

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS (DCA)

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Table of Content

Parental Income Can't be Sole Factor To Decide Creamy Layer: Supreme Court

Robust Coal Stocks Strengthen India's Energy Security

Stranded Renewable Power and Grid Constraints in India

International Year of the Woman Farmer (IYWF 2026)

Why is India staring at LPG Shortage?

Changes in FDI Norms Linked to Land Bordering Countries (LBCs)

NEWS IN SHORT

Savitribai Phule

Kurumba Painting

Fiscal Health Index 2026

National Shipping Board (NSB)

International Energy Agency Releases 400 Million Barrels of Emergency Oil

Black Rain in Tehran

Kisan Credit Card (KCC)

PARENTAL INCOME CAN'T BE SOLE FACTOR TO DECIDE CREAMY LAYER: SUPREME COURT

Context

- Recently, the **Supreme Court of India** ruled that **creamy layer status for Other Backward Classes (OBCs) cannot be determined solely based on parental income**, especially salary income.
- It ruled that treating children differently amounts to hostile discrimination, violating the principle of equality under the Constitution.

Background of the Case

- **Civil Services Examination Dispute:** The issue arose from disputes regarding candidates claiming **OBC Non-Creamy Layer status** in the **Civil Services Examination**.
 - ♦ Several candidates argued that they were **wrongly categorized as belonging to the creamy layer** because their parents worked in Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs), Banks, and Private sector organizations.
- Several High Courts, including the **Madras High Court, Kerala High Court, and Delhi High Court**, accepted these claims and ruled in favor of the candidates.
- The **Union Government challenged these decisions before the Supreme Court**, which **ultimately upheld the High Courts' rulings**.

Creamy Layer in OBC Reservation: Legal Framework

- **Origin of the Creamy Layer Concept:** The concept of **creamy layer** was introduced by the Supreme Court in **Indra Sawhney v. Union of India (1992)**.
 - ♦ The Court held that **socially advanced individuals within OBCs must be excluded from reservation benefits** to ensure that benefits reach the genuinely backward sections.
- **Office Memorandum (OM), 1993:** To implement the Indra Sawhney judgment, the Government of India issued an **Office Memorandum on 8 September 1993**. Key provisions included:
 - ♦ Identification of **creamy layer among OBCs**;
 - ♦ Criteria based on **social status, occupation, and income**;
 - ♦ **Salary income and agricultural income were excluded** from the income/wealth test.

- ♦ The determination of creamy layer was based on **status of parents, and category of posts (Group A, B, C, D)**.
- **Clarificatory Letter, 2004:** It changed the interpretation. It directed that the **salary income of parents employed in PSUs and the private sector should be included while determining the creamy layer**. It resulted in:
 - ♦ **Different treatment of similarly placed individuals**;
 - ♦ Government employees' salary excluded;
 - ♦ PSU/private sector salary included;

Supreme Court's Key Observations

- **Income Alone Cannot Determine Creamy Layer:** The Court ruled that **parental income from salary cannot be the sole criterion** for determining creamy layer status.
 - ♦ The determination needs to consider the **status of parents, nature of employment, and category of posts**.
 - ♦ Thus, **income alone is an insufficient indicator of social advancement**.
- **Equality Doctrine Must Be Upheld:** The Court held that the differential treatment between **government employees and PSU/private sector employees** violates the **equality principle under Articles 14, 15, and 16** of the Constitution.
 - ♦ According to the Court, individuals **similarly placed must be treated equally**, and excluding PSU/private sector employees' children purely based on salary leads to **hostile discrimination**.
- **Creamy Layer Principle Should Prevent Elite Capture:** The Court reiterated the objective of the creamy layer concept:
 - ♦ To **prevent socially advanced sections within OBCs from monopolizing reservation benefits**.
 - ♦ Not to **create artificial distinctions within the same social group**.
 - ♦ Thus, the purpose is **equitable distribution of reservation benefits**, not administrative discrimination.

Constitutional Principles Involved

- **Equality Before Law (Article 14):** The Constitution guarantees **equal treatment of similarly situated individuals**. Any arbitrary classification violates Article 14.
- **Prohibition of Discrimination (Article 15):** Article 15 allows **special provisions for socially and educationally backward classes**, but policies must remain **non-arbitrary and rational**.

- **Equality in Public Employment (Article 16):** Article 16 ensures **equal opportunity in public employment**, with reservations allowed for backward classes under **Article 16(4)**.

Significance of the Judgment

- **Clarifies Creamy Layer Determination:** The judgment reiterates that **income is not the only factor; social and occupational status need to also be considered**.
- **Removes Discriminatory Interpretation:** It corrects the **anomaly created by the 2004 clarification**, which treated PSU/private employees differently.
- **Strengthens Equality Jurisprudence:** The decision reinforces the **constitutional doctrine of equality** by preventing arbitrary classifications.
- **Impact on Civil Services Examinations:** The ruling directly affects **OBC Non-Creamy Layer certification for UPSC aspirants**, ensuring a more **balanced interpretation of reservation eligibility**.

Conclusion

- The Supreme Court's ruling marks an important development in India's **reservation jurisprudence**.
- The Court reaffirmed the **constitutional commitment to equality and social justice**, by holding that creamy layer status cannot be determined solely by income and that similar employees must be treated equally.
- The decision ensures that the **objective of reservation** i.e. to uplift genuinely backward sections **remains intact without creating artificial or discriminatory classifications**.

Source: IE

ROBUST COAL STOCKS STRENGTHEN INDIA'S ENERGY SECURITY

Context

- The Union Ministry of Coal has stated that India currently has an overall coal stock of about **210 million tonnes (MT)**, which is estimated to be sufficient for around **88 days** of consumption.

About

- India, with the **fifth-largest coal reserves** and being the **second-largest consumer**, heavily depends on coal.
- Coal contributes **55%** to the energy mix and powers over **74%** of electricity generation in India.
- Adequate coal stocks help ensure **uninterrupted electricity** supply during peak demand while

also acting as a **buffer against global energy market volatility** and uncertainties in alternative fuel supplies such as natural gas.

Current Coal Stock Status

- India's total coal stock stands at around **210 MT**, which is considered adequate to meet national demand for nearly **88 days**.
- Around **54.05 MT of coal** is currently available at thermal power plants, which is estimated to be sufficient for approximately **24 days** of consumption at the present rate.
- The **total coal stock** available at the mine end is around **156.58 MT**.

Key terms related to coal supply

- **Pithead coal** refers to coal that is mined and stored near the mine site before being transported to power plants or other consumers.
- **The Non-Regulated Sector (NRS)** refers to industrial users such as cement, steel, sponge iron, and captive power plants that procure coal outside the regulated power sector allocation framework.

Government initiatives

- **Commercial Coal Mining** opened the sector to private players to boost production, efficiency, and competitiveness.
- **Mission Coking Coal** aims to reduce import dependence by enhancing domestic coking coal availability.
- **Safety measures:** Directorate General of Mines Safety revamped the Coal Mines Regulations 1957 into **The Coal Mines Regulations 2017**, addressing modernisation, mechanisation, emergency response, and evacuation planning.
- **Coal Mitra Portal** developed for flexible coal allocation to power plants, ensuring better coal supply management.

What are the Challenges?

- Despite strong stock levels, India's heavy dependence on coal **raises environmental concerns**, particularly in relation to greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution.
- The continued expansion of coal production **conflicts with India's long-term climate commitments**, including its target of achieving **net-zero emissions by 2070**.
- Transport bottlenecks, logistical inefficiencies, and seasonal disruptions affect timely coal supply to power plants.

Concluding remarks

- The coal sector remains central to India's energy security and economic development, ensuring reliable power supply and supporting industrial growth.
- Strengthening coal production, supply chains, and technological advancements will continue to play an important role in meeting India's rising energy demand.

Classification of Coal

- **Anthracite:** It is the best quality of coal which carries **80 to 95%** carbon content. It has the highest calorific value.
 - ♦ It is found in small quantities in **Jammu and Kashmir**.
- **Bituminous:** It carries **60 to 80%** of carbon content and a low level of moisture content. It is widely used and has a high calorific value.
 - ♦ It is found in **Jharkhand, West Bengal, Odisha, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh**.
- **Lignite:** It is often brown. It carries **40 to 55% carbon content**. It has high moisture content so it gives smoke when burnt.
 - ♦ It is found in **Rajasthan, Lakhimpur (Assam), and Tamil Nadu**.
- **Peat:** It has less than 40% carbon content. It has low calorific value and burns like wood.

Coal India Limited

- CIL is a **Maharatna Public Sector Undertaking** under the **Ministry of Coal**.
- It was **established in November 1975**.
- **Headquarters:** Kolkata.
- **Products:** CIL produces coking coal, semi-coking coal, non-coking coal, washed and beneficiated coal, coal fines, and coke.
- CIL has 21 training Institutes and 76 Vocational Training Centres.
- **Strategic Relevance:** It contributes to **80%** of total domestic coal production and **75%** of total coal based generation.

Source: TH

STRANDED RENEWABLE POWER AND GRID CONSTRAINTS IN INDIA

Context

- At the Bharat Climate Forum 2026, energy experts highlighted a critical risk in India's energy

transition that renewable power generation is increasing rapidly, but grid and institutional constraints are preventing its efficient utilisation.

India's Renewable Energy Sector

- **India's total renewable energy capacity** reached **253.96 GW** in November 2025, representing an increase of over 23% from 205.52 GW in 2024.
- **Solar installed capacity** reached **132.85 GW** followed by **Wind** at around **53.99 GW**.
- **India's Global Position:**
 - ♦ India ranks **3rd globally** in **solar power** installed capacity.
 - ♦ India ranks **4th in wind power** installed capacity.
 - ♦ India ranks **4th in total renewable energy** installed capacity worldwide.
- The leading states in India for renewable energy capacity are **Rajasthan, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka**.
- The country aims to achieve **500 GW** of non-fossil fuel capacity by **2030** as part of its climate commitments.

Challenges in India's Renewable Energy Transition

- **Transmission Congestion and Stranded Power:** In Rajasthan, around **23 GW** of renewable capacity has been commissioned, but grid evacuation capacity is only 18.9 GW, leaving over 4,000 MW of power stranded during peak solar hours.
- **Unequal Curtailment of Renewable Projects:** Renewable projects with **Permanent General Network Access (GNA)** continue to transmit power normally while projects with **Temporary GNA (T-GNA)** often face complete shutdown during peak hours.
 - ♦ This unequal treatment creates financial losses for developers who invested in projects after obtaining necessary approvals.
- **Under-utilisation of Transmission Infrastructure:** High-capacity transmission lines such as **765 kV** corridors are designed to evacuate large amounts of electricity (around 6000 MW). In reality, many operate at only **600–1000 MW**, which is less than **20%** of their designed capacity.
 - ♦ These projects involve huge investments of **₹4,000–₹5,000** crore per corridor, and their costs are ultimately borne by electricity consumers.

- **Institutional and Governance Issues:** The grid operator **Grid Controller of India Limited** focuses mainly on grid stability, while no clear utilisation benchmarks or review mechanisms exist to address persistent underuse of transmission assets.
- **Technical Constraints in Grid Operation:** Grid operators cite technical risks such as voltage oscillations and potential grid instability when renewable energy injection increases rapidly.
 - ♦ Technologies such as **STATCOMs, reactive power compensators, and advanced protection systems** can help address these issues but are not deployed at sufficient scale.

Government Initiatives to Improve Clean Energy Utilisation

- **Green Energy Corridor (GEC):** Aims to strengthen the transmission infrastructure to evacuate renewable energy efficiently from generation points to demand centres.
- **PM-KUSUM Scheme:** Promotes installation of solar pumps and grid-connected solar power plants in rural areas to reduce diesel usage and support farmers.
- **National Green Hydrogen Mission:** Seeks to promote the production and use of green hydrogen to reduce reliance on fossil fuels in sectors like refining, steel, and fertilisers.
- **Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme:** Provides financial incentives for domestic manufacturing of high-efficiency solar photovoltaic (PV) modules and advanced battery storage systems.
- **Renewable Energy Hybrid Policy:** Encourages setting up of projects that combine solar and wind energy in the same location to increase capacity utilisation and reliability.

Way Ahead

- The mandate of **Grid Controller of India Limited** should include both grid stability and optimal utilisation of transmission assets.
- **Curtailement should be distributed proportionately** among all generators to ensure fairness.
- **Advanced grid management technologies** should be deployed to integrate higher levels of renewable energy.
- **Better coordination is required** between planning institutions such as the Central Transmission Utility of India Limited and grid operators.

Source: TH

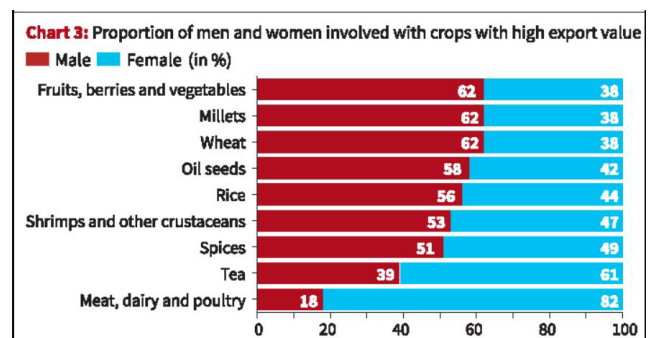
INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE WOMAN FARMER (IYWF 2026)

Context

- The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization has declared 2026 the **International Year of the Woman Farmer (IYWF 2026)**.

About

- **Workforce shift:** Rural men are moving to non-farm jobs leading to women replacing them in agriculture.
- **Rise in women's participation:**
 - ♦ Employment in agriculture surged by 135% in a decade.
 - ♦ Women now account for 42% of the agricultural workforce.
 - ♦ 2 in 3 working women are engaged in agriculture.
 - ♦ This still remains lower than the rest of the world, women's work participation was in the range 57%-63% in a majority of countries.
- **In 2023-24,** there were at least 117.6 million women working in agriculture (of whom 21.7 million were hired workers, 95.1 million were self-employed and 0.8 million were regular workers).
 - ♦ The estimated male workforce in agriculture was 127.5 million.
- **Economic Impact:** Women's greater participation has not translated into higher income for the economy, as agriculture's share of the national GVA fell from 15.3% in 2017-18 to 14.4% in 2024-25.



Challenges Faced by Women in Agriculture

- **Unpaid Labour:** Nearly half of the women in agriculture are unpaid family workers, with their numbers jumping 2.5 times from 23.6 million to 59.1 million in just eight years.
 - ♦ In States such as Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, more than 80% of women workers are in agriculture, and over half of them receive no wages.

- **Systemic Inequities:** Women as farmers, own only 13-14% of land holdings, and earn 20-30% less than men for equivalent work.
 - ♦ Asset ownership, decision-making power, and access to credit and government support remain male-dominated, trapping women in low-value activities.
- **Digital Divide:** Barriers in digital literacy, language, affordability of devices limits the participation in modern agri-markets.
- Therefore, the **feminisation of agriculture; has, in a way, reinforced inequities** rather than enabling women's economic empowerment.

Emerging Opportunities

- **High-Value Segments:** With global demand rising for organic products and superfoods, India's value chains for tea, spices, millets and certified organic produce are poised for expansion in sectors where women are already strongly represented.
 - ♦ Geographical Indications, branding initiatives, and support for meeting export standards can help women producers shift from subsistence farming toward premium, value-added product markets.
- **Digital Innovations:** Digital innovations can play a decisive role in bridging this gap.
 - ♦ Platforms such as e-NAM, mobile-based advisory services, voice-assisted applications, and precision agriculture tools are already connecting women to markets, knowledge systems, and financial services.
 - ♦ These solutions help formalise women's labour while expanding access to schemes, credit, and fair pricing.

Government Initiatives for Women in Agriculture

- **Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP):** Under National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM), supports women farmers in sustainable agriculture, livestock, and NTFP (non-timber forest produce).
- **Joint Land Titles:** States encouraged to issue land pattas in joint names of husband and wife.
- **Priority Sector Lending (PSL):** Mandates credit flow to women farmers.
- **Rural women SHGs & FPOs:** Supported through NABARD and DAY-NRLM.
- **Agri-Clinics & Agri-Business Centres (ACABC):** Special provisions for women agri-entrepreneurs.

- **Digital Literacy:** Initiatives like Digital Sakhi, BHASHINI platform for multilingual access to agri-services.
- **Maternity Benefits & Health Schemes:** Support women farmers' welfare indirectly.
- **Support for Women FPOs:** Encouraged under the 10,000 FPOs Scheme (2020) with special provision for women-led groups.
- **GI Tags, Branding, and Export Facilitation:** Helps women producers in spices, tea, millets, organic produce.

Way Ahead

- Without targeted measures, women risk being excluded from the export-led opportunities emerging in Indian agriculture.
- To transform women's role in agriculture, **land and labour reforms are equally vital.**
- Policies **must recognise women as independent farmers** by promoting joint or individual land ownership, which in turn strengthens their eligibility for credit, insurance, and institutional support.

Source: TH

WHY IS INDIA STARING AT LPG SHORTAGE?

Context

- Amid escalating tensions in West Asia, disruptions are being reported in the supply of **liquefied petroleum gas (LPG)** cylinders in several Indian cities, including Mumbai, Bengaluru, and Kolkata.

About LPG

- Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) is a **highly flammable, energy-rich, and clean-burning fuel** composed mainly of **propane and butane**.
- It is obtained during **crude oil refining or natural gas processing** and is stored under pressure as a liquid in steel cylinders for **household cooking, heating, and automotive use**.
- Oil Marketing Companies such as IOC and BPCL produce 40% of India's LPG requirement.

Why the Disruption?

- **Geopolitical Risk:** India imports about **60 percent** of its LPG consumption and out of these imports about **90 percent** come through the **Strait of Hormuz**, which has been impacted due to current happenings (US and Israel's war with Iran).



- **Infrastructural Weakness:** India's LPG supply system is largely designed for continuous operational flow rather than large-scale stockpiling. For long-term storage, the country currently has **two underground LPG storage caverns** located at **Mangaluru** and **Visakhapatnam**, with a **combined capacity of about 1.4 lakh tonnes**, which is limited compared to national consumption.
- **Surge in Domestic Demand:** According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), India's LPG imports increased threefold between 2011-12 and 2024-25, reaching nearly 20 million tonnes. The expansion has been driven partly by the **Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY)**, under which nearly **10 crore LPG connections** have been added since 2017.
 - ♦ India now has about **33 crore domestic LPG connections**.

Ripplings Effects of an LPG Shortage

- **Impact on Households:** Nearly 87 percent of India's LPG consumption is used in the domestic sector, mainly for cooking in household kitchens.
- **Industrial Implications:** A number of industries—including textile, food processing, pharmaceuticals, and agricultural equipment manufacturing—use LPG in boilers for processes such as heating, sterilisation, and dyeing.
 - ♦ Restaurants, hotels, and catering services depend heavily on commercial LPG cylinders.
- **Supply Chain and Transport Costs:** A journey that normally takes about four days from Gulf ports can extend to nearly 25 days if ships reroute around Africa to avoid the conflict zone.
 - ♦ Such detours increase **freight charges and insurance premiums**, raising the overall cost of LPG imports.

- **Macroeconomic Impact:** India is the **second-largest consumer of LPG** in the world. Analysts estimate that every \$10 increase in global crude prices can expand India's current account deficit by roughly \$9 billion, putting pressure on the country's external balance.

Government Response

- The government has taken several measures to manage the emerging shortage and stabilise supply.
 - ♦ The **Essential Commodities Act** has been invoked to prioritise LPG supply for **households, hospitals, and essential services**, while restricting commercial distribution in some areas.
 - ♦ Refineries have been directed to **increase LPG production**, leading to about a **25 percent rise in output**.
 - ♦ State governments have been asked to ensure **security and smooth functioning of LPG supply chains**.
- At the same time, India has been attempting to **diversify its energy procurement sources**, purchasing crude oil from more than **40 countries worldwide** to reduce dependence on any single region.

Way Forward

- The emerging LPG shortage highlights the broader challenge of **energy security in a geopolitically uncertain world**. While India has significantly expanded LPG access through welfare schemes such as the **Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana**, the country remains vulnerable to disruptions in global energy supply chains.
- Strengthening Strategic LPG storage capacity, diversifying energy imports, and promoting alternative fuels will be crucial for ensuring stable and sustainable energy access for millions of households and businesses in India.

Source: TH

CHANGES IN FDI NORMS LINKED TO LAND BORDERING COUNTRIES (LBCS)

In News

- The Government of India has introduced changes to the **Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) framework** related to investments from **Land Bordering Countries (LBCs) to balance national security concerns** with ease of doing business and investment inflows.

Key Changes Introduced

- **Determination of 'Beneficial Owner' (BO):** The amendment provides for a definition and criteria for determination of Beneficial Ownership that is widely used by the investing community, under the **Prevention of Money Laundering Rules, 2005**.
 - ♦ The Beneficial Ownership test shall be applied at the level of the investor entity.
- **Eased Criteria for Investment:** Non-controlling investors from Land Bordering Countries (LBCs) holding less than 10% ownership in a company can now invest through the Automatic Route.
 - ♦ Earlier Rule was that any investment from LBCs required prior government approval (Government Route), irrespective of ownership percentage.
- **Expedited 60-Day Approval Timeline:** Investment proposals in certain sectors will be cleared within 60 days.
 - ♦ Examples of sectors are manufacturing of capital goods, electronics manufacturing & Polysilicon and ingot-wafer production (important for solar value chains).

Benefits

- The new guidelines aim to improve clarity and ease of doing business in India, encourage higher FDI inflows, and promote technology transfer, domestic value addition, and integration with global supply chains.
- They are expected to strengthen India's position as an attractive investment and manufacturing destination, support Atmanirbhar Bharat, and boost overall economic growth.

2020 Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) Rules

- The Government of India introduced Press Note 3 (2020) to prevent opportunistic takeovers of financially vulnerable Indian companies by foreign investors during the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - ♦ Initially applied only to Bangladesh and Pakistan, it was expanded in 2020 to include all neighboring land-border countries, including China.

Source :TH

NEWS IN SHORT

SAVITRIBAI PHULE

Context

- Union Home Minister Amit Shah paid tribute to Savitribai Phule on her death anniversary.

About Savitribai Phule (1831 - 1897)

- **Born** in Naigaon village of Maharashtra's Satara district.
- In 1840, at the age of nine, she married **Jyotirao Phule**, who was just 13 at the time.
- Formally recognised as **India's first female teacher**. In 1848, the couple established the **country's first school for girls** in Bhidewada, Pune.
- In **1863**, Jyotiba Phule and Savitribai began Balhatya Pratibandhak Griha, **India's first home dedicated to prohibiting infanticide**.
 - ♦ She also advocated inter-caste marriages, widow remarriage, and eradication of child marriage, sati, and dowry systems, among other social issues.
- In 1873, the Phule's set up the **Satyashodhak Samaj ('Truth-seekers' society)**, a platform open to all, irrespective of their caste, religion or class hierarchies, with the sole aim of bringing social equity.
- **Literary works:** Kavya Phule (Poetry's Blossoms) in 1854 and Bavan Kashi Subodh Ratnakar (The Ocean of Pure Gems), in 1892.

Source: PIB

KURUMBA PAINTING

In News

- The **Kurumba art tradition** is facing the threat of extinction due to **declining practitioners**.

About

- Kurumba paintings trace back over 3,000 years, linked to rock art sites like Ezhuthupaarai in Tamil Nadu's Nilgiris; they were practiced by the **Kurumba tribe**.
 - ♦ The Kurumba tribe is classified as a **Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG)**.
- Originally they were painted over the house walls, temple walls or during festivals and artists derive natural pigments from forest sources like tree resins.
- These folk paintings illustrate rituals, festivals, honey hunting, nature, animals, and daily community activities using simple linear motifs, dots, lines, and geometric patterns.

Source: IE

FISCAL HEALTH INDEX 2026

Context

- NITI Aayog has released the **second annual edition of Fiscal Health Index (FHI 2026)**.

Key Highlights of FHI 2026

- **Overall State Rankings:**
 - ♦ Odisha remains the top-performing state, further improving its fiscal score.
 - ♦ Goa and Jharkhand also feature among the Achiever states.
 - ♦ Gujarat and Maharashtra continue to remain in the top five.
 - ♦ Haryana shows a notable improvement by gaining three ranks.
- **States Showing Recovery:**
 - ♦ Bihar, Karnataka, and Telangana demonstrate moderate improvement in fiscal performance.
- **Low-Performing States:**
 - ♦ Punjab, West Bengal, and Kerala continue to remain at the bottom of the rankings, reflecting persistent fiscal stress.
- **NE and Himalayan States:**
 - ♦ Evaluated separately for the first time, Arunachal Pradesh tops as Achiever (strong revenue growth), followed by Uttarakhand;
 - ♦ Himachal Pradesh and Manipur lag due to weak own-revenues (<5% GSDP) and fiscal stress from high committed expenditures.
- **Policy Recommendations:**
 - ♦ Priorities include boosting own-tax capacity (e.g., property, excise reforms), elevating capex to 5%+ GSDP, enhancing public financial management via digitization, and curbing off-budget borrowings to ensure debt sustainability below 25-30% GSDP.

Fiscal Health Index

- FHI initiative assesses the **fiscal health of states in India.**
- **Sub Indices:** Quality of Expenditure, Revenue Mobilisation, Fiscal Prudence, Debt Index, and Debt Sustainability.
- Data for the index is sourced from the **Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG).**

States have been classified on the basis of the FHI score as per below categories
FHI scores have been rounded off to the nearest number for the below classification

Above 50	Achiever
Greater than 40 & less than equal to 50	Front Runner
Greater than 25 & less than equal to 40	Performer
Less than equal to 25	Aspirational

Source: PIB

NATIONAL SHIPPING BOARD (NSB)**In News**

- The government held a high-level interaction with the National Shipping Board (NSB) to address emerging challenges in India's shipping sector amid evolving global geopolitical dynamics.

About National Shipping Board (NSB)

- It is India's apex advisory body on shipping and maritime matters, constituted under Section 23 of the Merchant Shipping Act, 1958.
- It works under the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways.
- Its primary role is to advise the central government on shipping policies and maritime development.
- Its chairperson is appointed by the Central Government.

Source: PIB

INTERNATIONAL ENERGY AGENCY RELEASES 400 MILLION BARRELS OF EMERGENCY OIL**Context**

- Amid escalating tensions in West Asia, the International Energy Agency (IEA) has agreed to release 400 million barrels of emergency oil reserves, the largest coordinated release in its history.

About

- **Global emergency reserves:** IEA member countries collectively hold **1.2 billion barrels** of public emergency oil reserves and **600 million barrels** of industry stocks held under government obligation.
 - ♦ These reserves were established in **1974** after the **1973 Arab Oil Embargo** to protect countries against sudden oil supply disruptions.
- IEA members have coordinated oil **releases five times** earlier:
 - ♦ Gulf War (1990–1991)
 - ♦ Hurricane Katrina in 2005
 - ♦ Libyan Civil War (2011)
 - ♦ Twice after the Russian invasion of Ukraine (2022).

International Energy Agency (IEA)

- The International Energy Agency (IEA) **was set up in the wake of the 1973-1974 oil crisis** to help industrialised countries respond to major oil shocks.

- **Headquarters: Paris, France.**
- **Members:** The IEA is made up of **32 Member countries** including the United States, Canada, Turkey, United Kingdom, Australia, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea etc.
 - ♦ **Association Countries:** India, China, Indonesia, Singapore, South Africa, Thailand etc.
- **Criteria for membership:** A candidate country to the IEA **must be a member country of the OECD.** In addition, it must demonstrate several requirements. These are:
 - ♦ Crude oil and/or product reserves equivalent to **90 days** of the previous year's net imports,
 - ♦ A demand restraint programme to reduce national oil consumption by up to **10%**,
 - ♦ Legislation and organisation to operate the **Coordinated Emergency Response Measures (CERM)** on a national basis.

Source: IE

BLACK RAIN IN TEHRAN

Context

- The World Health Organization (WHO) has warned of "black rain" and toxic air pollution in Tehran, following attacks on oil facilities.

What is "Black Rain"?

- "Black rain" refers to **rainfall contaminated with soot, ash, oil particles, and chemical pollutants** that are released into the atmosphere after large fires or explosions.
- Instead of **clear water droplets**, the rain carries **dark, oily particles**, giving it a **black or grey appearance**.
- Such rain usually occurs when **massive fires release pollutants into the air and rainfall absorbs these particles** before reaching the ground.
- Historically, similar phenomena were observed after the **Atomic Bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945**, when radioactive soot and debris mixed with rainwater.

Source: IE

KISAN CREDIT CARD (KCC)

Context

- **The Kisan Credit Card (KCC)** provides timely, affordable, and collateral-free credit to farmers,

including small, marginal, tenant farmers and SHGs/JLGs.

Kisan Credit Card (KCC)

- **The Kisan Credit Card (KCC) Scheme**, introduced in **1998**, was designed to simplify and expedite farmers' access to short-term institutional credit for crop production.
- It provides working capital and investment credit for allied activities and covers post-harvest and marketing expenses, thereby offering comprehensive financial support to enhance farm incomes.
- **Under the Modified Interest Subvention Scheme (MISS)**, the loan limit has been enhanced to Rs. 5 lakh, with collateral-free credit raised to Rs. 2 lakh per borrower.



- **Eligible Beneficiaries of KCC:** It extends coverage to:
 - ♦ individual farmers and joint borrowers who are owner-cultivators,
 - ♦ tenant farmers, oral lessees, and sharecroppers.
 - ♦ In addition, the scheme also includes Self Help Groups (SHGs) and Joint Liability Groups (JLGs), including groups formed by tenant farmers and sharecroppers.



Source: PIB