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DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS (DCA)

Time: 45 Min

Date: 07-03-2026

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KARNATAKA & ANDHRA TO BAN SOCIAL MEDIA USE BY CHILDREN

Context

- **Karnataka** has announced a **ban on social media use by children under 16** in its latest Budget, and Andhra Pradesh is moving to introduce a measure that would prohibit those under 13 to use such service.

About

- It signals the growing momentum in India **to protect children from the various harms that social media platforms can cause.**

- Andhra Pradesh has said the state will introduce s**imilar regulations within 90 days.**

- Calls for banning social media use for children are gaining traction across the world, with the **precedent set by a landmark Australian legislation** that went into effect last year.

Ban of Social Media for underage Children

- Though India is yet to make a regulatory move at the central level, preliminary discussions around age-based social media restrictions are learnt to have begun at the IT Ministry.

- **The Economic Survey 2025-26** also called on the government to implement age-based limits for social media usage for children and digital ads targeted at them.

- The Survey's recommendation stemmed from larger concerns surrounding **"digital addiction"** among young users.

- It also stated that simpler devices, such as basic phones or education-only tablets, should be promoted among children along with enforced usage limits and content filters.

Need for Ban / Regulation of Social Media for Underage Users in India

- **Protection from Cyberbullying and Online Harassment:** Children frequently face cyberbullying, trolling, and online abuse, which can lead to anxiety, depression, and social isolation.

- **Mental Health and Psychological Well-being:** Social media algorithms promote addictive scrolling, unrealistic body images, and peer pressure, negatively affecting adolescents' mental health.

- **Exposure to Harmful or Inappropriate Content:** Underage users may encounter violent, explicit, or misleading content that is unsuitable for their age and maturity level.

- **Protection from Online Predators and Exploitation:** Children are vulnerable to grooming, sexual exploitation, and trafficking risks on online platforms.

- **Reducing Screen Addiction and Improving Academic Focus:** Excessive social media use leads to screen addiction, reducing study time, concentration, and physical activity.

- **Protection of Personal Data and Privacy:** Minors often share personal information unknowingly, making them vulnerable to data misuse, identity theft, and targeted manipulation.

- **Combating Misinformation and Radicalisation:** Children may easily believe fake news, propaganda, or harmful online challenges, affecting their judgement and behaviour.

Challenges in Implementing a Ban on Social Media for Underage Users in India

- **Difficulty in Age Verification:** Most social media platforms rely on self-declared age, making it easy for minors to create accounts with false information.
  - Strict verification may require identity documents, raising privacy concerns.

- **Technical and Enforcement Challenges:** Implementing restrictions across millions of users and multiple platforms is complex.
  - Users may bypass bans using VPNs, alternate accounts, or logged-out browsing.

- **Policy Inconsistency:** If different states adopt different age limits, it may create legal and operational confusion.

- **Impact on Digital Rights and Freedom of Expression:** Blanket bans could restrict children's right to information, expression, and participation in the digital space.

- **Risk of Driving Users to Unsafe Platforms:** If mainstream platforms restrict access, teenagers may move to less regulated or anonymous platforms, which may expose them to greater risks.

- **Widening the Digital Divide:** In India, social media is often used for learning, awareness, and communication.
  - Restrictions may disproportionately affect children from disadvantaged backgrounds who rely on digital platforms for information.

- **Gender Digital Divide:** Families might misuse the ban to restrict girls' internet access completely, worsening the digital gender gap.

Australia's Model of Social Media Regulation

- Australia **became the first country** to introduce a minimum age for social media use.

- **Under the Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Act:**

   - Social media platforms must block users under 16.

   - Platforms must identify and remove existing accounts of under-16 users.

   - They must prevent new accounts or workarounds.

   - Mechanisms must exist to correct errors in account removal.

- **Rationale Behind the Australian Law**

   - **Aim:** Protect children from online risks and psychological pressure.

   - **Issues identified:**

      - Addictive design features that increase screen time.

      - Harmful content affecting mental health and wellbeing.

      - A survey by the Australian eSafety Commissioner found over 50% of young Australians experienced cyberbullying on social media.

Conclusion

- A balanced approach combining regulation, platform responsibility, digital literacy, and parental involvement is essential to ensure children's online safety while protecting their digital rights and access to information.

Source: IE

IISC LAUNCHES "MOONSHOT" PROJECT ON BRAIN CO-PROCESSORS

Context

- The Indian Institute of Science (IISc) launched a moonshot project to develop brain co-processors that combine neuromorphic hardware and AI algorithms to enhance or restore brain function.

What are Brain Co-Processors?

- Brain co-processors are **advanced devices** designed to interact directly with the human brain.

- They **decode neural signals, process them using AI algorithms, and re-encode them back into the brain** through neural stimulation or neurofeedback.

- These systems function as **AI-powered closed-loop devices** that assist the brain in restoring or enhancing cognitive and motor functions.

Key Objectives of the Project

- Develop **implantable and non-invasive brain co-processors** capable of decoding and processing brain activity.

- Use **AI algorithms and neuromorphic hardware** to interpret neural signals and stimulate the brain accordingly.

- Enable **cognitive and motor rehabilitation**, particularly for stroke survivors who lose sensorimotor abilities such as reaching and grasping objects.

Core Technologies Enabling Brain Co-Processors

- **Brain–Machine Interface (BMI):** Brain co-processors rely on brain–machine interfaces, which create a communication pathway between the brain and external devices.

   - These interfaces **translate neural signals into digital commands** that machines can interpret.

- **Neuromorphic Computing:** The project integrates neuromorphic hardware, which mimics the structure and functioning of biological neurons.

   - It enables energy-efficient processing of neural signals and **allows real-time interaction** between AI systems and the human brain.

- **Neural Recording Technologies:** The system will utilise advanced neural recording techniques such as:

   - **Stereo EEG (sEEG):** It records deep brain electrical activity.

   - **Electrocorticography (ECoG):** It records signals directly from the brain's cortical surface.

- **Closed-Loop Feedback:** AI algorithms **analyse neural signals and identify patterns** associated with motor or cognitive functions.

   - Once decoded, the **system re-encodes signals** and sends them back to the brain through electrical stimulation or feedback mechanisms.

Significance of the Initiative

- Strengthens India's capabilities in **neuroscience and neurotechnology research.**

- Promotes **indigenisation of medical technology,** including implants, hardware, and AI stacks.

- Builds **India-specific neural datasets** and **open-source digital public goods** for research.

- Supports development of **affordable neurological treatments** suited for low-resource healthcare settings.
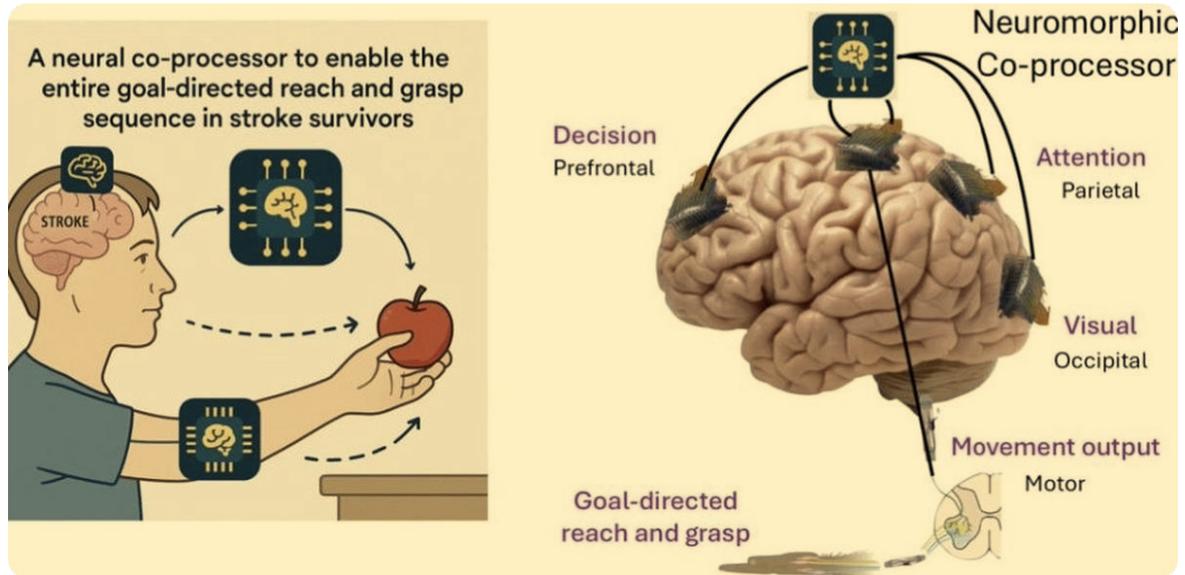
Challenges and Ethical Concerns

- **Ethical and Privacy Issues:** Neural data is extremely sensitive and can raise privacy concerns.

- **Regulatory and Clinical Validation:** Medical implants require rigorous testing and regulatory approvals.

- **Technical Complexity:** The human brain contains about 86 billion neurons, making accurate decoding extremely challenging.

- **Cost and Accessibility:** Advanced neurotechnology initially remains expensive and limited to specialised healthcare centres.

Concluding remarks

- The success of the Project will depend on long-term research funding, clinical trials, interdisciplinary collaboration, and strong ethical governance frameworks.

- If successfully implemented, the initiative could transform neurological rehabilitation, improve the quality of life for millions of patients, and position India at the forefront of AI-driven brain–machine interface technology.

Source: TH

LOK SABHA TO DEBATE RESOLUTION ON THE REMOVAL OF SPEAKER

Context

- The Lok Sabha is likely to take up the notice to **move a resolution to remove Lok Sabha speaker from office** for allegedly acting in a **'blatantly partisan'** manner.

- **Three Lok Sabha Speakers**, G. V. Mavlankar (1954), Hukam Singh (1966), and Balram Jakhar (1987) faced such resolutions, though none of them passed.

Speaker of Lok Sabha

- **The Speaker of the Lok Sabha** is the presiding officer of the Lok Sabha, responsible for maintaining order and conducting the proceedings of the House.

- **Election:** The Speaker is elected by the members of the Lok Sabha from among themselves.

  - The election takes place after the general elections when the new Lok Sabha meets for the first time.

  - The Speaker remains in office until the dissolution of the Lok Sabha, unless he/she resigns or is removed.

- **Removal:** The Speaker can be removed by a resolution passed by a majority of all the members of the Lok Sabha.

  - 14 days' notice is required before moving the resolution.

  - When the resolution for removal is under consideration, the Speaker cannot preside over the sitting.

  - The meeting is presided over by the Deputy Speaker of the Lok Sabha or another member of the House.

- **Right of the Speaker:** The Speaker can participate in the debate and defend himself/herself during the discussion on the removal resolution.

  - The Speaker can vote in the first instance on the resolution but cannot exercise a casting vote in this case.

- **Tenure:** The Speaker continues in office even after the Lok Sabha is dissolved until the new Lok Sabha elects a Speaker.

Powers and Functions

- **Presiding Powers:** Presides over the sittings of the Lok Sabha.
  - Maintains discipline and order in the House.
  - Decides who will speak and for how long.
- **Administrative Powers:** Heads the Lok Sabha Secretariat.
  - Appoints the chairpersons of various parliamentary committees.
- **Legislative Powers:** Decides whether a bill is a Money Bill.
  - Allows motions, resolutions, and questions.
- **Disciplinary Powers:** Can suspend or expel members for disorderly conduct.
  - Can adjourn or suspend the sitting due to lack of quorum or disorder.
- **Casting Vote:** The Speaker does not vote in the first instance, but can exercise a casting vote in case of a tie.
- **Anti-Defection Role:** Decides disqualification of members under the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution of India.

Constitutional Articles

- **Article 93 of the Constitution** mandates that the Lok Sabha must choose two of its members to be Speaker and Deputy Speaker "as soon as may be".
- **Article 94 of the Constitution** outlines the procedures for the vacation, resignation, and removal of the Lok Sabha Speaker and Deputy Speaker.

- **Article 95 of the Constitution** ensures continuity in the Lok Sabha by empowering the Deputy Speaker to perform the Speaker's duties when that office is vacant or when the Speaker is absent.
- **Article 110 of the Constitution defines a "Money Bill,"** restricting it to financial matters such as taxation, government borrowing, or expenditure from the Consolidated/Contingency Fund.
  - These bills can only be introduced in the Lok Sabha with the President's recommendation, and the Speaker's certification is final.

Source: TH

POLICY REFORMS THAT TRANSFORMED BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

Context

- Recent policy reforms centred on trust-based governance have significantly improved India's business environment, reflected in a 27% rise in active registered companies, from **1.55 lakh in 2020–21 to 1.98 lakh in 2025–26**.

Key Transformational Policy Reforms

- **Startup Ecosystem Development:** The Startup India initiative enables eligible firms to obtain recognition from the **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT).**
  - Recognised startups receive tax benefits, simplified compliance procedures, and fast-track intellectual property rights (IPR) processing.

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

- **Credit Guarantee Scheme:**
  - **Credit Guarantee Scheme for Micro & Small Enterprises (CGTMSE):** Facilitates credit guarantees for credit support of up to ₹10 crore to Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs).
  - **Credit Guarantee Scheme for Startups (CGSS):** Supports startups by providing credit guarantees; the revised framework has enhanced guarantee coverage, increasing the maximum limit from ₹**10 crore** to ₹**20 crore** per eligible borrower.
  - **Credit Guarantee Scheme for Exporters (CGSE):** Additional collateral-free credit support of up to ₹20,000 crore to direct and indirect exporter MSMEs.
- **Credit Assessment Model (CAM):** Public Sector Banks introduced the Credit Assessment Model (CAM) in 2025 for MSME lending.
  - The model utilises digitally verified financial data to automate loan appraisal and risk assessment.
- **The Sabka Bima, Sabki Raksha (Amendment of Insurance Laws) Act, 2025** introduced significant reforms. Key provisions include:
  - Increasing **FDI limit to 100%** to attract greater foreign investment.
  - Introducing **one-time registration for insurance intermediaries** to simplify operations.
  - Raising the **share transfer approval threshold from 1% to 5%** to reduce regulatory burden.
  - Reducing the **Net Owned Fund requirement for foreign reinsurers from ₹5,000 crore to ₹1,000 crore.**
- **The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), 2016** has significantly transformed India's insolvency framework by enabling timely resolution of financially distressed companies and improving recoveries for creditors.
- **GST 2.0 Reforms:** GST reforms introduced in 2025 aim to simplify tax structures and reduce compliance costs. The GST taxpayer base increased from 60 lakh in 2017 to over 1.6 crore by January 2026, indicating greater formalisation.
- **Rationalisation of Penalties and Prosecution:**
  - **Integrated assessment & penalty orders** with no interest on penalties during appeal; pre-deposit reduced from **20% to 10%** (on core tax demand).
  - **Updated returns allowed** even after reassessment, with an additional 10% tax.
  - **Immunity from penalty & prosecution** extended from underreporting to misreporting, on payment of full tax and interest.
  - **Decriminalisation** of non-production of books and TDS on payments in kind; minor offences to attract fines only.

Challenges in India's Business Environment

- **Skill Gaps in the Workforce:** Shortage of industry-relevant skills affects productivity and the ability of firms to adopt advanced technologies.
- **Global Economic Uncertainty:** External shocks such as geopolitical tensions, supply chain disruptions, and global financial volatility impact investment and business growth.
- **Limited Access to Finance for MSMEs:** Many micro and small enterprises still face difficulties in obtaining timely and affordable credit despite credit guarantee schemes.
- **Infrastructure Bottlenecks:** Inadequate logistics, transport, and digital infrastructure in certain regions increase operational costs and reduce competitiveness.

Way Ahead

- Strengthening regulatory coordination across different levels of government and expanding digital governance platforms can ensure smoother implementation of business reforms and reduce administrative delays.
- At the same time, aligning skill development with industry needs will help build a workforce capable of supporting innovation and sustainable economic growth.

Source: PIB

QUANTUM COMPUTING

Context

- At the Raisina Dialogue 2026, the need for early collaboration between scientists and diplomats was emphasized to design governance frameworks for emerging technologies such as quantum computing.

What is Quantum Computing?

- Quantum computing refers to a new class of computers that **use the principles of quantum mechanics** rather than classical binary logic.
- Classical computers process information using bits (0 or 1), while quantum computers **use qubits,** which **can exist in multiple states simultaneously.**
- This capability allows quantum computers to perform certain calculations exponentially faster than conventional computers.
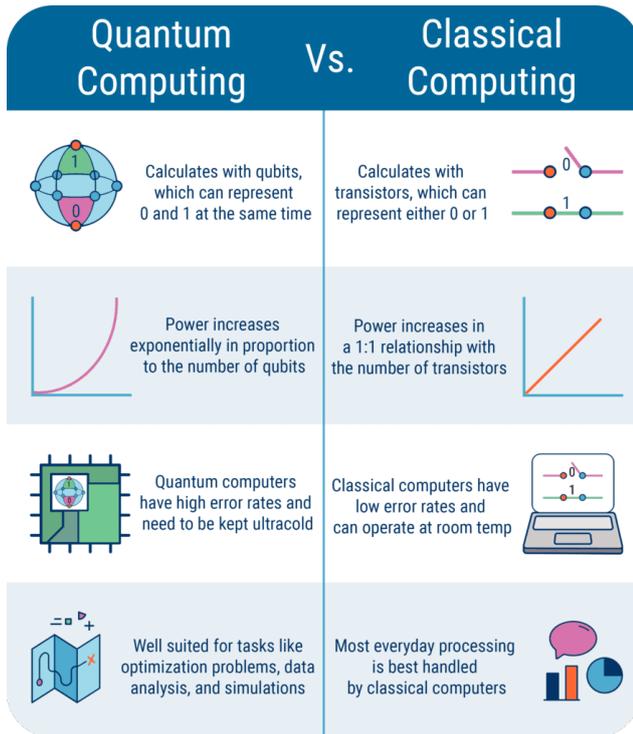
example, optimizing airline routes, traffic flow in cities, or portfolio management in stock markets.

- **Artificial Intelligence & Big Data Analysis:** Enhances processing of massive datasets; for example, improving pattern recognition in climate modelling, fraud detection in banking, or advanced machine learning systems.

Source: TH

Principles of Quantum Computing

- **Superposition:** It allows a qubit to **exist in multiple states simultaneously,** enabling quantum computers to perform many calculations in parallel.

- **Entanglement:** It occurs when two or more qubits become strongly correlated, such that the state of one instantly determines the state of the other.

  - This property allows quantum computers to process and link information efficiently, helping solve complex problems faster.

- **Decoherence:** Decoherence refers to the loss of a qubit's quantum state due to interaction with the environment (such as radiation or heat).

  - **Preventing or delaying decoherence** is a major challenge in building stable quantum computers.

Applications of Quantum Computing

- **Cryptography & Cybersecurity:** Enables ultra-secure communication through Quantum Key Distribution (QKD); for example, quantum communication networks being developed for secure government and military communication.

- **Drug Discovery & Material Science:** Can simulate complex molecular interactions; for example, designing new drugs or advanced batteries by modelling chemical reactions that classical computers struggle to process.

- **Optimization Problems:** Helps solve complex optimization tasks in logistics and finance; for

INDIA'S NEW GDP SERIES: KEY IMPLICATIONS FOR THE ECONOMY

Context

- Recently, the Union Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) came out with **new estimates of Gross Domestic Product, or GDP.**

About Gross Domestic Product (GDP)

- It represents the **total market value of all final goods and services produced within a country's geographical boundaries during a given period**.

- It is the most widely used indicator to measure the **size and performance of an economy**.

- India's GDP estimates are compiled by the **MoSPI** as part of the **National Accounts Statistics (NAS)**.

- Periodically, the government **revises the base year and methodology of GDP calculation to better reflect structural changes** in the economy, changes in consumption patterns, and improvements in data sources.

- The **latest revision** introduces **2022–23 as the new base year** (replacing the earlier series). It has led to important changes in the estimation of India's economic size, per capita income, and progress toward long-term economic targets.

Why Are the GDP Series Revised: Key Reasons

- **Changes in economic structure:** Rapid growth of sectors like services and digital economy.

- **Price changes:** Updating the base year allows better measurement of real economic growth by adjusting for inflation.
- **Improved data sources:** Administrative datasets such as GST, corporate filings, and surveys improve accuracy.
- **Alignment with international standards:** Updates ensure consistency with the **System of National Accounts (SNA)** framework.
    - According to research on **India's national accounts,** base-year revisions significantly influence measured growth rates and sectoral contributions, highlighting the importance of updated methodologies.

Key Takeaways from the New GDP Series

- **India's Economy Is Smaller Than Previously Estimated:** The revised GDP estimates indicate that **India's economic size is slightly lower than earlier calculations suggested**. The revision changes the **baseline used for economic comparisons and policy planning**.
    - Fiscal indicators such as **debt-to-GDP ratio and deficit ratios** may also be affected.
    - International comparisons of India's economic size may be slightly altered.
    - **Key Changes in 2022–23 GDP:** Old estimate: ₹269 lakh crore; New estimate: **₹261 lakh crore;**
    - **2025–26 GDP (current year estimate):** Old estimate: ₹357 lakh crore; New estimate: **₹345 lakh crore;**
- **Lower Per Capita Income for the Average Indian:** Per capita income is calculated by **dividing total GDP by the population**. Since the overall GDP estimate has declined, the **average income estimate has also fallen**.
    - **Revised Estimates: Old estimate (2025–26):** ₹2,51,393 annually; **New estimate: ₹2,43,180 annually;**
    - It translates to an average **monthly income of about ₹20,265**.
- **India Is Further from the $5 Trillion Economy Target:** India's GDP is often converted into **US dollar terms for global comparisons**, using the exchange rate.
    - **Current Situation:**
        - The government had set a target of **$5 trillion GDP by 2024**.
        - Earlier estimates suggested India's GDP had crossed **$4 trillion**.
        - With the revised GDP series and a weaker rupee (around ₹**88 per US dollar**), the economy is estimated at **around $3.9 trillion**.

Conclusion

- The new GDP series introduced by MoSPI with **2022–23 as the base year** provides a more updated and realistic picture of India's economy.
- The revision shows that **India's GDP size and average income are slightly lower than earlier estimates**, and the **$5 trillion target may take longer to achieve**.
- However, such revisions are a normal part of economic measurement and help improve the **accuracy and credibility of national statistics**, which is essential for effective policy formulation.

Source: IE

INDIA'S DIGITAL PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE

In Context

- India is transforming from a major user of digital systems to a builder of population-scale digital infrastructure, distinguished by its scale, openness, and integration.

Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)

- It refers to foundational digital systems that are accessible, secure, and interoperable, supporting essential public services.
- India's Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) supports welfare delivery, economic activity, and state capacity by connecting identity, payments, and data exchange through interoperable public rails.
- Its model demonstrates that digital systems can be designed as public goods, promoting both inclusion and efficiency, and is increasingly influencing the global conversation on building and governing digital infrastructure in the twenty-first century.

Foundations of India's DPI

- India's digital public infrastructure grew from the deliberate integration of identity, banking, and connectivity—known as the **JAM trinity**: Jan Dhan bank accounts, Aadhaar, and mobile phone penetration.
- India's JAM trinity laid the foundation for its Digital Public Infrastructure.
    - **Aadhaar** provided a biometric digital identity with over 144 crore numbers issued and 2,707 crore authentications in 2024-25, enabling secure, portable, and near-instant verification.
    - **Jan Dhan Yojana** expanded financial inclusion, growing bank accounts from 14.72 crore in 2015 to 57.71 crore by March 2026,

with deposits rising to ₹2.94 lakh crore and nearly 40 crore RuPay cards issued.

- **Widespread mobile connectivity**, with 85.5% of households owning smartphones and 5G coverage in 99.9% of districts, ensured access to banking, education, and public services across urban and rural areas.

Progress across various sectors

- **Digital Economic Infrastructure:** India's digital economic infrastructure includes UPI, facilitating 21.7 billion real-time transactions in January 2026 and handling 81% of India's retail payments;

  - Public Financial Management System (PFMS), enabling transparent welfare payments with ₹49.09 lakh crore transferred via Direct Benefit Transfer;

  - Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC), connecting 1.16 lakh+ sellers across 630+ cities to democratize e-commerce; and Government eMarketplace, processing 3.27 crore orders worth ₹16.41 lakh crore, with strong participation from Micro and Small Enterprises.

    - These platforms collectively enhance commerce, transparency, and inclusion.

- **India's citizen service delivery platforms**: It includes DigiLocker, a secure digital document wallet with 67.63 crore users and over 950 crore documents issued;

  - UMANG, a unified mobile app offering 2,400+ government services with 10.25 crore users and 723.36 crore transactions; and

  - e-Courts, a pan-India ICT initiative modernizing judicial processes through digital filing, online payments, video conferencing, and AI-enabled case management, with Phase III (2023–2027) advancing paperless courts and comprehensive digitisation.

- **Health & Nutrition Ecosystem:** India's digital health infrastructure includes

  - **CoWIN**, managing 220 crore COVID-19 vaccine doses with real-time tracking;

  - **eSanjeevani**, providing telemedicine to 45.42 crore patients via 2.3 lakh providers; eHospital and ORS, digitising hospital workflows, diagnostics, and blood bank management;

  - **Aarogya Setu**, evolving into a national health app for lab reports, prescriptions, and online consultations;

  - **National Non-Communicable Diseases Platform**, tracking 74.97 crore beneficiaries for lifestyle disease management; and

  - **POSHAN Tracker,** monitoring nutrition for 8.9 crore children across 14.03 lakh Anganwadi Centres.

    - These platforms enhance access, efficiency, and data-driven healthcare delivery.

- **Education and Skilling:** India's digital education and skilling platforms include

  - **DIKSHA**, delivering 566 crore learning sessions to 2.11 crore users with 12.69 crore certificates issued, supporting students, teachers, and administrators across states and boards; and

  - **the Skill India Digital Hub,** launched in 2023, which integrates training, certification, job discovery, and government portals to connect learners with employers and align skills with industry demand, strengthening India's human capital ecosystem.

- **Digital Systems for Governance Capacity & Coordination:** India's digital governance platforms include e-Office, enabling paperless administration and streamlined decision-making;

  - **API Setu** :MeitY initiated API Setu, also known as the Open API Platform project, in March 2020.

    - API Setu, hosting 8,036 APIs to facilitate secure, standardized data sharing across 10,530 organizations; and

  - PM GatiShakti, a GIS-based platform coordinating infrastructure projects, with 352 projects worth 16.10 lakh crore evaluated.

    - Together, they form an integrated digital backbone enhancing governance, coordination, and transparency at scale.

India's DPI Diplomacy

- India's approach to Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) extends globally, guided by the ethos of **Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam**—the world is one family—treating technology as a public good for inclusive development.

- Internationally, India has **signed agreements with 24 countries to share expertise on digital identity**, payments, data exchange, and service delivery, positioning itself as a partner in building population-scale digital systems.

- Initiatives like India Stack Global provide technical resources for partner nations, while the Global DPI Repository, launched during India's 2023 G20 Presidency, shares lessons and best practices.

- India has also offered CoWIN as open-source software and developed MOSIP, an open-source framework for sovereign digital identities, adopted by over 25 countries.

Source :PIB

NEWS IN SHORT

U.S. WAIVER ALLOWS INDIA TO PURCHASE RUSSIAN OIL AMID WEST ASIAN CRISIS

Context

- India has received a 30-day waiver from the United States Department of the Treasury allowing Indian refiners to purchase crude oil from Russia.

Why Was the Waiver Was Granted?

- Escalating hostilities involving the **United States, Israel, and Iran** have disrupted oil production and transportation in West Asia.
- Iran has blocked the **Strait of Hormuz**, a strategic maritime chokepoint through which over 55% of India's oil imports passes.
- **Several major oil installations** have been affected, including;
  - **The Ras Tanura Refinery** operated by Saudi Aramco in Saudi Arabia.
  - **The Rumaila Oil Field in Iraq,** one of the world's largest oil fields.

India's Oil Import Trends

- India remains over **85%** dependent on crude oil imports for its energy needs.
- **Imports from Russia:**
  - In January 2026, India's crude oil imports from Russia dropped to approximately **1.1 million barrels per day (bpd).** Russia's share in India's total oil imports fell to **19.3%–21.2%.**
- **Increasing U.S. Oil Imports:**
  - India imported **$11.6 billion** worth of crude oil from the U.S. in the period April 2025 to January 2026. This represents a **32% increase** compared with the same period in the previous financial year.
  - The U.S. share in India's crude imports rose from **5.7% to 8%.**

Source: TH

EXISTING AGREEMENTS DO NOT BIND INDIA TO SUPPORT AMERICAN DEFENCE OPERATIONS

Context

- India has denied reports that it assisted the **United States in targeting an Iranian vessel near Sri Lankan waters**.

About

- The vessel was returning home **after participating in the multilateral naval exercise 'Milan' hosted by India.**
- India has clarified that **existing India-U.S. communication and logistics agreements do not automatically apply to such situations.**

India - US Defence Ties

- Defence ties have transformed from transactional to a Major Defense Partnership (2016).
- Guided by mechanisms such as:
  - 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue
  - Defence Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI) (2012)
  - Military Cooperation Group (MCG)
- India is designated as **"Major Defense Partner"** and given **Strategic Trade Authorization-1 (STA-1) status (2018),** easing high-tech exports.
- **India has signed all four major foundational agreements with the U.S.:**
  - General Security Of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) in 2002 and the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) in 2016.
  - COMCASA (Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement) signed in 2018 to secure communications & interoperability.
  - Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement for Geo-spatial Cooperation (BECA 2020) for Geo-spatial intelligence & satellite data for precision targeting.
- **Military Exercises:**
  - Yudh Abhyas: Land forces.
  - Malabar: Naval quadrilateral with US, India, Japan, Australia.
  - Cope India: Air exercise.
  - Tiger Triumph: Tri-service HADR exercise.
  - Vajra Prahar: Special forces.
- **The deals, pursued under emergency procurement powers**, allow the armed forces to bypass the long procurement process for contracts, with a maximum ceiling of Rs 300 crore under the **Foreign Military Sales (FMS) route**.

Source: TH

ESSENTIAL COMMODITIES ACT INVOKED

In News

- The Centre invoked the Essential Commodities Act in response to the oil crisis following Israel-U.S. strikes on Iran.

◆ Centre directed oil refining companies to prioritize LPG production using propane and butane streams, supply it exclusively to domestic consumers, and not use these streams for other petrochemical products.

Essential Commodities Act, 1955

- It has been a tool used by the government through the years to offset rising food prices, prevent hoarding and maintain food security.

- The list of essential commodities includes drugs and medicines, fertilizers, foodstuffs (including edible oils), hank yarn, petroleum and petroleum products, raw jute and jute textiles, and various types of seeds such as those for fruits, vegetables, and cattle fodder.

- The 2020 amendment to the Essential Commodities Act limited the Centre's powers to regulate key food items only under extraordinary circumstances and

  ◆ It allowed stock limits on agricultural produce only if prices rose sharply—100% for horticultural goods and 50% for non-perishable foodstuffs.

Source :TH

US F-1 VISAS FOR INDIAN STUDENTS DROP 69%

In News

- In 2025, F-1 visa issuances to Indian students fell by 69% in June-July (12,776 visas) compared to 41,336 in 2024.

  ◆ The decline followed a pause on student visa interviews, stricter social media screening, and additional vetting requirements introduced from May 2025.

About F-1 visa

- The F-1 visa permits foreign students to study full-time in the U.S. at SEVP-certified academic institutions or language programs, enrolled in courses leading to a degree, diploma, or certificate, with schools authorized by the U.S. government to accept international students.

- It has long served as a key talent pipeline for the US. Created under the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952, it allows students to remain temporarily in the US after graduation.

- This route has helped American universities and technology firms attract global talent, particularly from India and China.

How is the F-1 visa different from an M visa?

- There are two types of **US study visas** — F and M. The 'F' category visa is used for university or college, high school, private elementary school, seminary, conservatory, and other academic institutions, including a language training programme.

  ◆ The 'M' category visa is used for vocational or other recognised nonacademic institutions, other than a language training programme.

Source :IE

WHAT IS A MEGAMASER?

Context

- Astronomers reported finding the **most distant hydroxyl maser** using the **MeerKAT telescope.**

About

- **A hydroxyl megamaser** is an extremely powerful natural microwave/radio-wave emitter in space produced by **hydroxyl (OH) molecules in distant galaxies.**

  ◆ It is similar to a laser, but instead of visible light it emits microwaves or radio waves.

- **MASER:** Microwave Amplification by Stimulated Emission of Radiation.

  ◆ It is the microwave/radio equivalent of a laser.

  ◆ Occurs naturally in space when molecules amplify radio signals.

- **Hydroxyl (OH) Molecule:** It consists of one oxygen atom and one hydrogen atom. It is found in giant molecular gas clouds in galaxies.

How Hydroxyl Megamasers Form

- **Galaxy collisions or mergers** occur that trigger intense star formation, feeding of supermassive black holes, and release of large infrared radiation.

  ◆ Infrared energy excites hydroxyl (OH) molecules to a high-energy state.

  ◆ When the molecules return to a lower energy level, they emit amplified radio waves.

  ◆ This creates an extremely bright maser signal.

Scientific Importance

- Astronomers use megamasers as cosmic beacons because radio waves penetrate cosmic dust, revealing hidden regions of galaxies.

  ◆ Help study galaxy mergers and starburst activity.

- Allow measurement of galaxy motion and distance.
- Improve understanding of cosmic evolution.

Source: TH

CENTRAL INDUSTRIAL SECURITY FORCE (CISF)

Context

- The 57th Raising Day of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) was observed recently.

About the CISF

- It is a **paramilitary force** that came into existence in the year **1969** under the CISF Act, 1968.

- It operates under the **Ministry of Home Affairs** and is responsible for providing security to **various critical infrastructure installation**s and industries including the Department of Space, the Department of Atomic Energy, Parliament complex, the Airports, the Delhi Metro, the ports across the country.

- Presently, CISF is also providing security to the protected persons classified as **Z Plus, Z, X, Y**.

- CISF is the only force with a customized and dedicated **fire wing**.

Source: PIB

MINUTEMAN III

Context

- As tensions continue to rise in the Middle East, the United States conducted a test launch of a Minuteman III missile.

About Minuteman III

- It is nicknamed as **'doomsday' missile**, and is an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM).

- It reaches a top speed of **Mach 23**, or roughly 28,400 kilometres per hour, and can travel over **9,600 kilometres**.

- Developed by **Boeing** in the 1950s to bolster American homeland protection, the Minuteman III is stored and launched from a silo, a fortified underground bunker designed to protect the missile from enemy attacks.

- Notably, a Minuteman III has never been fired in actual combat, making the weapon one of the most powerful things on Earth that has never actually been used in war.

Do you know?

- The Minuteman III was originally supposed to be replaced in the 2030s, but delays with the new Sentinel ICBM have led officials to consider keeping it in service potentially until 2050.

Source: IT

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