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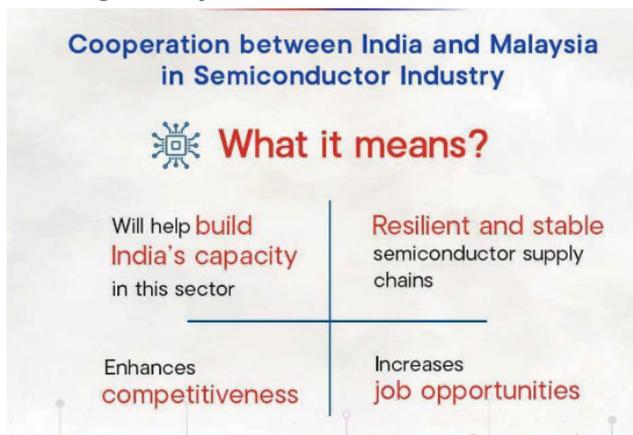
INDIAN PM VISIT TO MALAYSIA

Context

- **India and Malaysia** vowed to expand their ties in the **high-priority sectors** of trade and investment, defence, energy, advanced manufacturing and semiconductors.

Key Outcomes

- The two sides inked a **total of 11 agreements and documents** to expand cooperation in a **range of key areas**.



- **Audio-Visual Co-production Agreement** to boost cultural and media collaboration, and a MoU on **Disaster Management Cooperation** aimed at improving joint preparedness for emergencies.
- **In the technology and industrial domain**, the governments exchanged an Exchange of Notes on Cooperation in Semiconductors, underlining mutual interest in strengthening capabilities and supply chains in this critical sector.
- **A Framework Agreement on the International Big Cats Alliance (IBCA)** was also finalised, reflecting shared commitment to biodiversity and sustainable development.
- **Social Welfare:** Both signed a MoU between the Employees' State Insurance Corporation of India and the Social Security Organisation of Malaysia to enhance social security programmes for Indian citizens working in Malaysia.
- **Agreements on Vocational Education and Training and Security Cooperation** between the two national security councils were also exchanged, signalling broader institutional linkages.
- **Both sides also received the report of the 10th Malaysia-India CEO Forum**, highlighting private sector perspectives on trade, investment and future collaboration.

Overview of India and Malaysia Relations

- **Diplomatic Relations:** The two countries established diplomatic relations in 1957, and this was elevated to a **Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP) in 2024**.
 - ♦ Both countries are members of various international organizations, such as the United Nations, ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations), and the Non-Aligned Movement.
- **Trade and Economic Relations:** Malaysia is the 13th largest trading partner for India while India stands amongst the 10 largest trading partners globally.
 - ♦ Furthermore, Malaysia has emerged as the third largest trading partner for India from the ASEAN region and India is the largest trading partner for Malaysia among the countries of the Southeast Asian region.
 - ♦ Malaysia stands as an important trade partner, as both countries have engaged in various economic agreements such as the India-Malaysia Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA).
 - ♦ Both countries have agreed to conduct trade settlements in Indian rupees, reflecting an intention to bolster trade relations.
- **Defense and Security:** The defense ties have steadily expanded, marked by the signing of a **defense cooperation memorandum in 1993**, regular defense cooperation meetings, and joint military exercises.
- **Strategic Partnership:** India and Malaysia have aimed to strengthen their strategic partnership through various initiatives, including high-level visits, joint commissions, and dialogues.
 - ♦ Both countries have expressed interests in enhancing cooperation in areas such as defense, counter-terrorism, maritime security, and cultural exchanges.
- **ASEAN Centrality:** Malaysia holds a crucial position in **expanding India's trade with ASEAN**, aligning with **India's Act East Policy**, **advancing maritime connectivity** in the Strait of Malacca and South China Sea, and supporting ASEAN's Indo-Pacific Perspective (AOIP) and the Indo-Pacific Initiative (IPOI).
- **Tourism and diaspora:** India is the 5th largest source country for inbound tourism to Malaysia.

- ♦ A bilateral agreement on employment and workers' welfare in 2009, and a revised air services agreement in 2017, have significantly contributed to the growth of tourism between the nations.
- **Indian Community:** Malaysia has the third largest Indian diaspora in the world (2.9 million).
 - ♦ The number of Persons of Indian Origin is around 2.75 million (about 6.8% of Malaysia's population).
- **Cultural Ties:** Indian influence in Malaysia can be seen in various aspects of Malaysian culture, including language, religion (Hinduism and Buddhism), architecture, cuisine, and festivals.

Challenges

- **Trade Disputes and Imbalances:** Issues related to tariffs, non-tariff barriers, and trade restrictions have occasionally strained economic ties between the two countries.
- **Geopolitical Considerations:** Both countries have diverse foreign policy priorities and engagements with other nations, which lead to differences in strategic perspectives.
- **Indo-Pacific & China Factor:** Malaysia's economic dependence on China constrains deeper strategic alignment with India.
 - ♦ Differing approaches within ASEAN on South China Sea issues also impact the relations.
- **Connectivity Constraints:** Underutilisation of maritime and logistics connectivity despite geographical proximity.
 - ♦ Limited direct shipping and integrated supply chains.
- **Defence & Strategic Limitations:** Defence cooperation remains below potential, largely limited to training and exercises.
 - ♦ Lack of joint defence production or technology transfer.
- **Diaspora Issues:** Concerns related to welfare, employment conditions and political representation of the Indian-origin community.

Conclusion

- India and Malaysia completed **65 years of modern diplomatic relations in 2022.**
- The relations between India and Malaysia have grown from a Strategic Partnership to an Enhanced Strategic Partnership and to a comprehensive partnership now, with new cooperation in cultural diplomacy, digital economy, and agricultural commodities forthcoming.

Source: TH

STRENGTHENING INDIA'S ASTRONOMY INFRASTRUCTURE

Context

- The Union Budget 2026–27 has allocated **₹13,416.20 crore** to the Department of Space, signalling a renewed push towards deep-space exploration and astrophysics.

Key announcements in the Budget

Development of Advanced Telescope Infrastructure:

- ♦ The government has prioritised the construction of the 30-metre National Large Optical-Infrared Telescope (NLOT).
- ♦ The National Large Solar Telescope (NLST) near Pangong Lake in Ladakh has received funding support.
- ♦ Upgradation of the Himalayan Chandra Telescope in Hanle has been proposed.
- ♦ The COSMOS-2 planetarium in Amaravati is nearing completion to boost science outreach.

- **Focus on Deep-Space Exploration and Astrophysics:** A large share of the allocation is directed towards **frontier research in astrophysics**, enabling India to participate in cutting-edge global discoveries rather than remain a secondary collaborator.

Existing infrastructure in India's astronomy ecosystem

- The **Giant Metrewave Radio Telescope (GMRT)** near Pune is the world's largest low-frequency radio telescope array.
- The establishment of **IN-SPACe (Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre) in 2020** has encouraged public-private partnerships.
- **The AstroSat mission**, India's first dedicated **multi-wavelength space observatory**, has strengthened India's capability in space-based astronomy and produced globally recognised scientific output.
- **The Physical Research Laboratory (PRL), Ahmedabad**, plays a crucial role in planetary sciences, solar physics, and space astronomy, contributing to missions such as Chandrayaan and Mars Orbiter Mission.
- India possesses growing capabilities in **AI-driven data processing** centres. The ecosystem has witnessed an increase in **space-tech startups** working in collaboration with ISRO.

Rationale behind strengthening domestic infrastructure

- **Limited Global Access:** Only a few countries such as the **U.S., China, Japan, and members of the European Union** heavily invest in large terrestrial and space telescopes.
 - ♦ Access to such facilities is highly competitive, and Indian scientists frequently face restricted observation time at foreign facilities.
- **Utilising Ideal Geographical Advantage:** Many of the planned facilities are proposed for locations such as Hanle and areas near Pangong Lake in Ladakh, which have dark, high-altitude skies optimal for ground-based astronomy.
- **Arresting Brain Drain:** World-class domestic facilities can encourage talented students and researchers to pursue advanced research in India.
 - ♦ Strong infrastructure enhances India's global scientific reputation.
- **Strategic Positioning in Global Science:** Astronomy and space science contribute to;
 - ♦ Technological spillovers.
 - ♦ Advanced instrumentation development.
 - ♦ National prestige and soft power.

Gaps in India's Astronomical Infrastructure

- **Lack of Comparable Optical Telescope Facilities:** Despite GMRT's success, India lacks a world-class optical telescope comparable to global standards.
- **Absence of Sub-Millimetre Telescope Capabilities:** India does not currently possess telescopes operating in the sub-millimetre wavelength range, essential for:
 - ♦ Studying proto-stellar disks.
 - ♦ Understanding galaxy formation.
 - ♦ Probing dusty star-forming regions.
- **Underutilisation of Budget Allocations:** Experts have flagged that actual expenditure has fallen short of budgetary allocations.

Way Ahead

- **Promote Public-Private Partnerships:** Private sector participation in space and astronomy instrumentation should be expanded under **IN-SPACE** with regulatory oversight.
- **Build Advanced Data Infrastructure:** Investments in AI-driven data analytics, high-performance computing, and big-data astronomy platforms must be expanded.

- **Strengthen Human Capital:** Greater funding should be directed towards fellowships, postdoctoral programmes, and research grants in astrophysics and planetary science.

Source: [TH](#)

MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS IN INDIA

Context

- The Economic Survey 2025-26 flagged the **alarming rise of digital addiction and screen-related mental health problems**, particularly among children and adolescents.

About

- The Budget announced measures **to strengthen mental health infrastructure**.
- **Key highlights include** the proposed establishment of a second National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS) in north India and the upgrading of premier institutions in Ranchi and Tezpur to improve regional access.

Mental Health Burden on India

- **India** accounts for **nearly one-third of the world's suicides**, depression and addiction cases.
 - ♦ Suicide is one of the leading causes of death among Indians aged 15-29.
- **According to the WHO**, between **2012 and 2030**, the economic loss due to mental health conditions in India is **estimated to be \$1.03 trillion**.
- **Around 70% to 92%** of people with mental disorders do not receive proper treatment due to lack of **awareness, stigma, and shortage of professionals**.
- **India has 0.75 psychiatrists per 1,00,000 people**, whereas the WHO recommends at least three per 1,00,000.
- **While health spending may have increased since FY 2014-15**, specific allocations for mental health services have historically been small, **around 1% of the total health budget**.

Challenges in Psychiatric Healthcare in India

- **Poor Conditions in Psychiatric Hospitals:** Often associated with cruelty, neglect, abuse, and substandard living conditions.
 - ♦ Reflects systemic neglect and inadequate accountability mechanisms.
- **Scant Funding:** Mental health receives extremely low budget allocation, about 1% of the total health budget, with most going to institutions rather than community-based care.

- **Shortage of Trained Personnel:** India's mental health workforce remains scarce; with only 0.75 psychiatrists and 0.12 psychologists for a 1,00,000 population, India falls short of World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines requiring at least three psychiatrists for 1,00,000 people.
- **Disproportionate distribution:** Few psychiatrists at district HQs, almost none in towns/villages.
 - ◆ This leads to an urban-rural mental healthcare divide.
- **Accessibility & Economic Barriers:** Medicines are unavailable in rural/interior areas.
 - ◆ Travel to seek care leads to loss of wages, unaffordable for poor families.
 - ◆ Patients with severe mental illness are usually non-earning members, worsening their financial strain.

Key Initiatives by the Government of India

- **Mental Healthcare Act, 2017:** The act decriminalised suicide attempts in India and also included WHO guidelines in the categorisation of mental illnesses.
 - ◆ The most significant provision in the act was "advance directives", which allowed individuals with mental illnesses to decide the course of their treatment.
 - ◆ It also restricted the use of electro-convulsive therapy (ECT) and banned its use on minors, finally introducing measures to tackle stigma in Indian society.
- **Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2017:** The Act acknowledges mental illness as a disability and seeks to enhance the Rights and Entitlements of the Disabled.
- **In Sukdeb Saha vs State of Andhra Pradesh,** the Supreme Court of India reinforced mental health as a **fundamental right under Article 21**, thereby legally binding the government to ensure accessible, affordable and quality mental health care.
- **Under Ayushman Bharat,** mental health services have also been added to the package of services under comprehensive primary health care provided at these centres.
- **District Mental Health Programme (DMHP):** Delivered in 767 districts, offering services like suicide prevention, stress management, and counseling.
- **National Tele Mental Health Programme (NTMHP):** Launched in 2022 to provide access

to mental health services through 53 Tele MANAS Cells across 36 states/UTs.

- **Expansion of Mental Health Capacity:** Strengthening mental health services and educational resources in medical colleges and hospitals.
- **Budget Allocation:** Over the past five years, India's mental health allocation has increased from ₹683 crore in 2020-21 to about ₹1,898 crore in 2024-25.

Reform Measures Needed

- **Raise mental health spending to 5% of total health expenditure** (WHO benchmark).
- **Train and deploy mid-level mental health providers** to strengthen rural access.
- **Integrate mental health** fully into primary care and universal insurance schemes.
- **Establish monitoring and evaluation systems** with district-level accountability.
- **Expand anti-stigma and awareness campaigns,** especially in schools and workplaces.
- **Improve coordination among ministries** to ensure a unified mental health strategy.

Conclusion

- India's mental health ecosystem faces a triple deficit, in funding, workforce, and governance.
- Bridging these gaps requires policy integration, decentralised service delivery, and social destigmatisation, aligning with global best practices and WHO guidelines.

Source: TH

INDIA-CANADA SECURITY COOPERATION

Context

- National Security Adviser of India Ajit Doval held high-level talks with Canadian officials in Ottawa to strengthen security cooperation, streamline information sharing and rebuild institutional links after nearly two years of diplomatic strain.

Background

- In **2023**, Canada alleged the involvement of Indian officials in the killing of a Canadian citizen linked to Khalistan extremism.
 - ◆ India rejected the allegations as absurd and politically motivated leading to diplomatic expulsions, suspension of trade negotiations, and deterioration of bilateral engagement.

- The current dialogue signals a **calibrated effort to restore functional cooperation**, particularly in security and law enforcement domains.
- **Space Cooperation:** MoUs signed in 1996 and 2003 between ISRO and Canadian Space Agency (CSA).

Key Outcomes of the Dialogue

- **Work Plan on National Security:** Both countries agreed on a structured work plan to guide cooperation on national security and law enforcement.
- **Appointment of Liaison Officers:** India and Canada will post security and law-enforcement liaison officers in each other's countries to **streamline bilateral communication and facilitate real-time information sharing**. The focus areas include;
 - ♦ Illegal drug trafficking, especially fentanyl precursors.
 - ♦ Transnational organised criminal networks.
 - ♦ Extremist financing and document fraud.
- **Addressing Extremism and Diaspora Issues:** Discussions covered extremist fundraising, intimidation, and propaganda linked to organised crime networks.
- **Cybersecurity Cooperation:** Both sides agreed to formalise cooperation on cybersecurity policy. Also mechanisms for information sharing on cyber threats will be institutionalised.
- **Science and Technology:** Department of Earth Science and Polar Canada have started a programme for exchange of knowledge and scientific research on Cold Climate (Arctic) Studies.
 - ♦ A Memorandum of Cooperation between National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR) and POLAR Canada was signed in 2020.
- **People-to-People Links:** There are around 1.8 million Indo-Canadians and one million non-resident Indians in Canada, making up over **3% of its population**.
 - ♦ India is the largest source of international students in Canada, with Indians making up around 40% of that group.
 - ♦ Strong cultural exchanges and vibrant diaspora influence bilateral perceptions.
- **Multilateral Cooperation:** Both countries cooperate in forums like the G20, Commonwealth, United Nations, and International Solar Alliance.

Brief on India-Canada Relations

- **Historical Relations:** India and Canada established diplomatic relations in **1947**.
 - ♦ Shared democratic values and Commonwealth membership have underpinned ties.
 - ♦ Relations were historically strained after India's nuclear tests in 1974 and 1998, due to Canada's non-proliferation stance.
- **Economic Cooperation:** In 2024 (January – August), total bilateral trade in goods amounted to USD 8.55 billion (India's exports: USD 5.22 billion and India's imports: USD 3.33 billion).
 - ♦ Negotiations continue on a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) and a Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (FIPA).
- **Civil Nuclear Cooperation:** Nuclear Cooperation Agreement (NCA) signed in 2010, operational since 2013.
 - ♦ A Joint Committee oversees implementation of the 2010 Agreement on "Cooperation in Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy".

Way Ahead

- India-Canada relations have strong foundations and significant potential, especially in trade, education, and clean energy. However, bilateral ties remain fragile, with political and security concerns acting as key irritants.
- The future of the relationship depends on how both countries manage these differences while leveraging shared interests.

Source: [TH](#)

INDIA'S AGROFORESTRY AMBITIONS & FINANCING AND POLICY HURDLES

Context

- Recently, the experts highlighted that **India's agroforestry** continues to face serious challenges, especially in **access to finance, policy implementation, and farmer awareness**, during the **first South Asian Agroforestry & Trees Outside Forests (AF-TOF) Congress**.

South Asian Agroforestry & Trees Outside Forests (AF-TOF) Congress

- It is referred to as the ‘**Treescapes**’ 2026 Congress.
- It marked the **first regional platform** dedicated to advancing agroforestry and Trees Outside Forests (TOF) across South Asia.
- It was organised by the **Centre for International Forestry Research and World Agroforestry (CIFOR-ICRAF)** in collaboration with the **Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)**.

About Agroforestry

- It is a **land-use system** that integrates **trees with crops and/or livestock** on the same land.
- It enhances **food security, soil health, biodiversity, carbon sequestration, and income diversification** for farmers by combining perennial trees with farming systems.
- It helps in addressing land degradation and climate risks.

Current Status & Future Projection

- India currently has **about 28 million hectares** under agroforestry, and the government aims to expand this to **50 million hectares by 2050**.
- Tree-based systems account for nearly **20% of India’s national carbon stocks**.

Related Issues & Concerns

- **Limited Access to Finance:** Of nearly **₹20 lakh crore** in annual institutional agricultural credit, **less than 5%** reaches agroforestry. Reasons include:
 - ♦ Long gestation periods (5–30 years);
 - ♦ Tenure and land ownership complexities;
 - ♦ Lack of acceptable collateral;
- **Policy Awareness Gaps:** Low awareness among farmers about the **National Agroforestry Policy, 2014**, especially regarding:
 - ♦ Tree harvesting rights;
 - ♦ Transit and regulatory clearances;
- **Weak Policy Implementation:** Although agroforestry is recognised as climate- and livelihood-friendly, it remains **under-supported by institutions and financing mechanisms**, limiting scale and impact.
- **Missed Economic Opportunities:** India imports **over \$7 billion worth of wood annually**, indicating **underutilised domestic potential, lost opportunity for farmers** and the green economy, despite strong domestic tree resources.

Efforts For Agroforestry in India

- **National Agroforestry Policy, 2014:** First-of-its-kind policy globally to promote tree-based farming.
- **ICAR-led research and regional studies:** Evidence shows agroforestry helps reduce deforestation and avoid **tens of millions of tonnes of GHG emissions annually**.
- **AF-TOF/Treescapes Congress:** Regional platform involving policymakers, researchers, financial institutions, industry, farmers, and youth to strengthen governance and investment frameworks.

Way Forward

- **Improve Institutional Credit Flow** through tailored financial products for long-gestation tree systems.
- **Simplify Regulations** on tree harvesting and transit, with clear, farmer-friendly guidelines.
- **Enhance Awareness** of agroforestry policies at the grassroots level.
- **Leverage Carbon Markets and Digital Tools:** Align carbon credits, digital traceability, and private-sector procurement with smallholder realities.
- **Reduce Import Dependence:** Promote domestic timber and tree-based value chains to strengthen rural incomes, especially for India’s **86% marginal farmers**.
- **Align Climate, Agriculture, & Trade Policies** to unlock agroforestry’s potential for income generation, climate mitigation, and ecosystem services.

Source: DTE

THE AYUSH SECTOR IN INDIA

In News

- Recently, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman proposed a slew of resources for AYUSH in the 2026-27 Union Budget.
- India’s new free trade agreement (FTA) with the European Union opened the door for Indian doctors and products to enter the European market more easily.

AYUSH Sector in India

- AYUSH encompasses traditional systems of medicine such as **Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha, and Homeopathy**.

- ♦ It includes clinics, wellness centers, research, herbal products, education, and holistic health practices.
- India's AYUSH sector is rapidly expanding, supported by increasing awareness, demand for natural therapies, and government initiatives to promote traditional medicine systems.
- It has witnessed significant growth in recent years, emerging as a prominent domain in terms of revenue and employment.

Institutional Framework and Key Initiatives

- **National AYUSH Mission (NAM):** Core policy instrument to integrate AYUSH into public healthcare through:
 - ♦ Co-location of AYUSH facilities in PHCs, CHCs, and district hospitals
 - ♦ Strengthening AYUSH infrastructure and human resources
- **Institutes of National Importance:** All India Institute of Ayurveda (New Delhi), National Institute of Homoeopathy (Kolkata) & Dedicated national institutes for Siddha, Unani, Yoga, and Naturopathy.
- **Regulatory and Research Bodies:** Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences (CCRAS), National Commission for Indian System of Medicine & National Commission for Homoeopathy.
- **Medicinal Plant Promotion:** National Medicinal Plants Board (NMPB) working with 32 State Boards to support quality cultivation, value chains, and exports.
- **Flagship Schemes:** AYURGYAN (Education and capacity building), Ayurswasthya Yojana (Community health and preventive care using AYUSH systems).
- In the 2026-27 budget, its total allocation reached ₹4,408 crore, up from ₹3,992 crore in 2025-26 and ₹2,122 crore in 2020-21.
- It also announced plans to set up **three new All India Institutes of Ayurveda intended to be the gold standard for traditional medicine, similar to how AIIMS works for scientific medicine.**
- The budget also pitched for funds to upgrade the **WHO Global Traditional Medicine Centre in Jamnagar**, with the aim of India leading the way in setting standards for how traditional medicine should be practiced and documented worldwide.
- The budget for the **National AYUSH Mission** has been hiked by 66% to ₹1,300 crore, to modernise

local AYUSH hospitals and dispensaries, to place AYUSH clinics inside existing modern hospitals, and to upgrade existing centres to focus on preventive health. The budget also provides funds to upgrade AYUSH pharmacies and drug-testing laboratories.

- The government is also introducing a **multilingual AI assistant named Bharat-VISTAAR**, designed to give farmers who grow medicinal plants real-time advice on growing herbs of better quality, current market prices, and certifying crops for export.

Role of India-EU FTA in Boosting AYUSH

- The India-EU FTA provides strategic advantages to the AYUSH sector:
 - ♦ Easier mobility for Indian AYUSH practitioners without degree-recognition barriers
 - ♦ Legal certainty for Indian wellness and Ayurveda businesses across all 27 EU nations
 - ♦ Mutual recognition of laboratory testing and safety certifications
 - ♦ Protection of India's Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL) from biopiracy.

Importance of AYUSH

- Promotes preventive, personalised, and holistic healthcare, complementing modern medicine
- Expands India's soft power and cultural diplomacy
- Boosts wellness tourism and herbal medicine exports
- Generates livelihoods for farmers cultivating medicinal plants
- Enhances India's role in global health governance.

Challenges

- Limited infrastructure and skilled manpower in some regions
- Lack of uniform treatment protocols and standardisation
- Quality control and safety concerns in herbal medicines
- Criticism over unvalidated treatments and practices such as mixopathy
- Need for stronger clinical trials and evidence-based validation to gain global trust.

Conclusion and Way Forward

- The AYUSH sector is a key part of India's healthcare and cultural heritage, offering affordable and preventive solutions.

- With rising global demand, it can serve as a wellness model and economic driver, but integration, scientific validation, and regulation challenges must be addressed through strong policy, research, and innovation to balance tradition with modern science.

Source : [TH](#)

NEWS IN SHORT

THWAITES GLACIER

Context

- Scientists have raised concerns over the **Thwaites Glacier**, which is nicknamed the “**Doomsday Glacier**,” as it is melting at an unprecedented rate because of climate change fueled by human activities.

Thwaites Glacier (the Doomsday Glacier)

- It is an outflow glacier of the **West Antarctic Ice Sheet (WAIS)**, flowing into the **Amundsen Sea**.
 - ♦ The West Antarctic Ice Sheet is one of the 16 climate tipping elements on the planet.
- It is nicknamed ‘**Doomsday Glacier**’ due to its **potential to cause major sea-level rise**.
 - ♦ It is one of the most important places on the earth for those trying to understand how sea levels will rise in future.
- If Thwaites were to collapse completely over a long period, it **could cause global sea levels to rise by around half a meter**.
 - ♦ Higher sea levels will cause coasts to flood more easily, worsen erosion, increase storm surges, and threaten cities, low-lying islands, and ports.
 - ♦ While Thwaites is far from most lived areas, how it changes will affect people worldwide.

Source: [TH](#)

ERITREA

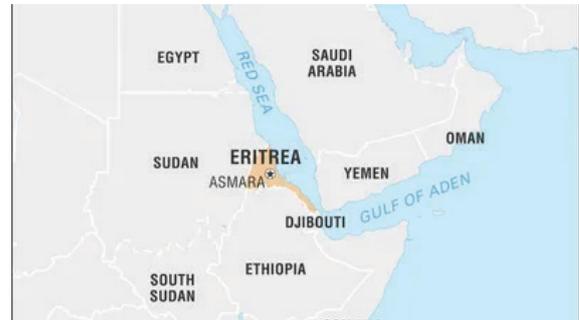
In News

- Recently, Ethiopia demanded that Eritrea immediately withdraw its troops from Ethiopian territory, highlighting renewed tensions in the Horn of Africa.

About

- **Capital:** Asmara (Declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site).

- **Location:** Situated in the Horn of Africa (Northeast Africa). Lies along a crucial geostrategic corridor connecting Africa with West Asia.
- **Strategic Importance:** Controls the western coast of the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, a vital global maritime chokepoint linking the Red Sea with the Gulf of Aden.
- **Geographical Features:** Hot desert climate along the Red Sea coast. Temperate / Mediterranean-like climate in the central highlands.
- **Membership in International Groupings:** African Union (AU) & COMESA (Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa).



Source: [TH](#)

SARDINIA ISLAND

In News

- The Italian government is planning to concentrate around 750 inmates under the strict “41bis” anti-mafia regime in a few facilities in Sardinia.

Italy's 41bis Regime

- It is named after the law that regulates it, and is among the most restrictive in Europe.
- Introduced in 1992 after the murder of anti-mafia judge Giovanni Falcone
- It imposes near-total isolation on prisoners and was designed to stop bosses running their operations from behind bars.

Sardinia

- It is situated in Italy and lies in the western Mediterranean, near Corsica and north of Africa.
- It features mountainous terrain of granite and schist, with Mount La Marmora as its highest point, and enjoys a subtropical Mediterranean climate.
- Its economy relies on agriculture, particularly sheep and goat farming, and the island is renowned for its cultural traditions, annual festivals, and distinctive code of honor.
- In Nuoro, a remote city in Sardinia, a high-security prison historically held top mafia bosses and terrorists.

Source: [IE](#)

NO QUESTIONS ON PM CARES, RELIEF AND DEFENCE FUNDS: PMO

Context

- The Prime Minister's Office has informed the Lok Sabha Secretariat that parliamentary questions and discussions related to the PM CARES Fund, Prime Minister's National Relief Fund (PMNRF), and the National Defence Fund (NDF) are not admissible under the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha.

About

- The **right to ask questions in the Lok Sabha, Rule 41(2) (viii) states** that "it shall not relate to a matter which is not primarily the concern of the Government of India".
 - Rule 41(2) (xvii) states "it shall not raise matters that are under the control of bodies or persons not primarily responsible to the Government of India".
- The reasoning given by the PMO was that the corpus of these funds is constituted entirely with **voluntary public contribution** and **not from any allocation out of the Consolidated Fund of India**.

The Funds

- PM CARES** is a public charitable trust set up to **raise funds for national emergencies such as Covid**.
 - It was set up in 2020, following the Covid outbreak.
 - The fund was registered as a Public Charitable Trust and its trust deed has been registered under the Registration Act, 1908.
- PMNRF** provides immediate relief to people affected by natural calamities, major accidents, riots, etc.
- The NDF** is meant specifically for the welfare of members of the armed and paramilitary forces and support to their families.

Source: IE

IMPACTS OF INDIA-US TRADE PACT ON GRAPHICS PROCESSING UNITS (GPUS)

In News

- India and the U.S. have agreed under an interim trade deal to significantly boost technology trade, particularly Graphics Processing Units (GPUs) and data center equipment, and expand joint tech cooperation.

Graphics Processing Unit (GPU)

- It is a specialised processor designed to accelerate tasks related to graphics, such as image and video rendering.
- Much like Neural Processing Units (NPU), GPUs excel at parallel processing, allowing them to handle multiple tasks simultaneously and perform trillions of operations per second.
- Today, GPUs are also indispensable for training large neural networks.

Applications

- Originally, GPUs were mainly used for gaming, video editing, and rendering 3D graphics.
- However, due to their immense processing power, GPUs have become essential for more complex tasks, such as large-scale data processing and cryptocurrency mining.
- GPUs support a wide range of applications including AI, scientific research, large-scale data analysis, and cryptocurrency mining.

Present Status

- India's GPU capacity is set to nearly triple from 38,000 to 100,000 by the end of 2026, supported by the IndiaAI Mission, which subsidises GPU usage for startups and researchers.
- The government is also building sovereign compute capacity for its own AI workloads through infrastructure like NIC's Meghraj. This expansion aims to strengthen India's AI ecosystem, reduce computing costs for smaller companies, and position the country as a global hub for AI development and data centres.
- The upcoming India-AI Impact Summit will showcase AI solutions for societal problems and highlight India's role in the Global South.

Importance of Recent agreement with US

- The new agreement allows India to import cutting-edge GPUs without such limits, addressing its growing AI compute needs.
- In data centers, India has offered a tax holiday until 2047 for foreign companies, fulfilling a key US demand and attracting major investments from Google, Microsoft, and Amazon, potentially spurring \$200 billion in sector investments.
- The agreement also promises expanded electronics trade, improved technology flows, and strengthened supply chains, reinforcing India's position as a global hub for electronics manufacturing, AI, and innovation, with the sector expected to reach \$100 billion in bilateral trade.

Source :IE

ETHYLENE GLYCOL

In News

- The Tamil Nadu government has banned a batch of Almond Kit cough syrup after detecting ethylene glycol contamination.

About Ethylene glycol

- Ethylene glycol (EG) is a colorless, odorless, sweet-tasting, water-soluble organic compound used as antifreeze in vehicles, in hydraulic fluids, inks, solvents, and for producing polyesters.
- It is highly toxic, with automotive antifreeze (95% EG) as a common poisoning source, leading to fatal outcomes even in small amounts.

Source: TH

SPACE SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

In News

- Azista Space, an Indian private aerospace firm, has achieved a milestone by imaging the International Space Station (ISS) from its own in-orbit satellite, enhancing India's space situational awareness (SSA).

About

- SSA involves comprehensive monitoring, tracking, and prediction of satellites, space debris, and near-Earth objects like asteroids to ensure space safety.
- It analyzes collision risks and supports avoidance maneuvers amid growing orbital congestion from over 50 Indian satellites worth Rs 50,000 crore.
- Azista's demo strengthens the national SSA for asset protection, naval surveillance, and defense against orbital threats.

Source: TH

RETICULATED PYTHON

Context

- Guinness World Records has confirmed a **7.22-metre** female **reticulated python** named **Ibu Baron** or "**The Baroness**", from Sulawesi, Indonesia, as the longest measured snake in the world.

About Reticulated Python

- **Scientific Name:** Malayopython reticulatus
- **The species is native to** South and Southeast Asia, including Indonesia, Philippines, Malaysia, Thailand, and parts of India.

Physical Characteristics:

- ♦ It is the longest snake species in the world.
- ♦ It is among the three heaviest snake species, after the green anaconda and Burmese python.
- ♦ It has distinctive net-like (reticulated) patterns on its scales.
- **Human Predation:** Reticulated pythons are among the few snake species known to prey on humans.
 - ♦ They kill by constriction, suffocating their prey before swallowing it whole.



Source: DTE

SURAJKUND MELA

Context

- A tragic accident occurred at the **Surajkund International Crafts Mela** in Faridabad when a giant swing collapsed.

About Surajkund Mela

- The fair has evolved into a strong global identity for Indian cultural heritage, crafts, and art since its inception in **1987**.
- The Mela is organised by the Surajkund Mela Authority and Haryana Tourism in collaboration with the Union Ministries of Tourism, Textiles, Culture and External Affairs.
- This year, more than 50 countries are participating, with **Egypt** as the partner nation.
- The central **theme**, "Local to Global - Atmanirbhar Bharat", aims to give traditional artisans international recognition, while **Uttar Pradesh and Meghalaya** are the theme states.
- The event is a reflection of **Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (The World is One Family)**.

Source: TH