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DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS (DCA)

Time: 45 Min

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MSME DEMANDS AHEAD OF 2026-27 BUDGET

Context

- Ahead of the Union Budget 2026–27, representatives of MSME have flagged rising industrial stress and sought targeted reforms in credit access, risk protection, and compliance norms.
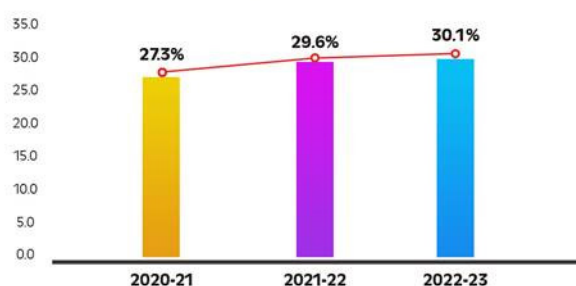
What are MSMEs?

- MSMEs or Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises are businesses that are defined by their **investment and turnover levels.**

- They are considered an important sector of the economy as they create jobs, generate income, and promote entrepreneurship.

Existing & Revised definition of MSMEs

Existing MSME Classification			
Criteria : Investment in Plant & Machinery or Equipment			
Classification	Micro	Small	Medium
Mfg. Enterprises	Investment<Rs. 25 lac	Investment<Rs. 5 cr.	Investment <Rs. 10 cr.
Services Enterprise	Investment<Rs. 10 lac	Investment< Rs. 2 cr.	Investment<Rs. 5 cr.
Revised MSME Classification			
Composite Criteria : Investment And Annual Turnover			
Classification	Micro	Small	Medium
Manufacturing & Services	Investment< Rs. 1 cr. and Turnover < Rs.5 cr.	Investment< Rs. 10 cr. and Turnover < Rs.50 cr.	Investment< Rs. 20 cr. and Turnover < Rs.100 cr.

Contribution of MSMEs

- **Contribution in Economy:** MSMEs are often called the backbone of the Indian economy; they account for more than 11 crore jobs and contribute around **27% of India's GDP.**

Share of MSME Gross Value Added (GVA) in India's GDP

- **Employment Generation:** The sector consists of around 6.4 crore MSMEs , with 1.5 crore of them registered on the Udyam portal and employs around **23% of the Indian labor force**, making it the **second-largest employer in India after agriculture.**

- **Output and Exports:** They account for **38.4% of the total manufacturing** output and contribute **45.03% of the country's total exports.**

Challenges faced by MSMEs in India

- **Access to Finance:** MSMEs struggle to secure capital due to a lack of collateral, limited credit history, or inadequate access to formal financial institutions.

- **Increased Competition:** MSMEs face stiff competition from larger, more established companies that have greater resources and market influence.

- **Lack of Technological knowledge:** Many MSMEs lack the technical expertise needed to modernize their operations, adopt new technologies, and stay competitive in the market.

- **Marketing and Networking Opportunities:** Limited resources and networks prevent MSMEs from effectively marketing their products and services.

Key Demands of MSMEs

- **Affordable Credit Access:** Statutory collateral-free lending up to **₹1 crore** for micro enterprises and interest rate cap of **6–7 percent** on such loans to ensure affordability.

- **Protection Against Trade Shocks:** Establishment of an **Export Risk Equalisation Fund** to compensate micro exporters affected by sudden tariff hikes.

- **Safeguards from Exchange Rate Volatility:** Introduction of a forex fluctuation protection scheme for micro enterprises with limited hedging capacity.

  - Simplified and subsidised foreign exchange hedging instruments to be considered by the Reserve Bank of India for micro units.

- **Simplification of Compliance:** Higher exemption thresholds under the Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime for micro enterprises.

  - Introduction of a single, simplified GST return for micro units.

- **Creation of an Emergency Working Capital Window** during wars or global disruptions affecting raw materials, fuel, and shipping routes.

Government initiatives to promote the MSME sector

- **MSME Champions scheme:** The objective of the scheme is to modernize MSMEs' manufacturing processes, reduce wastages, encourage innovativeness, sharpen business competitiveness and facilitate their National and Global reach and excellence.

- **Udyam Registration:** It is an online registration process to simplify the registration of MSMEs. The objective is to provide MSMEs with a streamlined process to avail themselves of various benefits and incentives offered by the government.

- **Section 15 of the Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises Development (MSMED) Act, 2006,** and newly enacted **Section 43B(h) of the Income-tax Act** says that businesses must pay these MSME Registered Enterprises within 15 days, or up to 45 days if they have an agreement.

- **Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE):** This scheme provides collateral-free credit to micro and small enterprises through a credit guarantee mechanism.

- **Scheme of Fund for Regeneration of Traditional Industries (SFURTI)** was launched in 2005-06 to organise traditional artisans into clusters for improved competitiveness, product development and sustainable income generation.

Way Ahead

- MSMEs are revolutionising India's growth story by driving innovation, generating employment, and empowering local communities.

- Addressing MSME concerns through targeted credit support, s and simplified compliance can strengthen enterprise resilience, protect employment, and reinforce India's manufacturing and export ecosystem.

Source: IE

BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF GURU GOBIND SINGH

In News

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid homage to Guru Gobind Singh Ji on the auspicious occasion of his birth anniversary.

Guru Gobind Singh

- He was Born on December 22, 1666, in Patna Sahib, Bihar.

- He was a renowned warrior, poet, philosopher, and the last of the ten Sikh Gurus.

- He succeeded his father, Guru Teg Bahadur, the 9th Guru, who was executed by Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb for standing up against religious persecution.

Contributions

- Guru Gobind Singh is perhaps best known for founding the **Khalsa** in 1699, a warrior community devoted to protecting the faith and upholding justice.

  - The Khalsa's five guiding principles, symbolized by the "Five K's" (Kangha, Kesh, Kara, Kirpan, and Kachhera), remain central to Sikh identity today.

- He also introduced a **strict code of discipline** for the Khalsa, including the prohibition of chewing tobacco, eating halal meat, and engaging in adultery or fornication.

- He established the **Panj Pyare** to symbolize purity, courage, and dedication.

Literary works

- Guru Gobind Singh has contributed many beautiful hymns and prayers to the holy scripture of Sikhism, the Guru Granth Sahib.

  - These hymns, known as Shabad, are recited and sung during Sangats, or gatherings, with fellow believers.

- He declared the Holy Scriptures of Guru Granth Sahib as the permanent Guru of Sikhs.

- He added the writings of **Guru Teg Bahadur into the 'Adi Granth**'.

- His works possess a sublime poetic beauty; they were later compiled into the 'dasm granth'.

Values and Leadership

- He displayed courage, compassion, and commitment to justice from childhood.

- He believed strong character is essential to withstand adversity.

- He was an exceptional strategist, administrator, and leader of the masses.

- He believed in protecting human rights, even through armed resistance when peaceful means failed.

Military Prowess

- He supported oppressed communities like Kashmiri Pandits against Mughal oppression.

- He Fought numerous battles, e.g., Anandpur Sahib, Bhangani, Chamkaur Sahib.

- He gained support across society and inspired even enemies to respect him.

Legacy and Influence

- Guru Gobind Singh Ji's life and teachings continue to inspire unity, service to humanity, national integrity and the principle of "Nation First."

- He was Praised by Swami Vivekananda for courage, self-sacrifice, and heroism.
  - He Unified Hindus and Muslims under common principles of justice.

> **Do you know ?**
> - Guru Gobind Singh's sons displayed immense valour and sacrifice.
> - While two died in battle, the other two were executed by a Mughal governor for refusing to convert to Islam, embodying the spirit of defiance and courage that Guru Gobind instilled in his followers.

Source :DD News

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IN GOVERNANCE IN INDIA

Context

- The Union minister addressed the National Workshop on Good Governance Practices as part of the observation of Good Governance Week.

About

- The workshop witnessed the launch of **several initiatives of DoPT:**
  - Launch of Compendium on Reservation for Ex-Servicemen (ESM), AI Powered Recruitment Rules Generator Tool, Mobile App for eHRMS 2.0, New Features on iGOT Karmayogi Portal and Karmayogi Digital Learning Lab 2.0.
- These initiatives reflect the Government's emphasis on digital governance and continuous capacity building of civil servants.

What is e-Governance?

- **e-Governance in India** means the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) by the government to deliver services, exchange information, and interact with citizens.

Benefits

- **Efficiency:** Faster, cheaper, paperless transactions.

- **Transparency & Accountability:** Reduced corruption, direct monitoring.
- **Inclusivity:** Services to rural/remote areas via Common Services Centres (CSCs).
- **Citizen Empowerment:** 24x7 access, participatory governance.
- **Economic Growth:** Boosts startups, IT industry, and digital economy.

Key Challenges to e-Governance

- **Implementation disparity:** Some states or local governments lag in digital capacity, infrastructure, funding, or in adopting the central e-governance frameworks.
- **Digital divide:** Access to internet / smartphone and digital literacy remain bottlenecks especially in remote, tribal or underdeveloped districts.
- **Data protection, security & trust:** As scale increases, vulnerabilities, data leaks, misuse risk rise. Ensuring confidentiality, consent, and legal safeguards is critical.
- **Sustainability and capacity-building:** Maintaining and upgrading systems, training personnel, continuous feedback loops, user support are resource-intensive and ongoing tasks.
- **Governance vs execution gap:** Even when policy is strong, translating it on ground often faces administrative inertia, lack of technical staff, or legacy systems.

Key Initiatives

- **Aadhaar & DBT:** Aadhaar-enabled e-KYC simplified verification, reduced paperwork, and enhanced transparency. DBT ensured direct transfer of welfare benefits, curbing leakages.
- **Karmayogi Bharat:** Initiative aims to nurture a future-ready civil service by equipping officials with the right Attitude, Skills, and Knowledge (ASK) to deliver efficient and citizen-centric governance.
  - It has 1.26 crore+ users, 3000 courses, and 3.8 crore+ certificates issued as of 2025.
- **DigiLocker**: Aims at 'Digital Empowerment' of citizens by providing access to authentic digital documents in the citizens' digital document wallet.
- **UMANG:** Provides a single platform for all Indian Citizens to access pan-India e-Gov services ranging from Central to Local Government bodies.
- **Digital Commerce: Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC)** enables sellers, including MSMEs, SHGs, artisans, and women-led

enterprises, to be discovered by buyers across multiple platforms, expanding digital market access.

- **Government e Marketplace (GeM):** Facilitates online procurement of common use Goods & Services required by various Government Departments/ Organizations/ PSUs.

    ◆ Over 22 lakh sellers and service providers, including MSMEs, startups, and women-led enterprises, are registered, promoting digital market access and self-reliance.

- **Right to Information (RTI):** The right to information stems from the basic right to free expression guaranteed by Article 19.

    ◆ Under this act, an individual can inspect, audit, evaluate, and analyze government activities and decisions to verify that they are in accordance with the principles of public interest, integrity and justice.

- **BHASHINI (BHASHa INterface for India)** is a pioneering initiative under the National Language Translation Mission (NLTM), aimed at bridging India's linguistic diversity through technology.

- **The SVAMITVA (Survey of Villages and Mapping with Improvised Technology in Village Areas) Scheme** was launched in 2020.

    ◆ The scheme gives rural households legal ownership papers for the homes and land they occupy.

    ◆ Using drones and advanced mapping tools, it clearly marks property boundaries.

- **BharatNet:** It was launched in 2011, to bridge the digital divide.

    ◆ The project aims to deliver affordable, high-speed internet to every Gram Panchayat.

- **eGramSwaraj:**

Source: Ministry of Panchayati Raj

- **Meri Panchayat App:** Meri Panchayat App serves as an integrated mobile governance platform, designed and developed by the National Informatics Centre (NIC).

    ◆ It empowers rural communities by promoting transparency, accountability and citizen participation in Panchayat affairs.

- **Gram Manchitra: Geo-Spatial Planning Tool:** The Ministry of Panchayati Raj launched the Gram Manchitra Geographic Information System (GIS) application.

    ◆ It offers a unified digital map where officials can visualise developmental works across different sectors and align them with the Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP).

Conclusion

- These reforms aim to make governance faster, more transparent and more inclusive.

- Tools now range from artificial intelligence (AI) meeting summarisers to geo-spatial mapping platforms, digital accounting systems and citizen-facing mobile apps.

- This shift also reflects the Government's broader vision under Digital India and Atmanirbhar Bharat.

Source: PIB

GLOBAL CAPABILITY CENTRES SUSTAIN TECH JOBS AMID IT HIRING SLOWDOWN

Context

- As India's IT services industry has entered a hiring slowdown, the Global Capability Centres continue to expand employment, highlighting a structural shift from client-driven outsourcing to enterprise-led capability building.

What Are Global Capability Centres (GCCs)?

- Global Capability Centres are **offshore subsidiaries of multinational corporations** that **perform critical business and technology functions** for their parent organisations.

- Over time, GCCs in India have evolved from **cost-arbitrage units into strategic hubs focused on research and development,** enterprise AI, data platforms, digital product engineering, and innovation management.

- **Examples:** Goldman Sachs' Bengaluru center for tech & risk, HSBC's Pune hub for AI banking etc.

Key Trends Highlighting GCC Dominance

- **Hiring Momentum Despite IT Slowdown:** Leadership hiring growth in 2025 in **IT services firms is 2.4%**, whereas it is around 7.7% in case of GCCs.

- **Expansion Beyond Metros:** GCC growth is no longer confined to Tier I cities, as **Tier II and Tier III cities** such as Nagpur, Indore, Coimbatore, and Kochi are witnessing **8–9%** quarterly growth. This trend supports;

  - Decentralisation of skilled employment
  - Reduced pressure on metro infrastructure
  - Balanced regional development

- **Strategic, Long-Horizon Talent Planning:** GCCs typically operate with 3–5 year rollout and ramp-up plans, unlike IT services firms that rely on quarterly demand-based hiring calibrations.

- **Premium and Diverse Employment:** GCCs offer **12–20% higher salaries** than traditional IT services firms. Expansion also includes the blue-collar and infrastructure roles with estimated **2.8–4 million additional jobs** by FY30.

Why GCCs Are More Resilient Than IT Services

- IT services firms **depend heavily on short-term client demand** and discretionary tech spending.

  - When global enterprises cut IT budgets, IT services firms quickly slow or freeze hiring, making them more cyclical and vulnerable.

- GCCs are **embedded within parent enterprises** and are not dependent on external client deal cycles, unlike traditional IT services firms.

- Their focus is on **long-term capability creation in areas such as AI, digital platforms, and product engineering** rather than short-term revenue generation.

- Strategic mandates provide GCCs greater insulation from market volatility and global demand fluctuations.

Impact of the GCC-Led Shift on India

- **Economic Impact:** The expansion of Global Capability Centres is moving India up the global value chain from cost-based outsourcing to high-value, innovation-driven services.

- **Employment opportunities:** GCCs are generating more **stable, long-term technology jobs** compared to the cyclical hiring patterns of IT services firms.

- **Regional Development:** The expansion of GCCs into Tier II and Tier III cities is enabling India to

pursue more balanced regional development by **distributing high-quality jobs beyond metropolitan centres.**

- **Skill and Innovation Impact:** GCCs are no longer just execution centres but are becoming hubs for global R&D, enterprise AI, and digital platform ownership.

  - This strengthens India's innovation capacity and integrates the country more deeply into global technology creation processes.

- **Strategic Impact:** Hosting critical global enterprise capabilities is enhancing India's strategic relevance in digital value chains.

Way Ahead

- India's technology job market is being sustained not by a revival in traditional IT services but by the steady expansion of Global Capability Centres.

- This shift marks a clear structural transformation in India's tech ecosystem, where the country is increasingly being viewed not as a low-cost outsourcing destination but as a strategic hub for enterprise innovation, AI development, and digital leadership.

Source: TH

INVASIVE MOSQUITO SPECIES THREATENS INDIA'S 2030 MALARIA ELIMINATION GOAL

Context

- As per the **Malaria Elimination Technical Report, 2025** urban malaria has emerged as a **national concern** threatening India's goal of eliminating the **mosquito-borne disease by 2030.**

Major Highlights

- **Drivers of Transmission:** Asymptomatic infections, difficult terrain, and population movement continue to drive transmission.

- **Cross-border transmission** from Myanmar and Bangladesh also continues to affect border districts in northeastern India.

- Besides the malaria elimination goal, India has also assigned itself an **intermediate goal of achieving zero indigenous cases by 2027,** aligning with the World Health Organisation's global strategy.

- **Invasive Threat:** Anopheles stephensi is a significant mosquito species, now recognised as an invasive threat due to its ability to thrive in urban environments, breed in artificial containers (tanks, tires).

- **Reasons for Urban Transmission:** Container breeding, construction sites, informal settings, high population density and fragmented healthcare delivery.

- **High-burden pockets:** India has now largely entered the pre-elimination phase, where malaria is no longer uniformly distributed across large geographical areas. **High-burden pockets** persist in districts of Odisha, Tripura and Mizoram.

- **Key challenges:** Inconsistent private-sector reporting, limited entomological capacity, drug and insecticide resistance, operational gaps in remote tribal areas, and sporadic shortages of diagnostics and treatment commodities.

- **Recommendations:** Strengthening surveillance systems, enhancing vector monitoring and improving supply chain reliability.

What is Malaria?

- **Malaria** is a life-threatening disease spread to humans by some types of mosquitoes and is mostly found in **tropical countries.**

- **Transmission:** It is caused by **plasmodium protozoa.** The plasmodium parasites spread through the bites of **infected female Anopheles mosquitoes**. Blood transfusion and contaminated needles may also transmit malaria.

- **Types of parasites:** There are 5 Plasmodium parasite species that cause malaria in humans and 2 of these species – **P. falciparum and P. vivax** – pose the greatest threat. The other malaria species which can infect humans are **P. malariae, P. ovale and P. knowlesi.**

  - **P. falciparum is the deadliest malaria parasite** and the most prevalent on the African continent P. vivax is the dominant malaria parasite in most countries outside of sub-Saharan Africa.

- **Symptoms:** Fever and flu-like illness, including chills, headache, muscle ache and fatigue.

- **Vaccine:** The RTS,S and R21 malaria vaccines act against P. falciparum, the deadliest malaria parasite globally and the most prevalent in Africa.

  - Both malaria vaccines are safe and efficacious, and both are prequalified by WHO.

Burden of Malaria (As per WHO)

- The malaria caseload in India was **reduced by 69 percent** from 6.4 million in 2017 to **two million in 2023.**

- In 2023, **India accounted for half of all estimated malaria cases** in the WHO South-East Asia Region, followed by Indonesia, which accounted for just under one-third.

  - The Region had **eight malaria endemic countries in 2023,** accounting for **4 million cases** and contributing **1.5 per cent** of the burden of malaria cases globally.

- **Bhutan and Timor-Leste,** from the Region, reported **zero malaria deaths** since 2013 and 2015, respectively, while **Sri Lanka** was certified **malaria-free in 2016.**

Indian government Initiatives to Control Malaria:

- The Government of India set a target to **eliminate malaria in India by 2027.**

- In India, a **National Framework for Malaria Elimination (NFME)** has been developed and launched in **2016** aligned with the Global Technical Strategy (GTS) for malaria elimination **2016-2030.**

- **Malaria Elimination Research Alliance-India (MERA-India):** It was established by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) as a conglomeration of partners working on malaria control.

Source: TH

INDIA'S AGRICULTURAL SECTOR IN 2025

Context

- The year **2025** marked a transformative milestone for **India's agricultural sector,** showcasing the cumulative impact of **policy continuity, institutional reforms, and strategic investments** made over the past decade.

Key Highlights For India's Agricultural Sector (2025)

- Agriculture and allied activities remained the **backbone of the rural economy**, contributing nearly **16% to India's GDP** and supporting livelihoods for **over 46% of the population**.

- **Union Budget 2025–26** allocated 1.52 lakh crore to agriculture and allied sectors, with a focus on research, infrastructure, and farmer welfare.

Record Production and Food Security

- India achieved its **highest-ever foodgrain production** of **357.73 million tonnes in 2024–25**, an **8% rise** over the previous year and **106 million tonnes higher** than in 2015–16.

  - **Rice:** 150.184 million tonnes;

  - **Wheat:** 117.945 million tonnes;

- **Pulses and Oilseeds:** Significant gains supported by targeted missions and procurement assurances;
- **Millets (Shree Anna):** Steady rise reaffirming India's leadership in climate-resilient cereals;

Strengthening Farmer Incomes

- **MSP Policy:** It continued as a pillar of income assurance, guaranteeing at least **50% return over cost of production**.
  - Since 2014, procurement operations have transferred over **₹20 lakh crore** in MSP payments, **₹14.16 lakh crore for paddy** and **₹6.04 lakh crore for wheat**, directly benefiting millions of farmers.
- **Direct Income Transfers and Credit Expansion:** Under **PM-Kisan Samman Nidhi**, over **₹3.90 lakh crore** was directly credited to **11 crore farmers** through 20 installments by August 2025.
  - The **Kisan Credit Card** scheme further expanded access to institutional finance, with **₹10 lakh crore** disbursed to **7.71 crore farmers**, including those in livestock and fisheries.

Risk Management and Irrigation Expansion

- **Crop Insurance and Risk Coverage:** The **Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY)** continued to mitigate risks, disbursing claims worth **₹1.83 lakh crore** since 2016.
  - Increasing participation from **non-loanee farmers** reflected greater trust and transparency.
- **Water Efficiency and Irrigation:** The **Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana (PMKSY)** accelerated completion of irrigation projects and promoted **micro-irrigation**, enabling shifts to **high-value crops** and improved **water-use efficiency**.

Infrastructure and Market Ecosystem

- **Investment in Agricultural Infrastructure:** More than **1 lakh projects** were sanctioned through the **Agriculture Infrastructure Fund**, including **Custom Hiring Centres, warehouses, and cold storage units**, reducing post-harvest losses and creating rural jobs.
  - The **PM Kisan Samriddhi Kendras** strengthened village-level access to **quality inputs and advisory services**, bridging last-mile delivery gaps.

- **Market Reforms and Farmer Institutions:** The **e-NAM platform** expanded nationwide, promoting **price discovery and transparency**.
  - The establishment of **10,000 FPOs** enabled collective marketing, input procurement, and value addition, empowering **women farmers and smallholders**.

Growth in Allied Sectors

- **Dairy:** 239.30 million tonnes in 2023–24, aided by the **Rashtriya Gokul Mission** and dairy development programmes;
- **Fisheries:** 195 lakh tonnes in 2024–25, led by rapid inland fisheries growth;
- **Horticulture:** Record expansion in fruits and vegetables;
- **Food Processing:** Exports crossed **USD 49.4 billion** by July 2025, reflecting rising value addition.

Sustainability and Climate Resilience

- Natural and **organic farming** gained momentum under national missions.
- The **Soil Health Card (SHC) Scheme** advanced balanced nutrient use through extensive testing and farmer training.
- The **Ethanol Blending Programme** reached **19.05%** by July 2025, reducing crude oil imports and providing additional income for sugarcane farmers.
- Under **PM-KUSUM**, solar pump installations expanded, fostering **renewable energy adoption** and **decentralized solar power generation**.
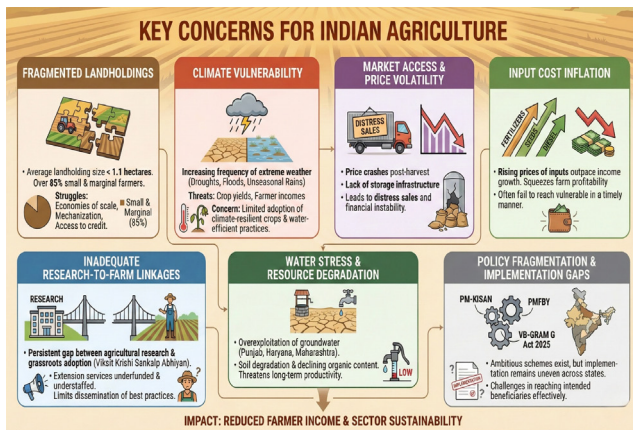
Human Capital and Skill Development

- **Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs)** trained millions through hands-on demonstrations and vocational programs.
- Schemes like **ATMA, STRY, and PMKVY** built a robust **rural skilling ecosystem**, empowering farmers, women, and youth to embrace **modern farming and agri-entrepreneurship**.
- Skill integration across horticulture, livestock, mechanization, and processing enhanced employability and innovation across the agri-value chain.

Inclusive Growth and Local Impact

- Convergence of income support, irrigation, infrastructure, and training translated into **higher rural incomes, reduced migration, and improved living standards**.

- **Women farmers, FPOs, and rural entrepreneurs** became pivotal agents of change in local agri-economies.

Related Efforts & Initiatives

- **Modified Interest Subvention Scheme (MISS):** Available to farmers availing short term crop loans up to Rs.3.00 lakh at an interest rate of 7% per annum for one year.

- **Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF):** To mobilize a **medium - long term debt financing facility** for investment in viable projects for post-harvest management.

  - All loans under this financing facility have interest subvention of 3% per annum up to a limit of ₹2 crore.

- **National Bee Keeping and Honey Mission (NBHM):** Launched as a part of the **Atma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyan**; Goal of '**Sweet Revolution'**.

- **Namo Drone Didi:** To provide drones to 15000 selected **Women SHGs**; application of fertilizers and pesticides.

- **National Mission on Natural Farming (NMNF):** To develop 15,000 clusters covering 7.5 lakh Ha area and establish 10,000 need based **Bio-Input Resource Centres (BRCs).**

- **Pradhan Mantri Annadata Aay Sanrakshan Abhiyan (PM-AASHA)**: To provide price support for **pulses, oilseeds, and copra;**

- **Agri Fund for Start-ups & Rural Enterprises (AgriSURE):** To boost innovation and entrepreneurship in the agricultural and rural ecosystem.

- **Per Drop More Crop (PDMC):** To increase water use efficiency at the farm level through Micro Irrigation technologies namely Drip and Sprinkler Irrigation systems.

- **Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY):** For promotion of organic farming in the country.

- **Soil Health & Fertility (SH&F):** To promote balanced and integrated nutrient management through the **Soil Health Card (SHC) initiative.**

  - Special initiatives include establishment of **school mini soil labs** (1,020 functional, expanding to 5,000 PM SHRI schools) and **capacity building** through demonstrations, campaigns, and farmer training.

- **Rainfed Area Development (RAD):** A component under **National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA)**, focuses on I**ntegrated Farming System (IFS)**.

- **Sub-Mission on Agroforestry:** Under **National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA)** with the motto of '**Har Medh Par Ped'**.

- **Crop Diversification Programme (CDP)**: To shift farmers from water-intensive crops like paddy to more sustainable and profitable alternatives such as pulses, oilseeds, and coarse cereals.

- **Sub-Mission on Agriculture Extension (SMAE):** Making the extension system farmer driven and farmer accountable by disseminating technology to farmers through new institutional arrangements viz. **Agricultural Technology Management Agency (ATMA) at district level**.

- **National Mission on Edible Oils (NMEO)-Oil Palm:** To promote oil palm cultivation with **special focus** on North-Eastern States and A&N Islands.

- **Digital Agriculture Mission:** To improve the existing **National e-Governance Plan in Agriculture (NeGPA)** by developing a digital public infrastructure for agriculture.

- **National Bamboo Mission:** Implemented through the State Bamboo Missions (SBM)/ State Bamboo Development Agency (SBDA).

Source: DD News

═══ NEWS IN SHORT ═══

CENTRE ALLOCATING FUNDS FOR HARAPPAN SITE OF RAKHIGARHI

Context

- The Central Government has allocated **Rs 500 crore in the Union Budget** for the **development of Rakhigarhi,** a site of the ancient Harappan civilisation.

About

- **Aim:** The initiative is expected to **place Rakhigarhi** strengthening India's archaeological presence worldwide.

- **Rakhigarhi:** It is the largest Harappan site in the Indian Subcontinent.
    - It is situated in the Hisar district of Haryana and is located in the **Ghaggar-Hakra river plain.**
    - The site was first excavated by **Amarendra Nath of Archaeological Survey of India (ASI).**

Harappan Civilization

- The Harappan civilization is believed to be **one of the oldest world civilizations** together with Egypt and Mesopotamia.

- It was developed along the **river Indus** and for that reason it is also known as the **Indus Valley Civilization.**

- The Harappan civilization is identified as a **Bronze-age civilization** because many objects have been found that are made up of **copper based alloys.**

Major Harappan Sites

Site	Present Day
Harappa	Punjab, Pakistan
Mohenjo-Daro	Sindh, Pakistan
Dholavira	Kutch district of Gujarat,
Kalibangan	Rajasthan
Lothal	Gujarat
Rakhigarhi	Haryana
Chanhudaro	Sindh, Pakistan
Ganweriwala	Punjab, Pakistan
Sutkagendor	Baluchistan Province, Pakistan
Alamgirpur	Uttar Pradesh

Source: IE

VEER BAL DIWAS

In News

- The Prime Minister addressed the national programme marking 'Veer Baal Diwas' at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi.

Veer Bal Diwas

- **Historical linkages:** Sahibzada Zorawar Singh Ji and Sahibzada Fateh Singh Ji, the two youngest sons of Guru Gobind Singh Ji, the tenth Sikh Guru, were bricked alive and martyred at Sirhind (present-day Fatehgarh Sahib, Punjab) on December 26, 1704 for refusing to abandon their faith under coercion.

    - **Veer Bal Diwas** is observed on December 26 every year in remembrance of the martyrdom of Guru Gobind Singh ji's sons **Sahibzada Zorawar Singh ji and Sahibzada Fateh Singh ji.**

- The day honour the bravery of the two young heroes of the country, and help inculcate the spirit of exemplary courage and sacrifice in the youth of today.

    - The martyrdom of the Sahibzadas symbolizes faith, courage, and moral strength, reflecting the heritage and bravery of the Sikh Gurus.

Source :PIB

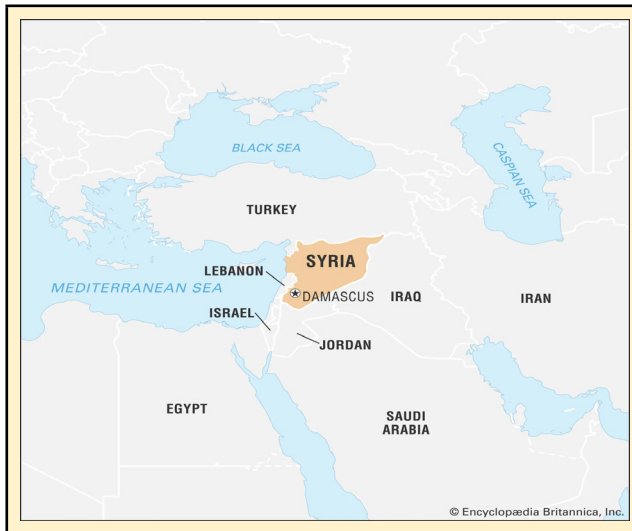## ALAWITE MINORITY IN SYRIA

Context

- Eight people were killed in an explosion at a mosque of the **Alawite minority sect in the Syrian city of Homs.**

About

- The **Alawites** are a religious minority group primarily **concentrated in Syria, with smaller populations in Turkey and Lebanon.**

- Alawites follow **Alawism,** a heterodox sect that emerged from **Shia Islam** (linked historically to Twelver Shia).

- Their beliefs incorporate **elements of Shia Islam, mysticism, and local traditions,** making them doctrinally distinct from mainstream Sunnis and Shias.

- **The Assad family that ruled Syria** from 1971 to 2024 are Alawites and made the community politically dominant there.

About Syria

- Syria is a **West Asian country** in the Levant region.

- **Bordering Countries:** Bordered by Turkey (north), Iraq (east), Jordan (south), Israel (south-west) and Lebanon (west).

- It has a **small Mediterranean coastline.**

- **Important river:** Euphrates (lifeline for agriculture).

Source: DD

UNIQUE IDENTIFICATION AUTHORITY OF INDIA (UIDAI)

In News

- The Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) is planning to expand full-fledged Aadhaar enrolment and update centres for adults from 88 to 473 by September 2026, aiming to ensure at least one centre for every two districts.

About Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI)

- It is a **statutory authority** established under the provisions of the Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery of Financial and Other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Act, 2016 ("Aadhaar Act 2016") under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY).

- UIDAI issues aadhaar numbers to Indian residents, ensuring they are robust, verifiable, and cost-effective to prevent duplicates and fraud.
  - It is responsible for the enrolment, authentication, and management of the entire Aadhaar lifecycle, including policy development, system operation, and security of identity and authentication data.

- UIDAI is collaborating with Google to map centre locations. Recent Aadhaar issuance requires field verification to prevent illegal enrolments, especially for non-resident Indians and overseas citizens.
  - To maintain data integrity, date-of-birth changes will be strictly regulated, allowing only one correction per affidavit, and

parents falsifying children's birth details may face criminal action, as highlighted by an Allahabad High Court case.

Source :TH

KIMBERLEY PROCESS

Context

- The Kimberley Process (KP) Plenary has selected India to assume the chairmanship of the Kimberley Process from **1 January 2026.**

About

- The Kimberley Process is a **tripartite initiative** involving governments, the international diamond industry and civil society to prevent the trade in **conflict diamonds.**
  - **Conflict diamonds are rough diamonds** used by rebel groups or their allies to finance conflicts that undermine legitimate governments, as defined in United Nations Security Council resolutions.

- **History:** The Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS), established pursuant to a UN resolution, came into effect on **1 January 2003.**

- **Members:** The Kimberley Process (KP) is **open to any country that can meet its standards.**
  - Currently, it comprises **60 participants** representing 86 countries, with the EU and its **27 Member States** counted as one participant under the European Commission.
  - **India** is a founding member of the KP.
  - The members account for over **99 percent** of the global rough diamond trade.

- **The chair oversees** the implementation of the **Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS)** and operations of the working groups, committees and administration that activate the KP.

- **Secretariat:** The Kimberley Process Secretariat is headquartered in **Gaborone, Botswana**.

Source: PIB

CAMELLIA SINENSIS

Context

- The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) issued a clarification to address misleading labelling of beverages marketed as tea.

Regulatory Framework

- As per **Food Safety and Standards** (Food Product Standards and Food Additives) Regulations, 2011, tea must originate from **Camellia sinensis.**

- **Labelling and Display Regulations, 2020** require the food name to reflect its true nature.

- Use of the word 'tea' for other products amounts to misbranding under the **FSS Act, 2006.**

What Is Tea as per FSSAI?

- Tea is defined as a product exclusively derived from the plant **Camellia sinensis.**

- This includes traditional variants such as, **Black tea, Green tea, Kangra tea and Instant tea (in solid form).**

- Tea is traditionally prepared from two leaves and a bud plucked from Camellia sinensis.

Geographical Condition for Tea production

- The tea plant grows well in **tropical and subtropical** climates. Tea bushes require a **warm and moist frost-free climate** all through the year.

- **Soil:** It requires deep and fertile well-drained soil, rich in humus and organic matter.

- **Temperature:** The average annual temperature for tea plants to grow well is in the range of **15-23°C.**

- **Precipitation:** The rainfall needed is between **150-200 cm.** Frequent showers evenly distributed over the year ensure continuous growth of tender leaves.

- **Major tea producing states** are Assam, hills of Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri districts in West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

    - Apart from these, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Meghalaya, Andhra Pradesh and Tripura are also tea-producing states in the country.

Source: TH

QUALITY COUNCIL OF INDIA ANNOUNCES QUALITY REFORMS

In News

- The Quality Council of India(QCI) announced a set of next-generation quality reforms on the eve of Sushasan Divas 2025.

Quality Council of India (QCI)

- It was established as a National body for Accreditation on recommendations of the Expert Mission of the EU after consultations in the Inter-ministerial Task Force, Committee of Secretaries and Group of Ministers through a Cabinet decision in 1996.

- It is a non-profit organization registered under the Societies Registration Act XXI of 1860.

- The Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion, Ministry of Commerce and Industry was designated as the nodal point for all matters connected with quality and QCI to structure and help implement the Cabinet decision.

Functions

- QCI has been established to create a mechanism for independent third party assessment of products, services and processes.

- It plays a pivotal role at the national level in propagating, adoption and adherence to quality standards in all important spheres of activities including education, healthcare, environment protection, governance, social sectors, infrastructure sector and such other areas of organized activities.

Latest Reforms

- **Q Mark – Desh ka Haq:** It is a QR-coded Mark of Quality to enable citizens to know their laboratory, hospital and MSME, ensuring full disclosure and eliminating fake certificates.

- **Trust-based governance:** Reduced paperwork, fewer inspections, shorter timelines, and digital processes.

- **Assessor pool expansion:** The assessor pool will be expanded across boards and divisions by lowering entry barriers to bring in young experts and strengthen last-mile reach.

- **Quality Setu platform:** It is a secure ticket-based system for time-bound grievance redressal and feedback resolution.

- **One-stop accreditation portal:** Paperless, modular system replacing multiple portals.

- **MSME and manufacturing support:** Training for 1 lakh MSMEs and SHGs, reduced ZED and Lean certification fees, and focus on Tier-2 and Tier-3 suppliers.

- **Laboratory reforms:** India positioned as a global testing hub, standardized medical lab scopes, technical training for 5,000 personnel, and simplified approval processes.

- **Healthcare reforms (NABH**): Healthcare reforms under the National Accreditation Board for Hospitals and Healthcare Providers (NABH) will focus on improving patient safety and expanding access to accreditation,graded penalties, AI-assisted surveillance, and mentorship via NABH MITRA, including smaller hospitals.

- **Certification reforms (NABCB)**: Reforms under the National Accreditation Board for Certification Bodies (NABCB) aim to help Indian products access global markets.

  - Fast-track accreditation for emerging technologies, Quality Passport for Indian products, and support for global market access.

Significance

- The reforms aim to simplify accreditation, reduce procedural friction, enhance transparency, and strengthen citizen trust, positioning quality as a driver of sustainable growth and globally competitive enterprises.

- These measures are designed to strengthen India's quality ecosystem and support the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.

Source :Air

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