

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS (DCA)

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KOMAGATA MARU INCIDENT

In News

- Recently a Punjabi Singer compared the **1914 Komagata Maru rejection of Indians in Canada** with his own sold-out concert to highlight how attitudes have changed over time.

Komagata Maru Incident

- The **Komagata Maru (also called Guru Nanak Jahaz)** was a Japanese steamship chartered by **Gurdit Singh in 1914**, carrying 376 Indians seeking better opportunities in Canada.
- Early 20th century Punjab faced **rural indebtedness, famines and epidemics and many ex-soldiers** and peasants migrated abroad for livelihood.
- Most passengers were Sikhs, along with Muslims and Hindus, who faced severe restrictions under **Canada's immigration laws**.
- On arrival in Vancouver, only 24 were allowed to disembark, and the rest were kept onboard without adequate food, water, or medical aid.
- Attempts by authorities to **seize the ship were resisted, and a local support group raised funds to challenge the restrictions legally**, but the ship was ultimately forced to leave.

Reasons for Passenger Denial

- Both India and Canada were under British rule, so Indian passengers believed they had the **right to settle anywhere in the British Empire**.
- However, in 1908 Canada introduced the **"continuous journey regulation,"** which required immigrants to arrive directly from their country of origin without stops—something practically impossible from India.
 - This rule, influenced by anti-Asian sentiment after the 1907 Vancouver riots led by the Asiatic Exclusion League, was designed to restrict immigration, particularly targeting Asians, including Indians.

Return in India

- After being expelled from Vancouver and refused entry at other ports during World War I, the ship was sent back to India.
- At **Budge Budge near Kolkata**, British authorities tried to send the passengers to Punjab, but they resisted and marched toward the city. Troops opened fire, killing 20 and injuring several. **Gurdit Singh initially escaped** but later surrendered on Mahatma Gandhi's advice and was imprisoned for five years.

Impact of Komagata Maru Incident on Indian Freedom Movement

- The Komagata Maru incident exposed the **racial discrimination faced by Indians within the British Empire**, first in Canada and later in India.
- The **humiliation and violence against the passengers** strengthened the belief that Indians could not secure equal rights under colonial rule, boosting demands for complete independence instead of reforms.
- It also **energized revolutionary groups like the Ghadar Party**, further encouraging resistance and the idea of armed struggle against British rule.

Source :TH

A NEW ERA OF ONLINE GAMING GOVERNANCE

Context

- India has entered a decisive phase in regulating its rapidly expanding online gaming ecosystem with the notification of the **Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Rules, 2026**, operationalising the **Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Act, 2025**.

About Online Gaming

- Online gaming refers to **games offered on the internet, accessible through devices such as smartphones or computers**, including both **casual games** (entertainment-based), and **real-money games (RMG)** involving stakes. (**MeitY, IT Rules 2023**).
- Around **80% of gamers worldwide are adults**, with the **largest group ages 18–34**, while the **average gamer is in their mid-30s**.
- Mobile gaming** has emerged as the **dominant platform**, with **3.6 billion players globally**.

Growth of the Online Gaming Sector in India

- India's online gaming market reached **₹232 billion in 2024** and is projected to grow to **₹316 billion by 2027**.
- Around **77% of revenue comes from transaction-based games**, indicating the dominance of monetised formats.
- The sector includes **e-sports** (competitive gaming), **online social games** (casual, skill-based), and **online money games** (involving financial stakes).

- ♦ **Money games have led to addiction, fraud, and social harms**, affecting crores of users, while e-sports and social games promote innovation.

Key Features of the New Governance Framework

- **Clear Classification of Games:** Distinguishes between **safe (e-sports/social)** and **harmful (money-based)** gaming; and enables targeted regulation and enforcement.



- **Complete Ban on Online Money Gaming:** Covers **games of chance, skill, or mixed forms involving money**. It prohibits hosting and participation; advertising and promotion; and financial transactions via banks/payment systems.
- **Strong Regulatory Mechanism:** Establishment of a **central regulatory authority** to monitor platforms, handle grievances, and enforce compliance.
- **User Protection Measures:** Mandatory safeguards such as **age verification, financial security checks**, and platform accountability focusing on preventing **addiction, fraud, and exploitation**.
- **Penal Provisions:** Severe penalties for violations up to **3–5 years imprisonment**; fines up to **₹2 crore**; and strict action against repeat offenders and advertisers.

- **Online Gaming Authority of India:** It is constituted as an **attached office** of MeitY with its **head office in the NCT of Delhi**, and chaired by the Additional Secretary, MeitY.

- ♦ It is designed to function as a digital office, and structured as a compact and multi-sectoral body.

Rationale Behind the Reform

- **Addressing Social Harms:** Estimated **₹20,000 crore losses** linked to online money gaming; it links to **addiction, debt, and suicides** necessitated urgent action.
- **Regulatory Vacuum:** Earlier, gaming regulation was **state-specific and fragmented**, causing ambiguity.
- **Balancing Growth and Safety:** Promotes **innovation in e-sports and digital entertainment**; and simultaneously ensures **consumer protection and financial integrity**.

Significance for Governance and Economy

- **Formalisation of the Sector:** Brings clarity, improves **investor confidence**, and ensures compliance.
- **Boost to E-sports Ecosystem:** Recognition of e-sports as a **legitimate industry** aligns with global trends.
- **Strengthening Digital Governance:** Reflects India's move toward **platform regulation and digital accountability**.
- **Consumer-Centric Approach:** Prioritises **user safety over profit-driven gaming models**.

Concerns and Challenges

- **Blanket Ban Debate:** Banning even **skill-based money games** may affect industry revenues; and push users to **illegal/offshore platforms**.
- **Enforcement Complexity:** Difficulty in tracking cross-border platforms, and regulating digital payments and cryptocurrencies.
- **Federal Issues:** Potential **Centre–State tensions**, as gambling traditionally falls under State List.
- **Impact on Startups:** Sudden regulatory shift may affect **employment and innovation in gaming startups**

Conclusion & Way Forward

- The **Online Gaming Rules, 2026** signify a **paradigm shift in India's digital governance**, aiming to create a **safe, transparent, and innovation-friendly gaming ecosystem**.

- Its long-term success will depend on **balanced implementation, stakeholder engagement, and adaptive policymaking**, while the framework addresses pressing social concerns.
- There is a need to develop **clear guidelines distinguishing skill vs chance**, strengthen **international cooperation** to curb illegal platforms, promote **responsible gaming awareness**, encourage **regulated innovation in e-sports and AI-driven gaming**, and periodic review of regulations to balance **freedom and control**.

Source: PIB

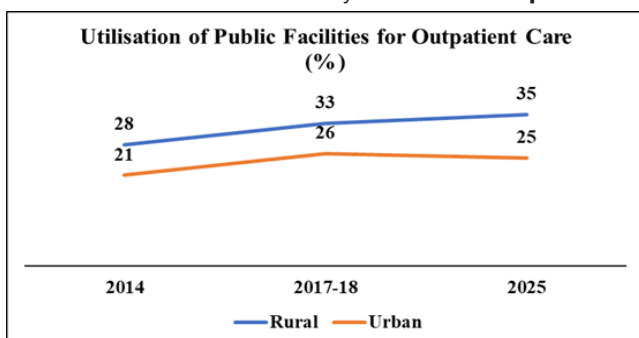
RISE IN HEALTHCARE ACCESS IN INDIA

Context

- National Statistical Office's (NSO) 80th Round Survey on Household Consumption on Health highlighted significant increase in healthcare access across the country.

Key Findings of the Survey

- **Out-of-Pocket Expenditure (OOPE):** Outpatient care in public facilities recorded zero OOPE, highlighting availability of free essential services.
 - ♦ Over **50%** of patients in government hospitals incurred OOPE of less than ₹1,100.
- **Strengthening of Health-Seeking Behaviour:** The projected population reporting ailments (PPRA) has increased significantly, reflecting improved health awareness and reporting behaviour.
 - ♦ In rural areas, PPRA increased from **6.8 percent** in 2017–18 to **12.2 per cent in 2025**, while in urban areas it increased from 9.1 per cent to 14.9 per cent.
- **Improvements in Maternal Healthcare:** In rural areas, institutional deliveries rose to 95.6 per cent, while in urban areas they reached **97.8 percent**.



- **Health Insurance Coverage:** There is a significant increase in coverage under government-funded health insurance schemes.
 - ♦ Coverage in rural areas increased from **12.9 percent** to **45.5 percent**, while in **urban areas** it increased from 8.9 per cent to **31.8 percent**.

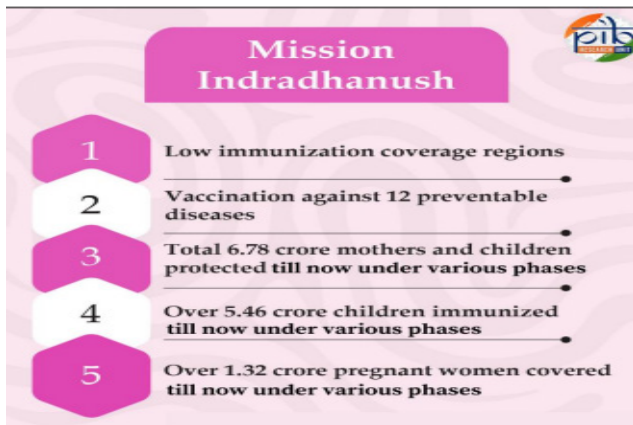
Challenges in India's Healthcare Sector

- **Limited Diagnostic Access:** Diagnostic facilities are **concentrated in urban areas**, limiting early detection in rural regions.
- **Inadequate Infrastructure:** India faces a shortage of well-equipped hospitals and medical institutions, especially in rural areas.
- **Increase in Public Spending:** India's healthcare spending is around **3.8% of GDP**, including out-of-pocket and public expenditure.
- **There is a severe shortage of trained manpower**, which includes doctors, nurses, paramedics and primary healthcare workers.
 - ♦ The doctor-to-patient ratio remains low, which is merely **0.7 doctors per 1,000 people** whereas the World Health Organisation (WHO) average is 2.5 doctors per 1,000 people.

Government Initiatives for Healthcare Access

- **Ayushman Bharat – Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY):** It provides a health cover of **₹5 lakh per family per year for secondary and tertiary care** hospitalization.
 - ♦ **All Indians aged 70 and above** are eligible for health coverage regardless of their income or socio-economic status.
- **Affordable Medicines and Diagnostics:**
 - ♦ **Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana** ensures availability of low-cost generic medicines.
 - ♦ **AMRIT pharmacies** provide essential drugs and medical implants at discounted prices.
- **Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan (PMSMA):** Launched in **2016**, PMSMA provides pregnant women a fixed day, free of cost assured and quality Antenatal Care on the **9th day** of every month.
- **The Swasth Bharat Portal** is a one-stop integrated platform designed to bring multiple national health programmes onto a single digital interface.
- **eSanjeevani** enables remote consultation and improves access to specialists, especially in rural areas.

- **Disease Control and Targeted Programmes:**
 - ♦ **The National TB Elimination Programme** has improved detection, treatment coverage, and reduced TB incidence.
 - ♦ **National Sickle Cell Anaemia Elimination Mission** focuses on screening and eliminating sickle cell disease by 2047.
 - ♦ **Pradhan Mantri National Dialysis Programme** provides free dialysis services, reducing out-of-pocket expenditure.



Way Ahead

- **Address Workforce Shortage:** Steps should be taken to increase the number of trained doctors, nurses, and paramedics, especially in rural and underserved areas.
- **Leverage Digital Health:** Digital initiatives like **Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission** should be expanded to improve efficiency, data management, and service delivery.
- **Improve Accessibility in Rural Areas:** Infrastructure, diagnostics, and specialist services should be expanded beyond urban centres to ensure balanced regional development.

Source: AIR

LIFT ABORTION TIME LIMIT FOR MINOR RAPE SURVIVORS: SC

Context

- The Supreme Court has asked the Union government **to amend the abortion law to remove the time limit on medical termination of unwanted pregnancies in the case of minor rape victims.**

About

- The court made the observation **while refusing to entertain a curative petition** filed by the government against a recent decision of the court

allowing a 15-year-old rape survivor to terminate a 30-week pregnancy.

- The court said it was not for the doctors or the state to choose what was best for the rape survivor.
 - ♦ The decision should be left to the parents of the survivor and the survivor herself.

Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) in India

- **The Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act** permits abortions in **specific predetermined situations.**
- **Before the enactment of the MTP Act in 1971,** the medical termination of pregnancy was governed by the **Indian Penal Code (IPC).**
 - ♦ Most of these provisions aimed at **criminalising abortions,** except where the procedure was done in good faith in order to save the woman's life.
 - ♦ The provisions **failed to make a distinction** between **wanted and unwanted pregnancies,** making it extremely onerous for women to access safe abortions.
- **In 1971, the MTP Act** was enacted by Parliament as a **“health” measure,** to **decriminalise abortion in certain defined circumstances** and under due supervision of registered medical practitioners.
 - ♦ A pregnancy could only be terminated **under Section 3(2) if it did not exceed 20 weeks.**
 - ♦ It laid down that the pregnancy can be terminated on the opinion of **one doctor if it is done within 12 weeks** of conception and **two doctors if it is done between 12 and 20 weeks.**
- **The 2021 amendment to the MTP Act:** Rule 3B permitted **abortion up to 24 weeks** for women due to change of marital status during the ongoing pregnancy, besides in cases of survivors of rape, and other vulnerable women.
 - ♦ It also replaced the word **“by any married woman or her husband”** with the words **“any woman or her partner”**, bringing within the fold of the law **pregnancies outside marriage institutions.**
- **After 24 weeks,** the MTP Act requires **medical boards of expert doctors to be set up by the state government** in each district, which opine on whether to allow termination of pregnancy in case of **substantial foetal abnormality.**

Arguments in favour of MTP

- **Bodily Autonomy and Reproductive Rights:** Women should have the autonomy to make decisions about their own bodies, the Supreme Court has emphasized the importance of reproductive rights as part of personal liberty.
- **Physical Health:** If carrying a pregnancy threatens a woman's health, abortion may be justified to protect her life.
- **Mental Health:** In cases where pregnancy exacerbates mental health conditions (e.g., postpartum depression or psychosis), abortion may be necessary to safeguard the mental health of the mother.
- **Non-Viable Fetuses:** If the fetus has congenital abnormalities or conditions incompatible with life, abortion may be ethically acceptable to avoid prolonged suffering for the child.
- **Unplanned Pregnancies:** For women facing economic or social hardships, the ability to access abortion services can allow them to avoid further challenges.
- **Reduction in Unsafe Abortions:** Legal access to abortion reduces the number of unsafe, illegal abortions that often lead to serious health risks or even death for women.

Arguments Against MTP

- **Right to Life of the Fetus:** Ethical objections argue that the fetus has a right to life, especially as pregnancy progresses and fetal viability increases, making abortion less acceptable.
- **Emotional and Psychological Effects:** Terminating a pregnancy can have long-term psychological consequences for the woman, including guilt, regret, and emotional trauma.
- **Non-Medical Abortions:** There is a concern that allowing abortion may lead to its normalization as a method of birth control, rather than a rare and necessary medical intervention.
- **Risk of Misuse:** There is a concern that abortion laws may be misused, such as for sex-selective abortions or for non-medical reasons, like convenience.
- **Negative Impact on Society:** Widespread abortion could contribute to a decline in societal values regarding family and the value of life.
- **Cultural Beliefs:** Cultural norms often view abortion as morally unacceptable, especially when it's perceived as a violation of the natural order or traditional family structures.

Way Ahead

- **Access to Abortion Care:** Making MTP pills more accessible and reducing administrative barriers could improve abortion access.
- **Improved sex education and viewing abortion as a health service** rather than a legal exception might help reduce stigma.
- **Empathy in Medical Decision-Making:** Doctors are encouraged to treat women with empathy, especially in emotionally and physically challenging situations involving late-term abortions.

Source: TH

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR DAY

Context

- May 1 is observed as the **International Workers' Day**, commonly known as **Labour Day**.

International Labour Day

- Also referred to as **May Day**, in some regions it is observed on the **first Monday of May**.
- The day serves to **acknowledge the social and economic contributions of workers** and to draw attention to the continuing fight for workers' rights and fair labour conditions globally.
- **The origins of International Labour Day** date back to the late **19th-century labour movement in the United States**.
 - ◆ On May 1, **1886**, workers across America launched a strike demanding an eight-hour workday, May 1 was chosen to commemorate the strike.
- **In India, the first Labour Day celebration** was held in **Chennai (then Madras)** in **1923** by the **Labour Kisan Party of Hindustan**.
- **Canada's first Labour Day celebration** took place in **1872**, nearly a decade before the United States officially recognised it.

International Labour Organisation (ILO)

- It is an United Nations Agency established in **1919** as part of the Treaty of Versailles that ended World War I, and it became the **first specialized agency of the UN in 1946**.
- India became a founding member of the ILO in **1919**, even before gaining independence.
- It has **187 Member states**.
- It **sets labour standards, develops policies** and devises programmes promoting decent work for all women and men.

- It is the **only tripartite U.N. agency** that brings together governments, employers and workers.
- It is headquartered in **Geneva, Switzerland**.

Key Features of the Labour Market in India

- **Dual Structure of the Economy:** India's labour market exhibits a dualistic nature, consisting of:
 - ♦ A formal sector, which offers job security, fixed wages, and legal protections.
 - ♦ An informal sector, which is largely unregulated and insecure.
- **Dominance of the Informal Sector:** Nearly 80–90% of the workforce is employed in informal jobs such as daily wage labour, small-scale agriculture, street vending, and domestic work.
- **High Dependence on Agriculture:** A significant portion of India's workforce is still engaged in agriculture (around 40–45%).
 - ♦ However, agriculture contributes a much smaller share to GDP, indicating low productivity.
 - ♦ This leads to disguised unemployment, where more people are employed than actually required.
- **Demographic Dividend:** India has one of the youngest populations in the world, with a large proportion in the working-age group. This presents an opportunity for economic growth, provided that:
 - ♦ Adequate jobs are created;
 - ♦ The workforce is properly skilled and trained.
- **Low Female Labour Force Participation:** Female participation in the labour force remains significantly low compared to global standards.

Major Challenges in India's Labour Market

- **Informalisation of Employment:** Even within the formal sector, there is increasing use of contractual and temporary workers. This reduces job security and benefits.
- **Jobless Growth:** India has experienced a "jobless growth" phenomenon where high GDP expansion, often averaging over 6.5%, has not produced proportional employment for its growing workforce, leading to a decline in the worker-to-population ratio.
- **Skill Mismatch:** There is a significant gap between the skills possessed by workers and those demanded by industries. This leads to unemployment even among educated youth.

- **Regional Imbalances and Migration:** Economic opportunities are unevenly distributed across states. This results in large-scale migration from less developed regions to industrial hubs.
- **Gender Inequality:** Women face lower participation rates, wage disparities and limited career advancement opportunities.

Labour Laws in India

- The Government of India has announced the implementation of the **four Labour Codes** with effect from 21st November 2025 rationalising 29 existing labour laws:
 - ♦ **Code on Wages, 2019:** Regulates wages, bonus payments, and equal remuneration.
 - ♦ **Industrial Relations Code, 2020:** Deals with trade unions, employment conditions, layoffs, and dispute resolution.
 - ♦ **Code on Social Security, 2020:** Merges laws on provident funds, pensions, insurance, maternity benefits, and gratuity.
 - ♦ **Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020:** Consolidates regulations on safety, working hours, health, and welfare.
- Labour laws in India **apply to both organized and unorganized sectors**, although enforcement in the unorganized sector remains a challenge.
- Enforcement agencies include the **Ministry of Labour and Employment, state labour departments, and specific boards (e.g., EPFO, ESIC)**.

Conclusion

- India's labour market presents a **combination of structural challenges and emerging opportunities**.
- The focus must be on **creating inclusive, productive, and sustainable employment** to fully utilise the country's demographic advantage and ensure long-term economic growth.

Source: AIR

'WOMEN AND MEN IN INDIA 2025' REPORT

In News

- The **Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI)** released the 27th edition of its publication titled **"Women and Men in India 2025: Selected Indicators and Data"**.

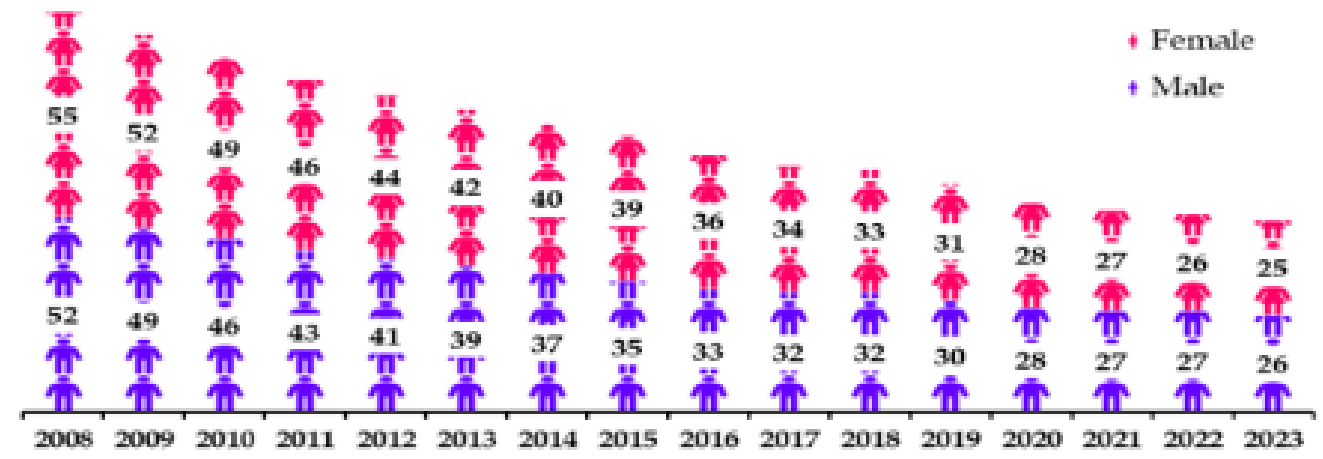
Women and Men in India 2025' Report Brief:

- It provides a comprehensive statistical overview of gender-related conditions in India using official data from multiple ministries and agencies.
- It brings together gender-disaggregated data across major areas such as population, education, health, economic participation, decision-making, and violence against women.
- It includes 50 key indicators with detailed metadata, explaining definitions, sources, and methods to improve transparency and understanding.
- It presents data across rural–urban areas, States/UTs, and over time, allowing comparison and tracking of trends in gender gaps.

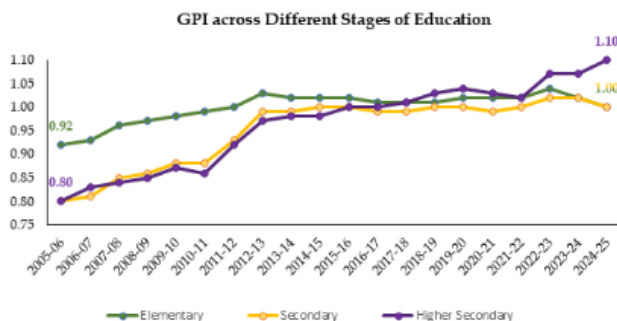
Key Highlights of the publication:

- **Sex ratio** : The sex ratio at birth has increased at the all-India level, indicating improved survival of females reaching from 904 in 2017-19 to 917 in 2021-23.
- **Infant mortality rate** : Infant mortality rate for both female and male infants has recorded a pronounced and sustained decline between 2008 and 2023.

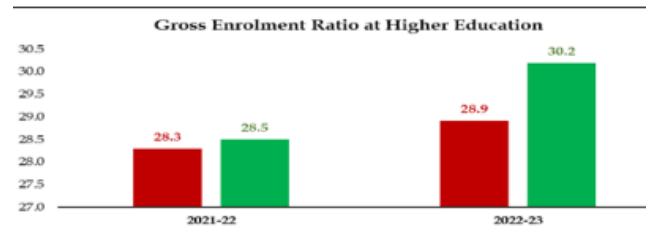
Year-wise Infant Mortality Rate



- **Gender parity** has been achieved across all levels of school education from Primary to Higher Secondary level.



- **Gross Enrolment Ratio** at Higher Education has improved from 28.5 to 30.2 for females and 28.3 to 28.9 for males between 2021-22 and 2022-23.



- **Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR)** : There has been an increase in LFPR for ages 15 and above for both men and women.
 - ♦ Rural females have seen the highest increase in LFPR, going from 37.5 percent to 45.9 percent during the period 2022 to 2025.
- **Leadership roles** : There has been a 73.80 percent increase in Men engaged in managerial positions between 2017 and 2025,
 - ♦ There has been a 102.54 percent increase in Women engaged in managerial positions during the same time period.

MAJOR STEPS TAKEN FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

- **Constitutional and Legal Framework:** The Indian Constitution guarantees gender equality through provisions in its Preamble, Fundamental Rights, and Directive Principles of State Policy.
 - ♦ **Article 14** ensures equality before the law, while Article 15 prohibits discrimination based on sex.
 - ♦ **Article 51(a)(e)** encourages citizens to renounce practices derogatory to women's dignity.
 - ♦ The Directive Principles, particularly Articles 39 and 42, emphasize equal livelihood opportunities, equal pay, and maternity relief.
- **Poshan Abhiyaan:** It launched in 2018, is a flagship government programme aimed at improving nutrition for children, adolescent girls, pregnant women, and lactating mothers by reducing malnutrition
- **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP):** The BBBP scheme was launched on 22nd January 2015.
 - ♦ The scheme aims to prevent gender biased sex selective elimination, ensure survival and protection of girl child and also to ensure education of the girl child.
- The **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)** provides financial compensation for loss of wages due to pregnancy and childbirth.
 - ♦ The scheme, previously limited to the first child, has now been extended to cover the second child if the child is a girl—a progressive step towards promoting gender equality.
- **Mission Saksham Anganwadi :** The Government of India launched Mission Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0 to improve nutrition, health, and immunity and reduce malnutrition among children, adolescent girls, pregnant women, and lactating mothers.
- **Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (KGBVs)** are residential schools for girls from socio-economically disadvantaged groups in educationally backward areas, offering safe education from classes VI to XII and supporting their transition to higher secondary schooling.
- **Vigyan Jyoti**, run by the Department of Science & Technology, encourages meritorious girls (classes IX–XII), especially in rural areas, to pursue STEM careers.
 - ♦ It addresses gender gaps in science and technology through mentoring, counselling, lab exposure, workshops, and role model interactions.
- **Nurturing Aspirations through Vocational Training for Young Adolescent Girls (NAVYA):** NAVYA, launched in 2025 is a skill development programme for adolescent girls (16–18 years, Class 10 pass).
- **Mission Shakti :** The Ministry of Women and Child Development has launched Mission Shakti
 - ♦ It aims at ensuring the safety, security, and empowerment of women through two key components: Sambal (safety and security) and Samarthya (empowerment).

Source :DD News

NEWS IN SHORT

ELECTION OF UN SECRETARY-GENERAL

Context

- The election of the **next UN Secretary-General** is underway.

Secretary-General as the UN

- The Secretary-General is the **UN's Chief Administrative Officer**, who oversees the work of the UN Secretariat and fulfills any other functions entrusted by the **organisation's principal organs**.

- The Secretary-General also has the mandate to **bring to the Security Council's attention any issue that threatens global peace and security**.
- He is often described as the **world's "chief diplomat**, speaking as the world's conscience on issues, ranging from the arms race in space and climate change to persistent inequality.
- **Elections:**
 - ♦ Secretary-General is appointed by the **General Assembly on the recommendation of the Security Council**.
 - ♦ This means that the **Permanent Members of the Security Council** - China, France, Russia, the U.K., and the U.S. have a significant say in who gets elected.

- While the term of a Secretary-General is technically “discretionary,” incumbents have, since 1981, voluntarily **limited themselves to two terms**.
- By custom, the **post rotates among five regions of the world**: Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, Western Europe, and Latin America and the Caribbean.

Source: TH

EU MERCOSUR TRADE DEAL

In News

- The **European Union (EU) and MERCOSUR** are implementing a long-negotiated **free trade agreement**, provisionally applied from May 1, despite political and legal challenges.

MERCOSUR

- It is the **Southern Common Market** which was formed in 1991 with the objective of free movement of goods, services, capital and people and it became a customs union in January 1995.
- Its members are **Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay. Venezuela joined in 2012** but its membership was **suspended in 2017**.
 - ◆ The Protocol of Accession of **Bolivia** to Mercosur was signed by all of the States Parties in 2015.
 - ◆ The Instrument of Ratification was delivered by Bolivia in July 2024 and has a term of up to 4 years to incorporate the normative acquis of the bloc.

EU -MERCOSUR Trade Agreement

- Mercosur will eliminate duties on **91% of EU goods** (currently facing tariffs as high as 35% on cars and 14–20% on machinery). The EU will **eliminate duties on 92% of Mercosur goods**.
- It provides **immediate tariff cuts on key goods** like cars, pharmaceuticals, and agri-food products, creating new export opportunities for EU industries, farmers, and service providers.
- For agriculture, it is expected to significantly increase EU agri-food exports, with early tariff reductions on products like wine, olive oil, and spirits.
- It also strengthens protection for 344 EU geographical indications, ensuring authenticity of regional products.
- **Supporters**: Germany and Spain say that the agreement will help compensate for the hit from

the U.S. President Donald Trump’s tariffs and reduce reliance on China for critical minerals.

- **Critics**: France and other critics argue it will increase imports of cheap beef and sugar and undercut domestic farmers, and environmentalists say it will increase rainforest destruction.

India-Mercosur PTA

- India currently has a limited **Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) with Mercosur** (covering only 450 items). The EU deal might push India to expedite its own “**Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement**” (CEPA) with the bloc.

Source :TH

PAST RISK AND RETURN VERIFICATION AGENCY (PARRVA)

Context

- Securities and Exchange Board of India has operationalised the Past Risk and Return Verification Agency (PaRRVA) to enhance transparency and investor protection in financial markets.

Institutional Framework

- The framework for PaRRVA was issued by **SEBI in April 2025**, laying down the regulatory structure and operational guidelines.
- **CARE Ratings Limited** has been recognised as the **first PaRRVA entity**, responsible for verifying performance data.
- **National Stock Exchange of India Limited** will function as the PaRRVA Data Centre (PDC), providing the necessary infrastructure for data handling and processing.

What is PaRRVA?

- PaRRVA is a **SEBI-regulated verification mechanism** designed to:
 - ◆ Authenticate past risk and return performance of market intermediaries.
 - ◆ Standardise the methodology for presenting returns.
 - ◆ Provide credible, comparable, and transparent data to investors.
- **Mandatory Enrolment and Compliance**: Investment advisers and research analysts must enrol with PaRRVA within **three months**, and after a **two-year transition period**, only PaRRVA-verified performance data can be used in public communication.

- **Significance:** Investors gain **access to verified and trustworthy information**, reducing risks associated with misinformation and mis-selling.
- **Use in Advertisements:** Market intermediaries are permitted to use PaRRVA-verified performance metrics in advertisements, ensuring that promotional claims are credible and compliant with SEBI regulations.

Source: AIR

PROSOPIS JULIFLORA

Context

- **Prosopis juliflora**, which has for decades threatened biodiversity in Kutch's Banni grasslands, will be turned into methanol.

About

- **Prosopis juliflora** has been ranked as one of the "top 100 invasive species in the world".
 - ♦ It may soon be harnessed for the **production of green methanol and fuel for ocean-going ships**.
- The plant was first introduced by the **British in the 1920s to 'green' Delhi** and by the Gujarat forest department in 1961 to halt the encroaching salt desert in the Rann.
- This weed is to become the feedstock for **India's first green methanol production plant, designed to fuel ocean-going ships**.

Source: TH

HUMAN GENOME DECODER DIED

In News

- **J. Craig Venter**, a key scientist in **decoding the human genome**, passed away at 79.

Human Genome

- **Human Genome** is the **complete set of DNA** found in the nucleus of every human cell, carrying the **genetic instructions** needed for growth, development, and functioning.
 - ♦ It consists of about **3.05 billion base pairs formed by four chemical bases**—adenine (A), thymine (T), cytosine (C), and guanine (G)—which pair specifically (A with T, and C with G).
- **Genome sequencing** is the process of determining the exact order of these base pairs.

- ♦ Genome sequencing is widely used in **medicine and public health to detect genetic disorders**, identify disease risks (including many single-gene conditions like cystic fibrosis and thalassemia), and support prenatal screening. It also enables emerging technologies such as **CRISPR-based gene editing**, liquid biopsies for early cancer detection, and large-scale population studies using AI to better understand disease causes and treatments.
- ♦ In infectious disease control, sequencing helps **track pathogens and mutations**. During the COVID-19 pandemic, rapid sequencing of the virus's genome allowed scientists to understand transmission, develop diagnostic tests, monitor new variants, and support vaccine development.

Human Genome Project

- The **Human Genome Project, launched in 1990**, first produced a near-complete human genome sequence in 2003, and a fully refined version was released in 2023 with about 0.3% remaining uncertainty.
- It was a major international scientific initiative aimed at mapping and sequencing the entire human genome.
- By 2003, it had produced a **sequence covering over 90% of the genome**, representing the most complete version possible with the technology of that time.
- It also promoted open data sharing in science and helped strengthen ethical standards in biomedical research due to concerns about genetic information

Do you know?

- The **'GENOMEINDIA', funded by the Department of Biotechnology of the Central Government** has completed a whole genome sequencing (WGS) database of over 10,000 individuals representing all major population groups, across the country.
- GenomeIndia data represents Government of India's commitment to scientific inquiry and is poised to reshape health and science in India and beyond, fostering sustainable development through democratizing and disseminating this national genetic resource knowledge.

Source :IE

AVIATION TURBINE FUEL (ATF)

Context

- An airline body representing carriers like IndiGo, Air India, and SpiceJet has urged the government to **revise the pricing formula of Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF)**, as global prices surge amid the West Asia crisis.

Economics of ATF Pricing in India

- ATF in India is priced based on **Import Parity Pricing (IPP)**. This means that even though a significant portion of ATF is produced domestically by Indian refineries, the price charged to airlines is **linked to international benchmarks (primarily Arab Gulf prices)**.
- ATF accounts for approx 40% of Indian airlines' operating expenses, significantly higher than the global average.
- ATF remains outside GST, attracting high state VAT (up to 30%). Airlines cannot claim Input Tax Credit, leading to "tax cascading."

About ATF

- Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF), or jet fuel, is a high-performance petroleum distillate primarily used in gas-turbine engines.
- Derived from the fractional distillation of crude oil, it is a colorless, kerosene-based fuel refined to meet stringent international safety and performance standards.

Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF)

- High volatility is accelerating the push for Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) to ensure long-term energy security.
- SAF is chemically nearly identical to conventional jet fuel. It can be blended (currently up to 50%) and used in existing aircraft engines and airport infrastructure without any modifications.

Source: IE

PANCHAYAT ADVANCEMENT INDEX (PAI) 2.0 REPORT

Context

- The Ministry of Panchayati Raj released the Panchayat Advancement Index (PAI) 2.0 Report (FY 2023–24) on National Panchayati Raj Day (24 April 2026).

Key Highlights

- **97.3% participation:** Over 2.59 lakh Gram Panchayats across 33 States/UTs participated by submitting validated data.
- **3,635 Panchayats** classified as **Front Runners**
- **1.18 lakh Panchayats** (≈45.7%) fall under Performer category
- Top performing themes:
 - ◆ Poverty-free & enhanced livelihoods
 - ◆ Healthy Panchayats.

About PAI 2.0

- PAI 2.0 is India's first nationwide data-driven framework to assess Gram Panchayat performance, using 150 indicators and 230 data points.
- It is aligned with the Localization of Sustainable Development Goals and evaluates Panchayats across **nine key areas including** poverty, health, child welfare, water, environment, infrastructure, social justice, good governance, and women's empowerment.
- Based on their composite PAI scores, Gram Panchayats are classified into **five performance categories** – **Achiever** (A+: 90 and above), **Front Runner** (A: 75 to below 90), **Performer** (B : 60 to below 75), **Aspirant** (C: 40 to below 60), and **Beginner** (D: below 40) – enabling meaningful benchmarking, healthy competition, and targeted interventions at the grassroots level.

Source: PIB

