NEXT IAS

# DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS (DCA)

**Time:** 45 Min

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# BUDGET GIVES BIG SCIENCE ALLOCATIONS, BUT CORE FUNDING GAPS REMAIN

## Context

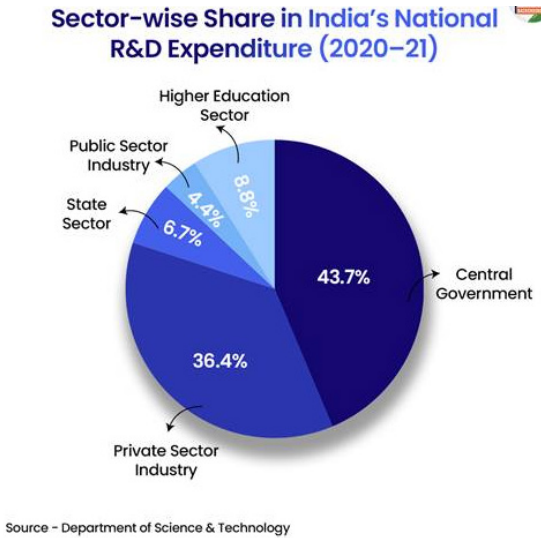
- **The Union Budget 2026–27** projects **strong ambition in science-led growth**, but experts caution that its success depends on **effective delivery, timely funding, institutional autonomy, and transparent innovation financing.**

## About

- **In 2023-24, allocation for the Department of Biotechnology** was revised down from ₹2,683.86 crore to ₹1,607.32 crore, and actual spending fell further to ₹1,467.34 crore.
- **Likewise for the Department of Science and Technology,** from ₹7,931.05 crore to ₹4,891.78 crore and actuals of ₹4,002.67 crore.
- **Mission-Mode Push in Science:** The budget supports major missions like Semiconductor Mission 2.0, CCUS, critical minerals, and biomanufacturing hubs, but concerns remain over long-term, stable financing beyond policy announcements.

## R&D Expenditure in India

- India's Gross Expenditure on Research and Development (GERD) as a percentage of GDP remained between **0.6% to 0.7%** which is **below the global average** and lower than countries **like China, South Korea and the US.**
- Another factor contributing to this is the **relatively low investment by India's private sector**, accounting for **only around 36%,** whereas in the aforementioned countries, **private sector contributions are more than 70%**.
- The Central Government contributes **43.7% of total R&D expenditure.**




Source - Department of Science & Technology

## Need for Funding in R&D

- **Economic Growth**: Drives new industries, improves productivity, and enhances global competitiveness.
- **Technological Advancement**: Facilitates breakthroughs in fields like AI, biotechnology, and renewable energy.
- **Social Challenges**: Helps address poverty, healthcare, education, and environmental sustainability issues.
- **Job Creation**: Innovation generates employment opportunities and stimulates entrepreneurship.
- **Global Positioning**: Positions India as a global leader in science, technology, and knowledge.
- **Attracts Investment**: Promotes foreign and domestic investments in research-driven sectors.

## Implications of Low Funding

- **Investment Concerns**: Limited investment in research and development, especially in public institutions.
- **Infrastructure Gaps**: Inadequate research facilities and resources in many institutions.
- **Brain Drain**: Loss of talent to other countries due to better opportunities abroad.
- **Lack of Industry Collaboration**: Limited partnerships between academia and industry for practical innovation.
- **Skill Gaps**: Insufficient training and development of skilled researchers and innovators.

## Government Initiatives

- **Research, Development and Innovation (RDI) Scheme:** Approved with a 1 lakh crore corpus, this scheme aims to energise private-sector R&D and deep-tech startups.
  - It offers long-term, low- or zero-interest loans, equity investments, and funds a new Deep-Tech Fund of Funds via the Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF).
- **Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF):** The ANRF established in 2023, provides high-level strategic direction for research, innovation, and entrepreneurship in science and technology.
  - The Foundation aims to mobilise funds amounting to 50,000 crore during 2023–28 through multiple streams, including the ANRF Fund, Innovation Fund, Science and Engineering Research Fund, and Special Purpose Funds.

- **National Geospatial Policy, 2022:** It seeks to position India as a global leader in the geospatial sector by 2035.
  - The policy liberalises access to geospatial data, encouraging its use in governance, business, and research.
- **Indian Space Policy, 2023:** It builds on the space reforms introduced in 2020, which opened the domain to non-governmental entities for end-to-end participation.
  - It aims to enhance space capabilities, promote a flourishing commercial space industry, and foster collaboration between public and private entities.
- **National Quantum Mission:** Allocated 6,003.65 crore for 2023–31, to advance quantum technologies through scientific and industrial R&D.
- **BioE3 Policy, 2024:** It encourages the creation of Biomanufacturing and Bio-AI hubs, along with a national Biofoundry network, to accelerate technology development and commercialisation.
- **National Supercomputing Mission (NSM):** Launched in 2015, the initiative empowers universities, research institutions, and government agencies with state-of-the-art supercomputing systems connected through the National Knowledge Network.
- **India Semiconductor Mission (ISM):** Established in 2021, the mission seeks to build a robust ecosystem for semiconductor and display manufacturing.
  - India has already approved 10 semiconductor projects across six states, including the first commercial Silicon Carbide fabrication facility in Odisha.
- **India AI Mission:** The IndiaAI Mission embodies the vision of "Making AI in India and Making AI Work for India."
  - It is advancing rapidly, having already increased computing capacity from an initial target of 10,000 GPUs to 38,000 GPUs, ensuring accessible AI infrastructure for startups, researchers, and industries.
- **Atal Innovation Mission (AIM):** To foster innovation at the grassroots level by providing support to students, startups, and entrepreneurs.
- **The National Mission on High-Yielding Seeds** will focus on strengthening the research ecosystem and developing high-yielding, pest-resistant, and climate-resilient seeds, aligning with DBT's efforts in agricultural biotechnology.
- **The Seaweed Mission and Learn & Earn Program** empower women entrepreneurs, supporting economic inclusion.

### Way Forward

- To raise R&D spending, there is a need to have increased partnerships with the private sector.
- Efforts are being made to create better synergies between industry, research labs, and educational institutions to broaden both research activity and the funds to support it.
  - The Union Finance Minister has also announced several initiatives, including the Nuclear Energy Mission, initiatives in clean tech, Atal Tinkering Labs, and the Centre of Excellence on AI in Education.

**Source:** TH

## PROTEST AGAINST KEN-BETWA LINKING PROJECT

### Context

- Protests against the **Ken–Betwa River Linking Project (KBLP)**, highlighting tensions over the **implementation of the river interlinking project.**

### About River Interlinking in India

- **Historical Context:** The **concept of interlinking rivers** dates back to the 19th century, with **Sir Arthur Cotton**'s designs for **irrigation dams in the Godavari and Krishna river valleys.**
  - Over the years, this idea evolved, with notable contributions from engineers like M Visvesvaraya, KL Rao, and Captain Dinshaw J Dastur.
- It was conceptualized in the **Interlinking of Rivers (ILR) Programme** under the **National Perspective Plan (1980)** that aims to **transfer water from surplus basins to deficit basins** to address regional water imbalances, enhance irrigation, mitigate floods and droughts, and support inland navigation and hydropower.
  - The **National Perspective Plan (1980)** proposed two components ie **Himalayan Component** (14 links), and the **Peninsular Component** (16 links).
- Recent progress includes the **Ken–Betwa Link Project** (the first ILR project under implementation), with others such as **Parbati–Kalisindh–Chambal** under appraisal.

- In 2002, the **Supreme Court of India** ordered the Union Government to complete the river interlinking project **within the next 12–15 years.**
  - In response to this order, the Government of India appointed a **Task Force** and scientists, engineers, ecologists and others for the project related works.

**Do You Know?**

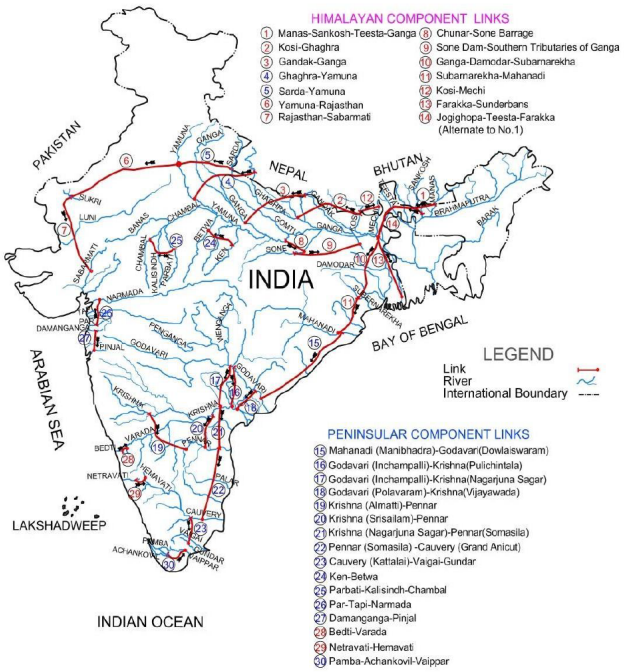
- **Hashim Commission Report (2004-05):** It highlighted which rivers and at which locations water surpluses could be transferred and to which rivers, and at what factors in these rivers the transfer water could be taken.
- **National Water Policy (NWP) 2012** considered **water as economic goods** for promoting its conservation and efficient use.
  - It was formulated to govern the planning and development of water resources and their optimum utilization.

## Objectives of River Interlinking

- **Irrigation Expansion**: Potential irrigation to millions of hectares in water-deficit regions.
- **Drinking Water Supply**: Augmentation of potable water for rural and urban populations.
- **Flood Control**: Diverting excess monsoon flows from flood-prone basins.
- **Drought Mitigation**: Stabilizing agriculture in arid and semi-arid zones.
- **Hydropower Generation**: Harnessing elevation gradients for renewable energy.
- **Inland Navigation & Fisheries**: Secondary economic benefits.

## Major Project: Ken–Betwa Link

- The **Ken–Betwa Link Project (KBLP)** is the first ILR project under the NPP to receive Cabinet approval. It aims to benefit the drought-prone Bundelkhand region of Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh.
  - It aims to provide annual irrigation to 10.62 lakh hectares, drinking water to 62 lakh people, and generate 130 MW of power.
- Other priority projects include the **Modified Parbati-Kalisindh-Chambal (PKC) Link and the Godavari-Cauvery Link**, besides the **Ken-Betwa Link Project (KBLP)**.




## Challenges and Concerns

- **Ecological Imbalance:** Interlinking rivers can disrupt the natural flow of rivers, affecting aquatic ecosystems and biodiversity. The alteration of river courses can lead to the loss of habitats for various species.
  - The **Ken-Betwa River Link Project**, for instance, involves constructing a dam within the **Panna Tiger Reserve**, raising concerns about submergence and loss of biodiversity.
- **Financial Viability:** High costs associated with the implementation and maintenance of the projects.
  - The **Ken-Betwa River Link Project**, estimated to cost around 45,000 crore, has faced objections from experts and circumvented strict legal terms for hydroelectric power projects.
- **Inter-State Disputes:** States have the power to use water in supplies, irrigation, canals, drainage, embankments, water storage, and water power within their respective territories.
  - **Water** is listed in **List II of the Seventh Schedule** of the Indian Constitution, which is the **State List**.
  - However, the **Central Government** has the power to regulate and develop **inter-state rivers** and river valleys **List I of the Seventh Schedule.**
- **Displacement of Communities:** Large-scale projects often require the displacement of local communities, leading to social and economic challenges.

- The resettlement process can be complex and may not always be fair or adequate.

- **Climate Change Impact:** The alteration of river systems can exacerbate the impacts of climate change, such as increased frequency and intensity of floods and droughts.
  - It can further strain the already vulnerable regions.
- **Deforestation and Habitat Loss:** The construction of canals and reservoirs requires large-scale deforestation, leading to habitat loss for wildlife.
  - It can also contribute to soil erosion and degradation.
- **Water Quality Issues:** The mixing of waters from different rivers can lead to changes in water quality, affecting both human and animal populations.
  - Pollutants from one river can contaminate another, leading to health hazards.

### Conclusion & Path Forward

- River Interlinking in India represents one of the world's most ambitious water engineering visions, reflecting developmental aspirations rooted in post-independence planning but faces modern scrutiny regarding ecology, climate uncertainty, financial viability, and federal governance.
- The path forward likely depends on strong environmental safeguards, transparent hydrological data, cooperative federalism, integration with decentralized water strategies, long-term climate modelling.

**Source: TH**

## CENTRE–STATE FISCAL RELATIONS IN A CHANGING FISCAL LANDSCAPE

### Context

- The finance minister has said the Union government transferred 41% of the divisible pool to the states and the share of no state has been reduced.

### What is Tax Devolution?

- Tax devolution refers to the **distribution of tax revenues** between the central government and the state governments.
- The Finance Commission decides what proportion of the Centre's net tax revenue goes to the **States overall (vertical devolution)** and how this share for the States is distributed among various **States (horizontal devolution).**
  - **The 15th Finance Commission** recommended that **41%** of the divisible pool of taxes be d evolved to the States.
- **The horizontal devolution** of funds between States is usually decided based on a formula created by the Commission that takes into account a **State's population, fertility level, income level, geography**, etc.
- The Centre also aids States through **additional grants for certain schemes** that are jointly funded by the Centre and the States.

**Constitutional Provisions Related to Centre State Financial Relations**

- **Articles 202 to 206** deal with the financial administration of states, including provisions related to their budget, expenditure, borrowing, and taxation powers.
- **Articles 268 to 272** outline the distribution of revenues between the Union and the states.
- **Article 280** provides for the establishment of a Finance Commission every five years (or as specified by the President).
  - The Centre is **not legally bound** to implement the suggestions made by the Finance Commission.
- **Article 282** allows the Union government to provide financial assistance to states for any public purpose.

### Friction between the Centre and States

- The Centre and the States have been at loggerheads over the issue of **sharing tax revenues.**
- The Centre collects major taxes such as the **income tax, the corporate tax**, and the **Goods and Services tax (GST)** while the States primarily rely on taxes collected from the sale of goods such as liquor and fuels that are beyond the ambit of GST.
- This has led to complaints that the Centre has reduced the power of the States to collect taxes and that it does not give enough funds to the States to match with the scale of their responsibilities.

### Key Demands of the States

- **Demand for more funds:** States argue they should receive more funds than recommended by the Finance Commission. States have greater responsibilities, including education, healthcare, and policing services.

- **Divisible Pool Concerns:** Cesses and surcharges, which are not shared with the States, can constitute up to **28%** of the Centre's tax revenues, leading to reducing the size of the shareable revenue base.
- **Criticism of the Finance Commission:** Critics believe the Finance Commission may not be fully independent due to the Centre's role in appointing its members, leading to potential political influence.

### Way Ahead

- The 16th Finance Commission should **reassess the balance between shareable and non-shareable revenues** to address structural fiscal imbalances.
- **Greater transparency and rationalisation of cesses and surcharges** can strengthen trust and expand the effective divisible pool.
- **Institutional dialogue** through bodies like the Inter-State Council and GST Council should be deepened to promote cooperative **fiscal federalism** and coordinated fiscal planning.

**Source:** TH

## BIOSECURITY THREAT IN INDIA

### Context

- In 2025, the Gujarat ATS uncovered an alleged ricin-based bioterror plot, marking India's first suspected ricin-linked bioterror case with possible international links.

### What are Biological Weapons?

- Biological weapons use **pathogens (bacteria, viruses, fungi) or toxins (like ricin, botulinum toxin)** to cause disease or death in humans, animals, or crops.
  - They are classified as **Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs)** due to their potential for large-scale harm.
- Biological agents are **attractive to non-state actors** due to their relatively low production cost and high psychological impact.

### Why Biosecurity Is Critical for India?

- India's **large population and high population density** increase the potential impact of any biological incident.
- Heavy dependence on agriculture and livestock makes the country vulnerable to **agro-terrorism and transboundary animal diseases.**
- Rapid growth in biotechnology research increases the challenge of regulating **dual-use research** with civilian and military applications.
- The interest of **non-state actors in low-cost, high-impact biological agents** further compounds security risks.

### India's Existing Biosecurity Architecture

- **The Department of Biotechnology** oversees research governance and safety frameworks for labs.
- **The Plant Quarantine Organisation of India** regulates agricultural imports and exports.
- **The National Disaster Management Authority** has issued detailed guidelines for the management of biological disasters.
- **Key legal instruments include:**
  - **The Environment (Protection) Act, 1986**, governing hazardous microorganisms and genetically modified organisms.
  - **The Weapons of Mass Destruction and Their Delivery Systems (Prohibition of Unlawful Activities) Act, 2005**, which criminalises biological weapons.
  - **The Biosafety Rules, 1989**, and guidelines issued in 2017 for recombinant DNA research and biocontainment.

### International Measures

- **Biological Weapons Convention (BMC):** It prohibits the development, production, acquisition, transfer, stockpiling and use of biological and toxin weapons.
  - It entered into force in **1975** and was the **first multilateral disarmament treaty** banning an entire category of **weapons of mass destruction (WMD).**
- **Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC):** It is a multilateral treaty that bans chemical weapons and requires their destruction within a specified period of time.
  - CWC is implemented by the **Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).**
- **Australia Group:** The Australia Group is an informal forum of countries that seeks to prevent the proliferation of chemical and biological weapons.
  - It does so by harmonising export controls on dual-use materials, equipment, and technologies.

### Global Best Practices

- The U.S. anchors its biosecurity framework under the **National Biodefense Strategy (2022-2028)** which integrates health, defence, and biotech oversight.
- **China's Biosecurity Law (2021)** treats biotechnology and genetic data as matters of **national security**, mandating centralised control over research and material transfers.
- **The United Kingdom's Biological Security Strategy (2023)** focuses on biosurveillance and rapid response.

### Way Ahead

- India should establish a **comprehensive national biosecurity framework** with clear leadership and coordination mechanisms.
- **Legal and regulatory systems** must be updated to **regulate dual-use research** and synthetic biology.
- Investment in **genomic surveillance, microbial forensics, and early-warning systems** should be enhanced.

**About Ricin**

- Ricin is a highly **toxic carbohydrate-binding protein** extracted from the castor bean plant (Ricinus communis).
- It **blocks protein synthesis in cells**, causing multiple organ failure and death within hours of exposure. Even a few milligrams can be fatal.
- It is listed under **Schedule-1** of the **Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC),** supervised by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).
- There is **no known antidote** for Ricin poisoning.

**Source:** IE

## DEMOCRATISING AI IN INDIA

### In News

- Recently, it has been highlighted that the democratisation of AI requires fair access to computing resources, data, and AI models, which are crucial for innovation and competitiveness in the digital economy.

### What is Democratisation of AI?

- Democratisation of AI refers to making artificial intelligence accessible, affordable and usable for a wide and diverse set of users. It goes beyond access to finished applications.
- It includes access to the core building blocks of AI such as computing power, datasets and model ecosystems.
- As these resources become available at scale, individuals and institutions are expanding what they can achieve with AI.

### Importance of Democratisation of AI

- **Equitable Access:** India is democratising AI to drive inclusive growth and economic opportunity, with over 6 million people employed in the sector.
  - Ensures AI tools are available across healthcare, education, agriculture, and finance, bridging socio-economic divides.
- **Public Welfare:** AI can enhance governance, improve service delivery, and empower citizens through transparent and efficient systems.
- **Practical AI applications** are enhancing agriculture, healthcare, and disaster preparedness, while India's innovation ecosystem features over 200,000 startups, nearly 90% of which leverage AI.
- **National Development:** Applied AI can accelerate India's development narrative by supporting initiatives like Digital India, Smart Cities, and agricultural reforms.
- **Global Positioning**: Democratised AI strengthens India's role in shaping global standards for ethical and inclusive technology.

### Challenges

- **Data Privacy & Security:** Safeguarding citizen data while enabling large-scale AI deployment remains a critical concern.
- **Bias & Fairness:** AI systems risk perpetuating social biases if not designed with inclusivity and contestability in mind.
- **Infrastructure Gaps**: Limited access to high-quality datasets, compute power, and skilled workforce in rural and underserved regions.
- **Global Competition**: Balancing innovation with systemic risk management while competing with frontier AI models in advanced economies.

### Regulatory & Policy Framework

- **Government Cloud and Digital Infrastructure:** The GI Cloud, known as MeghRaj, was established under the Digital India initiative to meet the cloud needs of the Government of India.

- Supported by MeitY, it provides secure, scalable and elastic cloud services for e Governance delivery. Features such as pay per use access, rapid deployment and on demand provisioning reduce costs and technical barriers for adopting AI.

- **Data Governance and Legal Enablers**: India's data governance framework promotes innovation while protecting privacy. The Government Open Data License (2017) allows reuse of non-sensitive public data for AI development, while the Digital Personal Data Protection Act (2023) ensures personal data security and compliance, fostering trust and accountability.
- **Centres of Excellence (CoEs)** promote research-led innovation in healthcare, agriculture, sustainable cities, and education, fostering collaboration between academia, industry, and government.
- **Skilling for AI Readiness (SOAR)** Trains students (Class 6–12) and educators in AI fundamentals and ethics.
- **Vocational & Technical Training:** Craftsmen Training Scheme offers 31 new-age courses, including AI and robotics, via ITIs and National Skill Training Institutes.
- **Youth Engagement (YUVAi)**: Equips students (Classes 8–12) with AI and social skills across eight thematic areas.
- **AI Competency for Government Officials:** Provides structured training for officials to apply AI in policymaking and governance.
- **Higher Education & Research (IndiaAI Mission)**: Supports 500 PhD, 5,000 postgraduate, and 8,000 undergraduate students, establishing AI labs in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities
    - **IndiaAI Mission** expands access to high-quality datasets, reusable models via AIKosh, and indigenous multimodal AI models trained on Indian data and languages, supporting startups and innovation.

### Global Cooperation for Democratising AI Resources

- The India–AI Impact Summit 2026 fosters global cooperation to democratise AI resources, focusing on fair access to data, compute, and infrastructure, especially for Global South countries.
- The Democratizing AI Resources Working Group, co-chaired by India, Egypt, and Kenya, aims to make AI resources accessible and affordable, promote distributed infrastructure and open innovation, and support capacity-building and knowledge exchange. This initiative seeks to enable all nations to use AI for inclusive growth and sustainable development.

### Conclusion and Way Forward

- India's approach to the democratisation of AI shows that scale, inclusion and innovation can progress together.
- The focus on affordability, openness and trust ensures that benefits of AI reach farmers, students, researchers, startups and public institutions alike.
- As India hosts the India–AI Impact Summit 2026, it also places this experience within a global context, offering a model shaped by the priorities of the Global South. The path ahead is clear.
- Democratising AI is not a one-time effort but a continuing commitment to ensure that technological progress strengthens societies, reduces inequalities and supports sustainable development for all.

**Source :PIB**

## NEWS IN SHORT

## CONTINENTAL MANTLE EARTHQUAKES

### In News

- Stanford researchers have produced the first global map of a rare type of earthquake that occurs not in the Earth's crust but deep within the planet's mantle

### Continental mantle earthquakes

- **Location**: They occur worldwide but are regionally clustered, particularly beneath the Himalayas in southern Asia and the Bering Strait between Asia and North America.
- **Depth**: Most earthquakes occur in the Earth's crust at depths of 10–29 km, but mantle earthquakes happen much deeper—over 80 km below the crust-mantle boundary, known as the Mohorovičić discontinuity (Moho), which separates the crust from the semi-solid mantle.

### Latest Study

- The team used differences in Sn waves (mantle) and Lg waves (crust) to reliably identify mantle earthquakes from seismic data.

- From 46,000 earthquakes since 1990, 459 were confirmed as mantle earthquakes; the true number may be higher.

### Importance

- It will offer fresh insights into how earthquakes originate and how the Earth works beneath its surface.
- Studying these quakes helps understand earthquake mechanics and Earth's internal structure.
- Researchers aim to explore whether these earthquakes are caused by stress from crustal quakes or heat-driven mantle processes, improving knowledge of how the crust and mantle interact.

**Source :**DTE

## MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS GUIDELINES ON VANDE MATARAM

### Context

- The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has issued guidelines directing that the national song Vande Mataram be sung/ played before the national anthem when both are played at official events.

### Key Guidelines

- **Occasions for Playing or Singing:**
  - **Arrival and departure of the President** at formal State functions.
  - **Before and after Presidential addresses** to the nation.
  - **Arrival and departure of Governors/ Lieutenant Governors** at State functions.
  - When the **National Flag is brought on parade**.
  - Other occasions specified by the Government of India.
- **Protocol:** The official version of approximately **3 minutes and 10 seconds** shall be used.
  - All six stanzas of Vande Mataram, including the four stanzas that were set aside by the Congress Working Committee in 1937, will be played.

### Constitutional and Legal Framework

- **Status of National Symbols:** On **24 January 1950**, the first two stanzas of Vande Mataram were adopted as India's National Song.
  - While the Constitution does not explicitly define **"National Song,"** its recognition flows from Constituent Assembly discussions and executive practice.
- **Article 51A(a) Fundamental Duties:** Mandates every citizen to abide by the Constitution and respect its ideals and institutions, the **National Flag and the National Anthem.**
  - Vande Mataram is not explicitly protected by any constitutional provision.

**Vande Mataram**

- Vande Mataram was composed by **Bankim Chandra Chatterjee** in Sanskrit and first appeared in the novel **Anandamath in 1882.**
  - Anandamath is set against the backdrop of the 1769–73 **Bengal famine** and the **Sanyasi Rebellion.**
- First sung by **Rabindranath Tagore at the 1896 Indian National Congress session** gave it national exposure.
- During the **Swadeshi Movement of 1905,** Vande Mataram emerged as the anthem of civil resistance.
  - Vande Mataram, as a political slogan, was first used on **7 August 1905.**

**Source:** TH

## SENSITIVE ITEMS OUT OF U.S. STATEMENT ON DEAL WITH INDIA

### Context

- The US has revised a factsheet it had released about the trade deal with India.

### About

- **Purchasing of American Products:** The earlier version of the factsheet said India had "committed to" buying more American products and purchasing "over $500 billion of U.S. energy, information and communication technology, coal, and other products".
  - The updated factsheet replaced the wording from "committed" to "intends".
- **Pulses:** Another section in the factsheet included "certain pulses" among the agricultural products India had committed to reducing tariffs on.
  - The joint statement had made no mention of pulses and the updated factsheet drops the mention of pulses.
- **Digital Services** India will remove its digital services taxes and commit to negotiate a robust set of bilateral digital trade rules that address discriminatory or burdensome practices and other barriers to digital trade.

- This section has now been removed altogether.

### Reasons for Updating the Fact Sheet

- **Clarification on India Buying American Products:** The $500-billion sum has left farmers worried over a sudden surge in imports of agricultural goods.
  - However, the government has clarified that this figure is not legally binding as private companies are involved in placing orders, not the sovereign governments.
- **The dropping of 'pulses'** from the revised fact sheet comes at a time when the Indian government is attempting to push for self-reliance in the segment.
  - For India, market access to agriculture has long been a sensitive point in trade deal negotiations.
  - Farmers have historically pushed for agriculture to be kept out of multilateral and bilateral agreements, citing steep international subsidies in the West.

**Source: IE**

## DRAFT DEFENCE ACQUISITION PROCEDURE (DAP)-2026

### Context

- The Department of Defence has prepared the **draft 'Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP)-2026.**

### About

- The proposed draft aims to **align India's defence acquisition with the rapidly evolving geo-strategic landscape.**
- It is the cornerstone for the '**Atmanirbhar Bharat' initiative** in defence and will replace the Defence Acquisition Procedure-2020.
- It focuses on **institutionalised preference for 'Buy (Indian-IDDM)' (Indigenously Designed, Developed and Manufactured) category** for procurement, thereby boosting domestic manufacturing and effective reduction of imports.
- **Imports restricted to only** domestically non-available and critical equipment.

### Significance

- It emphasises pragmatic evaluation of Indigenous Content (IC) and Indigenous Design (ID) and retention of IPR in India.
- Eases financial and experience criteria to promote inclusive participation of MSMEs, start-ups, and private industry.
- Promotes faster acquisition through delegation of powers, revamped trials & quality assurance, and digitisation of procedures.

**Source: TH**

## LIBERALISED REMITTANCE SCHEME

### In News

- During the Union Budget 2026-27, the Finance Minister announced that the Tax Collected at Source (TCS) under the Liberalised Remittance Scheme (LRS) for education and medical expenses abroad will be reduced from 5% to 2%.

### Liberalised Remittance Scheme (LRS)

- The Scheme was introduced in 2004, with a limit of USD 25,000. The LRS limit has been revised in stages consistent with prevailing macro and micro economic conditions.
- At present, under the Liberalised Remittance Scheme, resident individuals, including minors, can freely remit up to $2,50,000 per financial year for permissible current or capital account transactions or a combination of both
  - These transactions include education, medical treatment abroad, purchase of property, and investments in foreign stocks.

### Prohibited items under the Scheme

- Under the Scheme, remittances are prohibited for certain purposes, including activities banned under Schedule I (such as lottery tickets or proscribed magazines) or restricted under Schedule II of FEMA.
- They cannot be used for margin calls to overseas exchanges, purchasing FCCBs of Indian companies in the overseas secondary market, or trading in foreign exchange abroad.
- Remittances to FATF-designated non-cooperative countries, to individuals or entities flagged as terrorism risks by the RBI, and gifting in foreign currency to another resident's overseas account are also not allowed.

**Source :LM**

## CORRUPTION PERCEPTIONS INDEX

### Context

- Transparency International recently published 2025 Corruption Perception Index (CPI).

### Corruption Perceptions Index

- It measures perceived levels of public sector corruption using assessments from experts and business leaders.
- Scores range from zero, indicating very high levels of perceived corruption, to 100, which reflects a clean public sector.

### Key Highlights of Data

- **Methodology**: The index evaluated 182 countries based on perceived public sector corruption, using a scale from zero (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean).
- **Trend:** Corruption globally is worsening, even in advanced democracies, as the number of countries scoring above 80 has decreased from 12 a decade ago to just five this year.
  - It revealed a troubling downward trend, with the global average score falling to 42 out of 100—the lowest in over ten years.
  - It further pointed out that 122 countries, which are more than two-thirds of the total, scored under 50 in the 2025 CPI.
- **Best performing countries:** Denmark, maintaining its eight-year streak, tops the CPI 2025 with the highest score of 89, followed closely by Finland (88) and Singapore (84).
- **Worst Performing Countries:** The countries with the lowest scores suffer from severely repressed civil societies and high levels of instability.
  - South Sudan and Somalia, both scoring 9, tied at rank 181.
- **India's Performance**: In 2025, India ranked 91st globally on the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), scoring 39 out of 100, which is a slight improvement from the previous year.

**Source :IE**

## INDIA'S FIRST MUSICAL ROAD

### Context

- Mumbai's Coastal Road has introduced India's first musical road, marking an innovative use of road engineering to combine infrastructure with technology-driven public experience.

### About

- A 500-metre stretch between Nariman Point and Worli, named **Sangeet Marg**, plays the Oscar-winning song "Jai Ho" when vehicles travel at a speed of **60–80 km per hour**. The concept uses specially engineered rumble strips carved into the asphalt at precise intervals.
- As vehicles move over these grooves, vibrations are generated due to friction between the tyres and the road surface. These vibrations create sound waves that combine to reproduce the melody, which can be heard by passengers inside the vehicle.
- The concept is based on Hungarian technology and has previously been implemented in countries such as **Hungary, Japan, South Korea, and the United Arab Emirates**.

**Source: TH**

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