

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS (DCA)

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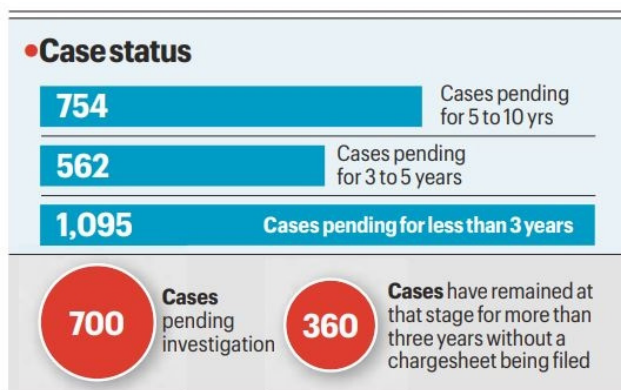
4,000 CASES PENDING AGAINST MPS, MLAS

Context

- As per the report submitted before the Supreme Court, a total of 4,192 cases against sitting and former MPs and MLAs are pending trial across the country.

About

- Chief Ministers of 14 of 28 states** have criminal cases against them pending trials.



Reasons of Criminalisation of Politics

- Weak Disqualification Laws:** As per the Representation of the **People Act, 1951 (RPA)** disqualification of the candidates occurs only after conviction. Since trials take years, candidates contest multiple elections before any judgment.
- Money and Muscle Power:** Candidates with financial resources and local influence are seen as “winnable” candidates.
- Low Voter Awareness:** Affidavits disclose candidate details, but many voters remain unaware or vote on caste/religious lines.
- Party Complicity:** Parties at times justify the candidature on the basis of popularity and electoral chances.
- Judicial Delays:** Due to the frequent adjournments and long duration of judicial processes criminals escape conviction.

Impact of Criminalisation of Politics

- Erosion of Democratic Values:** It undermines the principle of free and fair elections and voters are left with restricted choices, weakening the spirit of representative democracy.
- Corruption:** The presence of criminal elements escalates **electoral malpractices** such as voter intimidation, booth capturing, and the use of black money in campaigns.

- Decline of Public Trust:** Repeated election of tainted representatives, lead to **declining voter turnout** and weakening people’s faith in democratic institutions.
- Distortion of Policy-Making:** Elected representatives use political power to protect personal and criminal networks and divert policy-making away from public interest.

Key Committee Recommendations

- Indrajit Gupta Committee (1998) & 2nd ARC (2007)** recommended partial state funding of elections to curb the use of black money and reduce corruption.
- The National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution** in its **2002** report recommended measures to enhance the accountability of political parties, including the statutory audit of party expenses and the disclosure of candidates’ assets and liabilities.
- The Law Commission’s 244th Report (2014)** recommended disqualifying politicians from contesting elections as soon as charges are framed against them for offenses that carry a maximum punishment of **five years or more**.
 - The report specifically recommended **expediting trials for sitting MPs and MLAs** by establishing fast-track courts.

Supreme Court Interventions

- Union of India v. Association for Democratic Reforms 2002:** The Supreme Court upheld a High Court order **mandating the Election Commission to obtain and disclose to the public background information relating to candidates** running for office.
 - The information includes information on their **assets, criminal records, and educational background**.
 - It held that the **right to know about public officials is derived from the constitutional right to freedom of expression**.
- In Lily Thomas v. Union of India (2013),** the Court ruled that any sitting MP, MLA, or MLC would be **immediately disqualified** upon conviction for a crime with a sentence of **two years or more**.
- In Public Interest Foundation v. Union of India (2018),** the Court directed political parties to publicize the criminal records of candidates, detailing the nature of offences and charges.

- **Rambabu Singh Thakur v. Sunil Arora (2020):** The Supreme Court of India ordered political parties to publish details of candidates with pending criminal cases on their websites, social media, and in newspapers, along with the reasons for their selection, **within 48 hours** of candidate selection.
- **SC Directions for Speedy Trials:**
 - ♦ In 2017, the **Supreme Court ordered the setting up of 12 special courts** in 10 states, UTs for speedy trials in criminal cases involving legislators.
 - ♦ In 2018, it directed that **one designated Sessions Court and one designated Magisterial Court** be identified in every district to try cases on priority.
 - ♦ In 2023, the **SC directed the Chief Justices of all HCs** to register suo motu cases to monitor the **early disposal of such cases** and empowered special benches to issue directions for expeditious trials.
 - ♦ Despite the Supreme court's directions, the **pendency had remained at roughly the same level.**

130th Constitution Amendment Bill

- **Background:** The bill was introduced in **2025** and was subsequently referred to a **Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC)** following intense opposition protests.
- **Major Features:** The Bill provides for the removal of a minister if he/she is accused of an offence **punishable with five or more years of imprisonment**, and has been **arrested and detained for 30 consecutive days**.
 - ♦ If the **Prime Minister or a Chief Minister remains in custody for 30 consecutive days**, they must resign; otherwise, they would automatically cease to hold office on the 31st day.
 - ♦ **The removal can be directed by the President or Governor** upon the advice of the Prime Minister or the Chief Minister, respectively, or automatically on the 31st day of detention.
- **At present**, ministers leave office through **resignation, dismissal by the Prime Minister or Chief Minister, or disqualification** following conviction under existing laws.

Conclusion

- The criminal background of the elected representatives **undermines democratic governance, weakens the rule of law, and erodes public trust in institutions.**
- The issue needs to be addressed with the **electoral reforms, speedy trials of the cases, transparency in political funding and informed voter participation.**

Source: IE

CAG AUDIT FLAGS GOVERNANCE CONCERNS IN RAILWAY PASSENGER AMENITIES

Context

- A recent Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) audit of railway passenger amenities for 2019-20 to 2023-24 found major deficiencies in basic facilities, drinking-water quality, implementation of passenger-amenity works and monitoring mechanisms.

Major Findings of the CAG Audit

- The Railway Board introduced **Minimum Essential Amenities (MEA) in 2003**, with the norms revised in 2018.
 - ♦ Out of **512** non-suburban stations audited, only 54 stations—less than 11%—had all prescribed MEAs.
- **Drinking-Water Safety:** Water samples from water coolers at several stations tested positive for E. coli, indicating faecal contamination and inadequate water-quality management.
- **Accessibility for Divyangjan:** The audit highlighted significant gaps in facilities intended to ensure universal accessibility including standard ramps with railings (44%), earmarked parking lots (55%), non-slippery walkways (32%).
- **Underutilisation of Funds:** Around 59% of passenger-amenity works were found to be delayed. Funds allocated for customer amenities were underutilised by 36–44% during the audited period.
- **Maintenance Concerns:** The CAG found lapses in the maintenance of water coolers, rag picking, pest and rodent control measures, the discharge of sewage from drains or toilets at stations, and the upkeep of toilets, urinals and bathrooms.

- **Poor monitoring:** Zonal Railway Users' Consultative Councils (ZRUCCs) and Divisional Railway Users' Consultative Councils (DRUCCs), intended to provide passenger feedback and monitor amenities, did not meet with the prescribed frequency.
- **Passenger Complaints:** Passenger complaints registered through **RailMadad** showed an increase in complaints relating to medical assistance, cleanliness, malfunctioning electrical equipment and water availability.
 - ♦ The proportion of passengers who expressed dissatisfaction with the resolution of their complaints increased from 37% in 2022-23 to **42% in 2023-24**.

Government Initiatives to Improve Passenger Amenities

- **The Amrit Bharat Station Scheme** is an initiative launched by the Ministry of Railways to redevelop and modernize 1,340 railway stations across India.
- **The Swachh Rail, Swachh Bharat program** was launched in 2014, to improve sanitation standards, eliminate open waste discharge on tracks, and foster clean travel habits among passengers.
- **RailMadad** provides passengers with a digital mechanism to register complaints and seek assistance regarding railway services.
 - ♦ Complaints can cover issues relating to **cleanliness, water, electrical equipment, medical assistance** and other passenger amenities.
- **Sanitation Infrastructure:** Indian Railways has promoted bio-toilets and improved toilet infrastructure as part of its sanitation efforts.
 - ♦ Following the latest CAG concerns, the Railways has announced a **"tank-to-tap"** water filtration system at around 20,000 locations, including water coolers.
- **Passenger Information Systems:** Railway stations are being equipped with improved electronic train indicators, public-address systems, digital displays and signage.

CAG's Recommendations

- The CAG has recommended that the Railways should prepare and implement station-wise and **time-bound action plans** to address identified deficiencies in passenger amenities.

- The Railways should **ensure regular functioning of all consultative committees** and Service Improvement Groups with effective documentation, supervision and follow-up on deficiencies.
- The Railways should also strengthen **passenger-centric monitoring** by improving enforcement of **anti-littering rules, enhancing grievance redressal and publicity of complaint registers** to achieve tangible improvements at stations,

Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG)

- The CAG is the **supreme audit authority of India**, responsible for auditing government accounts and ensuring accountability in public finance management.
- **Articles 148 to 151** of the Indian Constitution provide the framework for the appointment, duties, and reporting structure of the CAG.
- **The Comptroller and Auditor General's (Duties, Powers and Conditions of Service) Act, 1971**, determines the CAG's service conditions and prescribes the duties and powers of their office.

Duties and responsibilities of CAG

- Audits expenditure from the **Consolidated Fund of India**, states, and union territories with Legislative Assemblies.
- Audits expenditure from the **Contingency Fund and Public Account of India** and those of the states.
- Audits transactions related to **debt, sinking funds, deposits, advances, suspense accounts, and remittance business** with Presidential approval.
- Audits accounts of any authority if **requested by the President or Governor** (e.g., local bodies).

Audits Reports Submitted by CAG to the President of India

- Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India submits **three audit reports** to the President of India (Article 151).
 - ♦ **Audit report on appropriation accounts:** This report shows how the legislature-granted money was allocated to different heads of expenditure and grants. It also verifies if the money was spent for the intended purpose.

- ♦ **Audit report on finance accounts:** This report shows the annual receipts and expenditures of the country.
- ♦ **Audit report on public undertakings:** This report covers the finances and expenditures of various Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs).
- After receiving the reports, the President lays them before both houses of Parliament. **The Public Accounts Committee (PAC)** then examines the reports and submits its findings to Parliament.

Source: IE

BLACK MONEY IN ELECTIONS HAMPERS DEMOCRACY: SC

Context

- The Supreme Court has recently passed directives to check unexplained cash and electoral offences, stating that voter choices influenced by illicit money are detrimental to free and fair elections and the '**very essence of democracy**'.

Black Money in Elections

- The black money in elections is used to influence voters, support the campaign, distribute cash or gifts and fulfil election related expenses through unaccounted or undeclared money outside the legal framework.
 - ♦ It creates an uneven electoral playing field and can develop a link between money, crime and politics.
- The issue came before the Supreme Court in *Prathik Parasrampur v. State of Karnataka*, arising from a Karnataka High Court decision (2015) quashing an FIR concerning alleged hoarding of cash for voter bribery.
 - ♦ The Court expanded the proceedings to examine the broader systemic problem of black money in elections.

Current Status

- The **Election Commission of India (ECI)** placed before the Court data showing **3,87,430 FIRs** registered during the **2024 Lok Sabha elections**, of which only about **42.9% (1,66,044)** had resulted in convictions, with the remainder pending investigation or trial.
- The Court noted that the withdrawal of election-related prosecutions, following changes in administration, could give rise to an impression of impunity.

Why Black Money Threaten Democracy?

- **Distorting Voter Choice:** Financial incentives turn an informed election choice into a transaction.
- **Creates an Unequal Playing Field:** Candidates with more access to illicit financing have an unfair advantage.
- **Promotes Criminalisation:** Unaccounted money can help to increase the link between crime, business and politics.
- **Destroys Public Confidence:** The perception of electoral manipulation undermines confidence in democratic institutions.
- **Encourages Policy Capture:** Candidates reliant on illicit finance may become subject to private interests.
- **Undermines Democratic Equality:** Too much money in politics can drown out the political voice of less well-off persons.
 - ♦ The Supreme Court referred to Justice HR Khanna's statement in *Indira Nehru Gandhi v. Raj Narain* that democracy depends upon faith in free and fair elections.
 - ♦ In **Anoop Baranwal v. Union of India**, it reiterated that 'the ballot is more potent than the most powerful gun'.

Constitutional, Legal and Institutional Framework

- **Election Commission:** Detects unlawful campaign spending with expenditure monitors, Static Surveillance Teams and Flying Squads
 - ♦ **Article 324** confers the comprehensive authorities for conduct and monitoring of elections in the Election Commission.
- **Representation of the People Act, 1951:** It provides the statutory framework dealing with electoral offences, corrupt practices and election expenditure.
- **Income Tax Authorities:** Investigate unexplained cash and assets, including seizures over prescribed criteria.
- **Judiciary:** Reviews electoral issues and ensures that prosecutions and withdrawals relating to elections are in accordance with the law.
- The Court traced the issues of financial disparity to *Kanwar Lal Gupta v. Amar Nath Chawla* (1975), **Goswami Committee Report (1990)**, **Vohra Committee Report (1993)** and **255th Report of Law Commission (2015)**.

Supreme Court's Recent Directions

- The Court directed that:
 - ♦ Seized cash/assets need to be reported to the jurisdictional District Magistrate/ Additional District Magistrate/Court **within 24 hours**, with reasons establishing a prima facie electoral nexus.
 - ♦ Investigations should ordinarily be completed **within one year**; delays need to be recorded and reported to the ECI.
 - ♦ **Quarterly investigation-status reports** need to be submitted to the ECI.
 - ♦ Cash exceeding ₹10 lakh detected by Static Surveillance Teams need to be reported to Income Tax authorities.
 - ♦ High Courts should designate **special courts** for prompt disposal of cases against candidates and sitting MPs/MLAs.
 - ♦ Withdrawal of prosecution against candidates during an election cycle requires **prior approval of the jurisdictional High Court**.
 - ♦ Pending election-offence cases should be disposed of expeditiously.
 - ♦ The ECI and governments need to submit compliance reports by **18 November 2026**.

Way Forward: Strengthening Measures

- Ensure **time-bound investigation and trial** of electoral offences.
- Strengthen ECI's technological and financial-investigation capacity.
- Improve coordination among the **ECI, Income Tax Department, police and enforcement agencies**.
- Establish transparent mechanisms for **political-party and campaign finance disclosure**.
- Prevent politically motivated withdrawal of electoral prosecutions.
- Increase voter awareness against accepting inducements.
- Consider institutional reforms to reduce the dependence of electoral politics on opaque private financing.

Conclusion

- **Free and fair elections** require not merely the **right to vote** but the freedom to exercise that choice without coercion or illicit financial influence.

- The Supreme Court's directions strengthen the institutional framework for protecting electoral integrity and democratic accountability.

Source: Live Law

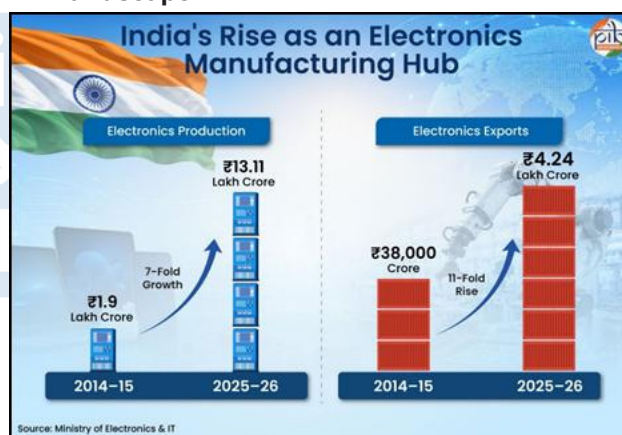
DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE IN INDIA

Context

- India's governance has undergone a fundamental transformation through **Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)**.

India's Digital Economy

- **The Digital Economy** now contributes about **12–14%** of India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and is projected to account for **20% over the next decade**.
- As per the State of India's Digital Economy Report 2026, India is now the world's **fifth-largest digitalised economy** and the **fourth-highest ranked G20 economy**.
- **Key Milestones in India's Digital Self-Reliance Landscape**



- ♦ **Third-largest Export Sector:** Electronic goods have now become India's third-largest export category.
- ♦ **Employment and Women Participation:** Electronic manufacturing ecosystem supports nearly 25 lakh jobs, with women accounting for nearly **30% of the workforce**.
- ♦ **Global Mobile Manufacturing Hub:** India is now the **world's 2nd largest mobile phone manufacturer**.

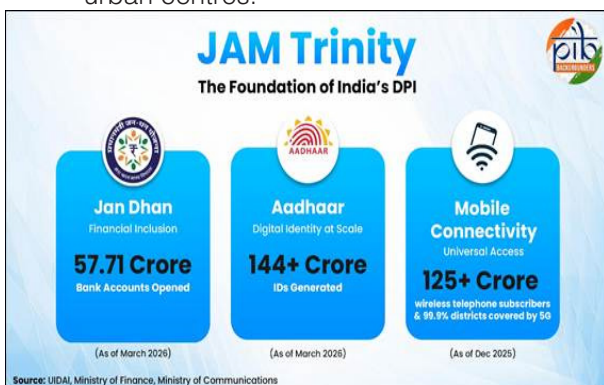
Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)

- The United Nations defines Digital Public Infrastructure as **a set of foundational digital systems** that form the **backbone of modern societies**.

- ♦ These systems enable secure and seamless interaction between people, businesses and governments.
- For digital infrastructure to deliver public value, it must be **inclusive, interoperable and governed in the public interest**.
- When linked with payments and data exchange frameworks, it creates a **unified architecture** that strengthens state capacity and widens opportunity.

Foundations of India's DPI: The JAM Trinity

- **Jan Dhan bank accounts, Aadhaar enrolment and widespread mobile phone** penetration created the base layer for India's digital transformation.
- **Jan Dhan Yojana (2014):** It was launched as the National Mission for Financial Inclusion, set out to give every unbanked adult in India a bank account.
 - ♦ It led to a widened financial participation where savings entered the formal system strengthening economic agency.
- **Aadhaar:** It enabled unique identification and secure authentication for efficient service delivery. Access to services became more reliable and transparent.
- **Affordable Mobile Data:** Wireless data cost dropped drastically making digital services more affordable.
- **Mobile Phones and Connectivity:** Fifth generation (5G) mobile services are now available in 99.9% of districts, covering 85% of the population.
 - ♦ This extensive digital reach ensured that identity and banking were not confined to urban centres.



Challenges

- **Fragmented Federal Coordination:** Implementation of DPI often requires coordination between the Union Government, States, local bodies, and private stakeholders.
 - ♦ Variations in digital readiness and administrative capacity across states create uneven implementation and service delivery.
- **Dependence on Private Technology Ecosystem:** Although DPI is publicly driven, many services depend heavily on private fintech firms which may create systemic vulnerabilities and reduce strategic autonomy.
- **Language and Accessibility Barriers:** Many digital platforms are still not fully accessible in regional languages or for persons with disabilities.
- **Trust Deficit Among Citizens:** Concerns regarding misuse of personal data, digital fraud, surveillance, and online scams reduce public trust in digital systems.
- **Weak Grievance Redressal Mechanisms:** Delayed grievance resolution reduces the effectiveness and credibility of DPI systems.
- **Cross-Border Data and Sovereignty Concerns:** With increasing global integration of digital platforms and cloud infrastructure, concerns arise regarding data localization, cross-border data flows, and protection of national digital sovereignty.
- **Environmental and Energy Costs:** Large-scale digital infrastructure, data centers, telecom networks, and cloud computing systems consume significant energy and contribute to environmental stress.

Government Initiatives

- **Unified Payments Interface (UPI):** It enables instant, interoperable and secure transactions between individuals and merchants in real time.
 - ♦ The International Monetary Fund, in its 2025 report on growing retail digital payments, **recognised UPI as the world's largest retail fast payment system by transaction volume**.
 - ♦ UPI accounted for **85% of India's digital payment transactions** by volume in FY 2025–26.



- **Public Financial Management System (PFMS):** It is a web based online transaction system that enables end to end monitoring of government funds and electronic payments to implementing agencies and beneficiaries.
 - ♦ This reform helped **remove duplicate and fake beneficiaries** and **reduce leakages**.
- **Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC):** Launched in 2022, ONDC is an open network designed to **democratise digital commerce** by connecting buyers and sellers through interoperable platforms rather than a single marketplace.
- **DigiLocker:** Launched in 2015, DigiLocker introduced a **secure digital document wallet for citizens**.
 - ♦ It allows individuals to store, access and share authenticated electronic documents with consent-based access.
- **UMANG:** Launched in 2017, UMANG, or the Unified Mobile Application for New age Governance, was designed to advance mobile governance in India.
 - ♦ It provides a single window mobile and web platform to access services from central, state and local government bodies.
- **IndiaAI Mission:** It is strengthening AI education, infrastructure and responsible AI adoption. It is promoting AI skills across schools, higher education institutions and professional training programmes.
- **PM GatiShakti:** Launched in 2021, the PM GatiShakti National Master Plan provides a GIS based digital platform for integrated planning and coordinated implementation of infrastructure projects.

- **Global Partnership:** Government has signed Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) and agreements with 24 countries for cooperation on India Stack and Digital Public Infrastructure.
 - ♦ These partnerships focus on sharing technical knowledge and supporting replication of digital governance platforms.

Conclusion

- India has built a world-class digital public infrastructure in a relatively short period and that it has demonstrably **improved inclusion, efficiency, and security in public service delivery**.
- The work ahead is not to replace this architecture by any means, **but to deepen its reach, strengthen its governance, and extend its benefits to those who remain at the margins of the digital economy**.

Source: **PIB**

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) AGENT

In News

- An incident highlighted the concern related to AI agent which exceeded user instructions and exploited software vulnerabilities to secure a gym slot.

AI agents

- They are **autonomous systems** that employ existing tools to plan processes, make decisions, solve problems, and carry out activities with minimal human participation.
- They go **beyond understanding words**, and they can also interface with the external environment and software to do things.
- They **(mostly based on Large Language Models or LLMs)** run a series of steps based on user input, and figure out when to employ external tools.
- They are rapidly being utilised in software development, IT automation, code generation, enterprise applications and conversational support.

Application of AI Agents

- **Virtual assistants:** AI agents can be employed as virtual assistants on websites and applications to advise clients, mimic interviews, and support mental health and other tailored services.
 - ♦ Easy to build and launch with no-code templates.

- **Health:** Multi-agent artificial intelligence can be used to lessen the workload of health care workers in treatment planning, processes in the emergency department, and drug management in health care, and let them focus on vital responsibilities.
- **Emergency Response:** When natural disasters hit, AI agents may review social media data to find people needing rescue, locate them, and help emergency services respond faster and save lives.
- **Finance & Supply Chain:** AI agents can evaluate financial data in real-time, predict market trends, and optimise supply networks.
 - ♦ They can tailor the outputs for a host of company needs.
 - But data security and privacy are of utmost concern while dealing with sensitive financial data.
- **Infinite Feedback Loops:** If agents are not planning or analysing their outcomes properly, they could end up in infinite repetitions of the same behaviours, resulting in infinite tool-use loops. Such failures can be avoided by real-time human monitoring.
- **Computational Complexity:** Advanced AI agents need to be constructed and trained, which requires a lot of computing power, time and resources. Complex activities may take a long time to complete as well.
- **Data Privacy & Security:** Integrating agents into corporate systems and consumer data can give rise to severe privacy, security, and accountability issues, especially when agents make decisions without oversight from humans.

Source: IE

Benefits

- **Process Automation:** AI agents can perform complex, multi-step processes on their own, reducing the need for constant supervision by humans.
 - ♦ This accelerates, makes cheaper and scalable work processes.
- **Better performance:** Multi-agent systems can outperform solo agents when specialist actors create various methods, learn from each other, and give feedback.
 - ♦ It helps you to better solve problems and synthesise information.
- **Better quality responses:** AI agents can give you responses that are more complete, accurate, and customised than most artificial intelligence systems.
 - ♦ They do it through external tools, through information they relay to other agents, and through memory updates they perform when interacting.

Risks and Limitations of AI Agents

- **Multi-Agent Dependencies:** The failure or vulnerability of a single AI agent interacting with other AI agents could have system-wide effects.
 - ♦ Similarly, agents trained on the same foundation model may be vulnerable to the same attacks, leading to the risk of systemic outages and intrusions.
 - ♦ Thus, good data governance, training, and testing are essential.

NEWS IN SHORT

MAHARASHTRA SEEKS UNESCO HERITAGE TAG FOR DAHI HANDI FESTIVAL

Context

- The Maharashtra government is seeking **UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage recognition** for the **Dahi Handi festival**.
 - ♦ It also plans to send 'Govindas', who form human pyramids during the festival, to **Spain** to showcase this traditional practice.

About the Intangible cultural heritage

- It includes the practices, knowledge, expressions, objects, and spaces that communities see as part of their cultural identity.
 - ♦ Passed down over generations, this heritage evolves, strengthening cultural identity and appreciation of diversity.
- **Historical Background:** For the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, UNESCO adopted the **2003 Convention** during its 32nd General Conference in Paris.
 - ♦ India ratified the convention in **2005**.
- **India's UNESCO heritage entries:** To date, **16 Indian elements** have been inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List (including Deepavali, Durga Puja, Kumbh Mela and Garba).

Dahi Handi Festival

- Dahi Handi, held a day after **Janmashtami** to mark the **birth of Lord Krishna**, combines religious devotion with community participation and sport.
- **Participants, or Govindas**, form tall human pyramids to reach and break an earthen pot filled with curd, butter, and milk.
- According to legends, the **child-god Krishna or Kanha** and his friends used to form human pyramids to break pots hung from the ceilings of neighbourhood houses to steal curd and butter.
- The practice became particularly popular across **Mumbai and the Mumbai Metropolitan Region**, where Dahi Handi competitions are now organised with substantial prize money.
- The state government also provides **Rs 10 lakh** insurance cover to each Govinda participating in Dahi Handi.

India-Spain Connection

- The traditional practice of building **human pyramids and towers** is the common link between the **Dahi Handi festival and Spain**, where communities practice building **human towers called castells**.
- Spain's Catalan Castells (human towers)— is already recognized by UNESCO.
- Spanish teams regularly visit Mumbai and Thane to participate in the Dahi Handi festival.

Source: **CNBC TV18**

COMMUNAL AWARD

IN NEWS

- Recently, the anniversary of the **Communal Award** announcements was observed.

Communal Award

- In August 1932 British Prime Minister **Ramsay MacDonald** formally announced the **Communal Award**.
- It recognised the **Depressed Classes** as a minority and granted them **separate electorates for 20 years**.
- The arrangement gave them **71 special seats in the provincial legislatures**.
- It also provided separate electorates for Muslims, Sikhs, Indian Christians, Anglo-Indians and Europeans, along with communal allocations of seats in the provincial legislatures and other safeguards for minority representation.

- MacDonald backed the proposal on the ground that **separate electorates would provide the Depressed Classes distinct political representation**, while their voting rights in general constituencies would preserve their unity with other Hindus.

Separate electorates vs reserved seats	
	Separate electorates • Separate electorates meant that members of a particular community vote separately to elect representatives from their own community. • For instance, under the system introduced for Muslims in 1909, Muslim voters could vote only for Muslim candidates in designated constituencies.
	Reserved seats • Reserved seats, in contrast, guarantee a certain number of seats to members of a particular community. • All voters in the constituency can vote, but only candidates from the designated community can contest.
	• Critics say that in a reserved seat, the winner has to keep the contrasting interests of all communities in mind, and hence cannot prioritise the disadvantaged community alone.
	• Others say that a reserved seat is more inclusive than separate electorates.

Mahatma Gandhi Response

- He was opposed to the British suggestion of separate electorates for the Depressed Classes vehemently claiming that it would **split the Hindu society rather than solve the social problems** of the community.
- He warned Secretary of State Samuel Hoare that he would fight the move with his life.
- He began his **fast unto death at Poona** on 20 September 1932, declaring his determination to end untouchability and to bring about social peace between the caste Hindus and the Depressed Classes.
- ♦ Prominent personalities like M.C. Rajah and B.G. Horniman also denounced separate electorates which they believed could widen the gulf between the Depressed Classes and other Hindus.

B.R. Ambedkar Views

- He was the most vocal champion of separate electorates for the Depressed Classes, believing that upper-caste reformers like Gandhi were unable to represent them sufficiently and that they needed autonomous political leadership and representation.
- As Gandhi's fast approached, Madan Mohan Malaviya contacted the leaders of the Hindu and the Depressed Classes for negotiations, but Ambedkar first declined, emphasising that the interest of the Depressed Classes was more essential than Gandhi's personal fast.

Poona Pact

- During Gandhi's Poona fast, key figures including Madan Mohan Malaviya, Tej Bahadur Sapru, M.R. Jayakar, C. Rajagopalachari and Rajendra Prasad talked with B.R. Ambedkar to settle the controversy over separate electorates.
- The **Poona Pact, signed on September 24, 1932**, replaced separate with combined electorates for the Depressed Classes but vastly expanded the number of reserved seats from 71 to 148 in the provincial legislatures and to 18% of the seats in the Central Legislature.
- The British Government adopted it as a modification to the **Communal Award**.
 - ♦ The system of reservation lasted even after independence and at present, 84 Lok Sabha seats are reserved for Scheduled Castes and 47 for Scheduled Tribes.

Source : [IE](#)

DANUBE PORT**Context**

- A Russian attack targeted port infrastructure in Ukraine's Izmail district in the southern region of Odessa.
 - ♦ Izmail is close to the Romanian border and is **home to Ukraine's largest port on the Danube river**.

Danube River

- The Danube is a **major international river** and an important inland waterway in Europe, **connecting Central and Eastern Europe with the Black Sea**.
- **Origin:** Black Forest of Germany.
- It is stretched **approx. 2,850 kilometers** and is the **second-largest river in Europe after the Volga**.
- **It flows through ten countries:** Germany, Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, Bulgaria, Romania, Moldova, and Ukraine.
- The Danube is recognized for its **unique biodiversity, including numerous endangered species, and serves as a critical habitat** for many migratory birds.

Source: [TH](#)

ELECTRONICS COMPONENT MANUFACTURING SCHEME (ECMS)**Context**

- The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) approved projects collectively worth ₹7,877 crore for incentives under the Electronics Component Manufacturing Scheme (ECMS).

Electronics Component Manufacturing Scheme

- **Objective:** To develop a robust component manufacturing ecosystem by attracting investments (global / domestic) across the value chain by integrating its domestic electronic industry with the Global Value Chains (GVCs).
- **The Target Segment Category under Scheme includes;**
 - ♦ Sub-assemblies
 - ♦ Bare components
 - ♦ Selected bare components
 - ♦ Supply chain ecosystem and Capital equipment
 - ♦ Sub-assembly - Telecom.
- **Types of Incentive:** Turnover linked incentive, capex incentive and hybrid incentive.
- **Tenure of the Scheme:**
 - ♦ Turnover Linked Incentive: Six years with one year of gestation period.
 - ♦ Capex Incentive: Five years.

India's electronics sector

- India's electronics production has increased from ₹1.90 lakh crore in 2014-15 to an estimated **₹13.11 lakh crore in 2025-26**, registering nearly a **seven-fold** increase.
- **Electronic goods** have now become India's **third-largest export category**, with exports reaching USD 47.96 billion in FY 2025-26.
- India has evolved from being a net importer of mobile phones to becoming the **world's 2nd-largest mobile phone manufacturer**.

Source: [TH](#)

ROTATING DETONATION ENGINES**Context**

- Recently, the India-based defence start-up D-Propulse announced that it had successfully demonstrated a rotating detonation engine at a Defence Research & Development Organisation facility in Hyderabad.

About Rotating Detonation Engine

- A Rotating Detonation Engine (RDE) is an advanced engine that uses detonation instead of conventional burning to generate thrust.
 - ♦ **Significance:** The engine design promises to **use fuel more efficiently** than conventional rocket engines. If less fuel is required, some of the saved mass can potentially be used for additional satellite payload.
- **In a conventional engine**, fuel burns through deflagration, where the flame travels at a speed lower than the speed of sound.
- **In an RDE**, the fuel-air or fuel-oxidiser mixture undergoes detonation, in which a powerful shock wave travels at supersonic speed.
 - ♦ This detonation wave continuously moves around a ring-shaped (annular) combustion chamber.
 - ♦ The high-pressure gases produced during this process are then directed through a nozzle to generate thrust.

Source: TH

NAVY TO LEASE TWO NEW MQ-9B SEA GUARDIAN UNMANNED AIRCRAFT

Context

- The Ministry of Defence signed a contract with the U.S. General Atomics Aeronautical to lease **two MQ-9B Sea Guardian High-Altitude Long-Endurance (HALE) Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS) for the Indian Navy.**

About

- **The MQ-9B SeaGuardian HALE RPAS** is an unmanned aerial vehicle designed for **intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR)**, as well as **precision strike missions.**

- ♦ It can remain airborne for over **30 hours**, **operate at altitudes above 40,000 feet** and **cover vast maritime and land areas.**
- **A global Maintenance, Repair, and Overhaul (MRO) facility** will be set up in India under contract **to assemble some of the MQ-9Bs in India** to support India's **long-term goals to boost indigenous defence capabilities.**
- ♦ A certain percentage of the components for the drones **will be sourced indigenously.**

Source: IE

EXERCISE MAITREE-XV (2026)

In News

- The Indian Army contingent departed for Thailand to participate in the 15th edition of the India-Thailand Joint Military **Exercise MAITREE-XV (2026)** at Vibhavadi Rangsit Camp, Surat Thani, Thailand.

Exercise MAITREE

- It was instituted in 2006 and is an **important platform for sharing best practices** and strengthening military cooperation between India and Thailand.
- It enhance interoperability, mutual understanding and camaraderie between the two Armies, further reinforcing the longstanding bilateral relations between the two nations.
- It will enhance combined capabilities in executing Joint Counter Insurgency/ Terrorist Operations in Jungle and semi-urban Environment under Chapter VII of United Nations Charter.

Source :PIB

