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Time: 45 Min

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DELHI POLICE'S AI-DRIVEN POLICE REFORM MODEL & FUTURE OF SMART POLICING

Context

- Recently, Delhi Police aims to modernise policing through Artificial Intelligence (AI), predictive policing, digital surveillance, community participation, and institutional accountability.

Reasons For Police Modernisation

- **Colonial Rule:** India's policing system largely continues to operate within structures inherited from the **Police Act of 1861**, enacted during colonial rule.
- **Rising Complexity of Crime:** Modern crimes include cybercrime, organised crime, financial fraud, terrorism, and narcotics trafficking.
  - Traditional policing methods are inadequate for such challenges.
- **Urbanisation and Population Pressure:** Rapid urban growth has increased traffic congestion, urban violence, public disorder, and emergency response requirements.
  - Police infrastructure has not kept pace.
- **Low Police-Population Ratio:** According to Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D), India's police-population ratio remains below the UN-recommended standard.
  - It causes overburdened personnel, reduced efficiency, stress and corruption vulnerabilities.
- **Poor Investigation Standards:** India has low conviction rates in several crimes due to poor forensic capabilities, delayed investigations, and lack of training.
- **Public Trust and Accountability:** Issues such as custodial violence, corruption, political interference, and delayed FIR registration have weakened trust in police institutions.

Key Efforts Toward Police Modernisation in India

- **Modernisation of Police Forces (MPF) Scheme:** It was launched by MHA with the aim to upgrade police infrastructure, improve mobility and weaponry, enhance forensic capabilities, and modernise communication systems.
  - It focuses on equipping police stations with modern technology and improving grassroots policing.
- **Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems (CCTNS):** A nationwide network connecting police stations digitally. Its **objectives** include online FIR registration, criminal database integration, and inter-state coordination.
- **Interoperable Criminal Justice System (ICJS):** It links police, courts, prisons, prosecution, and forensic laboratories.
  - It ensures seamless criminal justice delivery.
- **SMART Policing Initiative:** It stands for Strict and Sensitive; Modern and Mobile; Alert and Accountable; Reliable and Responsive; Tech-savvy and Trained
- **National Intelligence Grid (NATGRID):** It facilitates intelligence sharing among security agencies.
- **Emergency Response Support System (ERSS-112):** It is an integrated emergency response platform for police, fire, and ambulance services.

Key Features of Delhi Police Modernisation Initiative

- **AI-Based Predictive Policing:** To identify crime hotspots and forecast criminal activity patterns.
  - It helps to analyze historical crime data, real-time crime mapping, data-driven deployment of patrols and personnel,and identification of habitual offenders.
  - It resembles predictive policing systems used in countries such as the USA and the UK.
- **Integrated Digital Surveillance:** Delhi Police plans to expand CCTV networks, facial recognition systems, drone surveillance, and body-worn cameras.
  - **Databases to be Integrated** with **Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems (CCTNS), Crime Kundali**, and criminal records databases.
- **Strengthening Cybercrime Response:** Recognising the rise in online fraud and digital crimes, the initiative emphasises cybercrime investigation training, digital forensics capacity and **Coordination with Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C).**
- **Community Policing and Citizen Engagement:** Key measures include mohalla committees, Resident Welfare Association (RWA) engagement, public interaction meetings, citizen-facing mobile applications, and awareness campaigns on cyber fraud.
  - It reflects the philosophy of **'Policing by Consent'** rather than coercion.

- **Focus on Women and Child Safety:** Special emphasis is being placed on tracing missing children, fast-tracking crimes against women and children, women help desks and All-women patrol units.
- **Smart Infrastructure and Mobility:** Planned reforms include smart police stations, digital records management, GPS-enabled patrol vehicles, rapid response bikes, and integrated command centres.

Challenges in Police Modernisation

- **Privacy and Surveillance Concerns:** AI surveillance and facial recognition may violate privacy rights, enable mass surveillance, and lead to misuse of citizen data.
  - The absence of a robust data protection framework raises concerns.
- **Risk of Algorithmic Bias:** Predictive policing systems may reinforce existing social biases; and target vulnerable communities disproportionately.
- **Inadequate Funding:** Many states face budgetary constraints, lack of advanced equipment, and poor maintenance capacity.
- **Shortage of Skilled Personnel:** There is insufficient expertise in cyber forensics, data analytics, AI systems, and financial investigations
- **Political Interference:** Frequent transfers and external pressure affect professional independence, accountability, and institutional integrity.
- **Poor Police-Public Relations:** Fear-based policing traditions continue in many areas. Without trust, community policing cannot succeed.

Way Forward

- **Implement Supreme Court Police Reform Directives:** The **Prakash Singh vs Union of India (2006)** judgment recommended fixed tenure for officers, State Security Commissions, and separation of investigation from law and order.
  - But implementation remains incomplete.
- **Ethical and Regulated AI Use:** India should create AI accountability frameworks, ensure independent audits, protect privacy rights, and prevent discriminatory policing.
- **Strengthen Forensic Infrastructure:** More forensic labs, faster forensic reporting and AI-assisted investigation tools.
- **Invest in Human Capital:** Regular training in cybersecurity, behavioral policing, ethics, and crisis management are essential.
- **Deepen Community Policing:** Police reforms should prioritise citizen trust, local participation, transparency, and accessibility.
- **Greater Coordination Among Agencies:** Integrated responses are needed between State police, CBI, NIA, I4C, and Intelligence agencies.

Source: IE

PIL HAS BECOME 'PRIVATE INTEREST LITIGATION': SC

Context

- The Supreme Court judge has said **Public Interest Litigation (PIL),** has lately metamorphosed into **'private interest litigation', 'publicity interest litigation' and even 'paisa' and 'political' interest litigation.**

Public Interest Litigation (PIL)

- Public Interest Litigation (PIL) means a case or petition filed before a court to **protect, safeguard or enforce public interest.**
- It is a unique mechanism initiated by the **Indian judiciary post-Emergency** to "bring social justice within the reach of the common man",.
- PIL is **not explicitly mentioned in the Constitution** but has evolved through judicial interpretation.
- **All Indian citizens or organisations** can file a public interest litigation petition before the **Supreme Court under Article 32** or the **High Courts under Article 226** of the Constitution.
  - However, the person or organisation filing the PIL petition must prove to the court that the **PIL is being filed for an issue concerning public interest** and that it will benefit the public at large.
- A PIL can only be filed against the Central Government, municipal governments or State Government and **not against individuals.**

Some Landmark Judgements in India

- **Hussainara Khatoon vs. State of Bihar case:** This case was the first reported instance of PIL in India, which brought attention to the issue of inhuman conditions of prisoners and undertrial prisoners.

- **Vishaka vs. State of Rajasthan:** This case is related to the issue of sexual harassment in the workplace. As a result, the Vishaka Guidelines came into effect, published in 1997.
- **M.C. Mehta vs. Union of India:** This case is related to pollution in the Ganges basin. Directions were given to prevent the consequences of water and air pollution on millions of people in the Ganga basin.
- **Parmanand Katara vs. Union of India:** This case was filed to facilitate hospitals to handle emergency accident cases without concern for pending police investigations.
    - The judgment made it obligatory for a hospital or doctor, public and private, to provide immediate medical aid to a road accident victim.

Significance of Public Interest Litigation

- It ensures that **public bodies are accountable** by acting reasonably within the limits of their powers and ensures they make precise choices.
- It expands the **scope of law** by helping the judges to understand legislation and develop laws.
- It helps to **focus attention on broader public issues** in the areas of consumer welfare, environment and human rights.
- It gives **weak people a voice** by emphasising a significant issue and gives them a platform to advocate their rights.
- It also helps **raise awareness** of critical public problems through **media coverage and debates.**

Concerns related to Public Interest Litigation

- The Indian Judiciary is **already burdened** with a heavy caseload due to pending cases, and PIL petitions **may add to that burden.**
- Petitions without a significant public issue **can waste the courts' time.**
- Sometimes, PIL **may be abused by individuals** pushing for personal grievances instead of championing public causes, and thus, public interest litigation may become private interest litigation.
- The **lack of effective implementation of court judgments** is a significant issue hindering successful PIL implementation.
- Sometimes, PILs **may lead to Judicial Overreach,** i.e. courts entering the domain of the legislative and executive branches of government.

Conclusion

- Public Interest Litigation (PIL) in India is a powerful tool to protect and safeguard public interest matters.
- It has transformed the Indian judiciary into a proactive institution for social justice, but its effectiveness depends on responsible use.

Source: TH

CABINET APPROVES INCREASE IN THE JUDGE STRENGTH OF THE SUPREME COURT

Context

- The Union Cabinet approved an increase in the number of judges of the Supreme Court from 34, which **includes the Chief Justice of India**, to a total **38.**
    - The proposal will be implemented through an amendment to the **Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Act, 1956** in the upcoming session of Parliament.

Constitutional Provisions

- **Article 124(1)** of the Constitution **empowers Parliament to determine and increase the number** of judges in the Supreme Court.
- The Constitution originally provided for **a Chief Justice of India and not more than seven judges,** thereby allowing flexibility for future expansion.
- This constitutional design reflects the need to **adapt judicial capacity** to changing socio-economic and legal demands.

Evolution of Supreme Court Strength

- **The Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Act, 1956** initially fixed the strength at **10 judges, excluding the Chief Justice of India.**
- The strength was increased to **13 judges** through the 1960 amendment and 17 through the 1977 amendment.
- The strength was increased through subsequent amendments and was last increased to **33 (excluding the Chief Justice of India) by 2019** amendment.

Rationale for Increasing Strength

- **Rising Pendency of Cases:** The Supreme Court is currently dealing with more than 92,000 pending cases, indicating a significant backlog.
  - The introduction of e-filing and digital mechanisms after the pandemic has increased the inflow of cases.
- **Judicial Vacancies and Retirements:** Existing vacancies in the Supreme Court have reduced the effective working strength of judges.
  - Several judges are scheduled to retire in 2026, which will further strain judicial capacity if not addressed.
- **Expanding Jurisdiction and Workload:** The Supreme Court deals with constitutional matters, appellate jurisdiction, and public interest litigations.
  - The increasing complexity of governance and legal disputes has significantly expanded the Court's workload.
- **Reform Drive:** The need to increase judicial strength has been emphasised by the **Law Commission (120th and 245th Reports)** and reinforced by the Supreme Court in the **All India Judges Association vs Union of India** which recommended higher judge-to-population ratios.

What are the Concerns?

- **Quantity vs Quality:** Increasing the number of judges alone may not be sufficient to address the problem of pendency.
- **Structural Constraints:** Structural constraints such as limited courtroom infrastructure and administrative capacity continue to affect efficiency.
- **Case Management Issues:** Procedural delays, including frequent adjournments, contribute significantly to case backlog.
- **Centralisation of Cases:** The large number of appeals reaching the Supreme Court diverts its focus from core constitutional functions.

Way Ahead

- **Strengthening case management systems** through the use of technology can improve efficiency in case disposal.
- **Promoting Alternate Dispute Resolution** mechanisms such as mediation and arbitration can reduce the burden on courts.
- **Rationalising the inflow of cases**, especially Special Leave Petitions, can help the Supreme Court focus on constitutional issues.
- **Enhancing the capacity of the lower judiciary** and High Courts is essential to address pendency at all levels.

Source: TH

MISSION FOR COTTON PRODUCTIVITY (2026–31)

In News

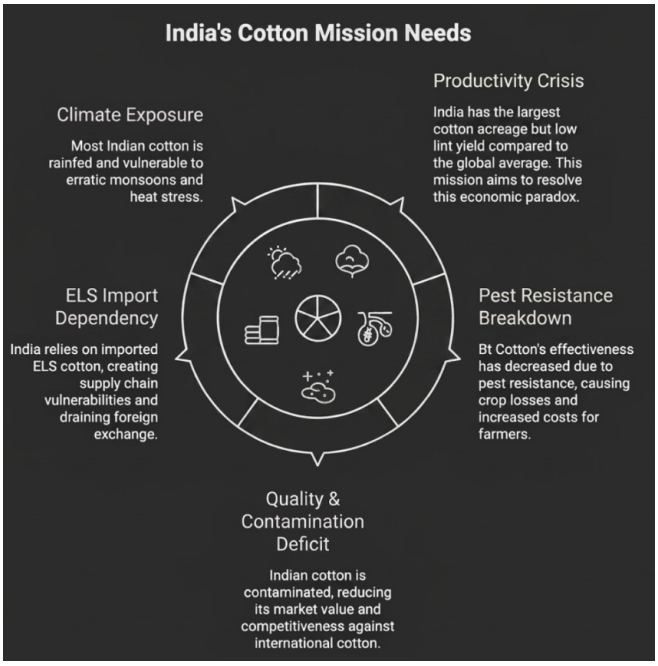
- The Union Cabinet has approved Rs.5659.22 crore for the **Mission for Cotton Productivity (2026–27 to 2030–31.**

About

- The mission targets stagnant yields, pest vulnerability, quality deficits, and import dependence while positioning India's textile sector as globally competitive through its integrated **5F Vision (Farm to Fibre to Factory to Fashion to Foreign).**

Key Features of the Mission

- **Implementing agencies:** Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare + Ministry of Textiles, supported by 10 ICAR institutes and CSIR.
- **Coverage:** 140 districts across 14 major cotton-growing states (initial phase)
- **Core focus areas:** Climate-smart seed development, pest-resistant varieties, **extra Long Staple (ELS) cotton promotion**, mechanization, and ginning quality upgrades.
  - **Extra Long Staple cotton (Gossypium barbadense)**, with staple length ≥30 mm, is the gold standard in premium textiles. **India currently imports it heavily from Egypt and the USA.**
- **Targeted outcomes by 2031:** To accomplish the production of 498 lakh bales (170 kg lint each) of cotton by enhancing lint productivity from **440 kg/ha to 755 kg/ha by 2031**.
  - Promotion of **Kasturi Cotton Bharat** for traceability and certification, targeting trash reduction <2% and promotion of natural fibres like flax, ramie, sisal, milkweed, bamboo and banana.



Cotton Cultivation in India

- Popularly called **"White Gold"**, It is a semi-xerophyte, and is grown in tropical and subtropical conditions.
- Cotton needs **deep alluvial (North), black cotton/regur soil (Central/Deccan), red-black mixed soils (South).**
- India is the only country that grows **all four species of cotton** G. Arboreum and G. Herbaceum (Asian cotton), G. Barbadense (Egyptian cotton) and G. Hirsutum (American Upland cotton).
- India is the **world's second-largest producer and consumer (after China)**, with the largest cultivated area globally.
- There are **nine major cotton-growing states in India**, as per the Ministry of textiles, these are grouped into three diverse agro-ecological zones:
  - **Northern Zone** – Punjab, Haryana, and Rajasthan
  - **Central Zone** – Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Madhya Pradesh
  - **Southern Zone** – Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka.

Major Challenges Confronting the Mission

- **Irrigation Deficit in HDPS Adoption:** The mission's push for High-Density Planting System (HDPS) requires assured soil moisture. Without micro-irrigation coverage, HDPS adoption in rainfed belts risks systemic failure.
- **Fragmented Landholdings:** A majority of cotton farmers hold less than 2 hectares. Capital-intensive interventions like mechanized harvesting and HDPS require contiguous land parcels — structurally incompatible with India's smallholder agrarian reality.
- **Soil Health Degradation:** Decades of monocropping and heavy chemical fertilizer use have depleted soil organic carbon across traditional cotton belts, limiting the efficacy of new High-Yielding Varieties (HYVs).
- **Mechanization Gap:** Mechanized cotton harvesters remain unaffordable for individual farmers. Without robust Custom Hiring Centres (CHCs) or cooperative models, labour shortage during picking season remains a bottleneck.
- **Farmer Behavioural Resistance:** Shifting farmers from traditional spacing and seed varieties requires intensive extension hand-holding, risk-mitigation guarantees, and financial incentives not just technology delivery.

Way Ahead: Strengthening the Mission

- **Extension Services:** Mobilise Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) and State Agricultural Universities (SAUs) for active "Lab to Land" transfer of HDPS and HYV protocols
- **Irrigation Convergence**: Integrate with PMKSY – Per Drop More Crop to provide micro-irrigation support in rainfed cotton zones
- **Next-Gen Integrated Pest Management:** Mandate pheromone traps, biopesticides, and refuge crop planting alongside Bt seed distribution to slow pest adaptation
- **Mechanization Push:** Parallel subsidies for mechanized harvesters through CHCs and FPO-led cooperative models
- **Digital Agriculture (Agri-Stack):** Deploy AI and satellite-based hyper-local advisories for weather, soil moisture, and early pest warnings via farmer smartphones.

Source:PIB

DECARBONISING INDUSTRIAL HEAT FOR SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

Context

- Geopolitical instability in the Strait of Hormuz and India's fossil fuel dependence highlight the need to electrify industrial heat for energy security and sustainability.

What is Industrial Heat?

- Industrial heat refers to **thermal energy required for manufacturing processes** across sectors such as **textiles, ceramics, steel, and chemicals.**
- It is used in processes like **steam generation, drying, dyeing, and high-temperature kiln operations** exceeding **1,000°C.**
- It constitutes nearly **25%** of India's total energy consumption.
  - Industrial process steam alone generates approximately **182 million tonnes of CO** annually in India.
- Fossil fuels such as coal, furnace oil, biomass, and natural gas dominate industrial heating systems. It contributes to **SO, NOx, and particulate matter emissions**, worsening air quality.
- Key sectors include **textiles, food processing, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, and paper industries.**

Need for Electrification of Industrial Heat

- **Energy Security:** Heavy reliance on imported fossil fuels makes industries vulnerable to geopolitical shocks and price volatility.
- **Decarbonisation Goals:** Industrial heat is a major source of carbon emissions, and electrification can support India's climate commitments.
- **Efficiency Improvements:** Conventional boilers lose **20–30% of energy,** whereas electric technologies can exceed 90% efficiency.
- **Thermal Sovereignty:** Electrification enables a shift towards domestically generated, renewable-based heat systems.

Technological Pathways for Electrification

- **Concentrated Solar Thermal (CST):** CST uses mirrors to concentrate sunlight and generate heat by heating a working fluid such as water or molten salt.
  - It can achieve temperatures up to **~400°C,** suitable for medium-temperature industrial processes **(100–180°C).** India has an estimated CST potential of **6.4 GW,** but adoption remains limited.
  - CST enables **on-site heat generation and thermal storage**, reducing dependence on both fossil fuels and the electricity grid.
- **Industrial Heat Pumps:** Heat pumps transfer and upgrade heat using electricity instead of combustion.
  - They operate with a **Coefficient of Performance (COP)** of **3–5,** making them highly efficient.
  - Particularly suitable for low-to-medium temperature applications **(up to 150–200°C).**
- **Induction Heating:** Induction heating uses **electromagnetic fields** to generate heat directly within the material. It eliminates intermediate heat transfer losses associated with air or steam.
- **Plasma Heating:** Plasma heating involves ionising gas to produce extremely high temperatures suitable for high-temperature industries.
  - It provides **precise control over heating processes,** improving product quality and reducing energy wastage.

Challenges in Electrification

- **Grid Readiness:** Electrification of industrial heat would significantly **increase electricity demand**. Distribution infrastructure in industrial clusters is already strained, with transformers operating near capacity.
- **Intermittency of Renewables:** Renewable energy sources such as solar and wind are intermittent in nature.
  - Industrial processes require continuous and reliable heat supply, creating a mismatch.
- **Storage Constraints:** Energy storage infrastructure, including battery and pumped hydro systems, is still underdeveloped in India.
- **High Capital Costs:** Technologies such as CST systems and electric kilns involve high upfront investment.

Global Best Practices

- **The Miraah Project in Oman** demonstrates the successful integration of **concentrated solar thermal (CST) technology** with existing gas-based industrial systems.
- **Denmark has introduced heat purchase agreements,** under which third-party providers install, operate, and maintain heat generation systems.
  - Industries procure heat at a fixed and predictable cost, thereby avoiding high upfront capital investments.

Way Ahead

- India should formulate a **National Thermal Policy** to drive **industrial heat decarbonisation**, while extending financial incentives such as **Production-Linked Incentives (PLI), subsidies, and accelerated depreciation** to technologies like concentrated solar thermal (CST) and industrial heat pumps.
- There is a need for **grid modernisation and infrastructure upgrades**, along with the **promotion of hybrid solutions combining CST, heat pumps, and backup systems** to ensure reliable and efficient industrial heat supply.

Source: TH

INDIA'S E-WASTE MANAGEMENT

Context

- India's Paryavaran NITI Manthan conference revealed that **6.2 million tonnes of e-waste was generated in FY24.**

About

- India generated **6.2 million tonnes of e-waste in FY24,** projected to **more than double to 14 million tonnes by 2030.**
- **Formal recycling capacity** remains **limited** to around 2 million tonnes, leaving a **vast gap between generation and processing.**
- As a result, only about **10% of e-waste is formally recycled**, far below global benchmarks.
- E-waste contains **nearly 33% metals,** including precious and critical minerals.
- **The total economic value embedded in India's e-waste is estimated** at Rs 51,000 crore, of which Rs 30,600 crore is technically recoverable.

What is E-Waste?

- E-waste refers to **discarded electrical and electronic devices** such as computers, circuit boards, mobile phones, and appliances.
- It contains hazardous materials like **lead, mercury, cadmium, and brominated flame retardants.**
- Improper disposal leads to **soil contamination, water pollution, and health hazards.**

India's E-Waste Scenario

- India ranks as the **third-largest** producer of electronic waste globally, following **China and the United States.**
- **According to the Global E-waste Monitor,** E-waste generation in India has increased from **~2.76 MMT in 2020 to ~6.19 MMT in 2024** and is projected to reach 14 MMT by 2030.
- **Computer equipment** accounts for the largest share of the E-waste stream (65%), followed by **large appliances and medical equipment (15%),** telecom equipment (12%), and **consumer electronics (8%).**

Challenges in E-Waste Management

- **Rapid Growth of E-Waste:** The fast pace of technological advancement and short product life cycles leads to a continuous rise in e-waste generation.
- **Dominance of Informal Sector:** In India, **90–95%** of e-waste is processed by the informal sector, using unsafe methods such as acid leaching and open burning, causing severe pollution.
- **Inadequate Infrastructure:** Limited number of authorized collection centres, recycling units, poor logistics and weak reverse supply chains hinder effective waste collection.
- **Poor Tracking:** Lack of reliable data on quantity generated and recycling rates enables leakages into informal channels.

Impact of Improper E-Waste Management

- **Water Pollution:** Toxic discharge from cyanide and sulphuric acid affects water bodies.
- **Air Pollution:** Emissions from lead fumes and plastic burning are severe.
- **Soil Contamination:** Hazardous substances leach into the soil, damaging agriculture and biodiversity.
- **Economic Loss:** India is estimated to forfeit over ₹**80,000 crore** worth of critical metals each year, which could have been recovered and re-used in manufacturing.
  - It is estimated that India loses at **least $20 billion** annually in potential tax revenue due to the absence of formal accounting and regulatory oversight in the e-waste recycling sector.

Initiatives for E-Waste Management in India

- **Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR):** Producers, importers, and brand owners are made responsible for managing their product's end-of-life waste.

- **An online EPR E-Waste portal** has been developed by Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) where entities such as producers, manufacturers, recyclers, and refurbishers of the e-waste are required to be registered.

- **The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change** has comprehensively revised the E-Waste (Management) Rules, 2016 and notified the **E-Waste (Management) Rules, 2022.**
- **India's first e-waste clinic was** inaugurated in **Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh.**
  - It's a facility for segregating, processing, and disposing of e-waste from both households and commercial units.
- The Ministry of Mines launched a **Pan-India E-Waste Recycling Drive as part of Special Campaign 5.0** (in 2025), aimed at promoting Swachhata in government offices and ensuring scientific disposal and resource recovery from electronic waste.

Basel Convention

- The Basel Convention is a **global treaty aimed at controlling the transboundary movement of hazardous wastes** and their disposal, ensuring that such wastes are managed in an environmentally sound manner.
- **It mandates:**
  - Prior informed consent of importing countries.
  - Environmentally sound management of hazardous waste.
  - Return of illegal waste shipments at the exporter's expense.
- It was adopted in **1989** and entered into force in **1992.**
- **India is a party** to the Basel Convention.

Way Ahead

- India's e-waste challenge reflects a broader conflict between technological advancement and environmental sustainability.
- As the country climbs the digital ladder, it must not let toxic waste undermine its economic and ecological foundation.
- The goal should not merely be to manage e-waste, but to extract value, protect health, and foster green economic growth.

Source: DTE

NEWS IN SHORT

TEESTA RIVER

In News

- Bangladesh has renewed its request to move forward on the long-pending Teesta water-sharing agreement.

Teesta River

- It is a tributary of the Brahmaputra
- It originates from the Tso Lhamo Lake at an elevation of about 5,280 metres in north Sikkim.
- It travels for about 150 km in Sikkim and 123 km in West Bengal, before entering Bangladesh from Mekhligunj in Cooch Behar district.
- It flows another 140 km in Bangladesh and joins the Bay of Bengal.

Importance for India and Bangladesh

- Teesta is Bangladesh's fourth largest trans-boundary river and its floodplain covers an area of 2,750 square kilometres in Bangladesh.
- But 83% of the river's catchment area lies in India and the remaining 17% is in Bangladesh, supporting 8.5% of its population and 14% of its crop production

Agreement

- India and Bangladesh had reached an in-principle agreement in 2011 to share the Teesta river waters, but it was never finalized due to coordination issues between the Centre and the West Bengal government .
- Bangladesh has now expressed hope that the 2011 agreement can be reconsidered in the present political context.

Source:TH

PREVENTION OF INSULTS TO NATIONAL HONOUR ACT, 1971

Context

- The Union Cabinet gave the go-ahead to amend **The Prevention of Insults To National Honour Act, 1971.**

About

- **Aim:** To make any insult or obstruction to the **singing of National Song Vande Mataram a punishable offence**.

- At present, **insults to the National Anthem, the National Flag and the Constitution of India** is mentioned in the **1971 Act** and **is punishable** by an imprisonment of **up to three years or a fine or both.**

Vande Mataram

- **Vande Mataram** was composed by **Bankim Chandra Chatterjee** in Sanskrit and first appeared in the novel **Anandamath in 1882.**
  - Anandamath is set against the backdrop of the 1769–73 **Bengal famine** and the **Sanyasi Rebellion.**
- First sung by **Rabindranath Tagore at the 1896 Indian National Congress session** gave it national exposure.
- During the **Swadeshi Movement of 1905,** Vande Mataram emerged as the anthem of civil resistance.
  - Vande Mataram, as a political slogan, was first used on **7 August 1905.**
- **National Song:** On 24 January 1950, the Vande Mataram was adopted as India's National Song.

Constitutional Provisions

- **Article 51A(a) Fundamental Duties:** Mandates every citizen to abide by the Constitution and respect its ideals and institutions, the National Flag and the National Anthem.
- **Absence of Explicit Constitutional Protection:** Unlike the national anthem, Vande Mataram is not explicitly protected by any constitutional provision.
  - Its status flows from **Constituent Assembly resolutions**, not from enforceable constitutional text.

Source: TH

EMERGENCY CREDIT LINE GUARANTEE SCHEME (ECLGS) 5.0

In News

- The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has **approved Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS) 5.0**.

Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS 5.0)

- It will provide additional financial support to **businesses facing liquidity pressures due to the ongoing West Asia situation**.
- The scheme aims to facilitate an additional **credit flow of ₹2,55,000 crore to help MSMEs** and the airline sector tide over financial instabilities.
- It will enable banks and financial institutions to extend additional credit to eligible borrowers with government-backed guarantees through the **National Credit Guarantee Trustee Company Limited.**
- The scheme provides **100% credit guarantee for MSMEs** and **90% for non-MSMEs, including the airline sector**, to Member Lending Institutions (MLIs). This guarantee is extended by National Credit Guarantee Trustee Company Limited (NCGTC) on the amount in default under additional credit facilities given to eligible borrowers, helping them manage short-term liquidity stress arising from the West Asia crisis.

Salient features of the scheme

- **Eligible borrowers**: MSMEs and non-MSMEs with existing working capital limits and scheduled passenger airlines having outstanding credit facilities, as of March 31, 2026, provided their accounts are standard.
- **Guarantee coverage**: 100% for MSMEs and 90% for non-MSMEs as well as the airline sector.
- **Guarantee Fee**: Nil.
- **Quantum of Support**: Additional credit up to 20% of peak working capital utilised during Q4 FY 26 (capped at Rs.100 crore).
  - For airlines up to 100% (capped at Rs.1,500 crore per borrower, subject to satisfying certain specific conditions).
- **Tenor of Loan:**For MSMEs/Non MSMEs (except Airline sector): 5 years from the date of first disbursement including a moratorium of 1 year.
  - For the airline sector: 7 years from the date of first disbursement including a moratorium of 2 years.
- **Tenure of Guarantee Cover:** Maximum period of guarantee cover shall be co-terminus with the tenor of the loan.
- **Duration of the Scheme**: The Scheme would be applicable to all loans sanctioned during the period from the date of issue of these guidelines by NCGTC upto 31.03.2027

Source: DD

UDGAM PORTAL

Context

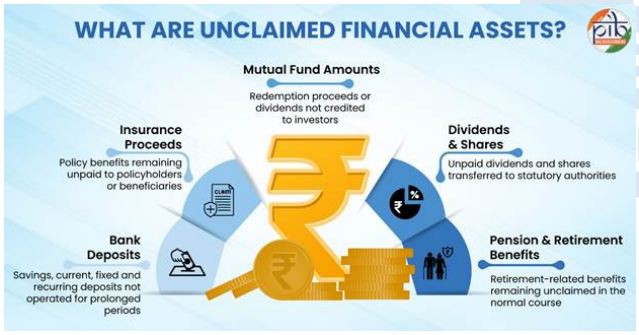
- The Reserve Bank of India informed the Supreme Court of India that 30 banks have been integrated into the **UDGAM portal.**

What is the UDGAM Portal?

- The **UDGAM (Unclaimed Deposits – Gateway to Access Information) portal** has been developed by the Reserve Bank of India to provide a centralised search facility for unclaimed bank deposits.
- It **enables citizens to identify unclaimed balances** across multiple participating banks through a single platform.
- The portal **does not settle claims**; instead, it facilitates the process by directing users to the respective banks where the deposits are held.

What Are Unclaimed Financial Assets?

- Unclaimed financial assets arise when money held with financial institutions is not claimed by the account holder or their legal heirs for a prolonged period.



- If a bank deposit remains unclaimed for 10 years or more, it is transferred to the **Depositor Education and Awareness Fund (DEA Fund)**.
- Even after transfer to the DEA Fund, the ownership of the money remains with the depositor. There is **no time limit for the depositor or their legal heirs** to claim the funds.

Source: TH

FRP FOR SUGARCANE FOR 2026–27 SEASON

In News

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by the Prime Minister, has approved the **Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP) of sugarcane for 2026–27 at ₹365 per quintal for a 10.25% recovery rate.**

Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP)

- FRP is the **minimum price** mandated by the Government that sugar mills are obligated to pay farmers for their produce.
- The FRP for sugarcane is decided **every year by the Centre's Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) headed by the Prime Minister**, on the **recommendation of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP)** after consultation with State Governments and other stake-holders
- The payment of FRP across the country is governed by the Sugarcane Control order, 1966 which mandates payment within 14 days of the date of delivery of the cane, failing which the cane commissioner may act against the miller.
- Failure to clear farmers' due can even lead to the attachment of mill properties.

Mechanism

- The FRP for sugarcane is decided using the same mechanism as the one that is used to calculate the Minimum Support Price (MSP) of 23 other crops.
- However, while the MSP is not legally guaranteed, sugar mills are legally obligated to pay the FRP.
- The FRP is based on the recovery of sugar from the cane.
- Sugar recovery is the ratio between sugar produced versus cane crushed, expressed as a percentage.
- The higher the recovery, the higher is the FRP, and higher is the sugar produced.

Source:PIB

SOUTH COAST RAILWAY (SCOR) ZONE

Context

- The Ministry of Railways has issued the gazette notification constituting the South Coast Railway (SCoR) zone, **India's 18th railway zone**, headquartered at **Visakhapatnam.**

About

- **Formalization:** The Zone was formed under **Section 3(4) of the Railways Act, 1989,** following a gazette notification.

- **Structure:** The new SCoR zone will consist of the existing **Vijayawada, Guntakal, and Guntur divisions**, plus a new division formed from the reorganization of the current **Waltair division.**
  - It will have a total route length of around **3,300 km across Andhra Pradesh and parts of Telangana, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.**

Existing Railway Zones in India

S.NO.	RAILWAY ZONES	Headquarter
1.	Central Railway	Mumbai
2.	Eastern Railway	Kolkata
3.	East Central Railway	Hajipur
4.	East Coast Railway	Bhubaneswar
5.	Northern Railway	New Delhi
6.	North Central Railway	Allahabad
7.	North Eastern Railway	Gorakhpur
8.	Northeast Frontier Railway	Guwahati
9.	North Western Railway	Jaipur
10.	Southern Railway	Chennai
11.	South Central Railway	Secunder-abad
12.	South Eastern Railway	Kolkata
13.	South East Central Railway	Bilaspur
14.	South Western Railway	Hubli
15.	Western Railway	Mumbai
16.	West Central Railway	Jabalpur
17.	Metro Railway	Kolkata

Source: TH

JAMAICA

Context

- **India and Jamaica signed three Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs)** in health cooperation, solarisation, and broadcasting during the External Affairs Minister official visit.

About

- **India and Jamaica** discussed expanding **cooperation in sectors including** healthcare, infrastructure, digitalisation, agriculture, education, tourism and capacity building
- They also discussed capacity building through ICCR scholarships and digital learning platforms such as E-Vidyabharati and iGOT Karmyogi.

Jamaica

- Jamaica is a mountainous island in the **Caribbean Sea, situated south of Cuba**.

- It is part of the chain of Caribbean islands called the **Greater Antilles,** along with **Cuba, Hispaniola, and Puerto Rico.**
- It is the **third largest island in the Caribbean Sea,** after Cuba and Hispaniola.
- Jamaica became **independent from the United Kingdom in 1962** but remains a member of the Commonwealth.
- Jamaica was formed when the **North American and Caribbean tectonic plates** collided about 25 million years ago.
- **Major Mountain Ranges:** Blue Mountains, John Crow Mountains, Don Figuero Mountains, Cockpit Country.
- **Major Rivers:** Black River, Rio Cobre, Rio Grande.

Source: DD

PULITZER PRIZE 2026

Context

- Two Indian journalists named Anand RK and Suparna Sharma along with Natalie Obiko Pearson won the **Pulitzer Prize 2026** in the Illustrated Reporting and Commentary category for their Bloomberg project 'trAPPed', exposing "digital arrest" fraud in India.

Pulitzer Prize

- The Pulitzer Prize was established in 1917, named in honour of newspaper publisher Joseph Pulitzer, and is administered by America's Columbia University.
- There are 23 categories. In 22 of them, winners get a certificate and 15,000 US dollars. But only one category, Public Service, gets a gold medal.
- It recognises excellence across journalism, literature and music composition.

Previous Indian Winners

- **Gobind Behari Lal:** First from India to win the Pulitzer Prize for journalism in 1937. He was the member of the Ghadar Party in America.
- **Siddhartha Mukherjee:** Won the Pulitzer Prize for General Non-Fiction for his demystification of cancer in **The Emperor of All Maladies: A Biography of Cancer**.
- **Danish Siddiqui**: Photojournalist and a **two-time Pulitzer Prize winner**, awarded in 2018 for Rohingya crisis coverage and in 2020 for his powerful images capturing the human toll of COVID-19 in India.

Source: AIR