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EASE OF LIVING: INDIA'S JOURNEY OF INCLUSIVE PROGRESS

Context

- The Government of India highlighted the progress made in improving the Ease of Living contributing to inclusive development and better quality of life of citizens.

What is Ease of Living?

- Ease of Living refers to the **ability of citizens to access basic services, opportunities, infrastructure, and governance** in a convenient, affordable, and dignified manner.
- It focuses on improving the quality of everyday life by ensuring access to housing, healthcare, sanitation, transportation, financial services, and digital governance.
 - It is a **key pillar of inclusive and sustainable development**.
- India has taken various initiatives for enhancing ease of living through enhanced access to housing, sanitation, drinking water, electricity, financial services, connectivity, and citizen-centric governance.

Housing and Basic Amenities

- Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojna Urban (PMAY-U):** India has significantly expanded access to affordable housing through the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY).
- More than 1.25 crore urban houses** have been sanctioned under **PMAY-Urban**, with over 98 lakh houses completed.
- Under PMAY-Gramin**, over 3 crore rural houses have been completed, providing secure shelter to vulnerable households.

Universal Access to Essentials

- Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY)**, launched in May 2016, transformed rural cooking practices by ensuring access to clean LPG connections.
- The Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM)**, with its goal of Har Ghar Jal, has delivered rapid expansion in piped water access. As of June 2026, over 15.86 (81.94%) crore households enjoy clean piped water.
- The Swachh Bharat Mission – Gramin**, launched in 2014, provided toilets to all rural households, ensuring dignity and hygiene across villages.

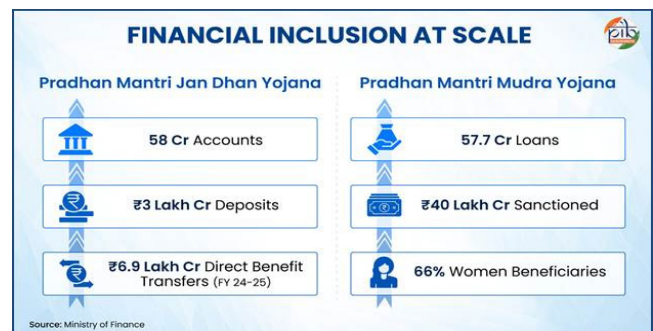
- Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban:** Urban waste processing rose to 82 percent in 2026 compared to 16 percent in 2014.

Reliable, Affordable and Clean Energy

- Universal Household Electrification:** The SAUBHAGYA Scheme connected approximately 2.86 crore households to electricity.
- Renewable Energy Expansion:** Renewable energy capacity increased from 76 GW in 2014 to more than 274 GW in 2026.
 - PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana:** It encourages rooftop solar adoption among households. More than 40 lakh households have already installed rooftop solar systems.

Financial Inclusion and Empowerment

- The JAM Trinity of Jan Dhan, Aadhaar, and Mobile** became India's welfare delivery backbone.
 - Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojna (PMJDY)** was the first pillar, opening banking access for crores of excluded citizens.
 - In FY 2024–25 alone, **₹6.9 lakh crore** was credited directly under **Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) schemes**.
 - Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojna (PMMY):** More than 57 crore collateral-free loans have been sanctioned to micro and small entrepreneurs. Women account for nearly two-thirds of Mudra beneficiaries.



Transport and Connectivity

- Road Infrastructure:** National Highways increased from about **91,000 km** to more than 1.46 lakh km.
 - Projects such as the **Atal Tunnel, Sudarshan Setu, and Delhi–Dehradun Economic Corridor** have improved regional connectivity.
- Railway Modernisation:** Railway electrification expanded from about 20% to nearly 100%. Vande Bharat Express trains have improved speed, comfort, and efficiency.

- ♦ The indigenous Kavach safety system has enhanced passenger safety and reduced accidents.
- **Regional Air Connectivity:** Under the UDAN Scheme, operational airports increased from 74 to 165.
- **Metro and Rapid Transit Systems:** Metro rail networks expanded from 248 km in 2014 to over 1,150 km.
 - ♦ **The Namo Bharat Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS)** has introduced high-speed regional connectivity.

Governance Reforms

- **The Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Act** amended provisions across multiple central laws, shifting minor defaults from criminal penalties to civil remedies.
- **Centralised Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS):** A dedicated feedback portal available for Ministries, Departments, States, and Union Territories to monitor citizen satisfaction regarding grievance resolution.
- **PM GatiShakti National Master Plan:** The initiative promotes integrated infrastructure planning across sectors.
 - ♦ It reduces project delays and improves coordination among government agencies.

What are the challenges?

- **Significant regional disparities** persist in access to public services and infrastructure. **Service quality remains uneven** across states and districts.
- **Financial literacy and digital literacy** levels remain inadequate among vulnerable populations.
- **Rising energy demand** requires greater investments in renewable energy storage and grid infrastructure.
- **Maintenance and long-term sustainability** of newly created assets require continuous attention.

Concluding remarks

- India's ease of living transformation demonstrates how targeted welfare programmes, infrastructure investments, digital governance, and institutional reforms can improve the lives of millions.
- Sustaining these gains while addressing emerging challenges will be crucial for building an inclusive, resilient, and prosperous **Viksit Bharat by 2047**.

Source: [PIB](#)

INDIA'S EXPORTS RISE

Context

- As per the data released by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, **India's merchandise exports** jumped to a **record high of \$45.2 billion in May 2026**, 18% higher than in May last year.

About

- **India's overall trade deficit widened to \$10.5 billion** due to a sharper growth in imports of both goods and services.
 - ♦ **Top 5 export destinations** are Singapore (68.96%), South Africa (116.21%), Tanzania Rep (196.89%), Italy (87.54%), and Sri Lanka Dsr (150.29%).

Table 1: Trade during May 2026*

		May 2026 (US\$ Billion)	May 2025 (US\$ Billion)
Merchandise	Exports	45.20	38.30
	Imports	73.41	60.86
Services*	Exports	36.76	32.46
	Imports	19.06	16.70
Total Trade (Merchandise + Services) *	Exports	81.96	70.76
	Imports	92.47	77.55
	Trade Balance	-10.51	-6.79

Fig 2: Total Trade during FY 2025-26 (April-March)*



Reasons for Increase in India's Exports

- **Rise in Petroleum and Commodity Prices:** Higher international petroleum prices increased the value of India's petroleum exports, particularly diesel, petrol, and aviation turbine fuel.
 - ♦ **Rising global commodity prices** contributed to the overall increase in export earnings.
- **Strong Performance of Manufacturing Sectors:** Engineering goods exports remained robust due to strong global demand for manufactured products and machinery.
 - ♦ **Electronics exports** recorded rapid growth because of expanding domestic manufacturing under **Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes**.

- **Diversification of Export Markets:** Indian exporters expanded into emerging markets such as **Tanzania, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Vietnam.**
 - ♦ Diversification reduced dependence on traditional export destinations and improved resilience against regional disruptions.
- **Improved Competitiveness:** Depreciation of the Indian rupee improved the price competitiveness of Indian goods in global markets.
 - ♦ **Stable supply chains and improved logistics** enabled industries to maintain export momentum despite global uncertainties.
- **Structural Weaknesses in Manufacturing:** India's manufacturing sector faces challenges related to **scale, productivity, and technological competitiveness.**
 - ♦ **Limited diversification** into high-value and technology-intensive exports constrains long-term export potential.

Recent Government Initiatives

Significance for India's Economy

- **Strengthening External Sector Stability:** Strong export growth supports India's foreign exchange reserves and external stability.
 - ♦ Diversification of export sectors reduces dependence on any single commodity or market.
- **Growth of Manufacturing Exports:** Rising engineering and electronics exports indicate improvements in India's manufacturing ecosystem. Export growth supports employment generation and industrial expansion.
- **Strategic Importance of Services and Trade Agreements:** Services exports continue to provide **stability to India's external trade balance.** FTAs can improve market access, reduce tariff barriers, and integrate India more deeply into global value chains.
- **Export Promotion Mission:** In the Union Budget for 2025-26, the Finance Minister announced an Export Promotion Mission.
 - ♦ It would facilitate easy access to export credit, cross-border factoring support, and support to MSMEs to tackle non-tariff measures in overseas markets.
 - ♦ EPM will span **six years** covering FY 2025-26 to FY 2030-31.
 - ♦ **Under EPM, priority support** will be extended to sectors impacted by recent global tariff escalations, such as textiles, leather, gems & jewellery, engineering goods, and marine products.
- **Export Support Package:** The government announced a Rs 7,295-crore export support package, comprising a Rs 5,181-crore interest subvention scheme along with a Rs 2,114-crore collateral support, to improve exporters' access to credit.
- **Free Trade Agreements (FTA) Negotiations:** **India is aggressively pushing for newer markets** and has signed as many as three free trade agreements, with Oman, New Zealand, and UK, in 2025. India also signed an FTA with the EU in 2026.
- **Digital Transformation:** The Department of Commerce has advanced its Digital Transformation agenda to strengthen trade facilitation and intelligence through data-driven solutions.
 - ♦ Initiatives such as Trade eConnect and Trade Intelligence & Analytics (TIA) portal lay a strong foundation for evidence-based decision-making.

Main Challenges in India's Export Sector

- **Global Economic Uncertainty:** Geopolitical tensions in West Asia and other regions disrupt trade routes, shipping networks, and supply chains.
- **Heavy dependence on imported** crude oil exposes India to global energy price shocks. Rising imports of gold and petroleum products contribute to widening trade deficits.
- **Infrastructure Constraints:** High logistics and transportation costs reduce the competitiveness of Indian exports.
- **Global Competition:** Indian exporters face intense competition from countries such as **China, Vietnam, and Bangladesh.**
 - ♦ **Protectionist trade policies** and **non-tariff barriers** imposed by developed countries restrict market access.
- **Diversify Export Markets:** India should expand exports to emerging markets and reduce dependence on a few traditional destinations.
- **Improve Logistics Infrastructure:** India should modernize ports, transport networks, and customs systems to reduce export costs and delays.

Way Ahead

- **Support MSMEs and Exporters:** India should improve access to finance, technology, and export incentives for small exporters.
- **Build Resilient Supply Chains:** India should develop resilient supply chains and alternative trade routes to tackle geopolitical disruptions.

Source: TH

DRONE REVOLUTION AND MODERN WARFARE

Context

- The wars in Ukraine, Lebanon and West Asia have shown **how drones have become central to modern warfare.**

What is Drone Warfare?

- Drone warfare refers to a **mode of warfare employing unmanned or remotely controlled devices.**
 - ♦ Such drones have the capability of **staying in the air, on land, at sea level, or underwater.**
 - ♦ The drones may be operated by **manual control**, and others may **utilise auto-pilot systems on their missions.**
- **Remotely Piloted Aircraft System:** It refers to a set of components that include **the drone, its ground-based control system.**
 - ♦ The US, UK, Israel, China, India, Russia, and Turkey, have produced combat drones, or **UCAVs (Unmanned Combat Aerial Vehicles).**
 - ♦ These are employed in **targeted attacks**, frequently in locations difficult to access by conventional forces.
- **AI: The second stage of drone application is artificial intelligence.** AI drones can navigate on their own, detect targets, and even operate in “swarm” groups.

Recent Use of Drones

- In the early years of the 21st century, most drone strikes were carried out by the **US military** in countries such as **Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria, Somalia, Yemen, and Libya**, using air-to-surface missiles against ground targets.
- Drone warfare has since been adopted by countries like **Russia, Ukraine, Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Iran**, as well as by **non-state actors** such as the Houthis.

- **India**, too, has employed drones in recent operations, including the **Operation Sindoor and retaliatory strikes against Pakistan.**

Evolution of UCAVs

- **In the 1960s, British Commonwealth artillery regiments** started developing drones for target identification and extending their range.
- The past two decades saw the US set the trend world-wide with using drones for its **counterterrorism action** in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, and Yemen with precision attacks minimising personnel risks.
- **It was the Ukraine war that saw a turning point.**
 - ♦ **Russian and Ukrainian forces** both used small drones on a massive scale for real-time intelligence and direct attacks.
- **By 2023**, small drones had evolved to accommodate multiple payloads - from infrared detectors to electronic warfare equipment.

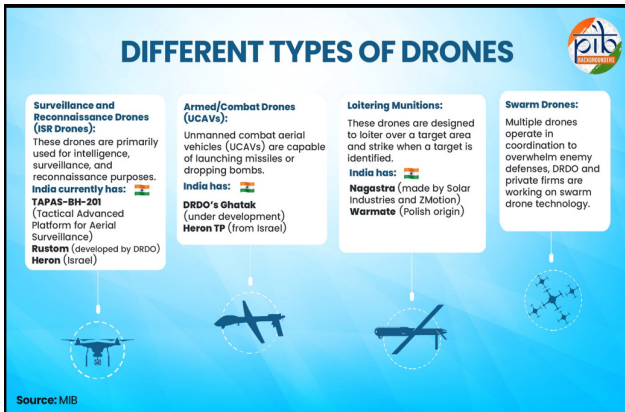
Significance of Use of Drones in Warfare

- **Targeted Strikes:** Drones allow militaries to carry out highly targeted attacks, minimizing collateral damage.
- **Lower Risk to Personnel:** Since drones are unmanned, they eliminate the risk to pilots and reduce the need for boots on the ground.
- **Cost-Effectiveness:** Drones are cheaper to manufacture, operate, and maintain compared to manned aircraft.
- **Real-Time Surveillance and Intelligence:** Drones provide continuous, real-time imagery and intelligence gathering, essential for both offensive and defensive operations.
- **Strategic Advantage in Asymmetric Warfare:** Drones are especially useful against non-state actors and terrorist groups, who may not be reachable by conventional military means.

India's Institutional and Strategic Response

- **Integrated Drone Detection and Interdiction System (IDD&IS)** is developed by Defence Research and Development Organisation and Bharat Electronics Limited, provides a comprehensive counter-drone solution.
 - ♦ It is capable of **detecting drones at ranges of 5–8 km, jamming communication signals within 2–5 km** and neutralising threats using laser-based directed energy weapons at close ranges.

- **Bhargavastra” Anti-Swarm System:** Developed by Solar Defence and Aerospace Limited (SDAL), it is a **low-cost, homegrown counter-drone system** that uses micro-rockets to destroy drone swarms in hard-kill mode.
- The Indian Army has initiated large-scale procurement of **surveillance and kamikaze drones** to enhance both defensive and offensive capabilities.



Way Ahead

- Modern warfare demands a shift from **platform-centric approaches to capability-based, technology-driven force** planning. India must accelerate **AI adoption, cyber resilience, space security**, and jointness reforms.
- Sustained investment in human capital, defence innovation, and strategic partnerships will be crucial to maintain credible deterrence.
- Adapting to the evolving character of warfare is essential for safeguarding India's **sovereignty, stability, and strategic autonomy** in a rapidly changing global order.

Source: TH

NCERT DANCING GIRL ROW

Context

- After facing backlash, NCERT has decided to restore the original image of the Indus Valley Civilization's iconic Dancing Girl in its Class 9 textbook, reversing its earlier decision to depict the figurine with a covered torso.

About the Dancing Girl

- The "Dancing Girl" is a **4,500-year-old bronze statuette** unearthed in **1926** by archaeologist **Ernest Mackay** at Mohenjo-daro (present-day Pakistan), a major urban centre of the Indus Valley Civilization.

- The statue is around 10.5 centimetres tall and is adorned with a **necklace** and a large number of **bangles stacked on her arms**.
- **Material and Technique:** The bronze sculpture was created using the **lost-wax technique**, a metal-casting method that continues to be practiced in parts of India, including **West Bengal, Jharkhand, and Chhattisgarh**.
- Today, the original artefact is housed in the National Museum, New Delhi.



Indus Valley Civilization

- The **Indus Valley Civilization (IVC)**, also known as the **Harappan Civilization**, is believed to be **one of the oldest world civilizations** that flourished roughly between 2600 and 1900 BC.
- It developed primarily along the **Indus River system** and covered large parts of present-day **Pakistan and north-western India**.
- The civilization is known for its **well-planned cities, drainage systems, standardized weights and measures, craft production, and long-distance trade networks**.
- It is considered a **Bronze Age Civilization** due to the widespread use of copper-based alloys.

Major Sites of the Indus Valley Civilization

Site	Present Day
Harappa	Punjab, Pakistan
Mohenjo-Daro	Sindh, Pakistan
Dholavira	Kutch district of Gujarat,
Kalibangan	Rajasthan
Lothal	Gujarat
Rakhigarhi	Haryana
Chanhudaro	Sindh, Pakistan
Ganweriwala	Punjab, Pakistan
Sutkagendor	Baluchistan Province, Pakistan
Alamgirpur	Uttar Pradesh

Significance of the Controversy

- The episode has reignited the debate over the balance between historical authenticity and educational sensitivity in school textbooks.
- It raises questions about whether historical artefacts should be reproduced exactly as they are or modified to suit contemporary notions of what is considered age-appropriate.
- The controversy highlights the role of textbooks in shaping students' understanding of India's cultural and civilizational heritage.
- It also underscores the importance of preserving the integrity of archaeological evidence while ensuring effective pedagogy.

Similar Debates in India and Abroad

- In India, the **Khajuraho Group of Monuments** feature intricate sculptures depicting love, human relationships, and sensuality. Despite occasional debates over their explicit imagery, these **UNESCO-recognized monuments** are preserved and presented in their original form as important expressions of India's cultural and artistic heritage.
- In **Europe and North America**, students routinely encounter images of **ancient Greek and Roman sculptures**, many of which depict the human body in ways that modern audiences might consider explicit. Yet these works are generally presented in their original form, accompanied by historical and artistic explanations.

Source: IE

NEWS IN SHORT

DENGUE VACCINE SAFETY CONCERNS

Context

- Brazil recently suspended the administration of its dengue vaccine, **Butantan-DV**, after reports of severe adverse events, including two deaths, during a large-scale vaccination campaign.

What is Dengue?

- Dengue is a **viral infection** caused by the **dengue virus (DENV)**, transmitted to humans through the bite of infected mosquitoes.
 - ♦ **DENV is an RNA virus** of the **Flaviviridae family** with four serotypes (DENV-1, DENV-2, DENV-3, and DENV-4).

- ♦ Infection with one serotype provides lifelong immunity against that serotype but only temporary protection against the others.
- **Symptoms:** High fever, severe headache, pain behind the eyes, muscle and joint pains, nausea, vomiting, swollen glands, rash.
- **Transmission:** The virus is transmitted to humans through the bites of infected female mosquitoes, primarily the **Aedes Aegypti mosquito**.
 - ♦ There is a **possibility of maternal transmission of Dengue** (from a pregnant mother to her baby), transmission via blood products, organ donation and transfusions.
- **Prevention:** There is no specific antiviral treatment for dengue, so prevention relies on controlling mosquito populations and raising public awareness.
- The mosquitoes that spread dengue are active during the day. The best way of protection is to protect yourself from mosquito bites.

Why are the concerns?

- The development has raised concerns regarding the **safety of India's upcoming dengue vaccine, DengiAll**, as both vaccines are based on similar scientific platforms.
 - Both vaccines are **live attenuated tetravalent vaccines**. They contain weakened forms of all four dengue virus serotypes.
 - Both are based on **vaccine candidates (TV003 and TV005)** originally developed by the U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH).
 - ♦ **A vaccine candidate** is a vaccine that is being tested for safety and effectiveness before receiving full regulatory approval.
 - The technology was later licensed to:
 - ♦ Instituto Butantan in Brazil (for Butantan-DV).
 - ♦ Panacea Biotec in India (for DengiAll).

Antibody-Dependent Enhancement (ADE)

- ADE is a phenomenon in which antibodies produced after a previous dengue infection or vaccination fail to fully neutralise the virus during a subsequent infection.
- Instead of protecting the body, these antibodies can help the virus enter immune cells more easily, leading to a more severe infection.

How Does It Occur?

- A dengue vaccine aims to generate immunity against all four serotypes.
- After vaccination, the body produces:
 - ♦ **Type-specific antibodies**, which provide strong protection against a particular serotype.
 - ♦ **Cross-reactive antibodies**, which can recognise multiple serotypes but may provide weaker protection.
- Over time, the level of cross-reactive antibodies may decline.
- If a person is later infected by a different dengue serotype, these weakened antibodies may fail to stop the virus. Instead, they can **assist the virus in entering immune cells**, allowing it to multiply more rapidly.

Source: [TH](#)

GI RECOGNITION FOR JHARKHAND'S TRADITIONAL HERITAGE

Context

- Eleven traditional products of Jharkhand have recently been granted the Geographical Indication (GI) Tag.

GI-Tagged Products of Jharkhand

- **Bhagaiya Silk:** Bhagaiya Silk is produced in the Bhagaiya region of **Godda district**. It is known for its traditional handloom weaving techniques and high-quality silk fabric.
- **Kuchai Silk:** It is cultivated naturally on **Asan and Arjun trees** in the village of Seraikela-Kharsawan (historically known as Kuchai).
- **Kesaria Kalakand:** It is a **traditional sweet** that forms an important part of the region's culinary heritage.
- **Dokra Craft:** It is one of the oldest surviving metal-casting traditions in India. It employs the traditional **lost-wax casting technique** to produce decorative and utility items.
- **Tumka Chadar:** It is a uniquely crafted shawl or bedspread sheet (chadar) woven by local tribal and artisan communities in Jharkhand.
- **Baroni Paintings:** It is traditional folk paintings of Jharkhand depicting local customs, nature, and tribal cultural traditions.

- **Pancho Saree and Fabric:** The traditional handwoven textiles of Jharkhand known for their distinctive patterns and cultural significance among local communities.
- **Jadopatia Painting:** It is a traditional scroll-painting art practiced by the **Santhal community**, depicting folklore, mythology, social customs, and cultural narratives.



- **Bhoaya Saree and Fabric:** It is a traditional handwoven textiles of Jharkhand.
- **Munda Jewellery:** It is a traditional ornament crafted by the Munda tribal community. It reflects the artistic traditions and social customs of Jharkhand's tribal population.
- **Jharkhand Bamboo Craft:** Bamboo Craft utilizes locally available bamboo to create utility and decorative products.

Geographical Indication (GI)

- A geographical indication (GI) is a sign used on products that have a specific geographical origin and possess qualities or a reputation that are due to that origin.
- In order to function as a GI, a sign must identify a product as originating in a given place.
- Geographical indications are typically **used for agricultural products, foodstuffs, wine and spirit drinks, handicrafts, and industrial products**.

GI Tags and India

- **The Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999** seeks to provide for the registration and better protection of geographical indications relating to goods in India.

- The Act is administered by the **Controller General of Patents, Designs and TradeMarks**, who is the Registrar of Geographical Indications.
- The registration of a geographical indication is valid for a period of **10 years**.

Source: [AIR](#)

INDIA AND SLOVAKIA ELEVATE TIES TO COMPREHENSIVE PARTNERSHIP

Context

- **India and Slovakia elevated their ties to a comprehensive partnership** and inked 11 agreements to expand bilateral cooperation.

About

- The visit was the **first by an Indian Prime Minister to Slovakia** since its independence in 1993.
- The agreements have been **signed in a range of areas such as** migration, digital technology and defence.
- The two leaders also agreed to **work towards the earliest implementation of the India-European Union free trade agreement**.
- The two sides also established a **joint working group in counter-terrorism** and a consular dialogue.
- The Slovak President presented **The Order of the White Double Cross (1st Class)**, the highest state honour of Slovakia, to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Slovakia

- Slovakia is a **landlocked country in Central Europe**. It became an independent state on **January 1, 1993**, after the peaceful dissolution of **Czechoslovakia**.
- Slovakia is bordered by **Poland to the north, Ukraine to the east, Hungary to the south, Austria to the southwest and the Czech Republic, lies to the west**.



- **Bratislava**, the capital of Slovakia, is the only national capital in the world that directly borders two separate countries i.e. Austria and Hungary.
- **Official Language:** Slovak.
- **Currency:** Euro (€).
- It is a member of both the **European Union and NATO (the North Atlantic Treaty Organization)**.

Source: [PIB](#)

BRICS INDORE DECLARATION

Context

- The BRICS Agriculture Ministers and officials-level meetings were held in Indore in which the **'BRICS Indore Declaration' was unanimously adopted**.
 - ♦ The decisions were taken at the end of a meeting of agriculture ministers and officials from BRICS countries **held under India's Presidency**.

Major Highlights

- The declaration has been adopted amid ongoing geopolitical tensions and focuses **on four main priorities:** Farmers, food security, climate and technology.
- BRICS countries represent **nearly half of the world's population**, possess about **42% agricultural land** and contribute nearly **42% to world foodgrain production**.
- Separately, **four institutional initiatives** have also been proposed. It includes:
 - ♦ **Centres of Excellence on Agro-Ecology and Regenerative Agriculture:** A platform for joint research, experience sharing and capacity building on natural, organic and regenerative agricultural practices.
 - The Indian Institute of Farming Systems Research, Modipuram, has been given an important role.
 - ♦ **BRICS Network on Digital Agriculture:** For the cooperation in the fields of artificial intelligence, geospatial technology, digital public infrastructure and data-based agricultural solutions. IIT Delhi in India will coordinate this network.
 - ♦ **Global Forum on Farmers' Rights in Seed Systems:** It will protect farmers' seed rights, the diversity of indigenous seeds and traditional knowledge.

- ◆ **BRICS AgriN (Agro Input, Genetic Resources and Information Network):** This will strengthen cooperation among member countries in areas of agricultural inputs, seeds and genetic resources.

About BRICS

- **BRICS** is an acronym that refers to a group of **five major emerging national economies: Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa.**
 - ◆ **Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Indonesia, and the United Arab Emirates** have joined BRICS as new full members.
- The term was originally coined by economist **Jim O'Neill in 2001.**
- **Origin:** As a formal grouping, BRIC started after the meeting of the Leaders of Russia, India and China in St. Petersburg on the margins of the **G8 Outreach Summit in 2006.**
 - ◆ The grouping was formalized during the 1st meeting of BRIC Foreign Ministers on the margins of **UNGA in New York in 2006.**
 - ◆ Initially, the grouping was termed BRIC as **South Africa was inducted in 2010** and from there on it has been referred to as **BRICS.**
- **Summits:** The governments of the BRICS states have met annually at formal summits **since 2009.**
- **New Development Bank:** Formerly referred to as the BRICS Development Bank, is a multilateral development bank established by the BRICS states.
 - ◆ The Bank shall support public or private projects through loans, guarantees, equity participation and other financial instruments.

Source: IE

U.S. AND IRAN REACH AGREEMENT TO END WAR, RE-OPEN HORMUZ STRAIT

Context

- The U.S. and Iran have reached a **preliminary agreement to end the war.**

About

- The pact includes an **immediate halt to military action**, including in Lebanon, and a **60-day negotiation period.**
- The US has announced the **removal of the US naval blockade**, authorizing the **reopening of the Strait of Hormuz** for global shipping.

- The move would allow **international maritime traffic to resume.**

Strait of Hormuz

- The Strait of Hormuz lies between **Iran to the north and Oman and the United Arab Emirates to the south**, linking the **Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea.**
- At its narrowest point it is about **33 kilometres** wide, with shipping lanes just a few kilometres across in either direction.
- **Nearly half of India's crude oil and around 60% of its natural gas** imports pass through the strait.



Persian Gulf

- The Persian Gulf lies between **Iran (north) and the Arabian Peninsula (south).**
- It connects to the **Arabian Sea through the Strait of Hormuz**, one of the world's most critical maritime chokepoints.
- The Persian Gulf is the **most important source of oil and gas for India.**
 - ◆ Around 90% of India's imports of LPG, 40% of its LNG and 35% of its crude oil came from the Persian Gulf in 2025.



Source: TH

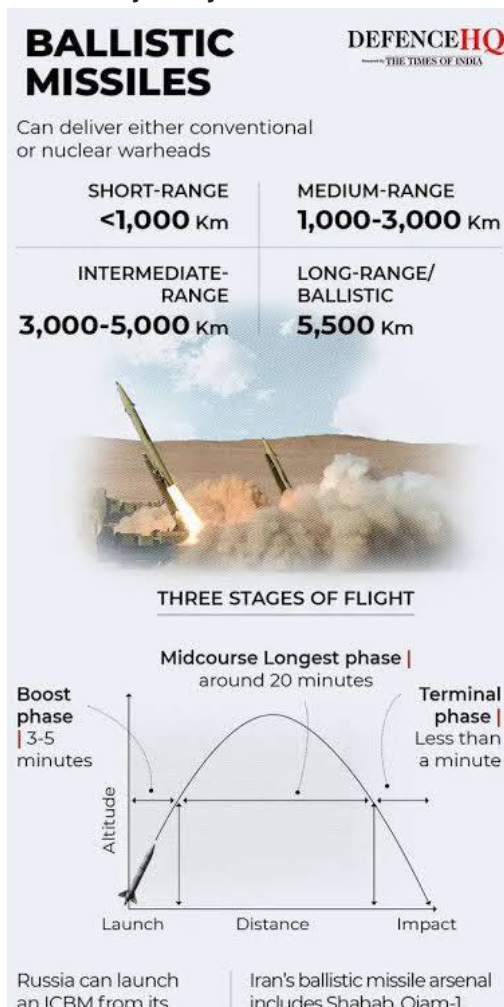
DRDO DEMONSTRATES MULTI-LAYERED BALLISTIC MISSILE DEFENCE CAPABILITY

Context

- The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) successfully conducted three consecutive flight tests validating India's **multi-layered Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) system** and the **Naval Anti-Ship Missile-Medium Range (NASM-MR)**.

What are Ballistic Missiles?

- A ballistic missile is a missile that is launched by a rocket and then travels mainly under the influence of gravity along a curved path called a **ballistic trajectory**.



What is a missile defence system?

- Missile defence refers to an integrated military system designed to **detect, track, intercept, and destroy** incoming missiles before they reach their intended targets, thereby protecting **civilian populations, military installations, and critical infrastructure**.

- Missile defence systems **rely on a network of satellites, radars, command centres, and interceptor missiles** that work together in real time to neutralise threats.

India's Missile Defence Architecture

- Multi-layered Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) system under DRDO:**
 - The Prithvi Air Defence (PAD) interceptor** is designed for exo-atmospheric interception to intercept incoming missiles at altitudes of **50 km to 180 km**.
 - The Advanced Air Defence (AAD) interceptor** is intended for endo-atmospheric interception during the terminal phase to neutralise threats within the Earth's atmosphere at altitudes up to **30 km**.
- Layered Air Defence Shield:**
 - The S-400 Triumf** is a highly advanced, mobile, Russian-developed **surface-to-air missile (SAM)** system inducted by India to enhance **long-range** air defence capability.
 - Medium-Range (70–100 km):** The Barak-8 (MRSAM/LRSAM), co-developed with Israel, provides **360-degree protection** for both land and naval assets.
 - Short-Range (25–50 km):** The indigenous **Akash system** and Israel's **SPYDER** protect strategic points and mobile army units.
- Mission Sudarshan Chakra:** Announced as a comprehensive vision for **2035**, Mission Sudarshan Chakra aims to create an all-encompassing, AI-enabled national shield.

Source: [IE](#)

INDIA LIKELY TO ADD CERVAVAC TO NATIONAL IMMUNISATION PROGRAMME AFTER 2027

In News

- The HPV vaccine developed by the Serum Institute of India (SII), with support from the Department of Biotechnology (DBT), is likely to be included in the national vaccination programme after 2027.

More about the news

- Cervavac**, India's first indigenously developed HPV vaccine, is currently administered in a **two-dose schedule**, which limited its inclusion in the national HPV vaccination programme.

- An ongoing clinical trial is assessing the effectiveness of a **single-dose regimen**, with results expected next year.
- Earlier this year, the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare** launched a nationwide HPV vaccination campaign targeting **14-year-old girls** using **MSD's Gardasil vaccine**.
- **Other cancers:** anal, vaginal, vulvar, penile and oropharyngeal cancers.
- **Genital warts** (non-cancerous).
- **High-Risk and Low-Risk Types:** HPV types **16 and 18** are high-risk strains responsible for the majority of cervical cancer cases (over 80% in India).
- **Types 6 and 11** are low-risk strains that primarily cause genital warts.
- **HPV vaccination:** It prevents infection from the most dangerous HPV types. Most effective when given before sexual debut (ages 9–14 years).

Human papillomavirus (HPV)

- HPV is a common **sexually transmitted infection. Most infections are asymptomatic and self-limiting.**
- **Nature:** HPV is a DNA virus from the **Papillomaviridae family**.
- **Diseases Caused by HPV:**
 - ♦ **Cervical cancer** (over 95% of cases linked to HPV).

Do you know?

- Cervical cancer is the **second most common cancer** among Indian women, with approximately **1.25 lakh new cases** and nearly **75,000 deaths** reported each year.

Source: [IE](#)

