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Time: 45 Min

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NATIONAL HANDLOOM DAY 2026

Context

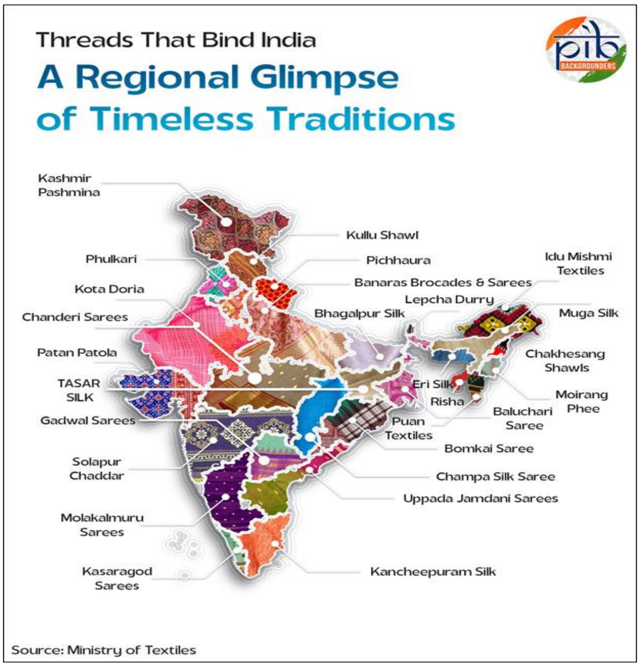
- On the 12th National Handloom Day, the GoI recognised the contribution of the handloom sector of India in attaining the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047 by converging the cultural heritage with sustainable economic growth.

About National Handloom Day

- National Handloom Day is celebrated annually on **7 August**. It commemorates the launch of the **Swadeshi Movement in 1905**, which promoted indigenous goods and encouraged self-reliance.
  - The Government of India declared 7th August as National Handloom Day in **2015.**
- The occasion celebrates India's weaving traditions and recognises the socio-economic and cultural contribution of handloom workers.
- It recognises **35.22 lakh weavers** and allied workers, over **72%** of whom are women.

Handloom Industry of India

- The Indian handloom industry is one of the oldest and most vibrant cottage industries in the world.
- **Handloom Census:**
  - India has conducted **four censuses** so far: 1987-88, 1995-96, 2009-10 and 2019-20.
  - They are conducted at intervals averaging **8-12 years.**
- **According to the 4th All India Handloom Census (2019–20),** about 35.22 lakh households are involved in this work, and around **72% of economic handloom weavers are women.**
- **Top Export Destination:** In FY 2024-25, the **United States** remained the largest destination, followed by the United Arab Emirates, the Netherlands, France, and the United Kingdom, respectively.
- **Products:** Made-ups such as cushion covers, curtains, table linen, and other household items contributed 42.4% in 2024-25, followed by floor coverings like carpets, rugs, and mats, which made up 40.6%.
  - Clothing accessories contributed 12.7%, while fabrics accounted for 4.3%.



Major Challenges Faced by the Industry

- **Declining Number of Weavers:** Younger generations moving away due to low income, lack of social security, and absence of modern skill training.
  - Traditional weavers are aging, leading to a shrinking workforce.
- **Economic Distress:** Prices of raw materials (cotton, silk and dyes) were high while selling prices were low due to exploitation by middlemen.
- **Competition from Powerlooms & Mills:** Machines create Fabrics in large quantities which are cheaper, faster to make and control the marketplace.
  - Handloom products of better quality and distinctive are priced non competitively.
- **Weak Marketing & Branding:** Poor penetration in domestic and worldwide markets due to lack of branding, modern retail and e-commerce acceptance.
- **Technological & Skill Gaps:** Traditional looms are less productive and labour consuming.
- **Globalisation & Import Competition:** Cheap imports (especially from China and Bangladesh) are flooding Indian markets.
  - Indian handloom struggles to compete internationally due to high production costs and a lack of aggressive export promotion.

An Ecosystem of Support for Handloom Weavers

- **National Handloom Development Programme (NHDP):** NHDP was formulated for implementation from **2021-22 to 2025-26.**
  - It follows a need-based approach to the integrated development of the handloom sector, focusing on the welfare of handloom weavers.

- **Raw Material Supply Scheme (RMSS):** The Scheme supports access to yarn by reimbursing freight charges on all types of yarn.
  - It also provides a **15%** price subsidy on specified yarns, subject to prescribed quantity limits.
- **GST Relief for Handlooms and Traditional Crafts:** The Next-Generation GST reforms recommended at the **56th GST Council meeting** in 2025 included measures supporting the handloom sector.
  - Under the GST rationalisation, the tax rate on 36 handicraft items was reduced from 12% to 5%.
  - Cotton handloom rugs and handwoven carpets were also brought under the **5% GST rate.**
  - The rate on domestic and industrial sewing machines was similarly reduced from **12% to 5%,** easing costs for tailoring units and supporting domestic manufacturing.
- **The Union Budget 2026-27** placed special emphasis on textiles through several new measures:
  - **The National Fibre Scheme** is designed to strengthen the textile raw-material base.
  - **Traditional clusters** will be modernised under the Textile Expansion and Employment Scheme.
  - **The Mahatma Gandhi Gram Swaraj Initiative** will strengthen khadi, handloom and handicrafts while benefiting weavers, village industries, rural youth and the One District One Product (ODOP) initiative.

Concluding remarks

- India's handloom sector represents a unique blend of heritage, sustainability, and economic opportunity.
- Handloom can be a significant pillar of Viksit Bharat 2047 by integrating traditional craftsmanship with modern technology, design innovation, and access to global markets, helping to preserve India's unique cultural identity and creating inclusive, women-led rural livelihoods.

Source: TH, PIB

GOVT. OPPOSES INCOME-BASED CREAMY LAYER IN SC/ST QUOTAS

Context

- The government told the Supreme Court of India that the **concept of a "creamy layer" cannot be extended** for the **reservation of the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes categories.**

About

- **Background:** Petitions were filed in the Supreme Court **seeking a creamy-layer exclusion within the reserved categories** of Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) as in the Other Backwards Classes (OBC).
  - The court had also asked the Union government to **file an Action Taken Report after the 2024** Supreme Court decision that paved the way for sub-categorisation among SCs and STs.

- **Government's Stand:** The government argued that the **doctrine has consistently** been applied to **Other Backward Classes (OBCs) only.**
  - Seeking an income-based creamy layer for SCs/STs, **neither raises a constitutional issue nor discloses the violation of any fundamental right** under the Constitution.
  - Reservation policy is **"not solely based on economic status,"** but rather on **historical and social criteria** such as tribe, social backwardness and caste.
  - Any modification, especially to introduce income-based preferences in reserved categories can be done **only after "a holistic review and thorough empirical study**.

Reservation in India

- As per existing instructions, reservation is provided to Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Other Backward Classes (OBCs) at the rate of **15%, 7.5% and 27%, respectively,** in case of direct recruitment on all India basis by open competition.
- The **Constitution (103rd Amendment) Act 2019** enables the State (i.e., both the Central and State Governments) to provide **reservation to the Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) of the society.**

Creamy Layer Principle

- It is a concept used to ensure that reservations in educational institutions and government jobs are extended to those **who are economically and socially disadvantaged within a certain group.**
  - It aims to **prevent the more affluent or advantaged members** of a reserved category from availing themselves of these benefits.
- **Origin:** The concept was first articulated by the **Supreme Court of India** in the **Indra Sawhney case (1992),** also known as the **Mandal Commission case.**
  - The Court's ruling emphasized that within the OBC (Other Backward Classes) category, those who are **relatively more privileged should not benefit from reservations.**
- **Impact:** By applying the creamy layer principle, the government aims to make its affirmative action policies more effective and equitable, ensuring that those who are most in need receive the support intended for them.

Constitutional Provisions Related to Reservation

- **Article 16:** It provides for **equality of opportunity** for all citizens but as an exception the State can provide for reservation of appointments or posts in favour of any backward class that is not adequately represented in the state services.
- **Article 16 (4A):** Provides that the State can make any provision for reservation in matters of promotion in favour of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes if they are not adequately represented in the services under the State.
- **Article 335:** It recognises that special measures need to be adopted for considering the claims of SCs and STs to services and posts, in order to bring them at par.
- **103 Amendment of the Constitution of India:** Introduced **10% reservation** for Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) of society.

Supreme Court Judgement on Sub-Categorisation of Scheduled Castes (SC)

- **In 2024,** the Supreme Court **upheld the validity of sub-classification within Scheduled Caste categories** in a 6:1 majority, overruling the five-judge bench decision in **E.V. Chinaiah v State of Andhra Pradesh (2004).**
  - It held that the criteria for identifying the creamy layer among SCs/STs should differ from those used for the Other Backward Castes (OBCs).
- **Argument of SC in 2024 Judgement:**
  - **Equality under Article 14** means treating equals equally, but allows the State to classify groups that are differently placed.
    - If a reserved category (like Scheduled Castes) is not uniform inside, the State can create smaller groups within it for fair distribution of benefits.
  - **Not Homogeneous:** The Presidential list is a legal fiction, used to identify disadvantaged groups, not a uniform class.
    - Inclusion in the SC list does not bar further classification for targeted benefits.
- **The SC held that the Sub-classification must be based on:**
  - Quantifiable data;
  - Proof of greater disadvantage;
  - Evidence of inadequate and ineffective representation in public services.
  - States must avoid arbitrary classification — must show rationale and empirical backing.

- Effective representation, not just numerical presence, is key.

Arguments in Favour

- **Unequal Backwardness Within SCs:** Some castes within the SC communities are more socially and educationally backward than others and have been consistently underrepresented.
  - Treating unequals equally perpetuates inequality, defeating the purpose of the reservation.
- **Not Homogeneous:** The SC list under Article 341 is a legal fiction created for affirmative action.
  - Chief Justice Chandrachud stated that inclusion in the list does not mean that castes are homogeneous, and law must recognize internal differences.
- **Constitutional Mandate allows it:** Articles 15(4) and 16(4) empower the state to make special provisions for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward class.
- **Promotes Effective Representation:** The goal is effective representation, not mere numbers. Sub-classification can help achieve meaningful inclusion.
- **Backed by Empirical Data:** Allows the government to target affirmative action where it's needed the most.

Arguments Against

- **Article 341:** Article 341 allows only the President to modify the SC list. State-led sub-classification is seen as indirect interference with the list and beyond state powers.
- **Fragmentation Within Community:** Sub-quotas can lead to increased caste-based divisions among SCs. It may undermine the collective political strength and social solidarity of SC communities.
- **Defining Criteria:** Establishing objective, empirical measures of disadvantage within SCs is challenging. It risks inaccurate classification and legal challenges.
- **Opens the 'Creamy Layer' Debate:** Introducing the 'creamy layer' concept for SCs could dilute the protection provided to SCs as a whole. Reservation for SCs is not just about economic backwardness, but historical discrimination and stigma, which persists across income groups.

Way Ahead

- **Within Constitutional Boundaries:** Ensure sub-classification stays within Articles 14, 15(4), 16(4), and does not alter the Presidential List under Article 341.
- **Evaluate Creamy Layer Applicability Carefully:** If applied to SC/ST, set separate criteria from OBCs, ensuring it does not dilute historical safeguards for these groups.
- **Strengthen Social Uplift Measures:** Complement reservations with targeted education, skill development, entrepreneurship support, and anti-discrimination enforcement.
- **Promote Social Cohesion:** Accompany policy changes with awareness drives to prevent divisions within SC communities and maintain the spirit of collective upliftment.

Source: TH

INDIAN FOREIGN SECRETARY HELD TALKS WITH SRI LANKAN PRESIDENT

Context

- India and Sri Lanka have agreed to take forward the **negotiations on updating the Free Trade Agreement and will sign the Social Security pact soon.**

Major Highlights

- The discussions between the visiting Indian Foreign Secretary and Sri Lankan President focused on issues of **mutual interest and review of key bilateral projects**.
- Both sides exchanged agreements on **INR-denominated Lines of Credit for USD 350 million,** which form part of the USD 450 million reconstruction package extended by India in the wake of Cyclone Ditwah.
  - The LoCs will support reconstruction, infrastructure development, and procurement requirements that arose in the aftermath of the cyclone.
- Both sides agreed to expedite **implementation of the electricity grid interconnection project,** the Sampur solar power project, and the development of Trincomalee as an energy hub.

India and Sri Lanka Relations

- **Diplomatic Ties:** Diplomatic relations were established in **1948** after Sri Lanka's independence.

- **Trade Relations:** India-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement (ISFTA) in 2000 contributed significantly towards the expansion of trade between the two countries.
  - India has traditionally been among **Sri Lanka's largest trade partners** and Sri Lanka remains among the largest trade partners of India in the SAARC.
  - India is also one of the **largest contributors to Foreign Direct Investment** in Sri Lanka.
  - **The merchandise trade** amounted to USD 7.18 billion in FY 2025-26, with India's exports at USD 5.52 billion and Sri Lanka's exports at USD 1.66 billion.
  - **The negotiations for finalization of the Economic and Technology Cooperation Agreement (ETCA)** covering both goods and services was resumed after 5 years in 2023.
- **Cultural relations:** The Cultural Cooperation Agreement signed in 1977 forms the basis for periodic Cultural Exchange Programmes between the two countries.
- **Tourism:** India has traditionally been Sri Lanka's **top inbound tourism market,** followed by China.
  - In 2025 India accounted for around 5.31 lakh arrivals (22.5% of Sri Lanka's tourist traffic).
- **Maritime Security and Defence Cooperation:** In 2011, a decision was taken to establish the **Colombo Security Conclave which aims to further promote maritime security in the Indian Ocean Region.**
  - India and Sri Lanka conduct a joint Military exercise named **'Mitra Shakti'**, Trilateral Maritime Exercise **"Dosti",** and a Naval exercise named **SLINEX.**
- **Connectivity Projects:** Recently, the two sides adopted a **vision document to enhance maritime, energy and people to people connectivity.**
  - There are plans to develop a **land bridge between the two countries** to provide India with land access to the ports of Trincomalee and Colombo to boost economic growth.
  - **Important projects under this mechanism include** commencement of ferry services between Nagapattinam, Tamil Nadu and Kankesanthurai, Sri Lanka.
  - **In order to develop Kankesanthurai port,** GoI has extended a grant of USD 65 million to GoSL.
- **Multilateral Forum Collaboration:** India and Sri Lanka are member nations of several regional and multilateral organizations such as the **South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)**, South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme, South Asian Economic Union and BIMSTEC, working to enhance cultural and commercial ties.

Areas of Concern

- **The Fishermen Issue:** Sri Lanka's proximity to Indian territorial waters has often blurred the line for fishermen on both sides in pursuit of fish stock**.**
  - Since 2016, a **Joint Working Group on Fisheries (JWG) mechanism** has been in place to address the immediate concerns of fishermen of both sides and to find a permanent solution to the issue.
- **Rise of China:** China's increasing strategic investments in vital maritime ports in the IOR has been an area of concern.
  - There is a lack of transparency in implementation of projects and possible military use of ports by China.
- **Maritime Security Concerns:** Piracy, illegal fishing, and smuggling in the Palk Strait and surrounding waters.
  - Need for constant coordination on maritime borders to prevent incidents.
- **Domestic Instability in Sri Lanka:** Political unrest or changes in government affect continuity of agreements and development projects.
  - Delays in infrastructure or economic projects due to internal instability.

Way Ahead

- India and Sri Lanka share **deep historical, cultural, and strategic ties,** reinforced by trade, defence, and development cooperation.
- While challenges such as Chinese influence, and economic instability persist.
- Enhanced economic and maritime collaboration, and strong people-to-people ties can ensure a **resilient, mutually beneficial, and strategically vital partnership** in the Indian Ocean.

Source: IE

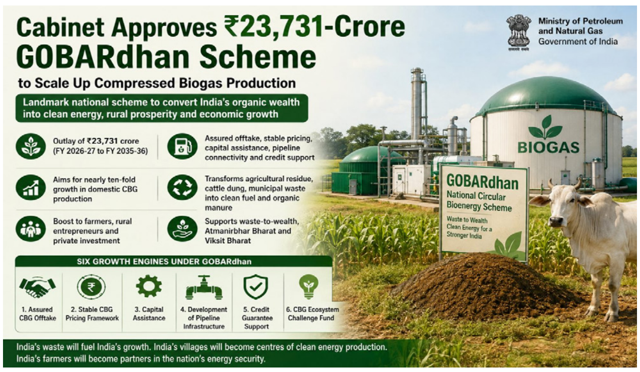
NATIONAL CIRCULAR BIOENERGY SCHEME (GOBARDHAN SCHEME)

Context

- Recently, the Union Cabinet has approved the **National Circular Bioenergy Scheme (GOBARdhan – Galvanising Organic Bio-Agro Resources Dhan)** with a total outlay of **₹23,731 crore**.

What is the GOBARdhan Scheme?

- The **National Circular Bioenergy Scheme** is designed to build a strong environment for **CBG production**, managed pricing mechanism, capital subsidies, pipeline infrastructure support, and easier access to finance.
- It is meant to catalyse **domestic CBG output to over 10 times**, creating a stable and predictable investment environment for the sector.
- It **builds on the foundation** laid through **earlier programmes** such as:
    - **Sustainable Alternative Towards Affordable Transportation (SATAT)** initiative;
    - **Market Development Assistance (MDA) Scheme** for organic manure;
    - **Biomass Aggregation Machinery (BAM) Scheme**;
    - **Development of Pipeline Infrastructure (DPI) Scheme;** and
    - **National Bioenergy Programme** for financial assistance.
- It encourages the production of compressed biogas from diverse organic wastes like agricultural leftovers, animal manure, sugar industry waste (such press mud), municipal organic waste and other biodegradable biomass.
- The CBG produced can be mixed with **Compressed Natural Gas (CNG)** for transportation and distributed through **Piped Natural Gas (PNG)** networks.



Major Features of the Scheme

- **Assured Market and Administered Pricing:** CBG is fixed at an administered price of **₹2,110 per Metric Million British Thermal Unit (MMBTU)** with assured market and administered pricing.
    - It creates long-term revenue stability for producers and affordable costs for consumers by combining government support and market-based cost sharing.
- **Capital Assistance:** Eligible greenfield and brownfield CBG projects for capacity expansion will be provided capital assistance **up to ₹2 crore per tonne per day (TPD)** of installed CBG capacity.
    - It covers core plant machinery, feedstock aggregation infrastructure, and manure processing.
    - It is projected to minimise the initial costs of projects and increase participation of private enterprises, MSMEs, cooperatives and rural entrepreneurs.
- **Development of Pipeline Infrastructure:** A crucial part of the project is the development of pipeline infrastructure.
    - It supports cluster-based pipeline networks, standalone pipelines connecting CBG plants to trunk pipelines, and **Integration with City Gas Distribution (CGD)** networks.
    - Improved connectivity is expected to reduce transportation and evacuation costs, ensure reliable offtake, expand market access, and increase utilisation of domestically produced CBG.

Significance

- The scheme supports **multiple national priorities** i.e. energy security, circular economy, waste-to-wealth mission, atmanirbhar bharat, climate change mitigation, doubling farmers' income through diversified revenue, and viksit Bharat vision
- It addresses three long-standing requirements of the sector i.e **remunerative pricing, assured offtake, and capital support** which are expected to facilitate expansion from around **300 operational CBG plants to nearly 5,000 plants** over time.

Expected Benefits

- **Energy Security:** Reduces dependence on imported fossil fuels, and increases domestic production of clean gaseous fuel.

- **Waste Management:** Converts agricultural, livestock, industrial, and municipal waste into useful energy, and supports scientific disposal of organic waste.
- **Rural Economy:** Offers extra avenues of income for farmers by selling agricultural residues and livestock dung; creates job possibilities in rural regions by setting up and running CBG units.
- **Environmental Benefits:** Helps in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, reduces stubble burning and open dumping of organic waste and stimulates formation of organic manure and improves soil health.
- **Private Investment:** Stable pricing and capital support are anticipated to draw investments into the bioenergy sector and accelerate the financial conclusion of projects.

Challenges

- Timely development of pipeline infrastructure.
- Reliable collection and aggregation of feedstock.
- Better coordination between Central Agencies, States and Local Bodies.
- Financial Sustainability and Operational Effectiveness of CBG Plants.
- Maintaining quality standards of CBG and organic manure.

Way Forward

- The success of the GOBARdhan Scheme would depend on successful implementation, strong infrastructure, timely financial support and active participation of private investors and rural enterprises.
- It has the potential to turn India's CBG sector into a significant pillar of clean energy, sustainable waste management and rural economic growth with a predictable pricing regime, better connectivity and capital support.

Source: TH

DISBURSAL OF LOANS UNDER THE RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT AND INNOVATION (RDI) FUND

Context

- Soft Loans were disbursed to the 22 private companies under the **Research, Development and Innovation (RDI) Fund.**

About RDI Fund

- The Research, Development and Innovation (RDI) Fund was **created by the government in 2025.**
  - The Scheme envisages a **corpus of ₹1 lakh crore over a period of six years.**
- **Aim:** To provide collateral-free, low-cost, long-term loans to private sector companies e**ngaged in advanced research and innovation** in priority deep-tech sectors like artificial intelligence, quantum technology, space science, defence, robotics, clean energy, semiconductors and digital healthcare.
- **Managed By:** The fund is housed under the **Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF),** a recently established statutory body under the Ministry of Science and Technology.
  - **A Special Purpose Fund (SPF)** has been created under ANRF, which is the custodian of money allocated for the RDI Fund.
- **Disbursal of Funds:** It is done through organisations designated as **Second-Level Fund Managers (SLFMs),** which are also responsible for **selecting the Eligible Technology Entities (ETEs) for funding.**
  - **Two organisations have been selected to act as SLFMs:** the Technology Development Board (TDB), a statutory body under the Department of Science and Technology,
  - and the Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC), a Section 8 not-for-profit company wholly owned by the Department of Biotechnology.
- **Investment Committee:** The evaluation and selection of ETEs has been delegated to **investment committees,** which **each SLFM must constitute separately.**
  - SLFMs take the **final decision after conducting assessments,** including a detailed background check, but a company not recommended by the investment committee does not get selected.
- **Type of Loan:** The ETEs are eligible for a loan of a **maximum of 50%** of their project cost from the RDI Fund. These are collateral-free loans, offered at about **2-4% interest, for 15 years.**
- **Eligibility for Applying:** Only technologies that have reached **TRL4 stage (products validated under laboratory conditions) are eligible to apply.**
  - Proposals are evaluated on scientific, technological, financial and commercial merits, and a decision is taken by majority.

Technology Readiness Level

- TRL (Technology Readiness Level) is a metric to describe the **maturity of technology being developed.**
- **TRL1, the lowest level,** is achieved when the basic principles of conversion of a scientific theory into a technology is established.
- **TRL9, the highest level**, denotes a technology that is proven in operational environments.

Source: IE

NEWS IN SHORT

RAJYA SABHA CLEARS APPROPRIATION BILL FOR EXPENDITURE OF ₹54,067 CRORE

Context

- The Rajya Sabha passed the Appropriation Bill, 2026, authorising ₹54,067.44 crore from the Consolidated Fund of India toward Excess Grants for expenditure incurred in FY 2022–23.

What is the Appropriation Bill?

- The Appropriation Bill is introduced under **Article 114** of the Constitution of India to authorise the **withdrawal of funds from the Consolidated Fund** of India to fulfil government expenditure.
- It deals with appropriation of funds already voted by the Lok Sabha and charged expenditure, as **authorised** under **Article 114(3).**
  - The **Bill does not allow any amendments**, as it only seeks approval for expenditure already voted.
  - It is introduced after the Demands for Grants are voted by the Lok Sabha under Article 113.

What are Excess Grants?

- Excess Grants are required when **actual expenditure during a financial year exceeds** the amount originally approved by Parliament.
- In cases of **Supplementary, Additional, or Excess Grants** (Article 115), a separate Appropriation Bill is also introduced to authorise the withdrawal of the additional amount from the CFI.
- They are presented after the **financial year has ended** and are examined by the **Public Accounts Committee (PAC)** before parliamentary approval.

Source: TH

GOOD SAMARITAN SCHEME

Context

- Only 813 people have been awarded under the **Good Samaritan scheme** over the past five years, from **2021-22 to 2025-26.**

About

- It was launched in **2021** by the **Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH).**
- **Bystanders, or Good Samaritans or Raah-Veers,** are among the most important links in saving lives on the road. They are often the **first responders at the scene of a road accident.**
- The scheme provides a **reward of Rs 25,000** to anyone who helps an accident victim reach a hospital during the **"Golden Hour"** i.e. the **first 60 minutes after a critical accident.**
  - Earlier, the reward amount was **Rs 5,000.**
- **The cash prize and certificate** were introduced to encourage the public to assist accident victims and inspire others to help save lives.

Data Under the Scheme

- **Only 77 Good Samaritans** were awarded in **2021-22,** followed by 75 in 2022-23, 384 in 2023-24, 177 in 2024-25 and 100 in 2025-26.
- Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Rajasthan, Bihar and Andhra Pradesh **account for two-thirds of road accident deaths** in the country.
  - Out of these eight states, **Rajasthan awarded the highest number** of Good Samaritans, followed by Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.
  - **Two states saw no beneficiaries** under the scheme over the last five years.

Source: IE

BLUE ZONES

Context

- Okinawa, Japan, one of the world's recognised Blue Zones, has drawn global attention for its high life expectancy and healthy ageing.

What are Blue Zones?

- Blue Zone is a geographic area where people live longer, healthier lives than average and have an extraordinary **concentration of centenarians** (those beyond the age of 100 years).

- The concept was developed by journalist **Dan Buettner,** demographer **Michel Poulain**, and physician **Gianni Pes a**fter studying regions with exceptional longevity.
- **The five recognised Blue Zones are:** Okinawa (Japan), Sardinia (Italy), Nicoya Peninsula (Costa Rica), Ikaria (Greece) and Loma Linda, California (United States).

Source: TH

FARAKKA TREATY

Context

- With the 1996 Farakka Treaty set to expire on 12 December 2026, demands have been raised to review its provisions in light of Bihar's future water requirements.

About

- The **Farakka Treaty**, also known as the **Ganga Water Treaty**, was signed on 12 December 1996 between Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda of India and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina of Bangladesh.
- It governs the sharing of **Ganga waters** at the **Farakka Barrage**. During the **lean period** (11 March–11 May), 35,000 cusecs of water are allocated alternately to each country for 10-day periods, subject to water availability.
- The **Farakka Barrage**, built on the **Bhagirathi River** in **West Bengal**, was constructed to improve the navigability of the Kolkata Port by diverting water into the **Hooghly River**.
- **Article XII** provides that the treaty is **renewable by mutual consent** after the completion of its **30-year** term.

Source: TOI

MEASURES FOR THE SAFETY OF INDIAN SEAFARERS

In News

- The Government has implemented a comprehensive framework to protect Indian seafarers amid security tensions in Iran, the Strait of Hormuz, the Persian Gulf, and adjoining waters.

Safety Seafarers

- Seafarers drive the global economy, moving over 80% of the world's trade.
- India is one of the world's largest providers of seafarers, and must focus on strengthening welfare, skilling and reskilling initiatives to build a future-ready maritime workforce.

Safety of Indian Seafarers: Key Measures

- **'Seafarer-First' framework:** The Government has adopted a 'Seafarer-First' framework to safeguard Indian seafarers amid heightened tensions
- **Security advisories**: Government Issued several DGS circulars (2026) recommending to not operate in conflict zones, restricting voyages thru Strait of Hormuz, making ship security drills mandatory, voyage specific risk assessments, complying with ISPS Code, and requesting seafarers to register with the Indian Embassy in Tehran.
- **eNavik Portal :** The Government has enhanced monitoring and emergency response for Indian seafarers with the eNavik Portal (effective from July 1, 2026) providing 24×7 digital reporting, crisis management and grievance redressal.
    - The online ship reporting system provides real-time data on vessels transiting high-risk areas.
    - Company Security Officers are to submit vessel and crew details to the DG Communication Center.
- **Communication & Monitoring** : 24×7 Control Room and DG Communication Center (MMDAC) works in tandem with the Indian Navy
    - Regular security advisories and navigational warnings are established, as well as emergency communication protocols.
- **Evacuation & Repatriation:** 60 vessels passed safely through the Strait of Hormuz and 3,972 Indian seafarers were repatriated from the Gulf region.
- **Seafarers Welfare Fund Society** provides continuous updates, welfare counselling and financial assistance of 10 lakh in case of fatalities to the families.
- **Controlled Deployment**: The employment of Indian Seafarers is confined to licensed agencies, which have undergone verification for approvals, compliance with deployment restrictions, and safe emigration procedures.
- **Consent-Based Crew Changes:** Emergency crew changes in conflict zones may only be made with the express consent of the seafarer and within the legal and safety framework that has been stipulated.
    - The government has issued advisories to discourage deployment through the Strait of Hormuz, ensuring seafarers are not forced into hazardous voyages.

- **Risk Disclosure & Due Diligence:** Shipping companies & agencies should inform seafarers about the voyage route, security risks, details of the vessel, insurance, and exposure to high-risk areas before employing them.
- **Grievance Redressal:** Toll Free helplines, WhatsApp help, email support, eNavik portal and DG Communication Center are provided for emergency help and grievance redressal thru 24x7 support system.

Source :PIB

THIRD-PARTY INSURANCE COVER

Context

- The Supreme Court extended the **mandatory third-party motor insurance coverage of new vehicles by a year.**

Third Party Insurance Cover

- **Third-party liability insurance** is a policy purchased from an insurance company that **protects the policyholder against claims made by a third party** for damages due to the policyholder's actions.
  - **A common example of third-party liability** insurance is **car insurance,** which is designed to protect you against the claims of other drivers in case of an accident.
  - It is a statutory requirement for all vehicle owners as per the **Motor Vehicle Act.**

About SC Directions

- New cars will now have **four years of coverage and two-wheelers six years.**
  - SC in 2018 (**S. Rajaseekaran v. Union of India case),** mandated that purchasers of new vehicles obtain three-year third-party insurance for cars and five-year cover for two-wheelers.
- It directed the Centre to **evolve a pilot project** by which fuel for vehicles can be refused at petrol pumps until valid insurance is obtained.
- Automatic Number Plate Recognition cameras, deployed on highways and roads to detect traffic violations **to be integrated with insurance data maintained by the Insurance Information Bureau of India (IIB)** and vehicle registration data available on the VAHAN portal.
- State police personnel to be equipped with **mobile applications linked to the IIB and VAHAN databases.**

Need for Mandating the Third Party Insurance

- The object behind mandatory insurance under Section 146 of the MVA is not just that victims of road accidents are compensated, it is also that **they are not drawn into prolonged litigation.**
- The result of vehicles remaining uninsured is that the **victims of the accident and their families have no recourse to adequate compensation** within a reasonable time period.

Source: TH

AGNI-4

Context

- India successfully test-fired the medium-range ballistic missile Agni-4 from the Integrated Test Range at Chandipur in Odisha.

About

- **Agni-4** is a **two stage** surface-to-surface nuclear-capable ballistic missile powered by solid-fuel rocket motors.
- It has a strike range of up to **4,000 km** and forms a vital component of India's strategic deterrence capability.
- The missile is 20 metres long, 1.3 metres in diameter, weighs around 17 tonnes, and can carry a **payload of about 1,000 kg**.
- It can be launched from a **road-mobile, self-contained launcher**, enhancing its survivability and operational flexibility.
- Agni-4 forms part of India's **Agni series** of ballistic missiles, which includes **Agni-I, Agni-II, Agni-III, Agni-IV, Agni-V**, and the newer **Agni-Prime**.

Source: TOI

DR. M. S. SWAMINATHAN AWARD FOR ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION

In News

- P. Pechiyammal of Ramanathapuram and Govindhammal of Villupuram were given the Dr. M. S. Swaminathan Award for Environment Protection 2026 .

> **Do you know?**
> - **Pechiyammal** was recognised for pioneering the collection of ghost fishing gear (abandoned fishing nets, nylon ropes and plastic waste) from coastal areas, a move that has helped reduce marine pollution.
> - **Govindhammal** was recognised for her contribution toward promoting sustainable agriculture, empowering farmers with better seeds and improved farming practices.

Dr. M. S. Swaminathan Award for Environment Protection

- It was instituted by the Rotary Club of Madras East (RCME) in the name of its honorary member and agricultural scientist, the late M.S. Swaminathan.
  - It is being supported by CavinKare Pvt. Ltd.
- It is presented to either an individual, a company, or an NGO that has contributed, either directly or indirectly, to enhancing environmental protection and awareness.

M. S. Swaminathan

- **Birth and Early age**: Born on 7 August 1925, Kumbakonam, Tamil Nadu
  - He opted for agriculture rather than medicine after seeing the Bengal Famine (1942–43), believing that better crop varieties could change the lives of farmers and provide food security.
- **Contributions:**
  - **Green Revolution**: He was instrumental in the Green Revolution in the 1960s and 70s that transformed India from food shortages and dependence on imports to self-sufficiency in food production.
  - **Scientific Efforts :** He Started research at the Central Rice Research Institute (1954) on improvement of fertilizer responsiveness for developing high-yielding rice varieties.
    - He Realised the need for semi-dwarf, fertilizer-responsive varieties of wheat that would not lodge.
    - He worked with Norman E. Borlaug and Orville Vogel introduced Mexican dwarf wheat varieties, leading to the Wheat Revolution in India by the late 1960s.
    - He was the first Indian to become Director General of the International Rice Research Institute, Philippines (1982-88), and his leadership was recognized with the first World Food Prize in 1987
  - **Conservation of the Environment: He** worked extensively for mangrove restoration and conservation of coastal eco-system in Kendrapara district of Odisha.
    - He Introduced the notion of trusteeship management of biosphere reserves 1999

    - With support of the Global Environment Facility (GEF), helped establish the Gulf of Mannar Biosphere Reserve Trust.
    - He advocated large scale mangrove plantation to protect coastal communities from future disasters after the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami.
- **Welfare of farmers:** As Chairman, National Commission on Farmers (2004-06) recommended that the MSP should be at least 50% above the weighted average cost of production (C2+50%) so that farmers get remunerative incomes.
- **Awards** : In 2024, he was conferred the Bharat Ratna posthumously.
    - For his visionary leadership that propelled the Green Revolution to success, he was recognised as “Father of Economic Ecology” by the United Nations Environment Programme.

Source :TH

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