

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS (DCA)

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MHA PORTAL SEEKS PUBLIC INPUTS ON DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES IN INDIA

Context

- A high-level committee set up by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has launched a portal inviting citizens, government agencies, NGOs, etc. to submit their input on demographic changes in India, preferably post-2011.

About the High-Level Committee on Demographic Changes (HLCDC)

- Constitution:** The Union Government constituted a high-level committee to study demographic changes, chaired by **Justice Prakash Prabhakar Naolekar in 2026**.
- The terms of reference** for the Committee are as follows:
 - To undertake an extensive consideration of the challenges arising from **demographic changes**, including those due to **illegal immigration**.
 - To study the possible **causes of such demographic changes**, such as variations in fertility, **cross-border movement** (including illegal immigration), economic opportunities, and other socioenvironmental factors.
 - To **identify the underlying factors** behind these changes, including illegal immigration, abnormal settlement patterns, and planned migration.
 - To **recommend an appropriate institutional mechanism** to strengthen border management, population stabilization, and identification systems for sustained monitoring of such trends.

Demographic Trends in India

- Declining Fertility Rate:** According to the National Family Health Survey-5 (NFHS-5), India's Total Fertility Rate (TFR) declined to around **2.0**, which is below the replacement level of 2.1.
 - This indicates that India is gradually moving towards population stabilisation at the national level.
- Declining Birth Rate:** According to the **Sample Registration System (SRS) Report 2024**:
 - India's birth rate declined **from 21 per 1,000 population** in 2014 to **18.3** in 2024.

- The decline reflects changing demographic patterns, rising urbanisation, increasing literacy, and improved access to healthcare and family planning.

Border-Related Demographic Challenges

- India–Bangladesh Border:** India shares a **4,096 km border** with Bangladesh across West Bengal, Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram.
 - The Assam Movement (1979-1985)** was a popular movement against illegal immigrants in Assam. The movement, led by All Assam Students Union (AASU) and the All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP).
- India–Myanmar Border:** India shares a **1,643 km border** with Myanmar across Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, and Mizoram.
 - Political instability after the **2021 Myanmar military coup** increased the inflow of **Chin refugees and Rohingya** migrants into Manipur and Mizoram.
- India–Pakistan Border:** India shares a **3,323 km border** with Pakistan.
 - In Jammu and Kashmir, cross-border infiltration from Pakistan has long been associated with **terrorism, militancy**, and internal security challenges.

Concerns Regarding Demographic Change

- National security and sovereignty:** Illegal immigration may create security challenges by increasing risks of infiltration, organised crime, and border instability.
- Social harmony:** Demographic changes linked to religion, ethnicity, or language may increase social tensions, identity politics, and conflicts over land and employment.
 - Ethnic violence** in Manipur between **Kuki and Meitei** highlighted tensions between communities over land, identity, and demographic concerns.
- Resource distribution:** Large-scale migration may increase pressure on housing, healthcare, education, welfare schemes, and employment opportunities.
 - Border districts in **Assam and Tripura** have witnessed concerns regarding land encroachment, competition for jobs, and pressure on public resources due to undocumented migration.

- **Protection of indigenous and tribal communities:** Indigenous and tribal communities, especially in the North-East region, fear loss of cultural identity, land rights, and political representation due to demographic changes.

Challenges

- **Lack of Updated Census Data:** The last Census in India was conducted in **2011**, while the next Census is scheduled for 2027.
 - ♦ The absence of updated Census data may affect the accuracy of demographic assessments and policymaking.
- **Human Rights Concerns:** There are concerns regarding the possibility of discrimination, social polarisation, and wrongful exclusion.
- **Federal and Administrative Challenges:** Different States may have varying political, administrative, and social responses to migration-related issues.
- **Border Management Challenges:** India shares long and porous international borders with neighbouring countries and effective border management requires advanced surveillance technology, infrastructure development, and better inter-agency coordination.

Way Ahead

- **Strengthen Border Infrastructure:** India should improve border fencing, surveillance systems, and technological monitoring mechanisms to prevent illegal infiltration.
- **Conduct Timely Census:** The government should ensure timely conduct of the Census and strengthen civil registration systems to enable evidence-based policymaking.
- **Ensure Constitutional Safeguards:** Any action related to identification or deportation must follow due process and protect constitutional rights.
- **Inclusive Population Policies:** Population stabilisation measures should focus on; women's education, healthcare access, awareness programmes, and voluntary family planning measures. Coercive population control measures should be avoided.

Concluding remarks

- A credible assessment of demographic change requires reliable data, transparent methodology and careful differentiation between natural population trends and migration.
- The committee's findings should strengthen evidence-based planning and lawful immigration

management while safeguarding privacy, constitutional rights and social cohesion.

Source: TH, PIB

DISINVESTMENT AND FISCAL MANAGEMENT IN INDIA

Context

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved the strategic sale of a 60.72% stake in IDBI Bank to Fairfax Financial Holdings for ₹52,878 crore despite nearing its annual target.

Disinvestment Policy of the Government of India

- **Government policy on disinvestment consists of;** Strategic Disinvestment/ Privatisation and Minority Stake Sale in CPSEs.
- **Strategic disinvestment** implies the entire or substantial sale of the government shareholding of a CPSE along with the **transfer of management control**.
 - ♦ **In case of privatisation**, which is a **subset of strategic disinvestment**, the government equity in CPSE and its management control is transferred to a private strategic buyer(s), and in other cases of strategic disinvestment, the government equity is transferred to another CPSE along with control.
- **Minority stake sales** in certain CPSEs are carried out without transfer of management control through various SEBI-approved methods like Initial Public Offer (IPO), Offer for Sale (OFS), buyback of shares, etc. These methods play an important role in strengthening the capital market through:
 - ♦ Increasing the float of well-performing CPSE's;
 - ♦ Providing opportunity to retail investors to participate in an extended range of stocks and
 - ♦ Increasing liquidity and depth of the capital market.

New Public Sector Enterprise (PSE) Policy

- **The New Public Sector Enterprise (PSE) Policy** for Atma Nirbhar Bharat, which provides overall guidance on strategic disinvestment, **was notified in 2021**, with the approval of the Cabinet.
 - ♦ The policy intends to minimise the presence of government in the PSEs across all sectors of the economy.
 - ♦ Existing CPSEs, Public Sector Banks and Public Sector Insurance Companies to be covered under it.

- **Two-fold classification** of Sectors to be disinvested;
 - ♦ **Strategic Sector:** Bare minimum presence of the public sector enterprises and remaining to be privatised or merged or subsidiarized with other CPSEs or closed. Following **4 sectors** to come under it;
 - Atomic energy, Space and Defence
 - Transport and Telecommunications
 - Power, Petroleum, Coal and other minerals
 - Banking, Insurance and financial services.
 - ♦ **Non-Strategic Sector:** In this sector, CPSEs will be privatised, otherwise shall be closed.
- **Valuation concerns:** Selling public assets below their fair economic value can result in a long-term loss to the public exchequer.
- **Employment concerns:** Employees may face uncertainty regarding job security, service conditions and future restructuring.
- **Revenue uncertainty:** Disinvestment is a one-time source of receipts and cannot sustainably substitute for recurring tax revenues.

Concluding remarks

- Disinvestment can strengthen fiscal management by unlocking public capital and improving the efficiency of commercial enterprises, but it is **not a substitute for sustainable revenue generation**.
- A transparent, strategically calibrated approach that balances fiscal needs, economic efficiency, public interest and long-term asset value is essential for ensuring that disinvestment contributes to inclusive and sustainable growth.

Why Is the Government Continuing Disinvestment?

- **Rising subsidy expenditure:** Disruptions linked to the **West Asian conflict** and the Strait of Hormuz have increased expenditure pressures, particularly on fertiliser and oil-related support.
- **Higher-than-anticipated fertiliser subsidy requirements:** Against a Budget estimate of ₹1.71 lakh crore for FY 2026–27, expenditure on urea and nutrient-based fertiliser subsidies reached ₹1.03 lakh crore during April–August.
- **Fiscal deficit management:** The government has targeted a fiscal deficit of 4.3% of GDP in FY 2026–27. Additional non-debt receipts can help finance expenditure and reduce borrowing requirements, all else being equal.

Significance of Disinvestment

- **Improves operational efficiency:** Private participation can introduce stronger commercial incentives, professional management and improved accountability.
- **Reduces the fiscal burden:** It can reduce the need for government support to loss-making or underperforming enterprises.
- **Promotes competition:** Private participation can improve service quality, encourage innovation and strengthen competition in sectors where adequate safeguards exist.
- **Unlocks public assets:** Disinvestment can help realise the value of government investments and make capital available for alternative public uses.

What are the concerns?

- **Uncertain market conditions:** Weak investor sentiment, volatile valuations and sector-specific risks can delay transactions or reduce sale proceeds.

Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM)

- **The Department of Disinvestment** was set up as a **separate department in 1999**.
 - ♦ It has been renamed the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) from 2016.
- As per the present allocation of business rules, the mandate of the Department is as follows:
 - ♦ All matters relating to the **management of Central Government investments in equity**, including the disinvestment of equity in Central Public Sector Undertakings.
 - ♦ All matters relating to the **sale of Central Government equity through offer for sale or private placement or any other mode** in the erstwhile Central Public Sector Undertakings.

Source: IE, DIPAM

THE KIGALI AMENDMENT AT 10: WHY INDIA'S COOLING CHOICES MATTER?

In Context

- The **Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol** that was adopted on 15 October 2016 marks a decade of global efforts to **reduce hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs)**.

What is the Kigali Amendment?

- **Background:** The Montreal Protocol, adopted in 1987, was designed to protect the ozone layer by

phasing out ozone-depleting substances such as chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs).

- **Why was it needed?** HFCs were widely adopted as alternatives to CFCs because they do not deplete the ozone layer. However, many HFCs have a high global warming potential.
- **Adoption:** It was adopted in Kigali, Rwanda, on 15 October 2016, and entered into force on 1 January 2019.
- **Objective:** To gradually reduce HFC production and consumption worldwide. It is a phase-down, not a complete phase-out.
- **Climate benefit:** Full implementation could prevent approximately 0.3°C–0.5°C of global warming by 2100.

Important Refrigerants: CFCs vs HFCs

- **CFCs (Chlorofluorocarbons):** Damage the stratospheric ozone layer and also contribute to global warming.
- **HFCs (Hydrofluorocarbons):** Do not directly deplete the ozone layer but many have a high global warming potential.
- **Low (Global Warming Potential) alternatives:** Options such as ammonia, carbon dioxide and certain hydrocarbons can reduce climate impacts, subject to equipment requirements and safety considerations.

Why is Cooling Important for Climate Action?

- Cooling affects the climate in two major ways:
 - ♦ **Refrigerant emissions:** HFCs can escape from air-conditioners, refrigerators and other cooling equipment, contributing to global warming.
 - ♦ **Electricity consumption:** Cooling equipment consumes electricity, which can cause emissions when power is generated using fossil fuels.

India's Commitments under the Kigali Amendment

- **Ratification:** India ratified the amendment in 2021.
- **HFC freeze:** India is required to freeze HFC production and consumption at its agreed baseline in 2028.
- **Reduction schedule:** The first reduction is 10% below the baseline in 2032, followed by progressively deeper reductions, reaching 85% in 2047.
- **Key challenge:** India's cooling demand is expected to rise with increasing temperatures,

urbanisation, incomes and access to air-conditioning.

What More Needs to Be Done?

- **Improve energy efficiency:** Strengthen appliance standards so that new cooling equipment uses less electricity.
- **Manage refrigerants:** Recover, recycle or safely destroy refrigerants from old equipment to prevent leakage.
- **Support industry:** Provide access to suitable technology, finance and training for manufacturers and technicians.
- **Strengthen implementation:** Improve servicing practices, refrigerant recovery systems and monitoring of HFC use.

Multilateral Fund

- **Multilateral Fund:** Established in 1990 to help developing countries meet their obligations under the Montreal Protocol.
- **Purpose:** Supports technology conversion, capacity-building and training.
- **Significance:** Financial and technical assistance helps developing countries adopt alternatives without placing the entire transition cost on domestic industries.

Source: IE

E-MOBILITY IS THE WAY AHEAD FOR INDIA

Context

- The Lieutenant-Governor of Delhi said recently that **E-mobility** is the way forward for the **nation's strategic, growth, and ecological trajectory**.

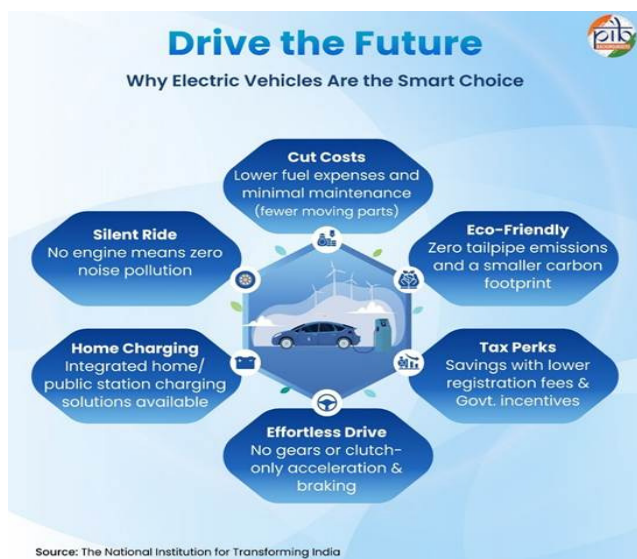
E-mobility

- **E-mobility (Electric Mobility)** refers to the **use of electric-powered vehicles and transportation systems** instead of vehicles that run primarily on petrol or diesel.
 - ♦ It involves the **use of electric vehicles (EVs), batteries, charging infrastructure and related technologies** to make transportation cleaner and more energy-efficient.

Electric vehicles

- An EV is a vehicle powered by an **electric motor that uses energy stored in a battery**. It can be recharged from an external power source.

- **There are four types of EVs:**
 - ♦ **Battery EVs (BEVs)**, that are fully electric.
 - ♦ **Hybrid EVs (HEVs) & Plug-in HEVs**, that combine an internal combustion engine and an electric motor to power the vehicle. PHEVs additionally have externally rechargeable battery packs for extended electric-only operation.
 - ♦ **Fuel Cell EVs (FCEV)**, in which electric energy is produced from chemical energy.



Adoption of EV's in India

- **EV adoption** has seen a multifold surge, **growing from 0.08% in FY15-16 to 8.26% in FY25-26.**
 - ♦ India's growth has outpaced global trends, where EV sales increased ~20 times.
- **India's EV penetration** was merely one-fifth of the global penetration in 2020. It ramped up to over two-fifths of the global penetration in 2024.
 - ♦ **In 2025, Uttar Pradesh emerged as the largest EV market**, followed by Maharashtra and Karnataka.
- **Exports have risen from USD 1.2 million in 2020 to USD 84 million in 2024. Top export destinations** included Nepal, Indonesia and Japan.
- **Infrastructure:** According to Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL), 16,561 of the 52,718 public charging stations available as of July 2026 are equipped with fast EV charging facilities.
- **Investment:** India's EV ecosystem raised over USD1.4 billion in FY 2025, ~27% higher than 2024. In this, **Delhi** emerged as the top city for EV investments.

- **e VITARA (2025):** It is Suzuki's first global strategic Battery Electric Vehicle (BEV), the Made-in-India BEVs are aimed to be exported to 100+ countries. With this milestone, India became Suzuki's global manufacturing hub for EVs.
- **India's EV market**, valued at **USD 3.71 billion in 2025**, is projected to grow to **USD 191.04 billion by 2034**, at a CAGR of 54.94%.
- **The Indian EV battery market** is likely to grow from **USD 2.71 billion in 2025 to USD 15.90 billion by 2034**, at a CAGR of 21.70%.
- **Targets: India aims for 30% of all vehicle sales** to be electric by 2030, aligning with the global EV30@30 initiative.
 - ♦ The EV ecosystem is strengthened with the establishment of **1.32 million charging stations across India by 2030.**

Challenges in Adoption

- **High Initial Cost:** The upfront cost of purchasing an electric vehicle in India is relatively high compared to traditional internal combustion engine vehicles.
 - ♦ This cost includes not only the vehicle itself but also the cost of batteries.
- **Limited Charging Infrastructure:** The availability of charging infrastructure remains a significant barrier to EV adoption in India.
- **Range Anxiety:** Range anxiety, or the fear of running out of battery charge before reaching a charging station, is a prevalent concern among Indian consumers considering EVs.
- **Battery Technology and Supply Chain:** India relies heavily on imported lithium-ion batteries, which increases costs and makes EVs vulnerable to supply chain disruptions.
- **Consumer Awareness and Education:** Many consumers in India lack awareness and understanding of electric vehicles, including their benefits, technology, and available models.

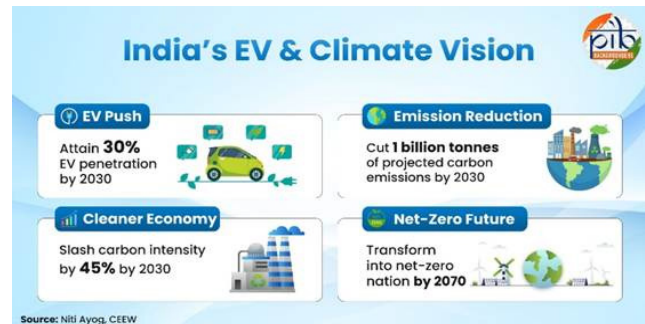
Government Initiatives

- **National Electric Mobility Mission Plan (2020) and FAME-I:** NEMMP was brought into effect to accelerate the adoption and production of electric vehicles (EVs).
 - ♦ As part of this mission, the FAME India Scheme (Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Hybrid and Electric Vehicles) was implemented from 2015 to 2019 to encourage the adoption of electric and hybrid vehicles.

- **FAMEII (Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles) — Phase II:** Launched in 2019, the scheme focuses on increasing EV adoption, expanding the e-bus network, and strengthening the charging infrastructure.
- **Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme for Automobile and Auto Component Industry in India (PLI-Auto):** Launched in 2021, the scheme aims to boost domestic manufacturing of Advanced Automotive Technologies (AAT).
 - ♦ Major players like Tata Motors and Mahindra & Mahindra have stepped up with significant EV production investments.
 - ♦ A key mandate is that companies must ensure at least 50% domestic value addition (DVA) to qualify for incentives.
- **Scheme for Promotion of Manufacturing of Electric Passenger Cars in India 2024 (SPMEPCI):** To draw global automakers to invest, the scheme grants approved applicants a five-year window to import Completely Built-in Units (CBUs) of electric four-wheelers (e-4W) valued at a minimum CIF (Cost, Insurance, and Freight) of USD 35,000 at a significantly reduced customs duty of 15%.
- **India Electric Mobility Index (IEMI):** NITI Aayog unveiled the India Electric Mobility Index (IEMI) in 2025. It is designed to track, measure, and compare how States and Union Territories are progressing on their electric mobility ambitions.
 - ♦ Based on these results, regions are ranked as frontrunners with thriving ecosystems; Delhi, Maharashtra, and Chandigarh are leading as 'Frontrunners' in the recent IEMI score.
- **PM e-Bus Sewa-Payment Security Mechanism (PSM) Scheme:** It was notified in 2024 and provides payment security coverage to each bus deployed for up to 12 years.
- **Delhi's EV Policy:** It aims to reduce vehicular emissions and improve air quality in the city. In 2026, the Government approved a comprehensive scheme to replace old, high-emission trucks and buses in Delhi-NCR.
 - ♦ The two-year scheme will support the replacement of around 2.07 lakh commercial vehicles in Delhi-NCR (Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh).
- **National Mission on Manufacturing (NMM):** The NMM (2025) identifies EVs as a key "seed" sector for innovation-led growth. It aims to double the manufacturing sector's contribution to GDP from 12.9% (2023) to 25%.
 - ♦ It strengthens India's EV ecosystem by promoting advanced manufacturing, fostering technology development, and integrating EV production into global value chains.
- **PM Electric Drive Revolution in Innovative Vehicle Enhancement Scheme (PM E-DRIVE Scheme):** It aims to accelerate EV adoption through targeted demand incentives, support for domestic manufacturing, and expansion of charging infrastructure.
- **Low GST on EVs:** EVs in India attract a concessional GST rate of 5%, which applies to all electric cars, two-wheelers, and three-wheelers. This makes them significantly cheaper to tax than conventional vehicles.

Way Forward

- India is reshaping itself from an **import-dependent market into a globally competitive hub** for EV production.
 - ♦ This is aligned with its **strategic priorities of energy security, reduced oil imports, and achieving the 2070 net-zero vision.**



- The Government is developing the next phases of **Corporate Average Fuel Efficiency (CAFE) norms, CAFE III (2027–2032) and CAFE IV (2033–2037).**

- ♦ These propose stricter CO₂ emission targets based on the Worldwide Harmonised Light Vehicle Test Procedure (WLTP).
- The road ahead will be shaped by **deeper supply chain integration, accelerated localization of batteries and a robust charging infrastructure.**
- ♦ Together, these pillars are poised to **define India's leadership in the global EV landscape.**

Source: TH

NEWS IN BRIEF

SOUTHERN INDIAN OCEAN FISHERIES AGREEMENT (SIOFA)

Context

- The Union Government approved India's accession to the **Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA)**, elevating its status from a Cooperating Non-Contracting Party to a full Contracting Party.

What is SIOFA?

- The Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA) is a **regional agreement** for the conservation and management of fishery resources in the high seas of the Southern Indian Ocean.
- It covers fish, molluscs, crustaceans and other sedentary species, while excluding highly migratory species listed in **Annex I of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)** and sedentary species falling under the fishing jurisdiction of coastal states.
- The Indian Ocean has **two** major regional fisheries management frameworks: **SIOFA and the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC).**
 - ♦ India has been a contracting party to the IOTC **since 1996**, which manages highly migratory tuna and tuna-like species.

Do you know?

- The high seas account for approximately **65%** of the global ocean. Fishing activity in these waters is dominated by **China, Taiwan, Japan, South Korea and Spain**, which account for 21%, 13%, 11%, 11% and 8%, respectively.
- Indian fishing vessels currently operate largely within **60–80 nautical miles** of the coast. Accession to SIOFA could create opportunities

for Indian fishers and entrepreneurs to access marine resources beyond their traditional operating areas.

Source: MoneyControl

OMAN REPLACES US AS TOP LNG SUPPLIER TO INDIA

In News

- Oman became India's largest supplier of **liquefied natural gas (LNG)**, replacing the **United States.**

India's LNG Supplier Ranking

- India imported 2.17 million tonnes of LNG in September 2026, around **14% less than in August.**
- **Oman ranked first**, supplying 27% of India's total LNG imports and **Nigeria ranked second.**
- The **United States fell to third place** as its shipments to India declined by 59% from August.
- Qatar, traditionally a major supplier, ranked sixth, supplying around 94,000 tonnes.

What is LNG?

- LNG is **natural gas cooled to approximately –162°C**, turning it into a liquid for easier storage and transport.
- Liquefaction **reduces its volume to about one-six-hundredth of its gaseous volume.**
- LNG is transported in specially insulated ships and converted back into gas at import terminals through regasification.

Uses of LNG

- Power generation and fertilizer production.
- City gas distribution, including domestic cooking and transport.
- Industrial and other commercial applications.

Why Did Supplier Rankings Change?

- **Geopolitical disruptions in West Asia** affected energy supply routes and availability.
- **Competition from European buyers** for US LNG cargoes reduced their availability to India.
- **Disruptions at Qatar's Ras Laffan Industrial City** following an Iranian strike in March 2026 affected Qatari shipments, according to the supplied report.

Significance for India

- **Energy security:** Diversifying suppliers reduces dependence on a limited number of countries.

- **Price stability:** Access to multiple suppliers can improve flexibility during supply disruptions.
- **Import vulnerability:** India remains exposed to geopolitical tensions, global competition for LNG and fluctuations in international prices.

Source: TH

INDIA'S COIR SECTOR

Context

- India's coir sector is gaining importance as a sustainable, export-oriented industry that promotes rural livelihoods, women's empowerment and value addition to agricultural waste.

What Is Coir?

- Coir is a natural fibre extracted from the tough outer husk of coconuts. It is used to manufacture **mats, ropes, brushes, mattresses and other products**.
- India is the **world's largest producer and exporter** of coir and coir products, accounting for around two-thirds of global production.

Coir Sector in India

- The sector provides direct and indirect employment to over 7 lakh people, around 80% of whom are women, mainly from rural households.
- In FY 2025–26, India's coir exports reached ₹6,614.40 crore, up from ₹1,630.33 crore in FY 2014–15, an increase of approximately 306%.
- More than **21,000 coir units** are registered on the Udyam registration portal, employing around 2.3 lakh people.

Coir Vikas Yojana (CVY)

- The **Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises** implements the **Coir Vikas Yojana**, a Central Sector Scheme for the sustainable development of the coir industry.
- Its key interventions include:
 - ♦ Skill development and training for artisans, including rural women.
 - ♦ Research, technology development and improved machinery.
 - ♦ Support for domestic sales, exports and participation in trade fairs.
 - ♦ Financial assistance and development of production infrastructure.

Source: PIB

PRADHAN MANTRI SAMAJIK SAHAYATA YOJANA (PMSSY)

In News

- The Union Cabinet has reportedly approved the continuation of the **National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) for five years**, from FY 2026–27 to 2030–31, with an outlay of ₹53,428 crore, **renaming it the Pradhan Mantri Samajik Sahayata Yojana (PMSSY)**.

About the Scheme

- **Launch:** 15 August 1995, originally as the National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP).
- **Ministry:** Ministry of Rural Development, Department of Rural Development.
- **Nature:** A 100% centrally sponsored, non-contributory social assistance programme.
- **Objective:** To provide financial support to vulnerable BPL households, including elderly persons, widows and persons with disabilities, and to families that lose their primary breadwinner.
- **Constitutional Basis:** Article 41 of the Directive Principles of State Policy calls upon the State to provide public assistance in cases such as old age, sickness, disability and undeserved want, within its economic capacity.

Key Features

- **Old-Age Pension:** The former Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS) is renamed Pradhan Mantri Vridhavastha Pension Yojana.
- **Widow Pension:** The former Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme (IGNWPS) is renamed Pradhan Mantri Vidhawa Pension Yojana.
- **Disability Pension:** The former Indira Gandhi National Disability Pension Scheme (IGNDPS) is renamed Pradhan Mantri Divyangjan Pension Yojana.
- **Family Benefit:** The former National Family Benefit Scheme (NFBS) is renamed Pradhan Mantri Parivar Labh Yojana and provides a one-time grant to eligible BPL households following the death of the primary breadwinner.
- **Disability Eligibility:** The supplied announcement states that the qualifying threshold has been reduced from 80% severe disability to 40% benchmark disability, in line with the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016.

- **Age and Assistance:** The supplied announcement states that the minimum age requirement for disability pension has been removed and that monthly assistance is ₹375 for beneficiaries aged 0–79 years and ₹625 for those aged 80 years and above.
- **Coverage:** The announcement cites coverage of approximately 3.20 crore beneficiaries.

Source: AIR

MINING PROJECT THREATENS FUTURE OF RARE JEYPORE GROUND GECKO

Context

- The bauxite mining project in the Odisha's Balda hills threatens the future of rare Jeypore ground gecko.

About

- In the hills of the Eastern Ghats in Odisha and Andhra Pradesh lives a tiny population of the strikingly-patterned Jeypore ground gecko.
- It was presumed extinct for 130 years until it was rediscovered in 2010 by an Indian scientist.
- Just four individuals of this endangered species have been documented in the past year in Odisha's Balda hills.

Jeypore Ground Gecko

- The Jeypore Ground Gecko is a rare species of gecko (a type of lizard) associated with the Eastern Ghats region of Odisha, India.
- **Scientific name:** *Cyrtodactylus jeyporensis*.
- **Description:** The nocturnal gecko, some 3.6 inches long, with a comparatively large head, and a yellow-orange body, was originally described in 1878 by the British naturalist Richard Henry Beddome.



- **Distribution:** Endemic to the Eastern Ghats of India, recorded in southern Odisha and northern Andhra Pradesh.
- **Habitat:** High-elevation, moist semi-evergreen forests, generally around 1,200–1,300 metres.
- **Threats:** Its habitat is fast shrinking, owing to its transformation to coffee plantations, hydropower projects and mining.
- **IUCN status:** Endangered (EN), according to the cited IUCN assessment.
- **CITES:** Included in Appendix II, which regulates international trade to help prevent unsustainable exploitation.

Source: TH

EXERCISE IBSAMAR IX

Context

- Indian Naval Ship (INS) Tarkash, a frontline guided-missile stealth frigate of the Indian Navy is participating in the ninth edition of the India-Brazil-South Africa Maritime (IBSAMAR) Exercise 2026.

About

- Conducted biennially since 2008 under the India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) framework, IBSAMAR has emerged as a platform for collective training and the exchange of operational best practices among the three navies.
- The trilateral exercise cover a broad spectrum of maritime operations, including surface warfare, anti-air warfare, anti-submarine warfare, naval air operations, maritime interdiction, Visit Board Search and Seizure (VBSS), anti-piracy operations, search and rescue, damage control and firefighting.

Source: DDNews

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