

## DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS (DCA)

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### Table of Content

Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Rules 2026

Workplace Well-being as a Public Health Priority

Inter-State Water Dispute

Clean Energy Surge and Fossil Fuel Decline: Global Electricity Review

#### NEWS IN SHORT

Atal Pension Yojana Crosses 9 Cr. Enrolments

The Druzhiba Pipeline

Technology Development and Investment Promotion (TDIP) Scheme

RBI Partially Eases Curbs on Rupee Derivative Trades

Mumbai-Ahmedabad bullet train to get ballastless track system

India-Sri Lanka Diving Exercise (DIVEX 2026)

Methane Emissions from Landfills

Dolphin Friends Initiative

## PROMOTION AND REGULATION OF ONLINE GAMING RULES 2026

### Context

- The Government has notified the **Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Rules, 2026** under the **Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Act, 2025** to regulate online gaming, curb money gaming, and protect users.

### India's online Gaming Industry

- India's online gaming industry is valued at **approximately \$5–6 billion in 2025–26**, reflecting its rapid expansion.
  - ♦ The market is projected to grow to around **\$9–10 billion by 2030–31**, indicating strong medium-term growth potential.
- The sector is growing at a **compound annual growth rate (CAGR)** of about **14–16%**, demonstrating consistent momentum.

### Key Provisions of the Rules

- **Regulatory Authority:** The rules establish the **Online Gaming Authority of India (OGAI)** as a unified, digital-first regulator under the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology**.
  - ♦ It maintains the list of online money games, handles complaints, issues directions and codes of practice, hears appeals, and coordinates with financial and law-enforcement agencies.
- **Determination of Online Games:** The Rules prescribe a time-bound determination mechanism to classify games as online money games.
  - ♦ Determination may be initiated  **suo motu** by the Authority, **on application by service providers, or through Government notification**.
- **Registration Requirements: E-sports games** and related entities are required to mandatorily register with the authority.
  - ♦ **Online social games are not required** to register by default, and registration is triggered only when notified by the Government.
- **User Safety Features:** The Rules mandate risk-based user safety features, including age verification, parental controls, time limits, reporting tools, counselling support, and fair-play monitoring.
- **Grievance Redressal Mechanism:** Every online game service provider offering an online social game or e-sport must establish a functional grievance redressal mechanism.

- ♦ A user dissatisfied with the provider's resolution (or in case of non-redressal) may approach the **Authority within 30 days**, which shall endeavour to dispose of the appeal within a further **30 days**.
- ♦ A second appeal lies before the **Appellate Authority** i.e., the **Secretary, MeitY**.

### Significance

- The rules provide **regulatory clarity** by distinguishing between **prohibited money games and permissible gaming formats**.
- They **strengthen consumer protection** through safety, transparency, and grievance redressal mechanisms.
- The rules promote the formalization and growth of the e-sports ecosystem in India.
- They reflect a whole-of-government approach through multi-ministerial representation in OGAI.

### What are the Concerns?

- **Enforcement challenge:** The use of **VPNs** enables users to bypass geo-blocking and access prohibited offshore betting platforms, making enforcement difficult
- **Cross-Border Jurisdiction Issues:** Many gaming and betting platforms operate from foreign jurisdictions, limiting India's enforcement capabilities.
- **User Protection Concerns:** Risks of gaming addiction, especially among minors, remain difficult to fully address.

### Way Ahead

- The Government should develop a **robust and objective classification framework** for different categories of games.
- It should enhance **technological capacity for monitoring and enforcement**, especially against offshore betting platforms.
- It should ensure **balanced regulation of VPNs** without undermining privacy and legitimate usage.
- It should **promote responsible gaming awareness** to address risks such as addiction.

Source: PIB

## WORKPLACE WELL-BEING AS A PUBLIC HEALTH PRIORITY

### Context

- A recent report by the International Labour Organization titled **“The Psychosocial Working Environment: Global Developments**

and Pathways for Action” states that toxic workplaces contribute to over **8.4 lakh deaths** annually worldwide.

#### What are Psychosocial Risks at Work?

- Psychosocial risks refer to **harmful conditions arising from the way work is designed, organised, and managed.**
- These risks include high job demands along with **imbalance between effort and reward, job insecurity, long working hours, and workplace harassment.**

#### Key Findings of the Report

- The report highlights that nearly **45 million disability-adjusted life years (DALYs)** are lost annually, reflecting years of healthy life lost due to illness, disability, or premature death.
- It estimates that psychosocial risks result in an **annual loss of about 1.37%** of global GDP.
- It notes that around **35% of workers globally work more than 48 hours per week**, which significantly increases health risks.
- It finds that nearly **23% of workers have experienced workplace violence or harassment at least once**, with psychological harassment being the most prevalent form affecting 18% of workers.

#### Framework for Workplace Well-being

- **Global Initiatives:**
  - ♦ The ILO–WHO framework on workers’ health promotes **integration of mental health into occupational safety policies** and emphasises preventive approaches.
  - ♦ International conventions such as **ILO Convention No. 155** call for national policies on **occupational safety and health**, including psychosocial well-being.
- **Indian Initiatives:**
  - ♦ **The Mental Healthcare Act, 2017** recognises the right to mental healthcare, which has implications for workplace well-being.
  - ♦ **Constitutional Provision:** The Directive Principles of State Policy emphasise the responsibility of the State to ensure humane working conditions and improve public health (**Article 42**).
  - ♦ **National Mental Health Programme (NMHP):** Implemented under the National Health Mission, the DMHP provides comprehensive

mental health services, including counseling and psychosocial interventions, at the community level.

- ♦ **Labour Law Reforms:** The **Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020 (OSH Code)** mandates employers to ensure **safe and humane working conditions**, regulate working hours, and provide welfare facilities.

#### Key Challenges in India

- **Informality and Weak Enforcement:** A large share of India’s workforce operates in the informal sector, which limits the effective enforcement of occupational safety and psychosocial risk regulations.
- **Invisible Nature of Psychosocial Risks:** Psychosocial risks such as stress and harassment remain under-recognised and under-reported due to their intangible nature.
- **Rise of Gig and Platform Work:** The expansion of the gig economy has increased job insecurity and algorithm-driven work pressures, intensifying workplace stress.
- **Implementation Deficit:** There exists a significant gap between legal provisions and their actual implementation, particularly in MSMEs with limited compliance capacity.

#### Way Ahead

- Workplace policies should formally integrate mental health as a **core component of occupational safety**, with mandatory counselling and stress management systems.
- Strict adherence to reasonable **working hour norms in line with global standards** is necessary to reduce health risks associated with overwork.
- Organisations should adopt structured mechanisms such as **mental health audits, grievance redressal systems, and anti-harassment frameworks.**

Source: TH

## INTER-STATE WATER DISPUTE

#### Context

- The **Mahanadi Water Disputes Tribunal** has given a final opportunity to **Odisha** and **Chhattisgarh** to arrive at a mutual settlement on water sharing before proceeding with its own adjudication.

## About

- Inter-state river disputes arise when multiple states contest the **use, control, or allocation of shared river waters**, reflecting the tension between state autonomy and collective resource management.
- With nearly 80% of freshwater used in agriculture, rising population, industrial demand, and urbanisation have intensified pressure on river systems, making water a strategic and political resource.

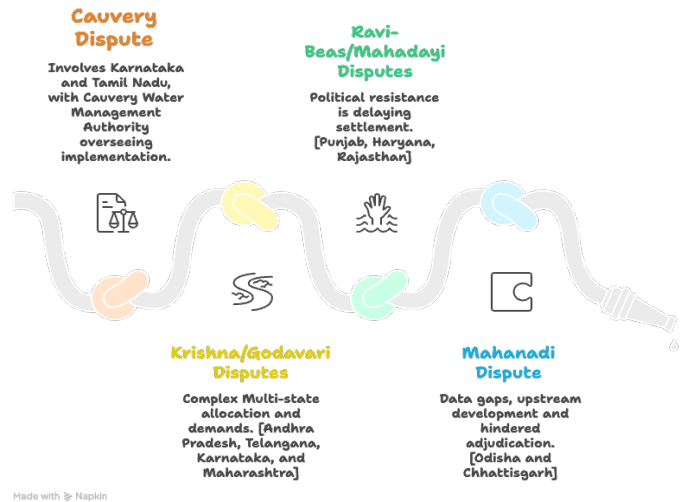
## Causes of Inter-State Water Disputes

- **Asymmetric river geography** allows upstream states to exercise greater control over water flows, often affecting downstream availability during critical seasons.
- **State boundaries not aligned with river basins** disrupt integrated planning, as rivers flow across multiple administrative units with differing priorities.
- **Rising demand for water** due to agriculture, urbanisation, and industry has created intense competition over limited resources, particularly in water-stressed regions.
- Unilateral infrastructure development, such as dams and barrages, often occurs without consensus, triggering disputes and mistrust among states.
- **Lack of transparent data sharing** undermines scientific allocation, as states rely on differing estimates of water availability.
- **Climate variability**, including erratic monsoons and droughts, increases uncertainty and complicates long-term water-sharing arrangements.
- Politicisation of water issues transforms technical disputes into identity-driven conflicts, delaying rational resolution.

## Legal and Institutional Framework

- **Article 262** of the Constitution empowers Parliament to legislate on inter-state river disputes and restricts judicial intervention once a tribunal is constituted.
- The **Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956** provides for the establishment of tribunals to adjudicate disputes, ensuring a quasi-judicial resolution mechanism.
- The **River Boards Act, 1956** envisages basin-level management institutions, although it has remained largely ineffective in practice.

## Major Inter-State Water Disputes



- Recent reforms, including the Inter-State River Water Disputes Amendment Bill, 2019, propose a permanent tribunal system and a central data repository to improve efficiency and transparency.

## Challenges in Resolving Water Disputes

- Delays in tribunal processes often extend beyond mandated timelines, reducing the credibility and effectiveness of dispute resolution.
- Weak enforcement mechanisms allow states to delay or partial compliance.
- Fragmented institutional structures prevent coordinated basin-level management, as multiple agencies operate without integration.
- Limited multidisciplinary expertise in tribunals restricts the incorporation of hydrological, environmental, and climate perspectives.
- Judicial interventions and political pressures further complicate and prolong dispute resolution processes.
- Environmental degradation and over-extraction reduce available water, intensifying competition among states.

## Way Forward

- To resolve water disputes, India should **strengthen cooperative federalism** through **permanent tribunals** and **river basin authorities**.
- Establishing a **centralised data bank** with satellite monitoring ensures transparent, objective decision-making.
- Additionally, promoting **micro-irrigation, climate-resilient frameworks, and ecological flows** will ensure long-term sustainability and efficient

resource management across administrative boundaries.

### Mahanadi River and Dispute

- The Mahanadi River, spanning about 851 kilometres, originates from the **Amarkantak plateau** in **Chhattisgarh** and flows extensively through **Odisha** before draining into the **Bay of Bengal**. Its basin supports agriculture, industry, and dense human settlements.
- The central issue revolves around assessment of annual water availability, which forms the basis of any sharing formula. The absence of reliable and mutually accepted hydrological data has stalled progress.
- Odisha alleges that extensive upstream infrastructure, including over 500 anicuts and multiple barrages, has altered river flow, while Chhattisgarh argues its developmental and irrigation needs justify water utilisation.
- The dispute is compounded by the absence of a formal water-sharing agreement, making the tribunal's decision critical for future allocation and governance.
- Odisha approached the Union Government in 2016, leading to the constitution of the **Mahanadi Water Disputes Tribunal in 2018** under the Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956, after negotiations failed to yield results.

Source: TH

## CLEAN ENERGY SURGE AND FOSSIL FUEL DECLINE: GLOBAL ELECTRICITY REVIEW

### Context

- India, along with China, witnessed a **historic shift in its power sector in 2025**, where record growth in renewable energy led to a **decline in fossil fuel-based electricity generation**, marking a significant milestone in the global energy transition.

### Global Highlights

- **Solar as Primary Growth Driver:** Solar energy met approximately 75% of global electricity demand growth in 2025.
- **Renewables Overtake Coal:** The share of renewables in global electricity generation reached a record 33.8%, surpassing coal (33.0%) for the first time in over 100 years.

- **Fossil Fuel Stagnation:** Fossil fuel-based power generation recorded a  $-0.2\%$  change in 2025, signalling that aggregate fossil generation has effectively plateaued at the global level.

### India-Specific Findings

- **Fossil Generation Decline:** India's fossil fuel power generation fell by 3.3% in 2025 a significant departure from the sustained growth trend of previous years, indicating a structural shift in the electricity mix.
- **Renewable Surge:** Renewable electricity generation grew by 24%, with solar overtaking hydropower to become India's largest clean energy source for the first time.
- **Record Solar Capacity Addition:** India installed 38 GW of solar capacity in 2025 surpassing the United States and ranking second globally behind China.
- **Global Significance:** Alongside China, India's clean energy scale-up played a decisive role in halting the growth of global fossil fuel generation.

### Factors Behind the Shift

- **Favorable Climatic Conditions:**
  - ♦ **Good monsoon:** Higher hydropower output
  - ♦ **Milder summer:** Reduced electricity demand (less cooling load)
- **Rapid Solar Deployment:** Strong policy push and falling solar costs accelerated installations.

### Challenges Ahead: Outlook For 2026

- **Weak Monsoon Prediction:** IMD forecasts **below-normal rainfall**, that **likely** reduced **hydropower generation**, increased **groundwater pumping** led to higher electricity demand, and higher use of **air conditioning** due to heat.
  - ♦ These could **reverse gains** and increase fossil fuel dependence.
- **Transmission Constraints:** Price parity with fossil based electricity generation (**One price**) possible only if **grid congestion is minimal**. Otherwise, **area-wise price differences (market splitting)** may persist.
- **Institutional Resistance:** Power exchanges fear **loss of autonomy and revenue**. **Implementation complexity** requires advanced algorithms, real-time coordination, and strong regulatory oversight.

### Way Ahead: Market Coupling and 'One Grid, One Price' in India

- Currently, India has **multiple power exchanges**, and each exchange independently discovers

electricity prices through bids. It leads to **price differences for the same time slot** across exchanges.

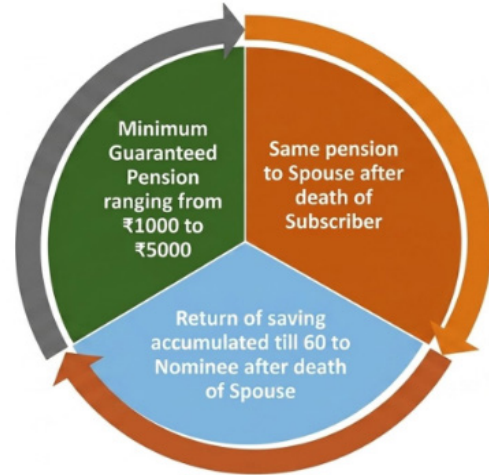
- **Market coupling pools all buy and sell bids** from different exchanges and determines:
  - ♦ A **uniform market-clearing price (MCP)**
  - ♦ Optimal allocation of electricity across the grid

#### How Market Coupling Enables 'One Grid, One Price'?

- **Unified Price Discovery:** All bids (buyers and sellers) are aggregated, and a **single algorithm determines one price** for the entire market. It eliminates price disparities across exchanges.
- **Efficient Transmission Utilisation:** Power flows are optimized across regions, and reduces **congestion and bottlenecks** in transmission corridors.
- **Improved Competition & Transparency:** Sellers compete in a **larger, unified pool**, and prevents market fragmentation and manipulation.
- **Cost Reduction for DISCOMs:** Eliminates arbitrage opportunities across exchanges. DISCOMs get access to the **lowest available price nationally**.
- **Better Renewable Integration:** Renewable energy (solar/wind) is variable. A unified market helps absorb surplus renewable power, and balance deficits across regions.

Source: IE

- It is open to all Indian citizens between the age of **18 and 40 years**, except those who are or have been income tax payers.
- It guaranteed monthly pension ranging from **₹1,000 to ₹5,000** for subscribers after attaining **60 years of age**.



Source: DD News

## THE DRUZHBA PIPELINE

### In News

- The resumption of Russian oil flows through the Ukrainian section of the **Druzhba pipeline** has prompted Hungary to lift its veto on a **critical €90 billion EU loan to Ukraine**.

### About

- The **Druzhba ("Friendship") pipeline** is one of the world's longest crude oil pipeline networks, serving as the primary overland energy artery connecting Russian oil fields to refineries across Central and Eastern Europe.
- **Constructed by the Soviet Union**, the pipeline became operational in 1964 with the explicit purpose of integrating the economies of Eastern Europe with Soviet energy supply, primarily serving member states of the **Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON)**, the Soviet-era economic bloc.
- The pipeline originates in the **Almet'yevsk region of central Russia**, where crude flows converge from Siberia, the Urals, and the Caspian Sea. It then passes through Belarus before splitting into two major branches:
  - ♦ Northern Branch → Poland → Germany
  - ♦ Southern Branch → Ukraine → Hungary → Slovakia → Czech Republic

Source: DD

## NEWS IN SHORT

### ATAL PENSION YOJANA CROSSES 9 CR. ENROLMENTS

#### Context

- The Atal Pension Yojana (APY), has achieved a historic milestone by surpassing total gross enrolments of **"9 crore"** subscribers on 21st April, 2026.

#### Atal Pension Yojana

- It is a flagship social security scheme of the Government of India, administered by the **Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA)**.
- The scheme, launched in **2015**, is a voluntary, contributory pension scheme primarily focused on the **poor, the underprivileged, and workers in the unorganized sector**.

## TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT AND INVESTMENT PROMOTION (TDIP) SCHEME

### Context

- The Government of India has released the revised guidelines for the Technology Development and Investment Promotion (TDIP) Scheme.

### About

- The revised scheme has been launched with a total outlay of **₹203 crore** for the period 2026–31.
- Objectives:** The scheme aims to enhance India's participation and influence in **global telecom standard-setting processes**.
  - It seeks to **promote indigenous research, development, and innovation** in next-generation telecom technologies such as **5G Advanced and 6G**.
- The scheme provides financial support** to Indian stakeholders for participation in global telecom bodies such as the International Telecommunication Union, 3rd Generation Partnership Project (3GPP), and oneM2M.
- Expanded Scope for Ecosystem Participation:** The revised guidelines significantly expand the scope of the scheme to include **startups, MSMEs, academia, research institutions, telecom service providers and industry players**.
- Institutional Framework:** The scheme will be implemented through institutions such as the Telecommunications Standards Development Society India (TSDSI), Telecom Centres of Excellence India (TCoE), and Telecommunications Consultants India Limited (TCIL).

Source: PIB

## RBI PARTIALLY EASES CURBS ON RUPEE DERIVATIVE TRADES

### Context

- The Reserve Bank of India **partially rolled back restrictions on rupee derivative transactions** that were introduced earlier to prevent excessive volatility and depreciation pressures linked to the West Asia crisis.

### About Non-Deliverable Forwards (NDFs)

- NDFs are **cash-settled foreign exchange derivative contracts** where the underlying currency is not physically delivered at maturity.

- Settlement occurs in a **convertible currency (usually US dollars)** based on the difference between agreed forward and prevailing spot rates.
- These contracts are mainly traded offshore in financial centres such as Singapore, London, Hong Kong, etc.
- They are **used for hedging currency risk and speculative positions** in partially convertible currencies like the rupee.

Source: TH

## MUMBAI-AHMEDABAD BULLET TRAIN TO GET BALLASTLESS TRACK SYSTEM

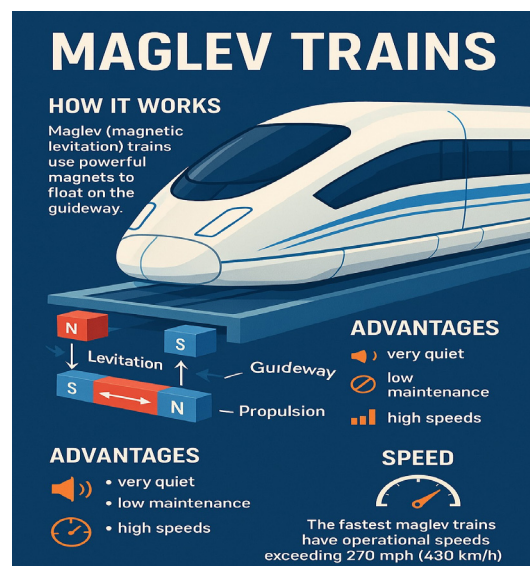
### In News

- The Mumbai-Ahmedabad High Speed Rail (MAHSR) corridor, **India's first bullet train project**, is going to deploy the **J-Slab ballastless track system**, adapted from **Japan's Shinkansen technology**.

### About

- The J-Slab is a pre-cast concrete slab track system used in high-speed rail infrastructure.
- Unlike conventional railway tracks** that rest on loose gravel (ballast), J-Slab tracks are embedded on a rigid concrete base eliminating ballast entirely.
- The system is the foundational track technology of **Japan's Shinkansen ("bullet train") network**, now being transferred to India under the MAHSR project.

### Maglev Technology



- Maglev (magnetic levitation) bullet trains use powerful electromagnets to hover and propel vehicles without touching the track, eliminating friction and enabling speeds over 600 km/h.

Source: TH

## INDIA–SRI LANKA DIVING EXERCISE (DIVEX 2026)

### Context

- INS Nireekshak arrived in Colombo to participate in the fourth edition of the India–Sri Lanka Diving Exercise (DIVEX 2026).

### About

- DIVEX is a **bilateral naval exercise** focused on specialised underwater operations and submarine rescue training.
- It aims to enhance interoperability, operational coordination, and the exchange of best practices between India and Sri Lanka.
- The exercise reflects deepening maritime cooperation and supports regional stability in the Indian Ocean Region, aligned with India's **MAHASAGAR vision**.

Source: TH

## METHANE EMISSIONS FROM LANDFILLS

### Context

- Two of India's waste landfills are among the top 25 global emitters of methane in the waste sector, according to a study by the University of California, Los Angeles.

### Key Findings

- The Secunderabad (Telangana) site ranked **4th**, while the Mumbai (Maharashtra) site ranked **12th** globally.
- The highest emitter is near Buenos Aires (Argentina), releasing about **7.6 tonnes of methane per hour**.
- Globally, **2,994 methane plumes** were detected from **707 waste sites**.

### Why Landfills Emit Methane?

- Landfills release methane when organic waste decomposes in the absence of oxygen (anaerobic conditions), making unmanaged dumpsites major emission hotspots.

### About Methane

- Methane is a potent greenhouse gas, responsible for nearly **30% of global warming** since the Industrial Revolution.
- Over a 20-year period, it is about **86 times more effective** at trapping heat than carbon dioxide.
- It remains in the atmosphere for a shorter duration (~12 years), but has a **high short-term warming impact**.

Source: DTE

## DOLPHIN FRIENDS INITIATIVE

### In News

- The Forest Department, Prayagraj has launched the Dolphin Friends volunteer network to strengthen conservation of the Gangetic dolphin through community participation and river monitoring.

### About Gangetic Dolphin

- The **Ganges river dolphin (Platanista gangetica)** is one of the world's few obligate freshwater dolphin species, officially described in 1801.
- It **inhabits the Ganga and Brahmaputra river systems** and their tributaries across India, Bangladesh, and Nepal.
- They are uniquely adapted to turbid river environments, the Gangetic dolphin lacks a crystalline eye lens rendering it functionally blind. It navigates and hunts entirely through a highly developed **echolocation system, emitting ultrasonic sounds to locate prey**.

### Ecological Significance

- The dolphin sits at the apex of the aquatic food chain, regulating fish and crustacean populations and maintaining trophic balance.
- Its presence in a river stretch is a reliable bioindicator of clean, healthy freshwater earning it the title "**Tiger of the Ganges**." The Government of India declared it the **National Aquatic Animal in 2009** on this basis.

### Steps Taken

- **Project Dolphin (2020)**: Launched on the lines of Project Tiger; focuses on dolphin and aquatic habitat conservation using technology — covering pollution reduction, sustainable fishery practices, and community involvement.

- **National Ganga River Dolphin Day:** Observed on 5 October annually — the date in 2009 when the species was declared National Aquatic Animal.
- **Vikramshila Gangetic Dolphin Sanctuary (VGDS):** Located in Bhagalpur, Bihar, the only dedicated dolphin sanctuary in India. Approximately half the total Gangetic dolphin population is found here.
- **Conservation Action Plan (2016):** Prepared by the Wildlife Institute of India; identifies key threats and maps habitat quality, prey-base depletion, and river traffic impacts.
- **WPA Schedule I:** Same protection tier as tigers and elephants.

Source: TH

