

## DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS (DCA)

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## RIISING POSH COMPLAINTS IN CORPORATE INDIA

### In News

- Nifty 50 companies reported 1,327 complaints under the Prevention of Sexual Harassment (POSH) Act, 2013 in FY26, a rise of 4.6% over FY25.

### About PoSH Act, 2013

- The **Prevention of Sexual Harassment (POSH) Act, 2013** was enacted to give statutory backing to the **Vishaka Guidelines (1997)** laid down by the Supreme Court in **Vishaka v. State of Rajasthan**.
- The Act defined workplace including client sites, travel for work, and virtual or remote work spaces, ensuring coverage beyond the physical office.
- The Act mandates **mandatory Internal Complaints Committees (ICCs)** in organisations with 10 or more employees & the Local Complaints Committee (LCC) to be constituted at the district level to address complaints from the informal sector and organisations with fewer than 10 employees.
- The complaints must **be resolved within 90 days**, with a further 60 days for implementation of recommendations.

### Why the POSH Act Was Needed?

- **Filling a Legal Vacuum:** Before 2013, India had no dedicated statute addressing workplace sexual harassment & the Vishaka Guidelines were interim judicial directions in this regard.
- **Constitutional Mandate:** The Act operationalises Article 14 (equality), Article 15 (non discrimination), Article 19(1)(g) (right to practice any profession), and Article 21 (right to life and dignity) for working women.
- **Rising Female Workforce Participation:** As more women entered organised and unorganised sectors, the absence of a safe and accountable environment became a direct barrier to workforce retention and career progression.
- **International Commitments:** India is a signatory to CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women), which obligates states to ensure non discriminatory working conditions.

### Significance

- **Institutional Trust Building:** A functional POSH mechanism signals organisational accountability, encouraging women to report rather than suffer silently or exit the workforce.
- **Governance and ESG Integration:** SEBI's BRSR framework now links POSH compliance to corporate governance ratings, making it a reputational and investment relevant metric.
- **Enabler of FLFPR Growth:** Safe workplaces are a precondition for improving India's persistently low Female Labour Force Participation Rate, a key structural constraint on demographic dividend realisation.
- **Cultural Shift:** Growing willingness to report peer level and digital harassment reflects a maturing understanding of consent and professional conduct.

### Implementation Challenges

- **Informal Sector Gaps:** A large share of India's workforce remains outside effective protection due to non functional or absent LCCs, particularly in rural and semi urban districts.
- **Awareness Deficit:** Many small and medium enterprises are unaware of their statutory obligation to constitute ICCs, and compliance remains largely symbolic.
- **Evidentiary Complexities:** Emerging categories like digital harassment and peer to peer complaints strain ICCs designed originally for hierarchical, in person misconduct.
- **Retaliation Fear:** Underreporting persists due to fear of professional repercussions, social stigma, and inadequate whistleblower protection.
- **Committee Composition Issues:** Improperly constituted or inactive committees undermine the credibility of the redressal process itself.

### Way Ahead

- **Modernise the Framework:** Amend rules to explicitly address digital and hybrid workplace harassment with clear evidentiary protocols.
- **Capacity Building:** Regular ICC and LCC training on evolving complaint typologies and unconscious bias.
- **Integrate with Labour Codes:** Align POSH compliance monitoring with the upcoming Labour Codes to ensure uniform enforcement across formal and informal employment.

Source: BS

## INDIA–EU FTA: ISSUE OF INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY & COPYRIGHT

### Context

- The European Commission has sought EU member states' approval for signing and concluding the **India–EU Free Trade Agreement**, bringing **Intellectual Property and Copyright** implications into focus.

### About India–EU FTA & Intellectual Property

- The India–EU FTA seeks to deepen trade and economic ties between India and the European Union.
- Its Intellectual Property (IP) chapter covers areas such as **copyright, enforcement, technological protection measures (TPMs)** and **rights-management information**.
- The **draft India-EU FTA** text raises concerns about whether existing Indian copyright exceptions and digital-policy flexibilities would remain protected.

#### Intellectual Property (IP) & Copyright

- IP:** Legal rights protecting creations of the mind, including inventions, literary/artistic works, software, designs, trademarks and geographical indications.
- Copyright:** A branch of IP protecting original literary, artistic and creative works, including **books, music, films, software and digital content**.
- In **India**, both are primarily governed by the **Copyright Act, 1957**, which incorporates India's obligations under international IP frameworks such as **TRIPS** and the **WIPO Copyright Treaty**.

### Copyright Rules: EU and India

- WIPO Copyright Treaty** specifically designed for the digital environment, protects authors' rights while recognising limitations and exceptions, including those relevant to education and research.
- India's **Section 52** provides important copyright exceptions, including **fair dealing** and certain transient or incidental digital reproductions.
- Section 65A** regulates TPMs while providing exceptions under Section 65A(2) for specified lawful purposes.

- Sections **52(1)(ab)** and **52(1)(ac)** permit software observation, testing and reverse engineering in specified circumstances, including interoperability and security research.
- Sections **52(1)(b)** and **(c)** protect certain temporary and transient copies created during electronic transmission and data routing.
- The **Copyright Rules, 2013**, including **Rule 75**, provide the framework for notice-and-takedown procedures.

### Key Concerns

- Structural Asymmetry in Copyright Rules:** The draft IP chapter reportedly excludes the **WIPO Copyright Treaty from the National Treatment clause**, despite affirming commitments to international IP treaties.
  - At the same time, provisions relating to **TPMs** and **Rights Management Information** remain binding. It also grants protection to temporary and permanent reproductions, raising concerns regarding transient digital copies.
  - It could expose **India's existing digital copyright exceptions** under **Section 52** to challenges by foreign rightsholders.
- Technological Protection Measures (TPMs):** A stringent anti-circumvention regime could affect students, researchers, libraries and archives.
  - A student legally examining software for interoperability or security research may encounter DRM or encryption that requires circumvention.
  - Similarly, libraries and archives increasingly rely on **format-shifting** to preserve digitally locked, out-of-print or fragile works. If statutory exceptions are weakened, preservation and academic research could face legal uncertainty.
- Threat to Internet Intermediaries:** Temporary copies generated in **RAM, server caches and routine network routing** are important to the functioning of the internet.
  - India's Copyright Act** provides protection for specified transient copies.
  - However, the draft's broad reproduction right could expose ISPs and digital intermediaries to greater copyright liability.

### Way Forward

- India should seek **targeted recalibration** of the IP chapter before finalisation.

- The **WIPO Copyright Treaty** should be **reinserted into the National Treatment clause**, while existing Indian statutory exceptions for education, research, preservation, interoperability and transient digital copies should remain protected.
- The objective should be to deepen India-EU trade ties without diluting India's **digital-policy autonomy, access to knowledge and innovation ecosystem**.

Source: TH

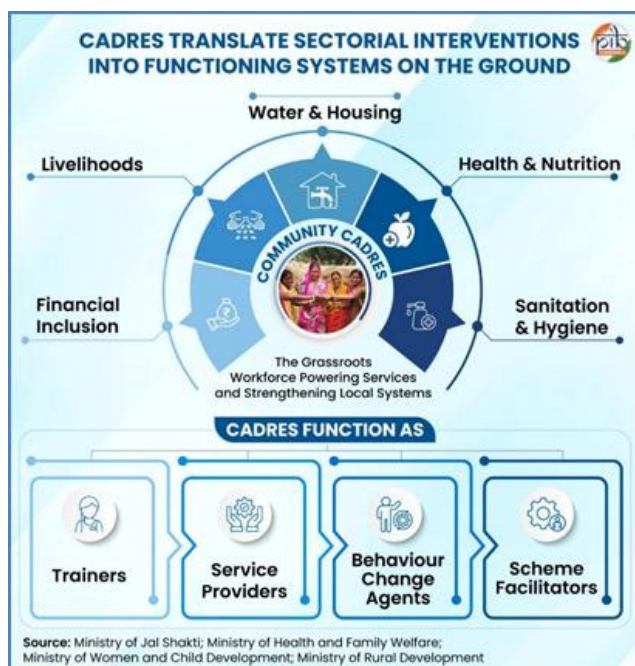
## GRASSROOTS WORKFORCE: THE LAST-MILE ARCHITECTS OF RURAL TRANSFORMATION

### In News

- The Government has enhanced rural development and last-mile service delivery through a broad network of frontline workers in health, nutrition, livelihoods, finance, sanitation, and community development.

### Grassroots workforce

- Community Cadre Approach is a **decentralised mechanism** for successful last-mile delivery of services through a trained grassroots workforce.
- These community cadres carry out **several interrelated functions**.
- They are service providers ensuring access to key livelihood and financial services at the community level.



- They are change agents in behaviour, raising awareness and promoting the uptake of improved practices in health, sanitation and social inclusion.

### Network of Frontline Workers in Rural Areas

- The network includes over 10.40 lakh **Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHA)**, 10.58 lakh **Anganwadi Workers (AWWs)**, and **Auxiliary Nurse Midwives (ANMs)** in health and nutrition.
- Over 9 lakh Community Resource Persons (CRPs) are active at the grassroots, serving areas such as agriculture, banking, insurance etc.
- In addition, there are frontline workers like Swachhagrahis, providing sanitation support.

### Importance and Role

- **Propagation of Skills and Training:** Peer-to-peer community cadres act as trainers and change activists within their respective localities.
  - From the same socio-cultural background, they use peer learning to instruct SHG members and rural households in contemporary farming techniques, enterprise management, and sustainable methods.
- **Financial services:** Community cadres supply needed doorstep financial services through Grassroots Financial Intermediation Business Correspondent (BC) Sakhis and Bank Sakhis.
  - They allow rural residents to create accounts, avail of direct benefit transfers (DBT), process credit, and receive financial literacy without having to travel great distances to urban bank offices.
- **Increasing Productivity and Livelihoods:** sector-specific cadres, Krishi Sakhis, are working to promote sustainable farming and enhanced agricultural production methods.
  - Pashu Sakhis enable livestock rearing households to improve animal health, reduce input expenses, and increase output.
  - Matsya Sakhis and Van Sakhis empower communities dependent on fisheries and forest resources.
  - CRP-EPs (Enterprise Promotion) are mentors for non-farm micro-enterprises.
- **Health, nutrition, and social development:** There are cadres such as ASHAs, AWWs, and social development CRPs who provide ongoing health monitoring and assistance.
  - They also undertake key initiatives related to gender awareness, maternal-child health, sanitation, and social inclusion, not only economic progress.

- **Closing the Citizen-State Trust Gap:** Local cadres are trusted, localised channels between official institutions and rural citizens.
  - ♦ They generate awareness on government welfare initiatives, collect field data, help in documentation, and facilitate entitlement delivery to the disadvantaged and marginalised sections.

### Issues and Concerns

- **Late payment:** Many cadres get honorariums, stipends, or performance incentives that may be extravagant or paid late.
- **Lack of resources and infrastructure:** Frontline workers, especially in rural and hilly areas, are faced with issues such as insufficient connectivity, lack of digital resources, and safety equipment.
- **Multitasking and Overburdened:** The community cadres have to collect and distribute survey data for several initiatives by government departments. This fatigues them and diminishes their primary purpose.
- **Capacity Building Needs:** Need for continuous training and skill upgradation to match the ever-developing digital applications, financial goods, and novel agriculture approaches.
- **Gender and Social Constraints:** Most of these cadres are rural women.
  - ♦ During field tours, they face social stereotypes, family chores, and safety risks.

### Various Initiatives

- **Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihoods Mission:** It established one of the country's largest networks of women-led community institutions, mobilizing more than 10 crore rural households into around 92 lakh Self-Help Groups (SHGs) across the country.
- **Village Organizations and Cluster Level Federations:** These institutions are supported by a large network of Community Resource Persons (CRPs) working across different thematic areas.
- **Business Correspondent (BC) Sakhis and Bank Sakhis:** Trained women community cadres promoted under the DAY-NRLM who function as grassroots financial intermediaries.
- **Poshan Bhi Padhai Bhi initiative:** Aims to improve the quality of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) through the Anganwadi system.

- **Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen):** Aims to provide people with sustainable sanitation and hygiene services. At the core of this effort are Swachhagrahis (volunteers), who are the foot soldiers of the SBM.
- **Jal Jeevan Mission:** In line with the 73rd Constitutional Amendment, Jal Jeevan Mission promotes village-level planning and community participation through Panchayati Raj Institutions. Gram Panchayats and their sub-committees, Village Water & Sanitation Committees (VWSCs) or Pani Samitis, are empowered to plan, implement, operate, and maintain in-village water supply systems.
  - ♦ VWSC members are selected through the Gram Sabha.
- **Awaas Mitras are field-level facilitators** under the Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana-Gramin (PMAY-G), supporting implementation, monitoring, and beneficiary assistance in rural housing.

### Conclusion

- Community cadres on the front line have emerged as trusted partners in translating government programs into tangible benefits at the household level.
- They raise awareness, create capacity, facilitate access to services and encourage cross-sectoral convergence.
- Their work makes sure development gets to the people who need it most.
- As rural India continues to transform, consistent investment in these community-based institutions and frontline workers will be critical to scale up service delivery, improve livelihoods and promote social inclusion, thus fostering resilient, empowered and self-reliant rural communities.
- Addressing their structural difficulties will be critical in ensuring this rural transformation is sustained, and an inclusive economy is built.

Source: PIB

## MAPPING THE MAGNET VALUE CHAIN

### Context

- In 2025, China's export limitations on rare earth magnets and related minerals emphasised India's dependence on vital stages of the permanent-magnet sector.

### What are Rare Earth Magnets?

- Rare earth elements are a set of **17** elements, including the **15 lanthanides** as well as **scandium and yttrium**.
- Rare earth elements such as neodymium, praseodymium, dysprosium and terbium are important for producing high-performance permanent magnets.
  - The two main types are **Neodymium (Nd-Fe-B)** and **Samarium Cobalt (SmCo)** magnets.
- Despite the name, rare earth elements are not geologically rare but are **difficult to extract economically** due to their dispersed occurrence and the environmental cost of mining.

### Availability of Rare Earth Magnets

- China controls over **85%** of global rare earth magnet production, and dominates the supply chain from mining to refining to magnet manufacturing.
- India**, despite having rare earth reserves (especially in **monazite sands in Kerala**,

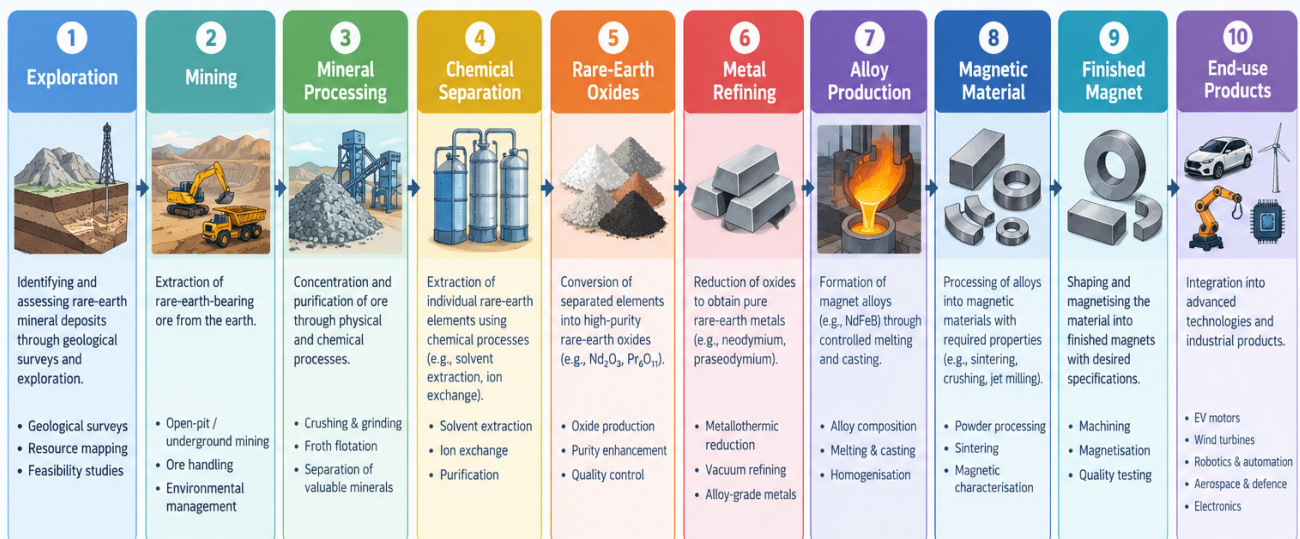
**Tamil Nadu, Odisha**), but lacks advanced refining capabilities and downstream magnet manufacturing industry.

### Significance for India

- Energy Transition:** High-performance magnets are used in EV motors and renewable-energy technologies, making magnet security **crucial for India's decarbonisation goals**.
- Strengthens Advanced Manufacturing:** Robotics, automation, precision machinery and other high-technology industries increasingly depend on compact and powerful permanent magnets.
- Enhances Strategic Security:** Permanent magnets have applications in aerospace, defence, electronics and advanced weapon systems, making their supply chains strategically important.
- Reduces External Vulnerability:** Developing capabilities across the value chain can reduce excessive dependence on a small number of foreign suppliers and improve India's supply chain resilience.

## The Permanent Magnet Value Chain

From minerals in the ground to advanced technologies, a permanent magnet passes through several technologically distinct stages.



From Critical Minerals to a Stronger, More Self-Reliant Future

### What are the challenges?

- **Low-grade resources:** India possesses significant rare-earth resources, but much of these are of **low grade and associated with radioactive minerals** such as monazite, making extraction complex and expensive.
- **Limited midstream capabilities:** India has capabilities in mining, separation and production of rare-earth oxides, but industrial-scale capacity for **metals, alloys and permanent magnets** remains limited.
- **Dependence on imported magnets:** Despite having domestic rare-earth resources, India remains dependent on imports for rare-earth permanent magnets and related products, particularly for advanced manufacturing applications.

### Initiatives taken by India

- **The National Critical Mineral Mission (NCMM)** was approved in 2025 with an overall outlay of **₹34,300 crore** and covers the complete critical-mineral value chain, from exploration and mining to beneficiation, processing and recycling.
- The government has expanded exploration of critical minerals through the **Geological Survey of India (GSI)** and amended the **Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957**, to facilitate greater exploration and mining.
  - ♦ Critical-mineral blocks, including rare-earth blocks, have also been auctioned.
- **Scheme to Promote Manufacturing of Sintered Rare Earth Permanent Magnets:** It was approved in **2025** with a financial outlay of **Rs.7280 crore**.
  - ♦ It aims to establish **6,000 Metric Tons per Annum (MTPA)** of integrated **Rare Earth Permanent Magnet (REPM)** manufacturing in India.
- **Khanij Bidesh India Limited (KABIL)** has been established to acquire critical-mineral assets overseas and secure long-term supplies of minerals such as lithium, cobalt and rare earth elements.
- **Strategic Magnet Manufacturing:** A Rare Earth Permanent Magnet Plant at **Vizag** has been established for indigenous production of **Samarium-Cobalt (SmCo) magnets**, particularly relevant for strategic sectors such as defence and atomic energy.

- **Rare Earth Corridors:** The Union Budget 2026–27 announced dedicated Rare Earth Corridors in **Odisha, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu** to strengthen the rare-earth ecosystem.

### Way Ahead

- Critical-mineral security is not merely about possessing minerals; it is about possessing the technological capability to convert them into strategic industrial products.
- A national database should integrate information on resources, processing capacity, technology ownership, trade flows and downstream applications.
- Greater emphasis should be placed on **separation, refining, alloy production and high-performance magnet manufacturing**, rather than focusing only on mining.

Source: TH

## PERSISTENT DECLINE IN INDIA'S GROUNDWATER

### Context

- India's groundwater levels are declining persistently, according to the **State of Global Water Resources 2025** report published by the **World Meteorological Organization (WMO)**.

### What is Groundwater Depletion?

- Groundwater depletion is the condition when the **rate of groundwater extraction exceeds** the rate at which groundwater is naturally replenished through **rainfall infiltration, surface-water seepage and other recharge processes**.
- Unlike a temporary fall in the water table, persistent depletion indicates a sustained imbalance between groundwater withdrawal and recharge.
- India holds **18%** of the world's population but only **4%** of its freshwater resources, placing enormous pressure on available water systems.
  - ♦ India depends on groundwater for about **85% of its rural drinking water** needs and around **60% of irrigation water**.

### Key Findings of the WMO Report

- The report uses **2001–2020** as the reference period to assess groundwater conditions.
- Globally, **34%** of groundwater observation stations recorded below-normal to much-below-normal levels in **2025**.

- ♦ Around **31%** of stations recorded above-normal to much-above-normal groundwater levels, indicating significant regional variation.
- **Northern India** recorded below-normal terrestrial water storage in 2025, indicating continued pressure on the region's freshwater reserves.
- The WMO also reported that **global terrestrial water storage has shown a declining trend since 2014–2016**, reflecting a longer-term deterioration in freshwater availability.

#### Drivers Behind the Groundwater Declining in India

- **Over-extraction:** Agriculture accounts for the **largest percentage of groundwater** withdrawal in India.
  - ♦ Since paddy and wheat are water heavy crops, the demand for ground water is significant in locations where the natural recharging is limited.
- **Subsidised electricity:** Low or subsidised electricity for agricultural pumping can reduce the economic incentive to conserve groundwater and encourage excessive extraction.
- **Variable groundwater recharge:** Fast urbanisation, concreting and wetland loss restrict the area for natural infiltration and aquifer recharge.
- **Climate variability:** Erratic rainfall, lengthy dry spells and increasing temperatures can impair efficient recharge of groundwater and increase irrigation demand.

#### Initiatives taken by Government

- **Jal Shakti Abhiyan (2019):** Focuses on water conservation and groundwater recharge in water-stressed districts.
- **National Aquifer Mapping Program (NAQUIM):** Helps delineate and understand aquifers for sustainable management.
- **Atal Bhujal Yojana** was launched to improve groundwater management in priority areas with critical and overexploited blocks.
- **The Central Ground Water Authority (CGWA)** regulates groundwater extraction through guidelines, particularly for industrial and infrastructure uses.
- **Micro-irrigation** under schemes such as the **Per Drop More Crop** component promotes efficient use of irrigation water.

#### Way Ahead

- Groundwater management needs to shift from **controlling extraction alone to managing the entire aquifer balance**.
- Crop diversification towards less water-intensive crops should be supported through assured procurement, price incentives and appropriate agricultural infrastructure.
- Groundwater budgets should be prepared at the **aquifer and watershed level**, using reliable monitoring data.

Source: DTE

## NEWS IN SHORT

### TULU LANGUAGE

#### Context

- The Karnataka Cabinet has decided to accord **additional official language status to Tulu** for administrative purposes in the Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts.

#### About Tulu

- Tulu is an independent Dravidian language with a history of more than **2,000 years**, according to the **Karnataka Tulu Sahitya Academy**.
  - ♦ It is primarily spoken in **Dakshina Kannada, Udupi and parts of Kasaragod in Kerala**.
- **Historical evidence:** The **Charition papyrus, a Greek text** dated to around the **2nd century BCE**, mentions the characters of the Western coast of Karnataka speaking a peculiar language, which is now proven to be **Tulu**.
  - ♦ The Tulu-speaking people are mentioned in **Tamil Sangam literature of the 2nd century**.
- **The Registrar General and Census Commissioner** recognise Tulu as an independent language, and Census reports provide separate statistics on its speakers.
  - ♦ Tulu is **not a scheduled language**, i.e., it is not included in the **Eighth Schedule** of the Constitution.
- Tulu historically had its own script, which was used for several older literary works. However, the Kannada script is now predominantly used for writing modern Tulu.
- The first Tulu dictionary, **Manner's Tulu-English Dictionary**, was published in **1886**.

Source: TH

## SWACHH BHARAT MISSION (SBM)

### Context

- The Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) has moved beyond toilet construction to focus on sustained sanitation practices and behavioural change in India.

### About Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM)

- The Swachh Bharat (Clean India) Mission was launched on **2 October 2014** with the goal of achieving **universal sanitation coverage and making India Open Defecation Free (ODF) by 2 October 2019**, as a tribute to the **150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi**.
- Toilet infrastructure:** By offering financial incentives for building household toilets, as well as community toilets for slums and migrant populations.
- Behavioural Changes:** To bring changes to the age-old idea that toilets in the home were unclean, the government ran several programmes with the participation of the private sector and NGOs to educate the population on the benefits of ODF.
- It has **two Sub-Missions:** the Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin) – SBM(G) and the Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban) – SBM(U); being implemented by the Ministry of Jal Shakti, and the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, respectively.
- SBM(G) sought to improve the levels of cleanliness through **Solid and Liquid Waste Management activities** and making Gram Panchayats **Open Defecation Free (ODF)**, clean and sanitized.

- 2019** marked the end of the first phase of SBM(G), the second phase, started in **2020-2021**, expands efforts with a focus on **safe management of solid and liquid waste and sustainability of ODF**.

- SBM (Urban) 2.0:** Commenced in **2021** and is expected to run till **2026**.

- Targets:** Sustaining the achievements of **phase 1** (2014–2021) and
  - ensuring that treatment of both liquid and solid waste is achieved through the help of technology and private sector engagement.

Source: DD News

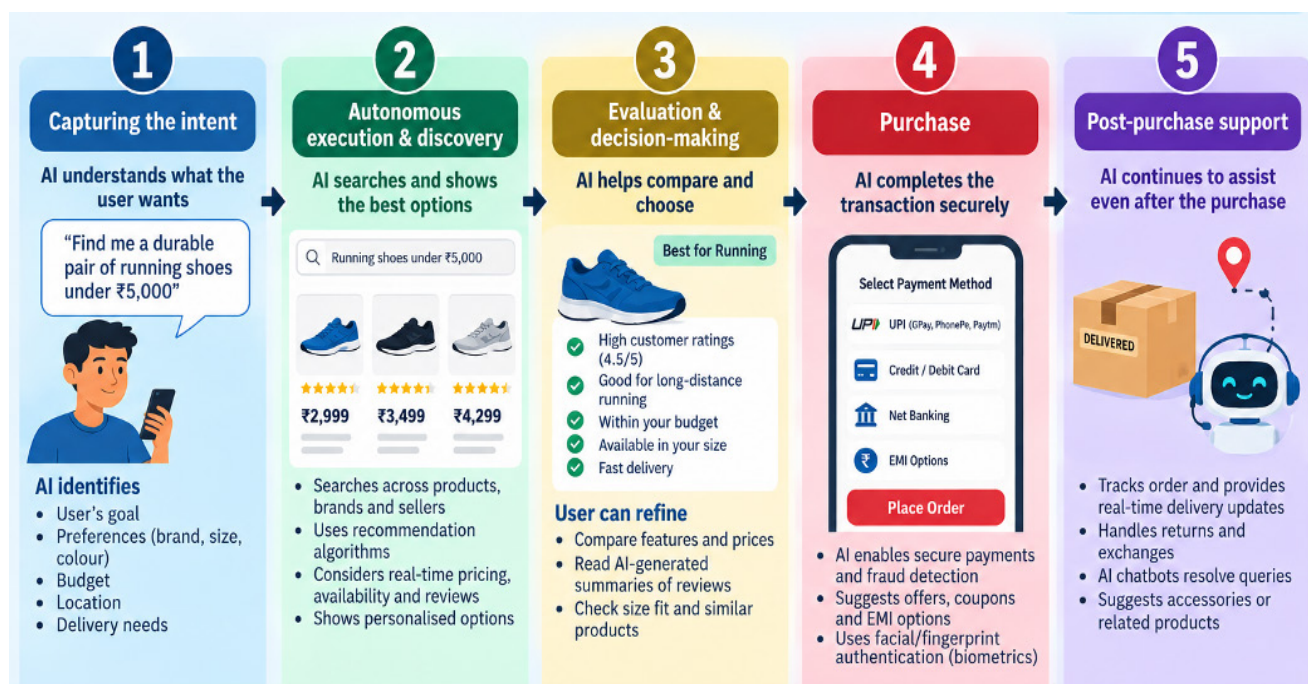
## AGENTIC COMMERCE

### In News

- The payments industry is integrating **agenntic AI** into its services.

### Agentic commerce

- It is a digital trade model under which **AI agents streamline the buying process** by discovering, negotiating, and executing on behalf of customers.
  - This **does not mean bypassing** the need for authorisation.
  - It only **cuts down steps involved in a customer's e-commerce journey**, including the payments phase.



### Importance

- Agentic AI can **revolutionise B2B payments by forecasting cash-flow shortfalls**, identifying checkout errors, reconciling bills, matching purchase orders, scheduling payments and enhancing working-capital management.
- EY predicts that agentic AI may automate up to **80% of regular treasury coordination** and boost cash-flow forecasting accuracy to around 90% with good data and governance.
- At the same time, companies like BharatPe and Razorpay are creating AI-enabled merchant, checkout, and payment solutions, and SMEs without sophisticated ERP systems can also benefit from it.

Source: IE

## RISING SULPHUR COSTS: NEW FERTILISER PROBLEM

### In News

- India has escaped a potential fertiliser crisis due to ample availability of urea and LNG, but **rising sulphur costs are now affecting the availability of DAP, SSP and other phosphatic fertilisers.**

### Sulphur

- It is an important **non-metal element** and precious commodity used in fertilisers, chemicals, medicines, insecticides, rubber, water treatment and metal processing.
- It is a **natural constituent of the earth's crust** and is mined and increasingly recovered as a by-product of oil and natural-gas processing and metal smelting.
- It is the preferred **raw material for sulphuric acid**, a vital ingredient for the production of phosphate and other fertilisers.
- It is also an important nutrient for crops, animals and humans, promoting plant development, enhancing the efficiency of nitrogen and phosphorus and helping to amend particular soils.
- It is also used in asphalt, synthetic rubber, chemicals, pharmaceuticals and industrial processes.

### Consumption and Imports

- India consumes about 3.8–3.9 million tonnes of sulphur yearly, with most of the fertiliser-sector requirements being imported.

- The growing need for sulphuric acid to process nickel for EV batteries, particularly in Indonesia, is making the situation worse, while some exports have been blocked by Russia and China.
- The fertiliser sector in India is facing a two-fold supply and price problem given geopolitical conflicts, supply constraints and a rising industrial demand.
- Imported sulphur prices have almost doubled to \$1,050-1,100 a tonne, partly on account of difficulties caused to the Russia-Ukraine and West Asia conflicts.

Source: IE

## AASHVAST LABS FOR SECURING MILITARY DRONES

### Context

- The Indian Army is establishing **six AASHVAST labs** to examine drones and other electronic systems for firmware-level vulnerabilities, hidden codes and foreign-origin components that could compromise their functioning during military operations.

### About AASHVAST Labs

- AASHVAST stands for **Assessment and Analysis of Electronic Systems Hardware for Vulnerabilities and Security Threats.**
- is a Firmware Analysis and Validation Suite developed by **QuickPay Pvt Ltd for the Directorate General of Electronics and Mechanical Engineers (DG EME).**
- The labs will initially focus on military drones and UAV components, with **CCTV cameras** procured by the Army also expected to undergo similar security checks in the future.

### Why is Firmware Security Important?

- **Firmware** is the low-level software embedded in electronic hardware that controls its basic functions.
- Vulnerabilities can be introduced during **manufacturing, component integration or software upgrades.**
- A compromised component could potentially cause a drone to **deviate from its mission, stop functioning, terminate prematurely or behave abnormally** under specific conditions.

Source: IT

## SLINEX-26

### Context

- The 13th edition of the Sri Lanka-India bilateral maritime exercise, SLINEX-26, was conducted at Visakhapatnam.

### About

- Conceptualised in **2005**, SLINEX has evolved into an important forum for fostering maritime cooperation, interoperability, and mutual understanding between the two Navies.

- Aligned with India's vision of **MAHASAGAR**, SLINEX-26 reinforces India's commitment to a secure, stable and inclusive maritime environment and further consolidates the enduring maritime partnership between India and Sri Lanka.

Source: PIB

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