NEXT IAS

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS (DCA)

Time: 45 Min

Date: 27-07-2026

Table of Content

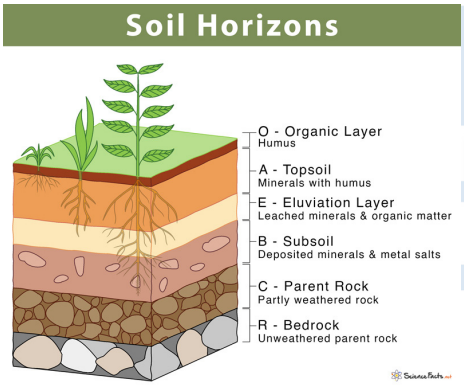
SOIL DIVERSITY IN INDIA

In Context

- Soil supports agricultural productivity, food security, and rural livelihoods in India.

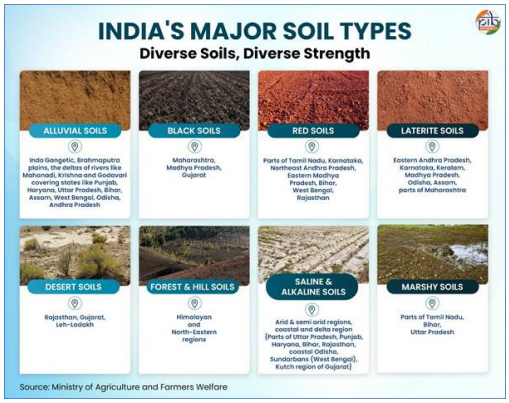
About Soil

- Soil is a **natural body** comprised of **solids (minerals and organic matter)**, liquid, and gases that occurs on the land surface, occupies space, and is characterized by **one or both of the following**: horizons, or layers, that are distinguishable from the initial material as a result of additions, losses, transfers, and transformations of energy.
- Soil horizons are the **distinct horizontal layers** that make up a soil profile from the surface down to bedrock. The main master layers are designated by the **letters O, A, E, B, C, and R.**
- Soils perform vital functions to sustain plant and animal life, regulate water flow, filter and buffer pollutants, cycle nutrients, and provide physical stability and sort.



Soil Diversity in India

- India's varied climate, geology, and relief have resulted in a wide range of soils that support region-specific agricultural practices.
- These soils differ in composition and fertility, enabling diverse cropping patterns and improving resilience across regions.



Importance

- **Food and Nutritional Security:** Soil is the backbone of India's agriculture, on which 59% of the land area is reported to be under cultivation, and more than 46% of the workforce depends.
  - Healthy soil supports productivity, food security and climate resilience, contributing to SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) and SDG 13 (Climate Action)
- **Water Regulation and Storage**: Healthy soils act as natural sponges like they recharge aquifers, hold soil moisture during dry spells, and reduce surface run-off.
- **Carbon Sequestration**: Soil plays a vital role in climate change mitigation and adaptation by acting as a natural carbon sink, storing atmospheric carbon as soil organic carbon.
  - Higher soil carbon improves soil structure, moisture retention, nutrient availability, fertility, and resilience to climate change.
  - Sustainable practices such as carbon farming further enhance carbon sequestration, making soils a key component of climate-smart agriculture.
- **Ecological Balance and Biodiversity**: Healthy soil contains millions of microbes, fungi, and earthworms that are responsible for the global nutrient cycles (nitrogen, phosphorus, and sulphur).

Issues and Concerns

- **Soil erosion:** Water and wind erosion carry away large quantities of fertile topsoil every year.
  - Water erosion is severe in the Himalayan ecosystem, Western Ghats and Chambal ravines.
- **Nutrient Imbalance & Depletion**: Decades of skewed chemical fertiliser usage have depleted soil micro-nutrients like Zinc, Boron and Iron.
- **Faulty irrigation techniques** (especially canal over-irrigation in flood-irrigated areas of Punjab, Haryana and western UP) have brought subsoil salts to the surface through capillary action, making vast tracts infertile (alkalinisation).
- **Urbanisation and Pollution**: Urban and peri-urban soils are polluted with industrial effluent discharge, leaching of excess agrochemicals, mining spoils and plastic accumulation.

Various steps taken by India

- **National Mission for a Green India:** It is one of the initiatives under the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC).
  - It enhances climate resilience by increasing forest and tree cover, thereby increasing the natural carbon sinks.
  - It helps India meet its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to add 2.5–3.0 billion tonnes of CO_2 equivalent carbon sink by 2030.
- **National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture:** It was launched in 2014-15 under the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) and aims to promote climate-resilient and sustainable agriculture through improved soil health, water-use efficiency and resource conservation.
  - It encourages better soil and water management practices through financial support and incentives.
- **National Mission on Natural Farming (NMNF):** It was launched in 2024 and aims to promote sustainable, nature-based agriculture by improving soil health, increasing soil organic carbon, reducing input costs and enhancing climate resilience.
- **Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (2023)**: It incentivises climate mitigation by enabling farmers and organisations to generate tradable carbon credits through voluntary carbon markets for verified greenhouse gas reduction, avoidance or removal activities.
  - Each carbon credit is equivalent to one metric tonne of CO_2, farmers can earn and sell carbon credits under standards such as the Verified Carbon Standard (VCS) and Gold Standard by implementing sustainable agricultural practices, thus creating an additional source of income while supporting environmental sustainability.
- **The Soil Health and Fertility Scheme:** It was launched in 2015 and promotes scientific management of soil through Soil Health Cards, which give recommendations for specific nutrients required by the crop for balanced use of fertilisers.
  - It promotes judicious use of chemical fertilisers, organic manures and bio-fertilisers, supported by farmer training and demonstration, which enhance soil health and productivity.
- The **School Soil Health Programme**, where students are involved in soil testing and Soil Health Card preparation, further strengthens the initiative and helps in extending advisory services to farmers.
- **Nutrient-Based Subsidy (NBS) Scheme** subsidies for 28 grades of Phosphatic and Potassic (P&K) fertilisers, including DAP, are linked to nutrient content to encourage balanced fertiliser application.
  - The rates of subsidies are revised separately for the Kharif (April-September) and Rabi (October-March) seasons.
- **Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) in Fertilisers**: Aadhaar-linked Point of Sale (PoS) devices authenticate beneficiaries and enable real-time tracking of fertiliser sales.
- **Neem Coated Urea:** 100 per cent neem coating on urea produced in the country to improve nitrogen-use efficiency and to check diversion for non-agricultural use.
- **Integrated Fertiliser Management System (iFMS):** Improves monitoring, logistics and availability of fertilisers through better management of supply chains.
- **Khet Bachao Abhiyan (June 1-30, 2026)**: The campaign led by ICAR and Department of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare (DA&FW) with support from NAREES, promoted soil test-based nutrient management, reduced excessive chemical fertiliser use and encouraged climate-resilient farming practices through awareness camps, demonstrations and farmer outreach.
- **Geospatial Soil Mapping:** The Nationwide Soil Resource Mapping project of Soil and Land Use Survey of India (SLUSI)prepares village-level soil maps by using satellite imagery and field surveys, which are essential for scientific land use planning and crop selection.
- **Integrated Digital Agriculture**: Platforms like Agri Stack under the Digital Agriculture Mission integrate data on farmers, land, crops and soil to provide location-specific advisory services.
- **AI and precision soil management:** AI-based platforms like Krishi Decision Support System (KDSS) combine data on soil, weather and crops to provide advisories on crop planning and nutrient management.
  - AI also helps with satellite imagery and remote sensing to detect soil nutrient deficiencies and stress.

- Better resource efficiency, lower costs, reduced environmental impacts, targeted use of water and fertilisers.
- More accurate decisions on crop choice, sowing time and nutrient management.
- Agri-robotics such as autonomous tractors and robotic systems for soil analysis, planting, sampling and crop monitoring developed by ICAR–IARI and others.

Source: PIB

START-UP VILLAGE ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAMME (SVEP)

Context

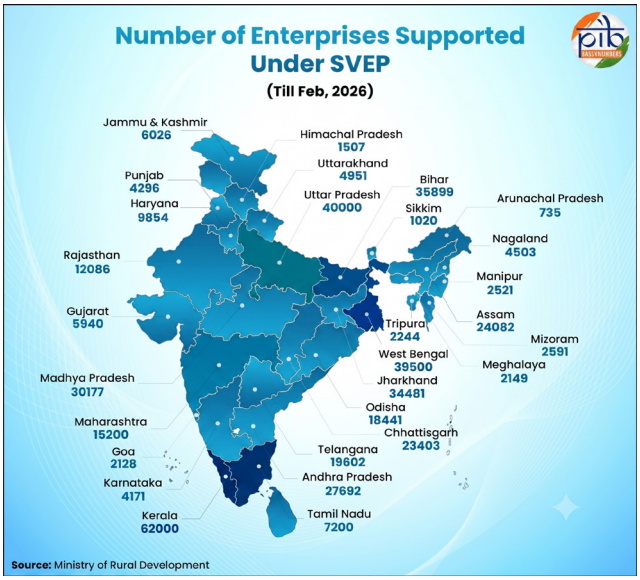
- Recently, the government highlighted the **increasing impact of the Start-up Village Entrepreneurship Programme (SVEP)** that has assisted **more than 4.32 lakh rural firms** and improved rural lives through community-led entrepreneurship under DAY-NRLM.

About Start-up Village Entrepreneurship Programme (SVEP)

- It was launched in **2016** as a sub-scheme of the **Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana–National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM)** by the **Ministry of Rural Development**.
- **Objectives:**
  - To promote **non-farm rural enterprises**.
  - To generate **self-employment and sustainable livelihoods**.
  - To empower first generation entrepreneurs, especially women and marginalised populations.
  - To diversify sources of income in rural areas to lessen dependence on agriculture.
  - To create community-based enterprises that create strong local economies.
- **Key Features:**
  - **Community Enterprise Fund (CEF)** funding.
  - Business planning, skills development, coaching and enterprise management support.
  - Convergence with government plans and credit facilitation through banks.
  - Digital tools for business planning, credit evaluation and corporate monitoring.
  - Community-based decision-making in the selection and funding of enterprises.

Institutional Framework of SVEP

- **National Level:** Implemented under **DAY-NRLM**, Ministry of Rural Development.
- **State Level:** Executed through **State Rural Livelihood Missions (SRLMs)**.
- **Block Level: Block Resource Centres–Enterprise Promotion (BRC-EPs)** coordinate implementation.
  - Provision of **₹6.50 crore per block**.
  - Average investment of **₹27,083 per enterprise**.
- **Community Level:** Enterprise Promotion (CRP-EPs) Community Resource Persons provide business mentoring, enterprise planning, loan facilitation and market connection help.
  - Each CRP-EP provides mentorship to up to 50 firms.
- **Role of Self Help Groups (SHGs):** Identify suitable entrepreneurs; handle the Community Enterprise Fund loans; assess enterprise performance; and give ongoing hand holding support.



Inclusive Design of the Programme

- **Women-Centric Approach:** At least 60% of the beneficiaries are women; At least 60% of CRP-EPs are women; Around 90% of CRP-EPs are recruited from SHG households.
- **Focus on Vulnerable Sections:** Priority to SC/ST communities, minorities, Persons with Disabilities (PwDs), poor rural households and individuals with little educational attainment.
- **Community Ownership:** Enterprises are selected based on poverty status, local needs, entrepreneurial potential and enterprise viability assessment.

Achievements of SVEP

- **Enterprise Development:** Supported **over 4.32 lakh rural enterprises**.
  - Highest implementation in Assam, Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal and Madhya Pradesh.
- **Impact Assessment (Quality Council of India):** Major findings include:
  - **99%** enterprises were profitable.
  - Enterprises contributed **57%** of household income.
  - Average monthly revenue from enterprise: **₹39,000**
  - Manufacturing businesses earned about **₹47,800 a month.**
  - **96% of entrepreneurs** said they saw an increase in savings.
  - **75% of firms** were women-owned or managed.
- **Socio-Economic Outcomes:** Greater financial inclusion, higher household incomes, better nutrition, education, sanitation and health, greater confidence and social standing of women and support for first generation rural entrepreneurs.

Case Study: Success Stories

- **Bhagyashri Londhe, Maharashtra:** Expanded her food processing business with the help of an SVEP loan of ₹45,000.
  - Earned **₹5 lakh within 10 days** at Mahalaxmi Saras.
  - Created employment for rural women.
- **Poonam (Uttar Pradesh):** Became a certified **CRP-EP**; mentored around **40 enterprises**; and facilitated credit, business planning, and market access.

Other Rural Development Programmes

- **DAY-NRLM:** Women's SHGs and livelihood promotion. It has constructed a strong institutional framework on which the success of SVEP is built.
  - Key Highlights:
    - Organises rural poor households into Self Help Groups (SHGs).
    - Mainly targeting women's economic empowerment.
    - Promotes financial inclusion, skill development and diversification of income sources.
- **PM Formalisation of Micro Food Processing Enterprises (PMFME) Support** to micro food processing enterprises
- **PMEGP:** Credit Linked Employment Generation
- **MUDRA Yojana:** Collateral free loans to smaller enterprises
- **Stand-Up India:** Women and SC/ST entrepreneurship
- **SFURTI:** Up-gradation of Traditional Industries and Clusters
- **National Rural Economic Transformation Project (NRETP):** Development of enterprise through SHGs

Related Challenges

- **Limited market access:** Rural firms have long faced challenges in areas like branding, packaging and marketing.
- **Credit Constraints:** Reliance on community donations and no access to official credit.
- **Limited digital literacy:** Low technology adoption Low technology adoption.
- **Infrastructure Gaps:** Lack of logistics, storage, transport and internet connectivity.
- **Capacity Constraints:** Continuous skill upgradation is a necessity for enterprise survival.
- **Regional Imbalances:** Concentrated in few states, many regions still under-covered.
- **Growth Hurdles:** Small businesses can grow only in local markets.

Way Forward

- **Boost rural start-up ecosystem:** Set up incubation centres and innovation hubs in remote regions.
- **Strengthen Market Linkages:** Promote e-commerce platforms such as GeM, ONDC, digital marketplaces.

- **Enhance Access to Finance:** Expand credit guarantee schemes and link with MUDRA and Stand-Up India.
- **Technology Adoption:** Promote digital bookkeeping, UPI payments, AI-enabled market intelligence and e-commerce.
- **Skill Development:** Provide sector specific entrepreneurial training through Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs), Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) and Rural Self Employment Training Institutes (RSETIs)
- **Cluster-Based Development:** Develop producer collectives and value chains to strengthen competitiveness.
- **Robust Monitoring:** Enhance MIS-based monitoring and impact evaluation to support evidence-based policy adjustments.

Source: PIB

INDIA MUST MODERNISE THE WAY GOVT. PUBLISHES LAWS AND REGULATIONS

Context

- India's legal publishing system remains **fragmented and dependent on PDFs,** making it difficult for citizens, lawyers and even courts **to access, track laws and amendments in force.**
  - **Adopting open legal publishing standards** would make laws **more accessible and strengthen democratic participation.**

About

- The rule of law requires that **Bills presented before Parliament or a State Assembly** be made known to the people in advance.
  - It ensures that **citizens are aware of the laws and amendments in force,** and that the judiciary knows the state of the law it adjudicates.
- In reality, Bills are **often not placed in the public domain** before they are introduced.
  - **Citizens struggle to find the law in force,** and even when they locate a copy, determining what the law was on a given date is a challenge.
- **The government uses gazettes** as its primary means of publishing laws and bringing them into force.
  - These gazettes are published as PDFs, to ensure that a digital document looks identical on every device by embedding fonts and images.
  - While this makes PDFs easy to share and print, it also makes it ver**y hard to extract the structure and meaning of a legal document.**

Concerns

- **Difficulty in Tracking Amendments:** Frequent amendments across multiple Acts and notifications make it challenging to identify the current version of a law or determine the legal position on a specific date.
- **Fragmented Legal Information:** Legal texts are dispersed across different gazettes, ministries, and websites without a unified, machine-readable repository, creating inconsistencies and duplication.
- **Inefficiency for the Judiciary and Legal Professionals:** Judges, lawyers, researchers, and businesses spend considerable time verifying the latest applicable legal provisions, increasing litigation costs and delays.
- **Weak Democratic Participation:** Inaccessible legal information hampers citizens' ability to understand, debate, and participate effectively in the legislative process, undermining transparency and accountability.

How Laws are Published in Other Countries?

- Governments in several countries have moved to **publishing laws in markup languages** that properly **capture their structure, semantics and the local languages.**
- **Many African countries** have adopted the **Akoma Ntoso standard**, a markup language specifically designed for legal documents.
  - One can apply amendments to an Act and see precisely what changed across successive amendments and what the law was at any given point in time.
- **The United States** publishes its laws in a variant of **Akoma Ntoso called USLM (United States Legislative Markup).**
  - As a result, not only commercial legal vendors but also nonprofits, think tanks and others can use them to help citizens better engage with their democracy.
- **The United Kingdom** publishes its legislation at legislation.gov.uk, run by The National Archives.
  - The base format for the content is the Crown Legislation Markup Language (CLML), another modified version of Akoma Ntoso.

Way Ahead

- While the rest of the world has moved away from PDF publishing, India remains dependent on a standard that was built more than three decades back.
- Until we upgrade the government's legal publishing software stack, **access to the law will remain unnecessarily difficult for citizens, lawyers, judges and other stakeholders in a democracy.**
- If the government consults its citizens and standardises legal publishing, it could **transform how the state communicates with the people and make them an active part of democracy.**

Source: TH

BITCHAT

Context

- **The Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C)** directed GitHub to remove repositories hosting BitChat, stating that the app could be exploited to coordinate unlawful assemblies and circumvent lawful restrictions imposed by competent authorities.

What is BitChat?

- BitChat is a **decentralised peer-to-peer messaging application** that operates over **Bluetooth** mesh networks. It requires no internet connection, no servers and no phone numbers.
  - It is developed by X (formerly Twitter) co-founder **Jack Dorsey.**
- BitChat creates ad hoc communication networks using only **devices in physical proximity**, with each device acting as both a client and a server, automatically discovering peers and relaying messages across multiple hops to extend the network's reach.
  - According to the platform, this approach **provides censorship resistance, surveillance resistance and infrastructure independence.**
  - The network remains **functional during internet outages,** natural disasters, protests or regions with limited connectivity.
- Traditional messaging apps depend on centralised infrastructure that can be monitored, censored or disabled.

Legal Basis of the Order

- **Section 79(3)(b) of the Information Technology Act, 2000:** It provides that an intermediary may lose safe harbour protection if, after receiving lawful notice, it fails to remove unlawful material expeditiously.
- **Rule 3(1)(d) of the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021:** It requires intermediaries to remove unlawful information upon receiving lawful directions.

Supreme Court Judgments

- **The Supreme Court in Shreya Singhal v. Union of India (2015)** struck down Section 66A of the Information Technology Act and **read down Section 79(3)(b)** clarifying that intermediaries are obligated to remove content only when directed by a court or a government authority acting under due process.
  - The Court also held that speech on the internet enjoys the same constitutional protection as offline speech.
  - It emphasised that vague laws have a chilling effect on free speech and violate **Article 19(1)(a)** of the Constitution unless they satisfy the test of reasonable restrictions under **Article 19(2).**
- **Anuradha Bhasin v. Union of India (2020):** The Supreme Court held that restrictions on internet access must satisfy the test of proportionality, which is the territorial extent of the restriction, stage of the emergency, nature of the urgency, duration of the restrictive measure, and nature of the restriction.

Source: TH

INVASIVE SPECIES THREATEN GLOBAL SOUTH BIODIVERSITY

In News

- A recent study found that the greatest impacts of invasive alien species on biodiversity are in the **Global South**, where rapid development, weak governance and limited management capacity make ecosystems **more vulnerable.**

Invasive Alien Species

- They are plants, animals, pathogens and other organisms that are **non-native to an ecosystem** and which may cause economic or environmental harm or adversely affect human health.
- They compete with, prey on, or transmit diseases to native species, threatening biodiversity.

Do you know?

- According to the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, **amended in 2022**, **invasive alien species (IAS) are non-native plants or animals** that pose a threat to the biodiversity of India through their introduction or spread. But this definition is too narrow.
- It does **not cover the case of native Indian species** which become invasive in parts.
  - The chital or spotted deer, for example, is protected on the mainland but has become ecologically damaging in the Andaman Islands.

Significance and Multidimensional Linkages

- **Ecological:** IAS drive native species extinction through predation, competition and habitat alteration. **For ex: Lantana camara** has altered forest understorey composition across Indian protected areas including Bandipur and Corbett.
- **Economic:** Agricultural losses from invasive pests and weeds threaten food security in economies dependent on smallholder farming. Fall armyworm caused significant maize losses across Africa and India after its introduction.
- **Health:** Invasive vectors such as Aedes mosquitoes expand the geographic range of dengue and Zika, linking biodiversity governance to public health security.
- **Water security:** Aquatic invasives like water hyacinth choke water bodies, affecting irrigation, fisheries and hydropower. For ex: Loktak Lake in Manipur faces recurring water hyacinth infestation.
- **Strategic and trade dimension:** Global supply chains and shipping ballast water are major transmission vectors, making IAS management a cross-border governance issue rather than a purely domestic one.

Challenges

- **Fragmented institutional responsibility** across environment, agriculture, trade and customs ministries weakens coordinated response.
- **Poor baseline biodiversity data i**n developing countries delays early detection.
- **Financial constraints limit** long term eradication and restoration programmes, which are costlier than prevention.
- **Climate change is expanding suitable habitats** for invasive species, compounding existing management gaps.
- **Limited public awareness** leads to unintentional spread through horticulture, aquarium trade and ornamental plantation.

India's Position and Initiatives

- India is a signatory to the **Convention on Biological Diversity and its National Biodiversity Action Plan** includes IAS management as a thematic priority.
- **Biological Diversity Act, 2002 and National Biodiversity Authority** provide the regulatory framework, though implementation remains uneven across states.
- Forest Departments have undertaken targeted removal drives against Lantana camara and Prosopis juliflora in protected areas.
- **Plant Quarantine Order, 2003** under the Ministry of Agriculture regulates import related biosecurity, though enforcement capacity at ports remains limited.
- **India's National Action Plan on Invasive Alien Species (draft stage)** seeks a unified national response mechanism.

Source:PTI

NEWS IN SHORT

ROMANIA

Context

- India and Romania have signed **three agreements** for **cooperation in the fields of Science and Technology, Education and Sports.**

About

- The agreements were signed **after delegation-level talks between President Droupadi Murmu and her Romanian counterpart.**
- India and Romania have **set a target of doubling bilateral trade over the next three years.**

About Romania

- Romania is a country of **southeastern Europe**. The national capital is **Bucharest**.
- It is bounded by **Ukraine** to the north, **Moldova** to the northeast, the Black Sea to the southeast, **Bulgaria** to the south, **Serbia** to the southwest, and **Hungary** to the west.

- The **Danube Delta** is the **second-largest and best-preserved river delta in Europe,** located primarily in Romania with a smaller portion in Ukraine.
  - It is a **UNESCO World Heritage Site,** inscribed on the list in **1991**.
- In **2004** the country joined the **North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO),** and in **2007** it became a member of the **European Union (EU).**

Source: AIR

DISHA 2.0

Context

- The Union Government has launched **DISHA 2.0 (Designing Innovative Solutions for Holistic Access to Justice) Scheme** with a financial outlay of **₹255 crore** for the period **2026–31** for pan-India implementation.

About DISHA 2.0

- It is a **Central Sector Scheme** of the **Department of Justice, Ministry of Law and Justice.**
- **DISHA 2.0** aims at leveraging technology to develop and enhance the outreach of citizen friendly solution platforms for legal services.

Key Components of the Scheme

- **The Tele-Law** connects people with panel lawyers through mobile-app and Toll-Free No. for rendering pre-litigation legal advice and through use of video/tele conferencing facilities.
- **Under Nyaya Bandhu** (Pro-Bono Legal Services) Programme, advocates voluntarily provide legal assistance to marginalized and disadvantaged sections of society covered under Section 12 of the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987.
- **The Legal Literacy and Legal Awareness Programme (LLLAP)** envisages engaging with institutions and building partnerships across stakeholder Ministries/Departments, to build capacity of the grassroot workers, legally empower them and spread legal awareness through workshops, webinars, IEC materials, collaboration with Prasar Bharati and others.
- **VIDHI (Vision for Integrated Delivery of Harmonized Legal Initiatives) - Sanjeevani** is envisaged as a key component under DISHA 2.0 to enhance the monitoring mechanism of the scheme through development and operationalization of a centralized Integrated Dashboard.
  - The dashboard aims to provide a unified interface integrating real-time data streams from multiple sources to facilitate monitoring of the programme performance, service delivery and implementation progress.

Source: PIB

RULE 176 AND RULE 267 OF RAJYA SABHA

In News

- Opposition members protested against the educational reform and gave a notice under **Rule 267 in Rajya Sabha.**

Rule 267 of the Rules of Procedure of Rajya Sabha

- It provides that with the consent of the Chairman, a member may suspend the normal business of the House and take up an urgent matter of public importance for immediate discussion.
- It's a special procedure because it skips the list of business, and can only be done with the consent of the Chairman.
- This shall not apply to any specific chapter of the rules where separate provisions for suspension are provided.

Rule 176 of the Rajya Sabha Rules

- It permits a short-duration discussion on a matter of urgent public importance without disturbing the scheduled business of the House.
- Any member shall send to the Secretary-General a written notice, accompanied by an explanatory note and signed by at least two other members.
- If the Chairman agrees to the notice, the debate is scheduled in consultation with the Leader of the House and may last for up to two and a half hours.

Do you know?

- Lok Sabha Rules of Procedure Rule 193 deals with short duration discussion on a matter of urgent public importance.
- A member shall give written notice to the Secretary-General, with an explanatory note and the signatures of at least two other members.
  - If the Speaker admits the notice, the debate is scheduled at a time fixed by the Speaker, usually on the advice of the Business Advisory Committee.

Source: BS

GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION (GI) TAGS FOR 'UNJHA CUMIN' AND 'UNJHA FENNEL'

Context

- Rajasthan's cumin (jeera) and fennel (saunf) farmers have opposed the Geographical Indication (GI) registration of 'Unjha Jeera' and 'Unjha Fennel'.

About

- Unjha is one of **Asia's largest agricultural markets** for seed spices, especially **cumin (jeera), fennel (saunf), and isabgol.**
- A substantial quantity of **jeera and saunf** traded in the Unjha APMC originates from Rajasthan.
- Rajasthan farmers argue that Unjha in Gujarat is primarily a trading and marketing hub rather than the main production centre for these seed spices.

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: IE

BHAVYA - RASAYAN SCHEME

In News

- The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister, has approved **Bharat Audyogik Vikas Yojana Rasayan or BHAVYA - Rasayan Scheme** for establishing three d**edicated Chemical Parks in the country.**

About BHAVYA - Rasayan Scheme

- The Scheme was announced in the **Union Budget of FY 2026–27** with an outlay of ₹3,030 crore (₹3,000 crore for infrastructure and ₹30 crore for administration) over the period of **five years (FY 2026-27 to FY 2030-31).**
- Union Government will provide up to Rs. 1,000 crore per park, subject to a minimum contribution of Rs. 500 crore by the respective State Government.
- Each park will be developed through a Challenge Route of minimum 2,000 acres (8 sq. km.) with plug and play infrastructure comprising Common Effluent Treatment Plants (CETP), Treatment, Storage and Disposal Facilities (TSDF), water supply systems, solvent recovery units, steam networks, inter-connected pipelines and logistics and warehousing facilities.

Benefits

- It will lead to **enhanced cost competitiveness**, and it will make the Indian Industry globally competitive.

- It will promote the d**evelopment of the Indian Chemical industry** sustainably by creating an environment-friendly ecosystem which will consist of centralized facilities such as a Common Effluent Treatment Plant, Treatment, Storage, and Disposal Facility, and Hazardous Waste Management infrastructure.
- It will help the Indian Chemical industry **better integrate in Global Value Chains**, leading to greater exports and higher import substitution.
- It will ensure **better compliance management with environmental regulations**, thereby promoting development of the industry in an eco-friendly manner
- It shall facilitate development of the sector by **attracting domestic and foreign investments**, enhancing domestic production capacity and generating employment.
- It will boost the global competitiveness of the sector, thereby promoting Atmanirbharta.

Source: PIB

PRAXIS MISSION

Context

- NASA has selected PRAXIS, an innovative mission concept to develop the first spacecraft capable of directly collecting and studying particles from planetary rings, such as those around Saturn.

What is PRAXIS?

- PRAXIS stands for **Planetary Rings Autonomous EXploration with In-situ Sampling.**
- It proposes a **bio-inspired robotic spacecraft** powered by Artificial Intelligence (AI).
- It aims to become the first mission to directly **collect samples from planetary ring particles.**
- **Key Features:**
  - **Bio-inspired robotic explorer:** Designed to mimic efficient movement and adaptability found in nature.
  - **AI-driven autonomy:** Uses AI to identify suitable ring particles, plan sampling operations, and analyze collected data with minimal human intervention.

Source: TH

KUSHA MISSILE

In News

- The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has successfully conducted the maiden flight test of the **Long-Range Surface-to-Air Missile (SAM) Kusha** from Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Island off the coast of Odisha.

Kusha Missile system

- It is an **indigenous long-range SAM system** that will protect strategic military and civilian assets and infrastructure from a range of aerial threats.
- It is capable of neutralising a **wide variety of aerial threats** including fighter jets, missiles, unmanned aerial vehicles and large enemy aircraft within a wide range & altitude envelope.
- A long-range SAM typically has a **range of over 200 km.**
- All weapon system elements, including the missiles, radars, command and control centre, have been developed by various DRDO laboratories and Industry partners.
- It is a part of the **Mission Sudarshan Chakra,** India's ambitious national defense initiative to build an interlocked, multi-layered, AI-enabled air and missile defense shield by 2035.

Do you know?

- In 2025 , the DRDO successfully conducted maiden flight tests of the **Integrated Air Defence Weapon System (IADWS)** — a multi-layered air defence system comprising all indigenous Quick Reaction Surface to Air Missiles (QRSAM), Advanced Very Short Range Air Defence System (VSHORADS) missiles, and a high-power laser-based Directed Energy Weapon (DEW).
- India operates the **Russian S-400 Triumf**, which is understood to be capable of hitting targets up to 400 km away.

Source: IE

ENGLAND TO HOST FIRST-EVER MIXED DISABILITY ASHES IN 2027

Context

- England and Australia will contest the first-ever Mixed Disability Ashes in 2027.

What is the Mixed Disability Ashes?

- It is the **inaugural Ashes series** between the England Men's Mixed Disability Team and the Australia Men's Mixed Disability Team.
- The series will be played in the **T20 International (T20I) format.**
- It will be part of England's 2027 Ashes summer, alongside the men's and women's Ashes series.

- **Mixed Disability Cricket** is an inclusive format in which players with different disability classifications compete together in the same team under a common set of playing conditions.

History of the Ashes

- The Ashes is one of the oldest bilateral cricket series in international cricket, contested between England and Australia. It originated in **1882**.
- **Origin of the Ashes:**
  - In August 1882, **Australia defeated England** for the first time on English soil at The Oval, London.
  - Following the defeat, the British newspaper The Sporting Times published a satirical obituary declaring that "English cricket had died, the body will be cremated and the ashes taken to Australia."
  - This phrase captured public imagination and **gave rise to the name "The Ashes."**
- **Evolution of the Series:**
  - Initially, the Ashes consisted only of Test matches between the men's teams of England and Australia generally every two years.
  - **Women's Ashes:** First played in **1934–35,** contested by the women's national teams of England and Australia.
  - **Blind Ashes:** Inaugurated in **2004**, featuring the blind cricket teams of England and Australia.
  - **Mixed Disability Ashes:** The inaugural edition will be held in **2027.**

Source: DD News

■■■■