB
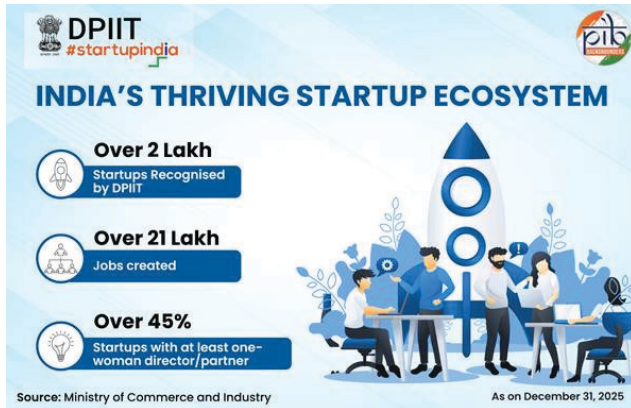
A DECADE OF STARTUP INDIA

Context

- PM Modi participated in a programme marking a decade of the **Startup India initiative** on **National Startup Day.**
  - ◆ **Startup India** was launched on **January 16, 2016,** as a transformative national programme to promote entrepreneurship and enable investment-driven growth.

India's Startup Ecosystem

- India has rapidly evolved into one of the **world's largest startup ecosystems,** with **more than 2 lakh startups as of 2025** .

- **India** has the **3rd largest startup ecosystem** in the world.

- **Major hubs like** Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Mumbai, and Delhi-NCR have been at the forefront of this transformation.

- India has **over 120 unicorns** with a valuation exceeding *$350 billion*.

- **Global Innovation Index (GII) 2025 ranking:** It provides **performance metrics and ranks around 140 economies** on their **innovation ecosystems.**

- India has made a steady climb **from 48 rank in 2020 to 38 in 2025.**
- At the same time, **smaller cities are also steadily contributing** to the momentum with **around 50% of the startups** emerging from Tier II/ III cities.

DPIIT #startupindia

INDIA'S THRIVING STARTUP ECOSYSTEM

- **Over 2 Lakh** Startups Recognised by DPIIT
- **Over 21 Lakh** Jobs created
- **Over 45%** Startups with at least one-woman director/partner

Source: Ministry of Commerce and Industry　　As on December 31, 2025

Challenges in Startup Ecosystem

- **Funding Constraints and Capital Volatility:** Indian startups face inconsistent access to capital, especially during global economic slowdowns.
  - Heavy dependence on foreign venture capital exposes them to external shocks.
  - Early-stage and deep-tech startups face acute funding shortages due to long gestation periods.
- **Regulatory Complexity and Policy Uncertainty:** Multiple compliance requirements across central and state governments, frequent regulatory changes, and tax-related ambiguities increase operational costs and discourage risk-taking and innovation.
- **Talent Shortages and Skill Mismatch:** There is a shortage of skilled professionals in emerging technologies such as AI, semiconductors, and cybersecurity.

- **Infrastructure and Ecosystem Gaps:** Startup-support infrastructure is concentrated in metro cities, limiting the growth of startups in Tier-2 and Tier-3 regions.
- **Weak Innovation and R&D Culture:** Low private-sector investment in R&D, poor industry–academia linkages, and inadequate awareness of intellectual property rights constrain innovation and commercialization of indigenous technologies.

Government Initiatives

STARTUP INDIA

KEY INITIATIVES

- Competitive Federalism → States' Startup Ranking Framework (SRF)
- Scale Capital → Fund of Funds for Startups (FFS)
- Early Funding → Startup India Seed Fund Scheme (SISFS)
- Investor Access → Startup India Investor Connect Portal
- Risk Mitigation → Credit Guarantee Scheme for Startups (CGSS)
- Startup Mentorship → National Mentorship Portal (MAARG)
- Ecosystem Gateway → Startup India Hub

Source: Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Ministry of Commerce & Industry

- **Sector-specific and ministry-led initiatives**

Scheme	Ministry	Objective
Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) (2016)	NITI Aayog	Foster nationwide innovation culture
GENESIS (Gen-Next Support for Innovative Startups) (2022)	Ministry of Electronics & IT (Meity)	Deep-tech startups in Tier II/III cities
Technology Incubation and Development of Entrepreneurs (TIDE) 2.0 (2019)	Ministry of Electronics & IT (Meity)	ICT startup incubation & scale-up
MeitY Startup Hub (MSH) (2016)	Ministry of Electronics & IT (Meity)	Integrate tech startup ecosystem
NIDHI (National Initiative for Developing and Harnessing Innovations) (2016)	Department of Science & Technology (DST)	Support S&T startups from idea to market
Startup Village Entrepreneurship Programme (SVEP) (2015)	Ministry of Rural Development (DAY- NRLM)	Promote rural entrepreneurship
ASPIRE (Scheme for Promotion of Innovation, Rural Industries and Entrepreneurship) (2015)	Ministry of MSME	Strengthen rural enterprise incubators
Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP) (2008)	Ministry of MSME (KVIC)	Subsidised credit for self-employment

- **AI Centers of Excellence:** Establishing dedicated AI hubs and innovation centers across the country to support AI startups and research.
- **India's Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI):** Combines public funding with private sector innovation to drive digital transformation.

Conclusion

- Over the last 10 years, India's startup ecosystem has experienced tremendous growth, becoming the third-largest in the world.
- This dynamic collaboration among stakeholders has strengthened the ecosystem, driving economic growth and empowering the next generation of innovators.

Source: AIR

═══ NEWS IN SHORT ═══

2025 WARMEST LA NINA YEAR ON RECORD

In News

- According to a new report ,2025 was the third warmest year on record and the **warmest La Niña year**.

La Niña

- It is the cool phase of the **El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO).**
- It is a Pacific Ocean weather pattern where warm water and clouds shift westward.
    - This causes heavier rainfall in regions like Indonesia and Australia.
    - Conversely, areas like the southwestern United States experience drier-than-usual conditions.

El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO)

- El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) is a climate phenomenon involving sea temperature changes in the central and eastern tropical Pacific and corresponding atmospheric fluctuations, affecting global weather.
- **ENSO has three phases:**
    - **In the neutral phase**, prevailing east-to-west winds push warm surface waters toward Indonesia, bringing cooler waters to the eastern Pacific.

- **In El Niño**, weakened winds reduce this displacement, warming the eastern Pacific
- **In La Niña,** stronger winds push more warm water west, cooling the eastern Pacific.
    - These phases occur irregularly every 2–7 years and alter global atmospheric circulation, influencing weather worldwide.

Impacts on India

- In India, El Niño usually causes less rainfall and higher temperatures, while La Niña brings more rainfall and cooler temperatures.
- La Niña may cause colder winters in parts of India, especially the north, with cold waves and more snowfall in hilly regions.
    - However, global warming can offset these cooling effects, so La Niña does not always result in a colder winter.
        - La Niña impacts are occurring within the broader context of human-induced climate change, which is raising global temperatures, intensifying extreme weather, and affecting seasonal rainfall and temperatures.

Source :DTE

WOMANIYA INITIATIVE

In News

- Government e-Marketplace (GeM) marked seven years of the Womaniya initiative

Womaniya initiative

- It was launched in 2019, aims to enhance access for women entrepreneurs and Self-Help Groups (SHGs) to government markets by providing a direct, transparent, and fully digital interface with buyers, removing intermediaries and entry barriers.
- It is aimed at strengthening the participation of women-led Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs) in public procurement.
- Over time, it has evolved into a national ecosystem supporting women-led MSEs and strengthening their participation in public procurement.

Progress

- Womaniya has grown into a structured and scalable ecosystem and has emerged as a flagship initiative enabling women-led enterprises to scale their businesses through resilience and credibility.

- Over two lakh women-led MSEs are registered on the GeM portal, collectively securing public procurement orders worth over 80,000 crore, which is 4.7% of GeM's total order value, exceeding the mandated 3% target for women-owned and women-led enterprises.

Importance

- The Womaniya initiative reflects the Government's commitment to gender-inclusive economic growth and demonstrates how policy, platforms and partnerships can work together to transform participation into prosperity.

Source :PIB

INDIA'S FIRST NATIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAMME FOR TRIBAL HEALERS

Context

- The Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA) is **organizing India's first National Capacity Building Programme** for **Tribal Healers** on Strengthening **Health Outreach in Tribal Areas.**

About

- The initiative will **recognize and integrate tribal and indigenous healers** as **trusted community-level partners** within India's public health ecosystem.
  - **Tribal healers** remain the most culturally trusted touchpoint for healthcare-seeking behaviour, especially in remote habitations where frontline staff mobility and Institutional access remain limited.
  - Healers possess deep-rooted ethnomedicinal knowledge, are accessible to the community, and often act as the **first point of health contact.**
- An MoU will be signed between **ICMR–Regional Medical Research Centre (RMRC) and MoTA** to establish India's **first National Tribal Health Observatory** – the **Bharat Tribal Health Observatory (B-THO)** under **Project DRISTI.**
  - It will institutionalize tribe-disaggregated health surveillance, implementation research, and research-driven disease elimination initiatives in tribal districts.
- **The capacity-building programme** is being organized with strong technical and knowledge partnerships involving leading national and international institutions.

  - **These collaborations will** bring global evidence, national best practices, and scientific rigour to structured engagement with tribal healers.

Source: PIB

28TH CONFERENCE OF SPEAKERS AND PRESIDING OFFICERS OF THE COMMONWEALTH (CSPOC)

In News

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the 28th Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth (CSPOC) at Samvidhan Sadan, highlighting how India has transformed its diversity into a democratic strength.

28th Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth (CSPOC)

- The conference, attended by 61 Speakers and Presiding Officers from 42 Commonwealth countries.
- It aims to promote knowledge and understanding of parliamentary democracy in its various forms and to develop parliamentary institutions.
  - Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla is the Chairperson of this Conference.
- It focused on the use of Artificial Intelligence in Parliament, the sharing of best practices and innovative ideas among the participants, Social media's impact on Parliamentarians, enhancing public understanding of Parliament and Security, and the health and well-being of MPs.

Key Points

- The Prime Minister emphasized that Indian **democracy ensures last-mile delivery** of welfare, **helping lift around 25 crore people** out of poverty.
- He underscored **India's economic and institutional progress,** citing its status as the fastest-growing major economy, world's largest digital payments system, leading vaccine producer, and hub for startups, infrastructure, and manufacturing.
- He noted the **scale of Indian democracy**, with 980 million registered voters in the 2024 elections, and highlighted the increasing leadership role of women at all levels of governance.

- He traced **India's democratic tradition to centuries-old practice**s of consultation and collective decision-making, comparing it to a deep-rooted tree.

- He emphasized India's role in raising **Global South concerns at international platforms like the G20.**

- He also highlighted the use of AI in parliamentary proceedings to enhance citizen understanding.

Source :IE

INDIA'S FIRST STATE-FUNDED BSL-4 LAB FOR DEADLIEST PATHOGENS IN GUJARAT

In News

- The Union Home Minister laid the foundation stone for a **Bio-Safety Level 4 (BSL-4) Containment Facility** and laboratory in Gandhinagar, describing it as a "health shield" for India.

BSL-4 Facility

- Bio-Safety Level 4 (BSL-4) labs represent the highest level of biological containment.

- It is designed to safely study the world's most dangerous and highly infectious pathogens that often lack vaccines or treatments.

- Scientists conduct advanced research, develop diagnostics, vaccines, and therapeutics, and carry out rapid outbreak investigation and response under strictly controlled and internationally monitored conditions.

Preset status in India

- Currently, there is only one civilian BSL-4 laboratory functional in India, located at the National Institute of Virology (NIV) in Pune, Maharashtra.

- However, in late 2024, the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) under the Defence Ministry set up its own BSL-4 lab in Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh.

- The **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare** had established a network of Virus Research and Diagnostic Laboratories (VRDL) under the central sector scheme "Setting up of a Nationwide Network of Laboratories for Managing Epidemics and National Calamities."

  - Under this scheme, 165 biosafety laboratories, including 11 BSL-3 level labs and 154 BSL-2 level labs, have been approved.

New laboratory in Gujarat

- The BSL-4 laboratory coming up in Gandhinagar, along with an Animal Bio-Safety Level (ABSL) facility, will be a strategic national asset where research is conducted on the deadliest pathogens known to mankind, including the Ebola virus, Marburg virus, Crimean-Congo Hemorrhagic Fever (CCHF) virus, Kyasanur Forest Disease virus, and Nipah virus, among others.

Source :IE

SYNTHETIC CATTLE BREEDS

Context

- India registers two new synthetic cattle breeds **Karan Fries and Vrindavani** developed by the **National Dairy Research Institute (NDRI).**

About

- **Karan Fries is a synthetic cow breed** developed through crossbreeding **Holstein Friesian,** a globally recognised high-yielding breed with **India's indigenous Tharparkar zebu cattle,** known for their hardiness and resilience.

- **The synthetic Karan Fries** cow breed combines high productivity with resilience, delivering peak daily milk yields of up to 46.5 kg.

  - Indigenous breeds typically produce 1,000–2,000 kg of milk per lactation.

- Karan Fries and Vrindavani along with another high-yielding synthetic cow breed took the country's total number of **registered livestock and poultry breeds to 246.**

- **Synthetic cattle breeds** are those developed through **planned cross-breeding of two or more breeds** usually **indigenous (Bos indicus)** with **exotic (Bos taurus)** followed by **stabilisation of desired traits** over generations.

  - Once stabilised, they breed true and are recognised as distinct breeds.

- **Significance:**

  - Higher productivity than indigenous cattle.

  - Better climate resilience than pure exotic breeds.

  - Improved economic returns for dairy farmers.

  - Lower mortality and better reproductive efficiency.

Source: BS