

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS (DCA)

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LEGISLATIVE PRIVILEGE VERSUS FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND EXPRESSION

Context

- The Supreme Court recently disposed of a more than two-decade-old dispute concerning the conflict between legislative privilege and freedom of speech and expression.

Background

- The matter arose from a **2003 Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly resolution** against journalists over reports and an editorial critical of the state government and the then chief minister of the state.
 - The Assembly treated the publication as a breach of privilege and ordered 15 days' imprisonment for five journalists. The Supreme Court stayed the arrest warrants.
- The case raised questions about the scope of legislative privilege under **Article 194(3)** and its relationship with freedom of speech under **Article 19(1)(a)**, particularly when privilege is exercised against non-members.

Supreme Court Ruling

- The Court disposed of the matter as infructuous, since the **Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly had withdrawn the 2003 resolution in 2004**.
- The Court did **not decide the larger constitutional questions** concerning the scope of legislative privilege and its relationship with **Article 19(1)(a)**.
- The Court kept these questions of law open for consideration in an appropriate future case.

What Are Legislative Privileges?

- Legislative Privileges: Article 105** provides privileges and immunities to Parliament and its members.
 - Article 194(3)** provides that the powers, privileges and immunities of a State Legislature and its members may be defined by the Legislature through law.

- These privileges are intended to enable legislatures and their members to **function independently and effectively without undue external interference**.
- They include protection for speech and proceedings within the legislature and powers necessary to safeguard the authority and functioning of the House.

Right to Freedom of Speech and Expression

- Article 19(1)(a)** guarantees citizens the fundamental right to freedom of speech and expression.
- Article 19(2) of the Indian Constitution** deals with the reasonable restrictions that can be placed on the **fundamental right to freedom of speech and expression under Article 19(1)(a)**.
- The conditions under which speech can be restricted by the state:**
 - Security of the State, Public Order, Decency or Morality, Contempt of Court, Defamation, Incitement to Offence.

Key Judicial Interventions

- In **M.S.M. Sharma v. Sri Krishna Sinha (1959)**, also known as **Searchlight Case** the Supreme Court of India ruled that the powers, privileges, and immunities of state legislatures under **Article 194(3)** prevail over the fundamental right to freedom of speech and expression under **Article 19(1)(a)**.
- In **Tej Kiran Jain v. N. Sanjiva Reddy (1970)**, the Supreme Court held that **Article 105(2)** confers immunity on Members of Parliament from court proceedings in respect of anything said or any vote given in Parliament, provided it is made in the course of parliamentary proceedings.

Way Ahead

- Legislative privilege is **essential to protect the independence and effective functioning of representative institutions**, but its exercise must coexist with the Constitution's commitment to fundamental rights and democratic accountability.

- The eventual judicial determination will therefore need to establish a **principled balance between legislative autonomy, press freedom and judicial review**, ensuring that privilege remains a constitutional instrument for institutional functioning rather than an unrestricted power against public criticism.

Source: TH

SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES (SME) GROWTH FUND

Context

- The Union Cabinet approved the proposal by the Ministry of Finance to commit ₹10,000 crore of central government funding for the setting up of a **Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) Growth Fund**.

About SME Growth Fund (SGF)

- SME Growth Fund (SGF)** is aimed at **catalysing growth-oriented capital** for India's SMEs and enabling the emergence of champion Indian enterprises across manufacturing, services, technology, innovation-driven sectors, and strategic value chains.
- The Fund was first mentioned in the **Union Budget 2026**.



- The SME Growth Fund is designed as a **direct equity investment fund** and will operate in the form of **Alternative Investment Fund (AIF)** established under the SGF framework.
 - An AIF is a **privately pooled fund** established in India that raises money from investors and invests it according to a defined policy.
 - The Fund will provide **patient equity capital** to high-potential SMEs with demonstrated **business viability and scalability**.

Strategic Focus of the SME Growth Fund

- Manufacturing at the Core:** A major share of the SME Growth Fund's allocations will be directed towards **small and medium manufacturing-focused enterprises**.
 - The Fund is intended to support firms seeking to expand manufacturing capacity, adopt advanced technologies, improve productivity and strengthen export competitiveness.
- Extending Growth to Industrial Clusters:** The Fund will also consider SMEs **operating in industrial clusters in Tier-II and Tier-III cities**.
 - This is expected to support balanced regional industrial development, strengthen local supply chains and generate quality employment opportunities.

How Long-Term Growth Capital Enables SME Expansion

Scale operations	Undertake acquisitions
Foster innovation	Integrate into global value chains
Adopt advanced technology	Undertake strategic investments
Invest in manufacturing capacity	Expand into international markets

Need for a Dedicated Growth Fund

- Capital for SMEs:** Despite the wide presence of MSMEs across the economy, existing equity funds largely focus on **early-stage enterprises covering Micro enterprises**.
 - This creates scope to further expand access to growth equity capital for Small and Medium Enterprises.
- By providing long-term capital, the initiative will enable **Indian SMEs to scale operations, invest in technology and manufacturing capacity, expand into international markets, and integrate into global value chains**.
- Investments across industrial clusters**, including those in Tier-II and Tier-III cities, will support balanced regional industrial development, reinforce local supply chains and generate high-quality employment opportunities.
- It is expected to support enterprises operating in **sectors of national importance**.

Conclusion

- The SME Growth Fund **complements ongoing efforts to strengthen the SME sector** through reforms, digitalisation, credit support and ease of doing business measures.
- By catalysing investments, the Fund will promote innovation-led industrialisation while advancing the vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat.
- This support for smaller enterprises reflects **India's broader effort to make growth more inclusive**, with opportunities extending across the country.

Classification of SMEs

- Enterprises are classified as **micro, small or medium** based on investment in **plant and machinery or equipment, and annual turnover**.
- Under the latest criteria, a **small enterprise has investment of up to ₹25 crore** and turnover of up to **₹100 crore**.
 - ♦ A **medium enterprise** has investment of up to **₹125 crore** and turnover of up to **₹500 crore**.

India's MSME Ecosystem

- **Contribution to the Economy:** According to the Economic Survey 2025-26, MSMEs account for 31.1% of GDP, 35.4% of manufacturing output and 48.58% of exports.
- **Expanding Formal MSME Base:** In 2026, total MSME registrations under Udyam and the Udyam Assist Platform (UAP) reached ~9.78 crore. Registered MSMEs have also reported ~43.28 crore employment opportunities.
- **Women's Participation in MSMEs:** Female-owned enterprises account for 37.6% of total registrations.
- **MSMEs Across Key Economic Activities:** The registered base is spread across trading, services and manufacturing.
 - ♦ Trading accounts for around ~4.08 crore registrations, followed by services at ~3.77 crore and manufacturing at ~1.93 crore.

Source: TH

A NUCLEAR REACTOR ON THE MOON

Context

- NASA wants to install a **nuclear reactor near the moon's south pole by 2030**.

About

- Its planned output is **20 kilowatt (kW)** and could power a few households on earth.
- **Russia's planned reactor** for the International Lunar Research Station (ILRS) led by China, will produce around **10 kW**.
- **The U.S. and China** are pursuing parallel efforts to be the first to set up a semi-permanent, and in future permanent, moon base.
- **The nuclear power system could provide electricity for:**
 - ♦ Lunar habitats and life-support systems.
 - ♦ Rovers and other surface equipment.
 - ♦ Scientific experiments require substantial power.
 - ♦ Resource utilisation, such as extracting oxygen from lunar regolith.
 - ♦ Operations during the long lunar night and in permanently shadowed areas.

Why the New Race?

- **First mover in building nuclear reactors on Moon could:**
 - ♦ Shape norms, behaviours, and legal interpretations.
 - ♦ Control access to strategic areas (e.g., lunar south pole with water ice).
 - ♦ Gain geopolitical leverage by anchoring long-term facilities.

Why Nuclear over Solar?

- The Moon has little atmosphere and experiences **14-day** stretches of darkness, this makes **solar energy unreliable** in some of the most critical regions.
- **A small lunar reactor** could operate continuously for a decade or more, powering habitats, rovers, 3D printers and life-support systems.
- **Developing this capability is essential for missions to Mars**, where solar power is even more constrained.

Concerns

- **Mission Failure:** Rocket launch failures could cause accidents involving nuclear reactors and potentially spread radioactive material.
- **Radiation and Contamination:** Unlike reactors on Earth, lunar reactors would be difficult to protect with containment structures, and areas around them may need to be restricted to reduce radiation risks to astronauts and equipment.

- **Concerns over Lawful Use:** The race has also raised questions about access to the Moon and its resources. The 1967 Outer Space Treaty states that no country can claim the Moon as its territory.
 - ♦ However, questions remain over whether countries can restrict access to areas around their lunar bases and whether they can own the resources they extract from the Moon.
- **Risk of de facto control:** The Artemis Accords allow temporary “safety zones” around lunar activities to prevent harmful interference.
 - ♦ Although these zones are not supposed to constitute territorial claims, extensive networks of reactors, landing sites, mines and habitats could potentially give one country effective control over strategically important areas.
- **High cost of shielding:** Nuclear reactors require protection against radiation. Transporting the necessary shielding from Earth would be extremely expensive, while producing it from lunar resources would require substantial technological capabilities.
- **Waste heat management:** A reactor generates significant waste heat. Since the Moon lacks an atmosphere, this heat cannot be dissipated through convection. Large radiator systems would therefore be required, which would also have to be protected from lunar dust.
- **Safety risks:** A reactor malfunction or accident could potentially contaminate areas that may later be used by astronauts, creating additional environmental and operational risks.
- **Risk of a strategic race:** Nuclear power may eventually become essential for a permanent lunar economy, but such an economy does not yet exist.
 - ♦ Deploying reactors primarily to establish a first-mover advantage over rival countries could therefore create geopolitical tensions.
- ♦ **Article IX:** States must act with due regard to interests of others, hence, no territorial claims can be made.
- ♦ India is a signatory to the outer space treaty, but not to the Moon Agreement.
- **Liability Convention (1972):** Launching State is absolutely liable for damage on Earth/aircraft; fault-based liability for damage in space/on the Moon. It also provides claims/settlement machinery.
- **Moon Agreement (1979) (few parties; not widely accepted):** It adds environmental and rescue duties on the Moon; recognizes the Moon's resources as the “**common heritage**”. Applies only to its Parties.
- **1992 UN Principles:** Non-binding resolution recognising the role of nuclear power in missions where solar is insufficient; lays down safety, transparency, and consultation guidelines.
- **The Artemis Accords**, an initiative of NASA and the US State Department, is a **voluntary code of conduct** on exploration of space. It has over 70 signatory countries, including India.
 - ♦ All cooperative activities are meant to be for **peaceful purposes**, but there is nothing that prevents signatories from deploying or using weapons in space.

Conclusion

- Nuclear power could become crucial for establishing a sustainable and long-term human presence on the Moon by providing reliable energy beyond the limitations of solar power.
- However, its deployment must remain **consistent with the Outer Space Treaty, international cooperation, safety standards and the principle of peaceful use of outer space**, so that the race for lunar resources does not turn into a race for strategic control.

Source: TH

NOBEL PRIZE IN PHYSICS 2026: ICECUBE NEUTRINO ASTRONOMY

Context

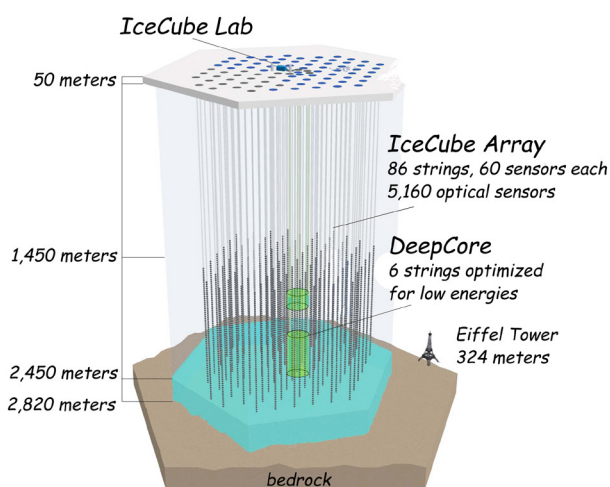
- The **2026 Nobel Prize in Physics** has been awarded to **Francis Halzen** for his pioneering contribution to the **IceCube Neutrino Observatory** and the **discovery of high-energy neutrinos** of astrophysical origin.

International Legal Framework

- **Outer Space Treaty (1967):**
 - ♦ **Permissible:** It permits peaceful purposes on the Moon and other celestial bodies and bans nuclear weapons/WMD anywhere in space or on celestial bodies.

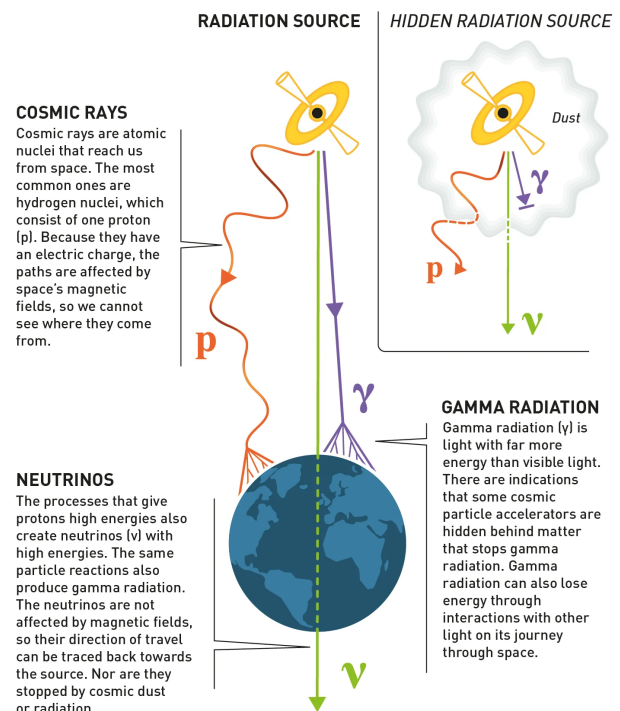
IceCube Neutrino Observatory at the South Pole

- The **IceCube Neutrino Observatory**, located at the South Pole in Antarctica, is designed primarily to detect **high-energy astrophysical neutrinos**.
- It occupies about **1 cubic kilometre of Antarctic ice** & contains **5,160 optical sensors**, called Digital Optical Modules.
- The observatory was completed in **2010**. Halzen first proposed using Antarctic ice as a neutrino detector in **1988**.
- In **2013**, IceCube reported the **first evidence** of high-energy cosmic neutrinos including two, nicknamed **Bert and Ernie**.
- In **2018**, one high-energy neutrino was traced to a distant **blazar, an active galaxy** containing a supermassive black hole whose relativistic jet points towards Earth.



How does IceCube work?

- When a neutrino occasionally interacts with an atomic nucleus in the ice, it produces a charged particle.
- It emits **Cherenkov radiation** if this particle travels faster than light can travel **through ice**, observed as a faint blue flash by the optical sensors.
- The vast volume of exceptionally clear and stable Antarctic ice provides the enormous detection medium required because neutrino interactions are extremely rare.



What are Neutrinos and Why Do They Matter?

- Neutrinos are **fundamental subatomic particles** belonging to the **lepton family** of the **Standard Model**.
 - It means that **they cannot be broken down** into any smaller bits, like quarks and photons and electrons.
- Produced in **the Sun, nuclear reactions, supernovae, cosmic-ray interactions** and other high-energy astrophysical processes.
- They carry **no electric charge**, so they are **not affected by electromagnetic forces**.
- Neutrinos have a **non-zero but very small mass**. Their mass was established through the discovery of **neutrino oscillations**.
- They interact primarily through the **weak nuclear force and gravity**, making them extremely difficult to detect.
- Neutrinos come in **three types, called flavors**. There are **electron neutrinos, muon neutrinos and tau neutrinos**. They oscillate between all three.
 - A neutrino can **change from one flavour to another** while travelling (**Neutrino oscillation**).
- Trillions of neutrinos pass through the **Earth and human body every second**, with very few interacting with matter.

- Neutrinos are **not deflected by magnetic fields** unlike charged cosmic rays. Hence, they can help identify the **sources of energetic cosmic events**.
- Because interactions are rare, detectors such as **IceCube** use enormous volumes of water/ice. Neutrino interactions can produce **Cherenkov radiation**, observed as a characteristic **blue flash**.
- Neutrinos provide insights into **particle physics, astrophysics, cosmology and the extreme environments of the Universe**.

India's Contribution to Neutrino Physics

- **1950s–60s:** TIFR scientists used the deep underground facilities of the **Kolar Gold Fields (KGF), Karnataka**, for cosmic-ray studies.
- **1964–65:** Detectors installed about **2.3 km underground** recorded atmospheric neutrinos, almost simultaneously with an experiment in a South African gold mine.
 - ♦ KGF experiments continued for decades but ended after the mines closed in **1992**.
- India later proposed the **India-based Neutrino Observatory (INO)** at **Pottipuram, Theni, Tamil Nadu**.
 - ♦ Its proposed **50,000-tonne magnetised Iron Calorimeter (ICAL)** was intended to study atmospheric neutrino oscillations and **matter effects inside the Earth**.

Source: TH

INDIA'S AEROSPACE SOVEREIGNTY

In News

- The Defence Minister emphasised that achieving aerospace and defence self-reliance requires indigenous aero-engine capabilities across design, development, testing, manufacturing, materials and MRO, particularly for the AMCA programme.

India's aerospace and defence sector

- The aerospace industry in India represents a huge opportunity for growth and could account for ₹3 lakh billion of defence production in India by 2029.
- The aerospace market alone is projected to require an estimated 43,000 new aircraft over the next 20 years because of increasing demand coming from the international marketplace.

Approach and Initiatives

- **Focus on Self-reliance:** Self-reliance in aero-engines is the foundation of India's complete aerospace sovereignty.
 - ♦ Work is underway on indigenous high-thrust engines, testing infrastructure, raw materials, and robust MRO (Maintenance, Repair, and Overhaul) capabilities, building a strong engine ecosystem in the country
- **Defence Acquisition Council (DAC):** It is India's premier defence procurement organization, spearheading indigenous acquisitions for Atmanirbhar Bharat.
 - ♦ It has granted Acceptance of Necessity (AoN) for about ₹6 lakh crore of DRDO-designed, Indian industry-manufactured systems.
- **Indigenous purchases** are strengthening fighting capabilities:
 - ♦ The approvals include 97 Tejas Mk-1A fighter fighters costing Rs 62,000 crore and 156 LCH Prachand helicopters costing Rs 62,700 crore. These procurements boost indigenous aerospace and defence manufacturing capabilities of India.
- **Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP) 2020** gave a push to indigenous procurement and domestic manufacture.
 - ♦ It also broadened the scope of Indian enterprises in defence design, development and manufacture.
- **Defence Procurement Procedure (DPP) 2016** streamlined defence buys and also moved Make in India forward.
 - ♦ It established the framework for future reforms in defence procurement.
- **Simplified revenue procurement** of almost Rs 1 lakh crore in the Defence Procurement Manual (DPM) 2025
 - ♦ It accelerated approvals, lowered penalties for indigenous projects and ensured long-term orders.
- **Indigenous high-thrust engine:** Government aims to invest over ₹5,000 crore for development of a domestic high-thrust aero-engine, especially for the AMCA (Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft) program.

- **Testing & Materials:** India will Set Up Its First Indigenous High-Thrust Engine Testing Facility and Collaborate with MIDHANI for Indigenisation of Critical Raw Materials
- **HAL Koraput milestone:** HAL hands up 2,000th aero-engine, AL-31FP for Su-30MKI fighters. It has also refurbished 9,000+ engines.
 - ♦ Koraput factory of HAL is manufacturing Russian-origin engines with technology transfer, however some spares, forgings and castings are still being imported.
 - ♦ The IAF has roughly 260 Su-30s in service and HAL estimates a life-time requirement of around 900 engines.
- **Shakti engine:** A second production line for the Shakti engine, developed together with Safran, will increase the capacity to 180 engines a year from 80 at an investment of 218 crore.
- **Global partnerships:** India is also bringing in Safran and Rolls-Royce to help build up domestic aero-engine capabilities.
- **iDEX project :** With an expenditure of ₹498.78 crore, the iDEX project had 676 startups, MSMEs and innovators, which resulted in 551 design and development contracts as of March 2026.
- **ADITI initiative:** The Defence Innovation Organization's (DIO) financial support initiative to expedite breakthrough inventions for the military. Sanctioned at an outlay of ₹750 crore for the period 2023-24 to 2025-26.
- **Technology Development Fund:** The initiative offers for funding of up to Rs. 50 crore for development of vital defence technology.
 - ♦ Besides, a corpus of ₹500 crore was being given for deep technology and new technologies and 80 projects worth ₹334 crore were being implemented by June 2026.
- **Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and Technology Transfer:** Collaborations with global aerospace giants provide advanced manufacturing methods, advanced composites and precision machining technology to Indian ecosystems.
- **Export Potential and Soft Power:** The spread of defence platforms (BrahMos missiles, HAL Light Combat Helicopters, and radar systems) to friendly foreign governments enhances economic and geopolitical ties.
- **Commercial Space and Downstream Applications:** Space technologies facilitate important civilian infrastructure, such as satellite communication, disaster management, agricultural yield mapping and urban planning.

Do you know?

- **The Indian Army** has indigenised almost 91 per cent of its ammunition inventory with 159 of the 175 varieties being produced in-country.
 - ♦ India has successfully test fired the operational and technical aspects of **Intermediate Range Ballistic Missile Agni-4** and Long Range Surface-to-Surface Ballistic Missile Agni-5.
 - ♦ Indigenous precision attack capabilities against ground targets have also been tested with the **TARA Glide Weapon and RudraM-II air-to-surface missile**.
 - ♦ The DRDO has progressed several indigenously developed systems like the Kusha Long Range Air Defence Missile and Very Short-Range Air Defence System (VSHORADS).
 - ♦ The DRDO has successfully completed a 12-minute ground test of an actively cooled scramjet combustor for hypersonic missile development.
- **The Indian Navy** commissioned 12 vessels and submarines including INS Surat, INS Nilgiri and INS Vaghsheer.
 - ♦ INS Mahendragiri, stealth frigate, inducted with more than 75% indigenous content.

Importance of India's aerospace and defence sector

- **Strategic Autonomy and National Security:** Aircraft manufacturing lowers dependence on volatile foreign supply chains in times of geopolitical crisis and ensures continual operational readiness of defence forces.
- **Economic Growth and High-Value Jobs:** Aerospace production is precision engineering.
 - ♦ It drives demand for trained technicians, software engineers, and materials scientists and boosts high-tech GDP contributions.

- ♦ SHACHI, the first of 11 Next Generation Offshore Patrol Vessels, has been launched. Commissioning of INS Dunagiri, INS Sanshodhak and INS Agray completes indigenous Sandhayak-class survey fleet, enhances maritime surveillance and survey capabilities.
- ♦ The DRDO has successfully carried out test-firing of Naval Anti-Ship Missile–Medium Range and shown multi-layered Ballistic Missile Defence capability.

Challenges and Concerns

- **Over-Reliance on Critical Components:** essential components such as aero-engines, high-end radar electronics and specialist alloys are still largely imported.
- **High Cost :** Aerospace R&D is extremely capital demanding and gestation times are in decades.
 - ♦ Domestic private sector players are usually faced with high capital costs and significant risk exposure.
- **Emerging Maintenance, Repair, and Overhaul (MRO) Ecosystem:** Indian commercial aircraft are being transported abroad for significant maintenance checks, resulting in capital outflow due to tax arrangements, certification barriers and lack of local infrastructure.
- **Regulatory and bureaucratic hurdles:** Modernising certification pipelines, procurement processes and defence acquisition regulations can be slow, often delaying the integration of products.
- **Structural gap in Specialised expertise:** India produces a large number of general engineers, but there is a structural shortage in specialised experience in fields like flight control design, propulsion engineering and stealth technologies.

Conclusion

- The Indian aerospace industry is heading toward more self-reliance through indigenous platforms, private-sector engagement and space capabilities, genuine technological autonomy demands mastery of aero-engines, advanced materials, avionics, sensors and autonomous systems.

- There is a need for sustained funding for R&D, stronger industry–academia–DRDO–ISRO collaboration, robust testing and certification infrastructure, integration of MSMEs and start-ups into global supply chains, civil–military technology convergence and international partnerships focusing on technology transfer and absorption.
- Aerospace should become a wider national technology ecosystem with India becoming a global MRO and aerospace manufacturing hub while creating a specialised skilled workforce.

Source :IE

NEWS IN SHORT

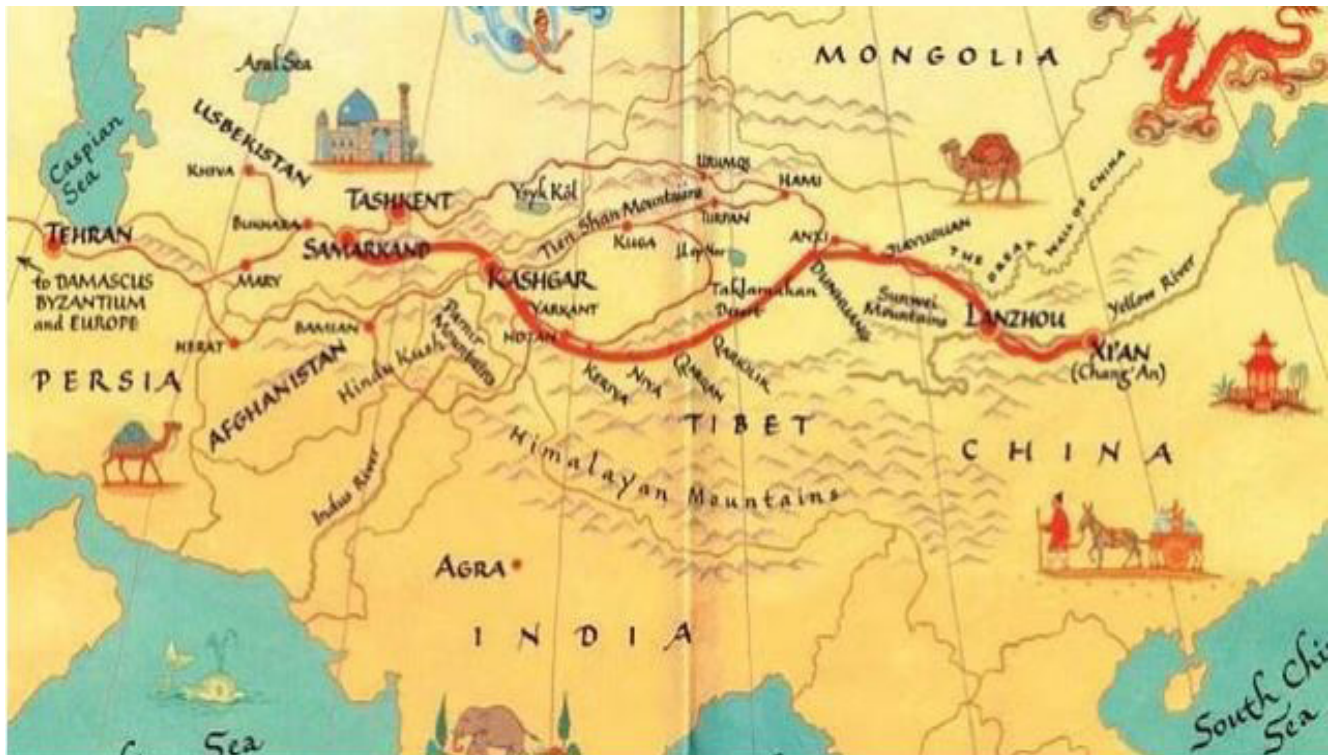
SILK ROAD

Context

- Contrary to the name, the Silk Road was a network of **multiple land and maritime trade routes** connecting **parts of east, central, south, and west Asia.**

Ancient Silk Road

- The Silk Road became important from around the **second century BC**, when **China's Han dynasty** expanded west and established contacts with Central Asian states.
 - ♦ Because **Chinese silk was a prized commodity** then, the **network was called the Silk Road.**
- It was a network of trade routes connecting **China and the Far East with the Middle East and Europe.**
 - ♦ Silk was **transported from east to west** throughout the year except for harsh winters which brought back **gold and silver coins** and other precious goods in exchange.
- Since it offered well-traveled roads, the Silk Road also **became the routes that technologies, religions, artistic styles, languages, and natural philosophy** took to spread across Eurasia.
- The Silk Road routes remained in use until A.D. 1453, until the **Ottoman Empire boycotted trade with China and closed them.**



Source: TH

RETREATING MONSOON

In News

- **Monsoon retreat** triggering thunderstorms and heavy rain across India.

Retreating Monsoon or Northeast monsoon

- The Retreating Monsoon refers to the **withdrawal of the Southwest Monsoon** from India, generally during **October–November**.
- It marks the transition from the **rainy season to the winter season**.
- During this period, the Northeast Monsoon becomes important, particularly over **southern and southeastern India**.
- The northeast monsoon mainly affects five meteorological divisions—Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Coastal Andhra Pradesh, Rayalaseema and South Interior Karnataka—and contributes about 11% of India's annual rainfall, compared with around 75% from the southwest monsoon.
 - ♦ Rainfall in northern and Gangetic regions during November–December is largely caused by Western Disturbances, not the northeast monsoon.
- **Kerala** receives some secondary rainfall during October–November.

Source :DTE

INTEGRATED TRANSPORT & LOGISTICS AUTHORITY (ITLA)

Context

- The Union Cabinet approved the setting up of a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV), namely, **Integrated Transport & Logistics Authority (ITLA)**.

About Integrated Transport and Logistics Authority (ITLA)

- It is a national apex institution established as a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) to promote integrated and multimodal transport planning, big-data analytics, technical appraisal of projects, and policy support across freight and transit sectors.
- It is modelled on integrated transport planning institutions in countries such as Japan, the United States, South Korea, China and Australia.

Key Roles and Responsibilities of ITLA

- **Long-Term National Transport Master Plan:** The authority will prepare a comprehensive National Transport Master Plan with a planning horizon of 10 years or more.
 - ♦ It will cover roads, railways, ports and shipping, civil aviation, inland waterways, coastal shipping, urban mobility and logistics.

- **Integrated Planning Framework:** It will evaluate short-term sectoral plans with a horizon of around five years and annual plans of transport Ministries.
- **Technical Appraisal of Major Projects:** ITLA will undertake technical appraisal of Government of India infrastructure projects costing ₹500 crore or more.
- **Monitoring and Impact Assessment:** It will monitor transport and infrastructure projects costing above ₹500 crore and provide a coordinated mechanism for issue resolution.
- **National Transport Data Repository (NTDR):** The authority will develop a unified transport data repository by integrating relevant transport and logistics datasets from multiple sources.
- **Logistics Policy Support:** It will advise and assist in the review and updating of the National Logistics Policy (2022).
- **Research and Innovation:** It will promote research & innovations in transport and logistics sectors.

Source: AIR

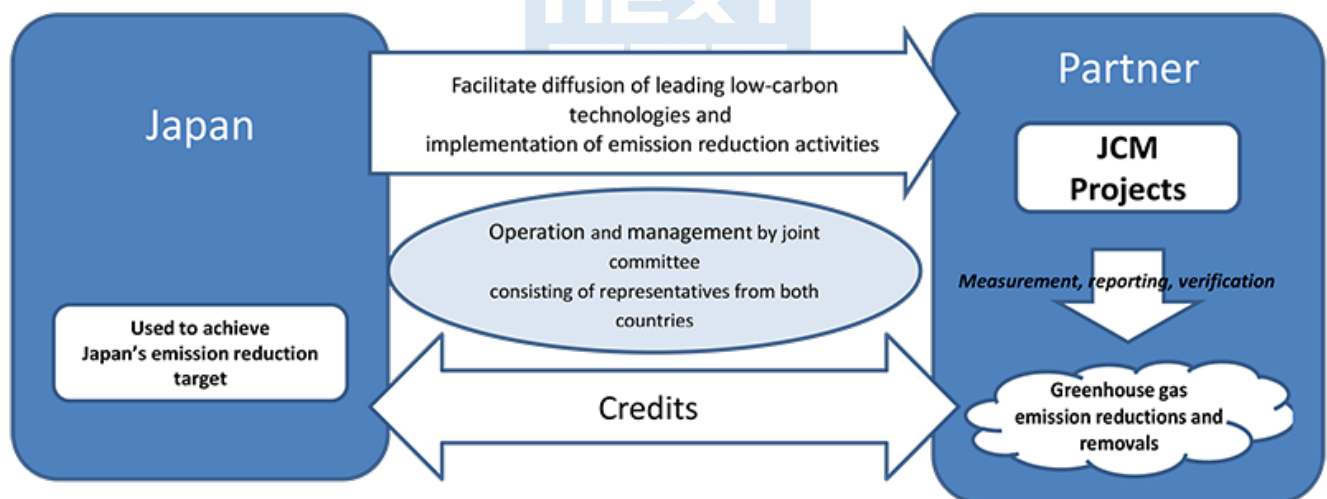
INDIA AND JAPAN LAUNCH OPERATIONAL MANUAL FOR THE JOINT CREDITING MECHANISM

Context

- India and Japan launched the Operational Manual for the India-Japan **Joint Crediting Mechanism (JCM)** in New Delhi.

About

- The Joint Crediting Mechanism aims to promote the deployment of **advanced low-carbon technologies**, **mobilise climate finance**, **facilitate technology cooperation** and support high-integrity emission reductions and removals in India.
- The JCM contributes to the achievement of both countries' **Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)** by evaluating Japan's contributions in a quantitative manner and acquiring the part of credit.
- It marks a significant milestone in operationalising bilateral cooperation between India and Japan under **Article 6.2 of the Paris Agreement**.



Source: DD News

INDIA'S FIRST-EVER HOUSEHOLD TRAVEL SURVEY (NHTS)

Context

- The **National Statistics Office (NSO)** of the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation has conducted the first-ever all-India survey on household travel between **July 2025 and June 2026**.

About

- The survey captures key aspects of domestic travel, including:
 - **Purpose of travel:** Employment, education, social engagements, cultural and leisure activities, tourism, domestic work, caregiving and other purposes.
 - **Mode of transport:** Modes of transportation used by different demographic groups for undertaking trips.

- ♦ **Travel duration and distance:** Average time taken and distances travelled during trips.

Findings of the Survey

- **Two-wheelers** are the predominant mode of transport for commuting to fixed workplaces, accounting for **42.6 per cent** of workers.
- **Buses and railways** facilitate **73.5 percent** of overnight travel followed by cars at **15.1 percent** and two wheelers at **8.8 percent**.
- **Gender Gap in Workforce Travel:** 61.9% of male workers undertake daily work trips (>1 km) compared to 41.9% of female workers nationwide.
- The average monthly expenditure on commuting to a fixed workplace is **₹785 per worker**.
 - ♦ **Urban workers** spend substantially more, at **₹1,044 a month**, compared with **₹612 for rural workers**.
 - ♦ Male workers spend an average of **₹835** on their commute each month, against **₹533 for female workers**.

Source: AIR

INDIAN NAVY'S FIRST INDIGENOUS FLEET SUPPORT SHIP 'SURYA'

Context

- Defence Minister Rajnath Singh launched '**Surya**', the Indian Navy's first indigenously built **Fleet Support Ship (FSS-1)**, in Visakhapatnam.

About

- Designed and built by **Hindustan Shipyard Limited (HSL)**, Surya is the **first of five Fleet Support Ships** being built for the Indian Navy.
- With a displacement of about **43,500 tonnes** and a top speed of **20 knots**, the vessel is designed to provide logistical support to warships during prolonged operations at sea.
- It can carry large quantities of **fuel and fresh water**, along with ammunition, spare parts and provisions.
- It also features a **helicopter deck** capable of supporting multi-role operations and **self-defence systems**.
- Surya will help enhance the Navy's **operational endurance and reach**, supporting India's sustained maritime presence across the **Indian Ocean Region (IOR)**.

Source: TH