



**FEBRUARY 2025**



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## 2nd February, 2025

### [Tax Bonanza for Middle Class: TH Front Page](#)

#### Economy

#### Easy Explanation:

The Union Budget 2025-26, presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, aims to **jumpstart** India's slowing economic growth by offering **₹1 lakh crore in tax relief** to middle-class households. This move is expected to **boost domestic demand** and **increase spending power** amid rising inflation and declining consumer confidence. The biggest relief for taxpayers comes with the announcement that individuals earning up to **₹12 lakh per year** will now **pay no income tax**—an increase from the previous ₹7 lakh threshold. This tax change is expected to benefit around **one crore taxpayers** by either eliminating or significantly reducing their tax liabilities.

Additionally, the government **continues to invest in infrastructure and capital expenditure** to fuel economic growth. Despite some concerns about reduced government spending, the Centre has assured that public



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investments in **capital projects, infrastructure, and state-level development initiatives** will continue. The budget also proposes **simplifying India's customs duty structure** by eliminating multiple tariff slabs, a move seen as an effort to make the country more business-friendly while addressing global trade concerns.

The budget also focuses on **long-term fiscal stability**, aiming to **reduce the fiscal deficit to 4.4% of GDP in 2025-26** and targeting a **debt-to-GDP ratio of 50% by 2031**. Alongside, it introduces business-friendly reforms, including **decriminalizing nearly 100 legal provisions** and a commitment to a **"trust-first, scrutinize-later"** tax system to ease compliance burdens. These measures align with the government's long-term vision of **stimulating private investment and enhancing India's global competitiveness**.

## Key Takeaways

### 1. Major Tax Relief for the Middle Class

- **New Income Tax Exemption:** No tax for annual incomes up to **₹12 lakh** (up from ₹7 lakh).
- **Salaried Employees:** Enjoy **₹12.75 lakh tax-free income** due to standard deduction of ₹75,000.
- **Estimated Impact:** **₹1 lakh crore in tax relief** for taxpayers, boosting consumption.

### 2. Boost to Economic Growth & Consumption

- **Declining post-pandemic demand and high inflation** have hurt spending.
- **Tax relief aims to increase disposable income**, driving consumption and growth.
- **Public investment in infrastructure** continues to support economic momentum.

### 3. Continued Government Investment & Fiscal Responsibility

- **Capital Expenditure (Capex):** Increased by 10.1% to **₹11.2 lakh crore** in 2025-26.
- **Interest-free loans:** **₹1.5 lakh crore for states** to build infrastructure.
- **Fiscal Deficit Target:** Lowered to **4.4% of GDP in 2025-26** from **4.8% in 2024-25**.
- **Debt-to-GDP Target:** To be reduced to **50% by 2031** from the current 56.1%.

### 4. Simplified Customs & Trade Policies

- **Seven out of 15 tariff slabs removed**, making imports/exports simpler.
- **Lowered customs duties to encourage domestic manufacturing.**
- **Possible response to Trump's trade policies** that could impose tariffs on India.

### 5. Pro-Business & Compliance-Friendly Measures

- **100 legal provisions decriminalized** across various laws.
- **New Income Tax Law** aims for **"trust-first, scrutinize-later"** approach to taxpayers.
- **Encourages deregulation & economic freedom** to boost private sector investment.

### 6. A Shift in Fiscal Strategy

- **Moving from 'fiscal deficit' to 'debt-to-GDP' as the main economic indicator.**
- **Greater flexibility** to respond to economic uncertainties while maintaining stability.



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## 7. Global & Political Implications

- **Addressing U.S. trade concerns** by simplifying tariff structures.
- **Strengthening India's position as an investment hub.**
- **Ensuring fiscal stability** while providing a stimulus to growth.

The **Union Budget 2025-26** balances **immediate relief for households, sustained investment in infrastructure, and long-term fiscal responsibility**, positioning India for **steady economic growth** in the coming years.

### [Responsive Budget that banks on India: TH Tax](#)

Economy

## Easy Explanation

The Union Budget 2025-26 focuses on **growth, fiscal discipline, and long-term transformation** under the vision of 'Viksit Bharat' (Developed India). The most notable highlight is the **increase in income tax exemption to ₹12 lakh**, which will **increase disposable income** for the middle class, boost **domestic consumption**, and promote economic confidence. The idea behind this move is that **a larger tax base and better compliance** will result in **lower taxes for everyone in the long run**.

The Budget also maintains **fiscal discipline**, with the **fiscal deficit target set at 4.8% of GDP for 2024-25 and an ambitious 4.4% target for 2025-26**. This **ensures inflation remains in check**, protects purchasing power, and signals financial stability to investors.

A **record ₹11.2 lakh crore** has been allocated for **capital expenditure**, focusing on infrastructure development to **stimulate private sector investments**. An additional **₹1.5 lakh crore in interest-free loans to states** aims to **boost local infrastructure projects**. Another major investment is in **sustainable energy**, with **₹20,000 crore** dedicated to nuclear energy research and initiatives to accelerate the **electric vehicle (EV) sector** by removing **customs duties on battery-related materials**.

Recognizing that **India's future growth relies on skilled manpower**, the government has announced **new skilling initiatives**, including **five National Centres of Excellence, expansion of IIT capacities, and a Centre of Excellence in Artificial Intelligence (AI)**. These initiatives will **equip India's workforce with advanced skills** for global opportunities, aligning with the '**Make for India, Make for the World**' strategy.

## Key Takeaways

### 1. Major Income Tax Relief for Middle Class

- **New Income Tax Exemption:** No tax for annual incomes up to **₹12 lakh** (up from ₹7 lakh).
- **Encourages Compliance:** Expanding the tax base and rewarding honest taxpayers with lower taxes.
- **Boost to Consumption:** Higher disposable income will **increase spending power**.

### 2. Fiscal Discipline & Inflation Control



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- **Fiscal Deficit Target:** 4.8% of GDP in 2024-25, aiming for 4.4% in 2025-26.
- **Inflation Management:** Ensuring tax savings are not eroded by rising costs.

### 3. Record ₹11.2 Lakh Crore Capital Expenditure

- **Infrastructure Development:** Major funding for **transport, roads, railways, and urban projects**.
- **₹1.5 Lakh Crore in Interest-Free Loans for States:** Supports **local infrastructure projects**.

### 4. Sustainable Energy & Electric Vehicles (EVs)

- **₹20,000 Crore for Nuclear Energy Research:** Promoting **clean and sustainable power**.
- **Customs Duty Cuts for EV Batteries:** Lowering costs for **battery production and recycling**.

### 5. Boost to MSMEs & Domestic Industry

- **Easier Credit Access:** MSMEs will get **better credit guarantee coverage**.
- **Higher Investment & Turnover Limits:** Allows small businesses to expand easily.

### 6. Skilling & Workforce Development

- **5 National Centres of Excellence for Skilling:** Training for **future-ready jobs**.
- **Expansion of IITs & AI Research:** Strengthening **India's leadership in technology**.
- **Make for India, Make for the World:** Preparing skilled workers for **domestic and global markets**.

## Final Thoughts

The **Union Budget 2025-26** strikes a balance between **immediate relief (tax cuts)**, **long-term investments (infrastructure, energy, skilling)**, and **financial discipline (fiscal deficit control)**. It positions India as a **strong economic player** while ensuring **growth opportunities for businesses and individuals alike**.

[Govt. to remove FDI cap for insurers: TH Investor](#)

Economy

## Easy Explanation

The **Union Budget 2025-26** has introduced a major reform in the **insurance sector** by raising the **Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) limit from 74% to 100%**. However, this increase is **conditional**—only those companies that **invest the entire premium within India** will be eligible for the enhanced FDI cap.

Finance Minister **Nirmala Sitharaman** announced that the current rules and restrictions on foreign investment in insurance will be **reviewed and simplified** to encourage more global participation. This decision aligns with the government's goal of **'Insurance for All by 2047'**, ensuring that every individual and business has access to **risk protection and financial security**.



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Industry leaders have **welcomed** this move, as it is expected to **attract more global investments, strengthen the industry, and foster innovation**. Increased competition in the sector will likely lead to **better services, faster claims processing, and possibly lower premiums for consumers**.

Additionally, the Budget has made **tax-related changes** for the insurance sector, such as:

- **Raising the threshold for TDS (Tax Deducted at Source)** on insurance commission from ₹15,000 to ₹20,000.
- **Reducing the TDS rate** on insurance commission from **5% to 2%** (effective April 1, 2025).
- **Exempting life insurance policy proceeds** received via International Financial Services Centre (IFSC) intermediaries from certain premium conditions.

While this reform is a significant boost for the industry, consumers were hoping for a **reduction in the GST on insurance premiums**, especially for **health insurance** (currently taxed at 18%). However, the **GST Council** has postponed its decision for further deliberations.

## Key Takeaways

### 1. 100% FDI in Insurance (Conditional)

- **FDI limit increased from 74% to 100%** but applies **only if the entire premium is invested within India**.
- Aims to **attract global investments, enhance competition, and improve services**.
- Expected to **lead to lower premiums and better insurance products**.

### 2. Industry Reactions

- **Leaders in the insurance industry welcome the move**, predicting **greater transparency, faster claim processing, and increased innovation**.
- **More foreign players** can now enter the market, offering **diverse and customized insurance products**.

### 3. Tax Changes in the Insurance Sector

- **TDS (Tax Deducted at Source) threshold on insurance commission increased** from ₹15,000 to ₹20,000.
- **TDS rate on insurance commission reduced** from **5% to 2%** (from April 1, 2025).
- **Exemption on life insurance policy proceeds via IFSC intermediaries** from certain premium conditions.

### 4. GST Reduction on Insurance Still Pending

- The **demand to lower GST on insurance (especially health insurance) from 18% was not addressed**.
- The **GST Council is still discussing the issue**, delaying a final decision.

## Final Thoughts



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This Budget brings a **transformational change** to the **Indian insurance sector**, making it more **investment-friendly and competitive**. However, while **policyholders may benefit from better products and lower costs**, they still **await GST relief on insurance premiums**.

### Centre trying to make India food basket of the world: TH Economy

Economy

## Easy Explanation

The **Union Budget 2025-26** has introduced significant measures to **boost food security, food processing, and agricultural research** in India. **Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman** highlighted the government's goal to **make India a "food basket of the world"**, strengthening the country's agricultural and food processing industries.

One major initiative announced is the **establishment of the National Institute of Food Technology, Entrepreneurship, and Management in Bihar**, which will **enhance food processing activities in the eastern region**. Additionally, a **second Gene Bank with 10 lakh germplasm lines** will be set up to **preserve genetic resources for future food and nutritional security**. This will **support both public and private sectors in conserving and improving crop varieties**.

In terms of financial allocation:

- The **Ministry of Food and Public Distribution** received an **increased budget of ₹2,11,406 crore**, most of which is **dedicated to food subsidy schemes** like the **Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY)**, ensuring affordable food for the poor.
- The **Department of Consumer Affairs** saw a **budget reduction**, mainly affecting the **Price Stabilization Fund**, which is used to control the prices of essential commodities like **onions, tomatoes, pulses, and edible oils**.
- The **Ministry of Food Processing Industries** received a **higher allocation of ₹4,364 crore**, a large part of which is for the **PM FME Scheme**, aimed at **formalizing small food processing enterprises and supporting two lakh micro food processing units** under the **Atma Nirbhar Bharat initiative**.

The government is also **reducing financial support for price stabilization**, indicating that it may **rely more on market-driven solutions** to control food prices rather than heavy government intervention.

## Key Takeaways

### 1. Boosting Food Processing & Agricultural Research

- **National Institute of Food Technology in Bihar** to enhance **food processing** in the eastern region.
- **A second Gene Bank with 10 lakh germplasm lines** to support **food and nutritional security**.
- **Public and private sectors** to benefit from enhanced **genetic resource conservation**.

### 2. Increased Budget for Food Subsidy Schemes



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- Ministry of Food & Public Distribution budget increased to ₹2,11,406 crore.
- ₹2,03,420 crore allocated for food subsidy, mainly for Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY).

### 3. Reduced Allocation for Price Stabilization Fund

- Budget for controlling food prices reduced, with fund allocation dropping from ₹10,000 crore (2024) to ₹4,019 crore (2025).
- The government aims to manage food inflation through other policy measures instead of heavy subsidies.

### 4. Higher Investment in Food Processing Industry

- Budget for Ministry of Food Processing Industries increased to ₹4,364 crore.
- Major funding boost for PM Formalisation of Micro Food Processing Enterprises Scheme (PM FME).
- Two lakh micro food processing units to benefit, helping small businesses formalize and scale up.

## Final Thoughts

This budget prioritizes food security, food processing, and agricultural sustainability, with a focus on modernizing food production and supporting micro-enterprises. While food subsidies remain strong, the cut in price stabilization funds suggests a shift towards market-driven food price management.

[Job schemes don't look promising: TH Economy](#)

Economy

## Easy Explanation

The Union Budget 2025-26 has been analyzed for its impact on **employment generation**, both at a **macro** (overall economy) and **micro** (specific job schemes) level. The government claims that **Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR)** and **Worker Population Ratio (WPR)** have increased, while unemployment has fallen, but this may not be as positive as it sounds. The rise in participation is mainly due to **women returning to unpaid farm work**, not because of actual job creation in high-paying sectors.

Over the years, India's **unemployment rate** reached its highest level in **2017-18**, followed by a **slow economy and job losses during COVID-19**. As a result, **80 million workers returned to agriculture**, reversing earlier progress of shifting people into better-paying non-farm jobs. The Economic Survey itself acknowledges that **real wages for 80% of workers haven't increased in five years**, which contradicts the claim that job creation has been strong.

To boost demand, the Finance Minister has **offered tax breaks to the middle class**, hoping they will **spend more and revive economic growth**. However, given that **many people have already used their savings to maintain basic spending**, it is unlikely that this tax relief alone will **create jobs or encourage private investment**.



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The Budget also introduced **three schemes aimed at job creation**, but they **fall short of addressing the large-scale employment crisis**:

1. **More credit availability for MSMEs and startups** (to promote small businesses).
2. **Encouraging employment in labor-intensive sectors like leather and footwear.**
3. **A tourism sector push** (including developing tourist spots, training programs, and loans for homestays).

For a country where **6-7 million people enter the job market annually**, **46% of the workforce is stuck in agriculture**, **100 million youth are not in education, employment, or training**, and **25 million remain unemployed**, these **three schemes seem inadequate to address India's massive employment challenge**.

## Key Takeaways

### 1. Employment Situation in India

- Unemployment hit a **record high in 2017-18**.
- **COVID-19 worsened job losses**, forcing **80 million people back into agriculture**.
- **Women in unpaid farm work** are a big reason for the rise in workforce participation.
- **Real wages for 80% of workers have not increased in five years**, questioning claims of job growth.

### 2. Government's Strategy for Job Creation

- **Middle-class tax cuts**: The government hopes that **extra money in people's hands will boost demand and revive economic growth**.
- However, given **slow wage growth and weak private investment**, tax cuts alone **may not create enough jobs**.

### 3. Budget Schemes for Employment

- **MSME Credit Support**: Provides **loan guarantees for small businesses and startups**.
- **Labor-Intensive Sectors**: Encourages **growth in leather, footwear, and similar industries**.
- **Tourism Jobs**: Focus on **tourism development, training programs, and loans for homestays**.

### 4. Why These Measures May Not Be Enough

- **6-7 million new job seekers enter the market every year**, and these schemes **do not cover enough ground**.
- **46% of the workforce remains in agriculture**, and **there is no clear plan to move them into better-paying sectors**.
- **100 million youth are "Not in Education, Employment, or Training"**, needing **urgent skill development programs**.
- **25 million unemployed people need direct employment solutions**, but these schemes **are not aggressive enough**.

## Final Thoughts



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The **budget's employment push seems weak compared to the scale of India's job crisis**. The government needs to focus on large-scale job creation in industries beyond agriculture, provide better skilling programs, and ensure wages grow in line with economic growth.

### [Viksit Bharat and the Budget's play with numbers: TH Editorial](#)

Economy

## Easy Explanation

The Union Budget 2025-26 was presented against the backdrop of **slowing economic growth** due to **weak domestic consumption, declining public investment, and sluggish private investment**. Additionally, global trade trends, especially post-Trump, suggest that **India cannot rely on external trade for economic recovery**. To fulfill its **Viksit Bharat 2047** goal of becoming a developed nation, the government needs to **boost domestic demand**.

A major concern is the **growing income disparity** in India. While corporate profits **hit a 15-year high in 2023-24**, wage growth and employment generation **remained weak**. The Economic Survey itself acknowledges that **stable growth requires a fair distribution of income between capital and labor**, yet corporate giants continue to benefit the most. The **lack of demand has hurt economic activity**, and the government has **not stepped up capital expenditure enough** to counterbalance this slowdown. Despite having access to large revenue sources like **cesses, spectrum sales, and RBI transfers**, the government has **prioritized fiscal conservatism over spending**, leading to lower public investment.

The Finance Minister's response to these challenges has been to **cut taxes for the middle class**, hoping that **increased disposable income will boost spending and revive economic growth**. The income tax exemption limit was **raised from ₹7 lakh to ₹12.75 lakh**, resulting in an estimated **₹1 lakh crore revenue loss** for the government. However, this comes at the cost of **cutbacks in welfare programs**, such as **food subsidies and rural employment schemes (MGNREGA)**.

The Budget also assumes that **incentives to businesses will encourage private investment**. However, this contradicts the Economic Survey's own findings that **rising corporate profits and stagnant worker wages weaken demand, which in turn discourages private investment**. The government is also making **India more attractive to foreign investors**, such as by **raising the FDI cap in insurance to 100%** and relaxing **bilateral investment treaties**, which could make India vulnerable to multinational corporations.

In short, while the **Budget focuses on boosting growth through tax cuts and business incentives**, it **neglects mass employment generation and income redistribution**, which are crucial for a **sustainable economic recovery**.

## Key Takeaways

### 1. Economic Challenges Before the Budget

- **Slowing growth** due to **weak consumption, lower public investment, and lack of private investment**.



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- **Global trade uncertainties** post-Trump mean India **cannot rely on exports for growth**.
- **Widening income disparity**: Corporate profits hit a **15-year high**, but **wage growth and employment remained low**.
- **Government's capital spending slowed**, despite access to **extraordinary revenues from cesses, spectrum sales, and RBI transfers**.

## 2. Key Budgetary Measures

- **Middle-class tax relief**: The tax-free income limit **raised to ₹12.75 lakh** to boost consumption.
- **Fiscal conservatism**: Government **cut back on welfare spending** to compensate for revenue loss from tax cuts.
- **Lower government spending growth**: Total **expenditure increased by only 7%**, limiting public investment.
- **17% increase in capital expenditure** (lower than previous targets).

## 3. Cuts to Welfare Programs

- **Food subsidy bill reduced**: ₹27.3 lakh crore in 2022-23 → ₹20.3 lakh crore in 2025-26.
- **MGNREGA funding stagnant**: ₹90.8 thousand crore in 2022-23 → ₹86 thousand crore in 2025-26.
- **Focus shifted from welfare to business incentives**.

## 4. Business & Foreign Investment Push

- **Hope that tax cuts will increase middle-class spending and boost private investment**.
- **Contradiction**: Economic Survey itself **admits that weak wages and demand discourage private investment**.
- **FDI in insurance increased to 100%**, despite concerns about multinational firms prioritizing profits over policyholders.
- **Bilateral investment treaties being relaxed**, making India **more vulnerable to multinational corporations**.

## 5. Final Analysis

- **The Budget prioritizes tax relief and corporate incentives but neglects employment generation**.
- **It assumes that giving businesses more freedom will revive investment**, even though weak demand suggests otherwise.
- **Cutting welfare spending could widen inequality and reduce economic security for low-income groups**.
- **Government's strategy is based on optimism rather than structural reforms for inclusive growth**.

[Hope in the time of desperation: TH Editorial](#)







## Easy Explanation

The Union Budget 2025-26 tries to **tackle key economic problems** such as **low domestic demand, weak private investment, and sluggish wage growth**, all of which have slowed GDP growth. To address these challenges, the government has focused on **tax cuts for the middle class** while **keeping public spending tight**. This is a **risky strategy** because while tax relief may increase spending, it also **limits government funds** for critical investments.

One of the biggest highlights of the Budget is the **increase in the tax-free income limit to ₹12 lakh**, allowing middle-class families to save more. This move aims to **boost consumption**, particularly in urban areas where demand has been inconsistent. However, **private businesses are not investing enough**, despite enjoying low corporate tax rates. The government **hopes businesses will respond to tax incentives**, but past trends show that corporations have **not significantly increased their investments** even when given tax breaks.

Public infrastructure spending, a major growth driver in recent years, **has been scaled down** compared to previous budgets. **Spending on roads, railways, and telecom has either stagnated or been reduced**, despite the urgent need for **rail safety improvements**. However, the government has **increased support for MSMEs, clean energy, and rural housing schemes**, recognizing their importance for economic stability.

A **key concern** is the **cut in allocations for the MGNREGS (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme)**, which **helps boost rural incomes**. While more money has been allocated for rural development, reducing funds for a **proven job-generation scheme** may **hurt demand in rural areas**. Meanwhile, **gig workers and informal sector employees will get identity cards and access to healthcare**, which is a step towards improving their economic security.

The **Employment Linked Incentive (ELI) scheme**, which was supposed to **help create jobs**, was **not mentioned in the Budget**, raising questions about the government's long-term employment strategy. Instead, the focus was on **skilling initiatives** for jobs in an increasingly **automated world**.

Overall, while the **Budget tries to boost demand through tax cuts**, it **relies heavily on assumptions**—that people will spend more, that businesses will invest more, and that economic growth will pick up on its own. The **lack of direct investment in job creation and public spending** makes it uncertain whether the **Budget will actually deliver sustainable growth**.

## Key Takeaways

### 1. Focus on Tax Cuts Instead of Public Spending

- **Tax-free income limit raised to ₹12 lakh** to boost middle-class spending.
- **Hopes that tax cuts will revive demand**, but **corporates have not significantly increased investments despite past incentives**.
- **Government spending is tight**, with only a **small increase in total expenditure**.

### 2. Infrastructure & Rural Development Spending Adjustments



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- **Spending on roads, railways, and telecom has been cut or stagnated**, despite the need for improvements.
- **Support for MSMEs and clean energy has increased**, including **higher credit limits** and **duty exemptions** for EV and battery industries.
- **More money for rural housing and livelihoods**, but **MGNREGS (rural job guarantee) funding has been reduced**, which may hurt rural demand.

### 3. Employment & Social Security

- **Gig workers to get identity cards and access to healthcare**, a step towards formalizing their employment.
- **Employment Linked Incentive (ELI) scheme missing**, despite the urgent need for job creation.
- **Emphasis on skill development** to prepare for an **automated, tech-driven job market**.

### 4. Risks & Uncertainty

- **Budget assumes tax cuts will lead to higher consumption and private investment**, but there are no guarantees.
- **Reduction in social welfare and public investment may slow economic recovery**.
- **Over-reliance on private sector participation**, despite businesses' past reluctance to invest aggressively.

### 5. Final Verdict

- **The Budget takes a calculated risk**, betting on tax cuts to **revive demand** while **keeping public spending under control**.
- **While it helps the middle class**, it does **not directly create jobs or address income inequality**.
- **If businesses do not increase investments and spending does not rise as expected**, the economic slowdown may persist.

[Union Budget that ticks most of the boxes: TH Editorial](#)

Economy

### Easy Explanation

The **Union Budget 2025-26** was presented at a time when **India's economy is slowing down**, with **weak urban consumption**, **sluggish job growth**, and **private investment failing to take off**. On top of that, **global uncertainties**—such as geopolitical conflicts and disruptions in global trade—add more challenges. However, India's **macroeconomic fundamentals remain strong**, with **low inflation**, a **manageable current account deficit**, and a **stable political environment**, giving it an edge over many struggling economies worldwide.

The **biggest focus of this Budget** is on **fiscal stability** and **personal tax relief**. The **fiscal deficit target for 2025-26 has been reduced to 4.4% of GDP**, lower than the previous year's 4.8%, showing the government's commitment to financial discipline. This **gradual reduction in deficit** improves India's chances of getting an **international credit rating upgrade**, making the country more attractive to global investors.



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To **boost household spending**, the **personal income tax exemption limit has been raised**, leading to an estimated **₹1 trillion loss in government revenue**. However, the government **hopes that extra money in people's hands will drive higher consumption**, especially in urban areas. Another significant change is that **taxpayers can now claim tax benefits on two self-occupied homes instead of just one**, which may boost the **real estate sector**, creating jobs and increasing economic activity.

A key debate around this Budget is the **perceived cut in capital expenditure (capex)**. While the **FY25 capex was revised down**, it was mainly due to **delays caused by elections**. In December 2024, the government disbursed **₹1.72 trillion in capex—the highest monthly spending ever**—suggesting that public investment is still strong. For **FY26, capex spending remains at 3.1% of GDP**, maintaining continuity in infrastructure development.

There is also a **shift towards improving ease of doing business** with **regulatory simplifications, tax decriminalization, and better investment conditions for states**. The government is **focusing on labor-intensive sectors like agriculture, leather, tourism, and exports** to generate employment. However, while the Budget takes steps in the right direction, **it lacks a clear long-term fiscal policy strategy**, which could create uncertainty in the markets.

From **FY27 onwards**, the government will switch to a **debt-targeting framework**, aiming to **reduce central government debt from 56.1% of GDP in FY26 to 49%-51% by FY31**. While this **gives flexibility in managing finances**, it may also lead to **market volatility** depending on how it is implemented.

## Key Takeaways

### 1. Fiscal Stability and Investment Confidence

- **Fiscal deficit lowered to 4.4% of GDP in FY26**, improving India's **international credit rating potential**.
- **Focus on disciplined financial management** ensures long-term economic stability.

### 2. Personal Income Tax Relief and Consumption Boost

- **Income tax exemption raised to ₹12 lakh**, putting more money in the hands of the middle class.
- **Allows tax benefits for two self-occupied homes**, which may **boost the real estate sector**.
- **Government expects ₹1 trillion revenue loss but hopes increased spending will stimulate economic growth**.

### 3. Capital Expenditure and Infrastructure Development

- **Capex spending maintained at 3.1% of GDP**, despite earlier concerns of cuts.
- **₹1.72 trillion disbursed in December 2024—the highest ever—showing continued public investment**.
- **Key focus areas: roads, railways, telecom, and urban infrastructure**.

### 4. Support for Businesses and Employment Generation





- **Regulatory simplifications and tax decriminalization** to improve ease of doing business.
- **Boost for MSMEs and labor-intensive sectors (agriculture, leather, tourism, and exports)** to create jobs.
- **Creation of a national manufacturing and export promotion mission** to attract investments.

## 5. Long-Term Fiscal Strategy and Market Impact

- The government will switch to a debt-targeting framework from FY27 to reduce debt from 56.1% of GDP to 49%-51% by FY31.
- This new approach provides flexibility but may lead to market volatility.

## 6. Final Verdict

- The Budget focuses on financial discipline while boosting household spending.
- It aims to stimulate demand through tax cuts but avoids excessive government spending.
- Uncertainty remains over whether private investment will pick up as expected.

### [The delicate balance: IE Editorial](#)

Economy

## Easy Explanation

The **Union Budget 2025-26** had to strike a tough balance between **maintaining financial stability and supporting economic growth**. On one side, **the global economy is facing serious risks**, including **rising U.S. interest rates, trade wars, and a strong dollar**, all of which put **pressure on emerging markets like India**. This means the government needed to **focus on stability** to protect India from external shocks. On the other side, **India's domestic economy is slowing down**, with **weak consumption, sluggish private investment, and a lack of job growth**. This called for **more government spending to stimulate demand**.

The government **chose a conservative approach, reducing the fiscal deficit to 4.4% of GDP from 4.8% this year**, despite global uncertainties. This move **prioritizes financial discipline** and reassures international investors. While this approach strengthens India's economic credibility, **it also limits the government's ability to increase spending**, which could slow down recovery.

To **boost urban consumption**, the government **introduced a major tax cut**, costing about **0.3% of GDP**. This is expected to **put more money in the hands of the middle class**, driving spending. However, this means the government had to **cut back on revenue spending**, such as subsidies and welfare programs. Experts warn that **reducing government spending too much could hurt economic growth** more than expected.

A big concern is **tax revenue growth**, which has slowed due to weaker economic activity. The government is **betting on a higher tax buoyancy next year (1.3 vs. 1.1 this year)**, expecting **more tax collections** despite lower rates. If tax targets are not met, **cutting government spending further would be risky**, and experts suggest **allowing the deficit to widen slightly instead**.



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One key area to watch is **public investment**. **Government spending on infrastructure has nearly doubled in four years**, but **some states have slowed down capex spending due to fiscal constraints**. The government needs to **ensure that public investment remains strong** to support long-term growth.

Ultimately, the government **doesn't have the space for big spending in the future**, so **economic reforms are the only way forward**. The **Economic Survey** recommends **deregulation, liberalization, and boosting labor-intensive sectors** to attract private investment. The government has made a **start with sector-specific reforms and incentives for small businesses**, but **more aggressive reforms are needed** to sustain growth and job creation.

In the long run, **India needs a reform-driven economic stimulus, not a fiscal stimulus**, to balance **growth and financial stability** in a challenging global environment.

## Key Takeaways

### 1. Fiscal Discipline and Stability

- **Fiscal deficit reduced to 4.4% of GDP**, reinforcing India's economic credibility.
- **Ensures financial stability amid global uncertainties like trade wars and U.S. interest rate hikes.**
- **FX reserves and lower inflation provide a cushion against external shocks.**

### 2. Boosting Consumption through Tax Cuts

- **Major tax cut (0.3% of GDP) to stimulate urban consumption.**
- **Middle-class tax relief expected to boost demand but comes at the cost of reduced government spending.**
- **Revenue spending cuts could slow economic recovery.**

### 3. Risk of Weak Tax Revenue Growth

- **Tax revenue growth (buoyancy) expected to rise to 1.3, but uncertainty remains.**
- **If revenue targets are missed, further spending cuts could hurt the economy.**

### 4. Public Investment Needs to Stay Strong

- **Government investment in infrastructure has doubled in 4 years, but some states are cutting back.**
- **Ensuring strong capex spending is key for long-term growth.**

### 5. Need for Structural Economic Reforms

- **Economic growth must be driven by private investment, not government spending.**
- **Reforms in labor-intensive sectors, deregulation, and policy simplification are critical.**
- **Attracting global businesses and improving job creation will strengthen long-term economic resilience.**

### 6. Long-Term Outlook: Reform Over Stimulus

- **India cannot rely on big fiscal stimulus in future budgets.**



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- Sustained economic reforms are needed to attract private investment and create jobs.
- Balancing financial stability and growth requires a reform-driven, not spending-driven, strategy.

### BUDGET'S MULTIPLIER EFFECTS: IE Editorial

Economy

#### Easy Explanation

The **Union Budget 2025-26** aims to balance **economic growth with financial discipline** by reducing the **fiscal deficit to 4.8% of GDP this year and 4.4% next year**, exceeding market expectations. To **stimulate urban consumption**, the government has introduced **income tax cuts for individuals earning up to ₹12 lakh**, while also increasing **capital expenditure allocations by 10% at the central level and 17% including grants**.

Significant **investments in future growth** include **₹10,000 crore for startups, ₹25,000 crore for shipbuilding, and ₹20,000 crore for small modular nuclear reactors**. These are expected to **boost economic activity and generate employment** through long-term multiplier effects.

The **education sector** has received a push with **digital textbooks, broadband in government schools, and Atal Tinkering Labs to promote innovation**. The **tourism industry** will also benefit from **50 new destinations and expansion of medical tourism**, requiring **public-private partnerships**.

To **improve the business environment**, the government is **repealing outdated laws** through the **Jan Vishwas Bill**, aiming to **reduce compliance burdens on entrepreneurs and eliminate bureaucratic inefficiencies**. This step is crucial to **ending "Inspector Raj" and making India a more business-friendly destination**.

While **disinvestment** could have provided additional funds for capital expenditure, **institutional constraints in efficient spending remain a challenge**. However, the government is focusing on **streamlining investment regulations**, including **centralized KYC and attracting global fund managers to operate from India**.

A major highlight is the **commitment to reducing India's debt-to-GDP ratio over the next six years**, ensuring **long-term financial stability without burdening future generations**. This responsible approach **lays the foundation for future interest rate cuts by the RBI**, which could further support economic growth.

For **investors**, the budget **encourages domestic investment and improves corporate profitability over time**. Global market trends, particularly **U.S. interest rates and China's underperformance**, have influenced **foreign portfolio investor (FPI) movements in India**. To retain and attract FPIs, **India needs to sustain strong economic growth and corporate earnings through stable fiscal and monetary policies**.

Market behavior remains uncertain—if FPIs **sell aggressively, market prices will correct sharply**, but if selling remains **controlled, a time correction** may occur. If FPIs **turn buyers, a strong market rally could follow**.



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For **individual investors**, asset allocation should be **balanced**. **Equities remain attractive**, particularly **large-cap stocks with strong valuations**. **Gold is also a good investment**, as central banks worldwide **diversify reserves**. With **potential rate cuts and improved liquidity**, **long-duration assets and performing credit funds** are suitable for **debt allocation**.

## Key Takeaways

### 1. Fiscal Prudence & Economic Stability

- Fiscal deficit reduced to 4.8% in FY25 and 4.4% in FY26, exceeding expectations.
- Ensures long-term financial stability without excessive borrowing.
- Lays the foundation for RBI rate cuts and improved liquidity.

### 2. Boosting Consumption & Investment

- Income tax cut for incomes up to ₹12 lakh to stimulate urban demand.
- Capital expenditure increased by 10% (central level) and 17% (including grants).
- ₹10,000 crore for startups, ₹25,000 crore for shipbuilding, ₹20,000 crore for nuclear reactors to fuel growth.

### 3. Education & Tourism Focus

- Digital textbooks, broadband for schools, and innovation labs to improve education.
- 50 new tourism destinations & medical tourism expansion to boost economic activity.

### 4. Business Reforms & Investment Attraction

- Jan Vishwas Bill to repeal outdated laws and improve ease of doing business.
- Encouraging fund managers to operate from India to boost investment ecosystem.

### 5. Debt Reduction & Fiscal Responsibility

- Government committed to lowering debt-to-GDP ratio over six years.
- Ensures sustainable economic growth without excessive future debt burdens.

### 6. Market & Investment Strategy

- Equities remain attractive, especially large-cap stocks with strong valuations.
- Gold is a good hedge as central banks diversify reserves.
- Rate cuts and better liquidity make long-duration assets & performing credit funds ideal for debt allocation.

### 7. Foreign Investor (FPI) Trends & Market Outlook

- FPIs taking profits amid global uncertainty; India needs strong earnings growth to attract them.
- Market correction depends on the extent of FPI selling—aggressive selling could cause sharp declines.
- If FPIs start buying, a sharp rally is expected.





The Union Budget 2025-26 takes a balanced approach, maintaining fiscal discipline while encouraging investment and consumption growth. The challenge now is effective implementation to translate policy measures into real economic gains.

## **BETTING BIG ON THE MIDDLE: IE Editorial**

Economy

### **Easy Explanation**

The **Union Budget 2025-26** delivers a **historic tax relief** aimed at reviving **middle-class confidence and boosting consumption**, while maintaining **fiscal discipline**. The **biggest highlight** is the **income tax exemption for individuals earning up to ₹12 lakh**, marking a **major shift towards a simpler, lower-tax regime**. This move is both a **political strategy to regain middle-class support** and an **economic measure to increase disposable income**, encouraging spending and growth.

The **budget's second key feature** is its **commitment to fiscal prudence**. The **fiscal deficit has been reduced to 4.8% this year** (better than expected) and is **targeted at 4.4% next year**. This steady reduction from the pandemic-era deficits ensures **long-term economic stability** and prepares the ground for **lower interest rates from the RBI**. Unlike previous budgets, **no new fiscally risky schemes have been introduced**, keeping the focus on **responsible financial management**.

However, **major economic challenges remain**. The **private sector is still hesitant to invest**, despite tax cuts and incentives like **production-linked incentives (PLI)**. Companies continue to **hoard cash instead of building new capacities**, limiting **job creation and wage growth**. The budget has not directly addressed **why firms are reluctant to invest** or what can be done to **unlock private sector expansion**.

The budget assumes that **higher disposable income will revive consumer demand**, but it remains uncertain **whether households will spend this extra income or save it**, similar to how corporations have held onto their cash reserves. The government could have **used its strong political position** to implement **bold economic reforms**, such as **reducing inefficient subsidies on fertilizers and food grains** or launching an **aggressive disinvestment plan**. These moves could have freed up **public funds for more productive investments**, boosting long-term economic prospects.

The **capex reduction of ₹92,682 crore** is a concern, as **public investment remains crucial for sustaining economic momentum**. While the government is empowering taxpayers and promoting fiscal discipline, **major structural reforms are still needed to unleash entrepreneurial energy and ensure high, sustained growth** in a **challenging global economic environment**.

### **Key Takeaways**

#### **1. Historic Income Tax Relief for Middle Class**

- Individuals earning up to ₹12 lakh are now exempt from income tax.
- Move simplifies the tax system, reducing slabs and exemptions.
- Expected to boost consumer demand, but impact remains uncertain.



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## 2. Strong Commitment to Fiscal Prudence

- Fiscal deficit reduced to 4.8% in FY25 and targeted at 4.4% in FY26.
- Ensures stability and sets the stage for RBI interest rate cuts.
- No risky new welfare schemes introduced.

## 3. Private Investment Still Weak

- Despite tax cuts, firms are not investing in new capacities.
- PLI and corporate tax cuts have had limited success in driving private sector expansion.
- Budget does not directly address what's holding back private investment.

## 4. Public Investment Remains Key, but Capex Cut is a Concern

- High capital expenditure continues, but ₹92,682 crore cut from previous estimates.
- Public investment is crucial for maintaining economic growth.
- More structural reforms needed to sustain long-term investment momentum.

## 5. Uncertainty Over Consumer Behavior

- Budget assumes tax cuts will drive spending and growth.
- Households might choose to save rather than spend, limiting impact on demand.
- Similar to how corporations have been sitting on cash reserves.

## 6. Missed Opportunity for Bold Reforms

- No major disinvestment plan announced to generate extra revenue.
- Inefficient subsidies on fertilizers and food grains remain in place.
- More ambitious economic reforms could have unlocked faster growth.

## Final Thoughts

The Union Budget 2025-26 balances tax relief, fiscal discipline, and investment, but long-term structural challenges remain. While middle-class taxpayers benefit, the economy still needs higher private investment and deeper reforms to sustain high, inclusive growth. The real impact will depend on whether people spend their extra income or hold onto it, and whether businesses regain confidence to expand.

[ONLY TINKERING, NO VISION: IE Editorial](#)

Economy

## Easy Explanation: Budget 2025-26 – A Missed Opportunity for Big Reforms

The **Union Budget 2025-26** was expected to bring big changes to India's economic policy, similar to the historic **1991 economic reforms**. However, instead of making bold decisions to push India's growth forward,



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the government chose **small, cautious steps**. The Budget focused on giving tax cuts to the middle class, but it did **not** bring major structural changes in areas like private investment, job creation, or trade policy.

The **Economic Survey 2025**, which was released just a day before the Budget, emphasized "**getting out of the way**"—meaning the government should **remove excessive controls and regulations** to let businesses and industries grow freely. But instead of following this advice, the Finance Minister's speech focused more on **government-led programs**, showing a **contradiction between the Survey and the Budget**.

## Key Takeaways: Budget 2025-26

### No Big-Bang Reforms – A Conservative Approach

- The Budget **did not** bring major economic reforms that could **push India's growth** to the next level.
- There were **no significant changes in taxation, labor laws, or trade policies**, which are needed to **attract investments and create jobs**.
- Instead of reforming old systems, the Budget **introduced new schemes and initiatives**, which may **increase government control** rather than reduce it.

### Income Tax Cuts for the Middle Class – But Will It Boost Growth?

- **Biggest announcement:** People earning **up to ₹12 lakh per year** will now **pay no income tax**.
- This move is aimed at **increasing household spending**, but it's unclear if it will **actually boost consumption** and help the economy.
- Only about **1.5 crore people (out of 140 crore population)** **pay income tax**, so the overall **impact on demand** may be limited.

### Private Sector Investment Remains Weak

- **Companies are not investing enough** in expanding industries, despite previous tax cuts and incentives.
- **Private sector investment (capital formation)** has fallen from **31% of GDP (UPA-1)** to **19.7% (Modi 2.0)**—this is a worrying sign for economic growth.
- The government has been **pushing public spending** to fill this gap, but this is **not sustainable in the long run**.

### Employment Generation Not Addressed

- The Budget **did not** bring any **major policies for job creation**, despite rising unemployment.
- Last year's **Employment-Linked Incentive (ELI) scheme**, which aimed to reward companies for hiring more workers, **was not even mentioned** this time.
- Instead, the Budget **announced a "Makhana Board" for Bihar**, which is **not a serious job-creation policy** for a country with **millions of unemployed youth**.

### No Big Moves on Tax Reforms (GST & Corporate Taxes)



- India's tax system is **imbalanced**—indirect taxes (like GST) put **more burden on common people** compared to direct taxes (income tax).
- The Budget **did not** bring any **GST rate simplification or reduction**, which could have boosted spending.
- **Corporate tax rates remain low**, but big companies are **still not investing much**, showing that tax cuts alone **do not encourage growth**.

## Trade & Export Policies – No Strategy to Compete with China

- Many countries are reducing trade with China, creating an opportunity for India to **capture global markets**—but the Budget **did not take any bold steps** in this direction.
- Instead of major trade reforms, the Budget **only announced small customs duty changes**—like tax exemptions for “shuttle-less looms” and “frozen fish paste.”
- A strong **export and trade policy is missing**, which is crucial for making India a global manufacturing hub.

## Fiscal Deficit Reduction – A Double-Edged Sword

- The government **successfully brought down the fiscal deficit to 4.8%** of GDP this year and aims for **4.4% next year**.
- This is good for maintaining **economic stability**, but it also **limits how much the government can spend** on infrastructure and social programs.
- The cut in government spending could **slow down growth**, especially since **private investments remain weak**.

## Missed Opportunity for Bold Reforms

- The Budget **did not address long-term issues** like improving India's **ease of doing business**, **simplifying tax laws**, and **boosting manufacturing**.
- It focused on **short-term gains (like tax cuts)** rather than **long-term structural changes**.
- A **reform-heavy Budget** could have encouraged **private investment**, improved employment rates, and strengthened India's position in global trade.

## Conclusion: A Safe but Underwhelming Budget

The **Budget 2025-26** took **small, safe steps** instead of making **big, transformative changes**. While the **tax cuts** will benefit the middle class, they may **not be enough** to revive overall demand and economic growth. **Private investment remains low, employment issues are unaddressed, and trade policies lack ambition.**

India needs **strong reforms** to unlock its true economic potential. Unfortunately, this Budget **played it safe rather than seizing the opportunity**.





# 3rd February 2025

## [How the Uttarakhand UCC regulates live-in relationships-Indian Express Explained](#)

Polity

### Easy Explanation

The **Uttarakhand Uniform Civil Code (UCC)** mandates the **compulsory registration of live-in relationships** for residents of Uttarakhand and those originally from the state. Couples must register their relationship within **30 days** and provide proof of age, residency, and relationship status. The law defines live-in relationships as **heterosexual cohabitation in a marriage-like nature**, restricting relationships that fall within prohibited degrees (e.g., cousins) and banning simultaneous marriages or live-in relationships.

Failure to register can lead to **penalties, including imprisonment (up to 6 months) and fines (up to ₹25,000)**. Registered live-in partners gain **legal rights**, such as maintenance for women, legitimacy of children for inheritance, and protection against rental discrimination. The law empowers **government authorities to verify relationships** and ensures landlords **request registration certificates** before renting properties to unmarried couples. The primary objective is **to regulate live-in relationships and prevent domestic crimes outside of marriage**.

### Key Takeaways

#### 1. Definition of Live-in Relationship

- A **relationship between a man and a woman** who cohabit in a shared household in a marriage-like nature.
- Only **heterosexual relationships** are recognized.

#### 2. Eligibility and Prohibitions

- Couples must **not be in any prohibited relationships (e.g., cousins)**.
- A person **cannot be married or in another live-in relationship** simultaneously.
- Consent must be **free of force, fraud, or misrepresentation**.

#### 3. Registration Process

- **Mandatory registration** within a **month** of entering a live-in relationship.
- Requires **proof of age, residency, relationship history, and permissibility of marriage**.
- Registration can be **online or offline**, and the **Registrar has the authority to verify details**.

#### 4. Legal Rights and Benefits

- **Women in live-in relationships** can claim **maintenance similar to married spouses**.
- **Children born from live-in relationships** are **legitimate and can inherit property**.
- **Landlords cannot refuse tenancy** solely due to a couple's unmarried status.

#### 5. Penalties for Non-Registration

- **Failure to register within 30 days:**
  - **Up to 3 months' jail or ₹10,000 fine.**
- **Failure to comply with a notice:**
  - **Up to 6 months' jail or ₹25,000 fine.**



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- **False complaints:**
  - **First-time offenders get a warning;** repeat offenders may be fined.

## 6. Additional Rules for Landlords

- **Must verify** the registration certificate before renting property to an unmarried couple.

### [The illegal immigration issue-Indian Express Explained](#)

International relations

#### Easy Explanation

The issue of **illegal immigration** has taken center stage in U.S.-India relations following discussions between **Prime Minister Narendra Modi and U.S. President Donald Trump**. The Indian government has agreed to **accept deported illegal immigrants** from the U.S. in order to safeguard legal migration channels for Indian professionals and students.

The U.S. is undergoing a **mass deportation drive**, with Trump aiming to **deport 1 million undocumented migrants annually**, including **20,000 Indians** identified for removal. However, logistical and legal challenges make large-scale deportations difficult. The U.S. is considering using **Guantanamo Bay for detainees** and increasing deportation flight capacities.

India's **primary concern** lies in **preserving the H-1B visa program and student visas**, as **Indian nationals make up 72% of H-1B visa recipients** and **over 3.5 lakh Indian students are studying in the U.S.** Trump has so far **supported the H-1B program**, recognizing its economic benefits.

India is carefully navigating **Trump's aggressive immigration stance**, ensuring that **deportations do not impact overall U.S.-India diplomatic ties** while securing legal migration pathways for skilled professionals and students.

#### Key Takeaways

##### 1. India-U.S. Discussion on Illegal Immigration

- Prime Minister **Narendra Modi and U.S. President Donald Trump** discussed deportation of **illegal Indian immigrants** from the U.S.
- India has agreed to **accept deported citizens** to protect legal immigration pathways.

##### 2. Trump's Mass Deportation Plan

- **Trump aims to deport 1 million undocumented migrants annually**, including **20,000 Indians** identified for removal.
- **ICE (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement)** faces **logistical challenges**, including detention space and deportation flights.
- The **U.S. may use Guantanamo Bay for detainees** and ask countries to finance deportation flights.

##### 3. Impact on Indian Migration to the U.S.

- **7.25 lakh Indians** are estimated to be living illegally in the U.S.
- The **U.S. embassy issued over 1 million visas** to Indians in 2024, showing high demand for travel, education, and work.



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#### 4. India's Focus: Protecting H-1B & Student Visas

- Indian nationals received **72% of U.S. H-1B visas** between 2022-2023.
- Over **3.5 lakh Indian students** are studying in the U.S., mostly in STEM fields.
- Trump **supports the H-1B visa program**, calling it beneficial for the U.S. economy.

#### 5. Political and Diplomatic Considerations

- India is **cooperating on deportations to maintain strong diplomatic ties** and avoid restrictions on legal migration.
- New Delhi **wants deportations to remain low-key** to prevent political backlash.
- Several **U.S. states are challenging Trump's immigration orders** in court.

#### 6. India's Diplomatic Strategy

- External Affairs Minister **S. Jaishankar has engaged with key U.S. officials** to safeguard Indian interests.
- India is open to **minor changes in U.S. immigration policy**, as long as it avoids **large-scale disruption** for Indian professionals and students.

### THE ESCALATING CONFLICT IN CONGO, WHY ITS NEIGHBOURS ARE INVOLVED-Indian Express Explained

International relations

#### Easy Explanation

The conflict in the **Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)** has intensified as **Rwandan-backed M23 rebels** advance southwards after capturing **Goma**, the capital of **North Kivu province**. The situation threatens to escalate into a **regional war**, as **Burundian and Rwandan troops** have reportedly crossed into **South Kivu** to support their respective allies. The fighting has led to **mass displacement**, with **over a million people fleeing their homes**.

M23, a **Tutsi-led rebel group**, claims to fight for the rights of **Congolese Tutsis**, citing the **government's failure to uphold the 2009 peace deal**. They also justify their actions as a defense against **Hutu militias like the FDLR**, which includes perpetrators of the **1994 Rwandan genocide**.

The **UN and Western powers** accuse **Rwanda** of militarily backing M23, deploying **thousands of troops and heavy weapons** into the conflict. Rwanda, led by **President Paul Kagame**, denies these claims and **accuses Congo of working with the FDLR**, a group responsible for past **Tutsi massacres**.

M23 controls the **coltan-rich Rubaya region**, earning **\$800,000 per month from mining**—a crucial material for smartphone production. With multiple **neighboring nations involved**, the conflict is no longer just a Congolese issue but a **major security crisis in Central Africa**, posing risks of full-scale **regional war**.

#### Key Takeaways

##### 1. M23 Rebels' Expansion

- **M23 rebels, a Tutsi-led insurgent group**, have captured **Goma** and are advancing toward **Bukavu in South Kivu**.
- The conflict has **displaced over a million people**, worsening the humanitarian crisis.



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## 2. Ethnic and Historical Roots of the Conflict

- M23 claims to **defend Congolese Tutsis**, accusing the government of failing to **integrate them into the military**.
- The rebels also fight against **Hutu militias like the FDLR**, which includes perpetrators of the **1994 Rwandan genocide**.

## 3. Rwanda's Alleged Involvement

- The **UN and Western nations** accuse **Rwanda** of supporting **M23 militarily**, sending troops and weapons into Congo.
- Rwanda denies these allegations, instead accusing **Congo of working with the FDLR**, which has a history of **anti-Tutsi violence**.

## 4. Economic Factors – Control of Resources

- M23 controls **the coltan-rich Rubaya region**, earning **\$800,000 per month from mining operations**.
- **Coltan is essential for global smartphone production**, making the conflict economically significant.

## 5. Risk of a Regional War

- **Burundi and Rwanda are now involved militarily**, raising fears of a **wider regional conflict**.
- The UN has warned that the fighting could **destabilize Central Africa** if not controlled.

## 6. Global Concerns and Diplomatic Responses

- The **US, UN, and European countries** are pressuring Rwanda to **withdraw support for M23**.
- A **peaceful resolution is urgent** to prevent further displacement and potential **regional war**.

### [THE FIRST SALVO-Indian Express Editorial](#)

International relations

### Easy Explanation

U.S. President **Donald Trump** has imposed new tariffs on three major trading partners—**Canada, Mexico, and China**—sparking fears of a **global trade war**. The tariffs include **25% additional duties on Canadian and Mexican imports** and **10% on Chinese imports**, affecting nearly **40% of U.S. imports**. Trump justifies these measures as a way to **pressure these countries on illegal immigration, drug control, and trade imbalances**.

In response, **Canada, Mexico, and China** have announced **retaliatory measures**. Canada is imposing **25% tariffs on \$107 billion worth of U.S. products**, while Mexico is planning both **tariff and non-tariff restrictions**. China has **taken a more cautious approach**, signaling a potential **WTO case against the U.S.**

Economic experts predict that these tariffs will **raise inflation, slow U.S. economic growth, and impact monetary policy**. The **Federal Reserve may struggle to cut interest rates**, increasing **tensions between Trump and the central bank**. Analysts estimate that U.S. households could bear an **\$830 additional tax burden per year** due to these tariffs.

**India is not directly affected** but must navigate this volatile global environment carefully. **Prime Minister Narendra Modi's upcoming visit to the U.S. presents an opportunity** to strengthen bilateral ties and



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leverage bipartisan support for India-U.S. trade and strategic relations. India should be **strategic in capitalizing on emerging economic opportunities** amid the uncertainty.

### Key Takeaways

1. **Trump's Tariff Imposition on Major Trading Partners**
  - **25% tariffs on imports from Canada and Mexico.**
  - **10% tariffs on Chinese imports.**
  - Aimed at **curbing illegal immigration, controlling drug inflows, and addressing trade deficits.**
2. **Retaliatory Measures by Affected Countries**
  - **Canada imposes 25% tariffs on \$107 billion worth of U.S. goods.**
  - **Mexico plans tariff and non-tariff restrictions.**
  - **China hints at a WTO case against the U.S..**
3. **Economic Consequences for the U.S.**
  - **Tariffs could cost U.S. households an additional \$830 per year.**
  - **GDP may shrink by 0.4% and core inflation could rise by 0.7%.**
  - **The Federal Reserve may struggle to cut interest rates,** increasing economic uncertainty.
4. **Global Market Uncertainty and Policy Implications**
  - **Tariffs could disrupt global trade and slow down economic growth** worldwide.
  - **The Federal Reserve and Trump are at odds over monetary policy,** creating financial instability.
5. **India's Strategic Position**
  - **India is not directly affected** by these tariffs.
  - **Prime Minister Modi's U.S. visit is an opportunity to strengthen India-U.S. ties.**
  - India should **play its cards carefully** and capitalize on economic opportunities in a shifting global trade environment.

[MY WORKPLACE, YOUR HOME -Indian Express Editorial](#)

Governance

### Easy Explanation

The **Supreme Court of India** has directed the **Union government to examine the possibility of a separate law** for domestic workers, recognizing their **vulnerability and exclusion from existing labor laws**. The Court emphasized that **domestic workers are not covered under key labor laws**, such as the **Minimum Wages Act and Equal Remuneration Act**, and highlighted the need for a **national law applicable across all states**.

Domestic work is **largely a feminized occupation**, often performed by **migrant and marginalized communities**, with **low wages, poor working conditions, and no social security**. The **lack of recognition** of domestic work as formal employment leads to **exploitation, job insecurity, and harassment**, which rarely gets reported. India has **not yet ratified ILO Convention 189** on domestic workers, and previous attempts at regulation through judicial orders have had **limited impact**.



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A **separate legal framework is needed** due to the **unique nature of domestic employment**, where the **workplace is a private home** and employment is often informal, part-time, or full-time. Domestic workers' unions have **demanding employer registration**, but resistance from employers remains a challenge. While enforcement will be difficult, legislation could help **recognize the value of domestic work, provide legal protections, and redefine power structures** in the long run.

## Key Takeaways

### 1. Supreme Court's Directive for a New Law

- The **Supreme Court ordered the Union government** to form an **inter-ministerial committee** to explore a **separate legal framework for domestic workers**.
- The Court noted the **exclusion of domestic workers from key labor laws**, despite some state-level regulations.

### 2. Challenges Faced by Domestic Workers

- Mostly **migrants and marginalized women**, facing **low wages, excessive work, and lack of benefits**.
- **No formal job contracts, social security, or legal protections**, leading to exploitation and **vulnerability to harassment**.
- **Employers do not recognize themselves as “employers”** or their homes as “workplaces,” making regulation difficult.

### 3. The Need for a Separate Legal Framework

- Domestic work is **structurally different from other labor sectors** due to **private household employment**.
- Workers are engaged in **varied forms of employment**—part-time, full-time, live-in, or live-out—making **regulation complex**.
- A legal framework should ensure **minimum wages, fair working conditions, and grievance redressal mechanisms**.

### 4. Employer Registration and Implementation Challenges

- Domestic workers' unions demand **mandatory employer registration** for enforcement.
- Proof of employment is a major challenge, as seen in past **Minimum Wages Act enforcement failures**.
- **Employer resistance to regulation** is expected, as they do not see domestic work as formal employment.

### 5. Recognition of Domestic Work as Valuable Labor

- A **national law** would help **recognize the economic and social value** of housework and care work.
- The legal framework could help **redefine employer-worker power dynamics** in the long run.

### 6. Next Steps: Government's Response

- The effectiveness of a new law **depends on the committee's recommendations and the Union government's follow-up**.
- **Kerala and Delhi's regulatory models** could be examined for a national approach.
- While immediate improvements may be limited, **legislation would empower domestic workers and their unions**.





## Beyond tax cuts, a closer read of the Union Budget-The Hindu Editorial

### Economy

#### Easy Explanation

The **Union Budget 2024**, presented by Finance Minister **Nirmala Sitharaman**, focuses on **tax relief, fiscal consolidation, manufacturing, agriculture, exports, and climate initiatives** while tackling **unemployment, weak investment, and external risks**.

The **4.4% fiscal deficit target by FY26** relies on **optimistic revenue projections** and an **asset monetization plan**, despite past failures. **₹11.54 lakh crore in market borrowings** may crowd out private investment.

**Tax cuts** exempting incomes up to **₹12 lakh** provide relief but cost **₹1 lakh crore in revenue**, raising concerns about **funding infrastructure and social welfare**. **Household savings (18.4% of GDP)** continue to decline, affecting **long-term sustainability**.

In **manufacturing**, while MSME credit expansion and the **National Manufacturing Mission** are positive, **regulatory issues, infrastructure gaps, and weak R&D** remain barriers to global competitiveness.

**Agriculture measures** like **higher Kisan Credit Card (KCC) limits** and **targeted interventions** shift focus from subsidies but fail to **reform markets or boost exports**.

On **trade**, services exports are growing, but initiatives like **Bharat Trade Net (BTN)** and **MSME export credit** lack scale to **reduce trade deficits**. **Rupee depreciation and falling forex reserves** need a **stronger export strategy**.

**Climate policies** support **battery recycling, solar manufacturing, and critical mineral exemptions**, but lack **grid modernization and energy storage investments** for a full green transition.

While the budget **balances tax relief, investment, and fiscal discipline**, it **falls short of being transformative**, with **uncertainties in execution and revenue sustainability**. Its success depends on **effective implementation and policy flexibility**.

#### Key Takeaways

- Fiscal Consolidation Targets May Be Difficult to Achieve**
  - **4.4% of GDP fiscal deficit target for FY26** relies on **ambitious tax revenue projections** (11.2% total tax growth).
  - **₹11.54 lakh crore in market borrowings** could crowd out private investments.
  - Asset monetization has **underperformed in the past**, making the **new plan's success uncertain**.
- Tax Cuts Benefit Middle-Income Earners But Raise Sustainability Concerns**
  - **Income up to ₹12 lakh is tax-free**, reducing liabilities across all income brackets.
  - The tax cut **costs ₹1 lakh crore in lost revenue**, which may **impact funding for infrastructure and social welfare**.



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- Household savings have dropped to 18.4% of GDP, raising concerns over long-term economic stability.
- 3. **Manufacturing Push Lacks Structural Reforms**
  - National Manufacturing Mission and expanded MSME credit aim to boost ease of doing business.
  - Manufacturing still contributes only 17% of GDP, with weak R&D (0.64% of GDP) limiting competitiveness.
  - No concrete measures for industrial innovation, crucial for competing with China and Germany.
- 4. **Agriculture Policies Shift Towards Targeted Support But Have Gaps**
  - Kisan Credit Card (KCC) loan limit increased to ₹5 lakh to enhance farmers' financial flexibility.
  - Focus on low-productivity districts instead of blanket subsidies is a positive shift.
  - No major reforms in agricultural markets or support for exports, missing an opportunity to expand millet and organic exports.
- 5. **Trade and External Sector Lacks Ambitious Growth Measures**
  - Services exports (IT, BPO) are growing at 10.5% CAGR, but efforts to diversify export sectors are insufficient.
  - Bharat Trade Net (BTN) and MSME export credit are good steps but lack the scale to address trade deficits.
  - Depreciating rupee and declining forex reserves require a more aggressive trade policy.
- 6. **Climate Commitments Are Modest, Not Transformative**
  - Incentives for lithium-ion battery recycling, duty exemptions for critical minerals, and solar manufacturing support.
  - Lack of investments in grid modernization, energy storage, and industrial decarbonization slows the green transition.
- 7. **Execution and Policy Adjustments Will Be Key to Success**
  - The budget must balance tax relief with sustainable revenue generation.
  - Success depends on how effectively policies are implemented and whether the government course-corrects when needed.
  - A proactive private sector role is essential to achieving growth and investment targets.

## 4th February 2025

[Trump, Musk& USAID-Indian Express Explained](#)

International relations

### Easy Explanation

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID), established in 1961, has been a key instrument of American foreign policy, providing humanitarian and development aid globally. However, under the Trump administration, USAID has become a target for reform as part of a broader effort to



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downsize the federal government and cut perceived inefficiencies. Trump appointed Elon Musk as the head of the newly created Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), with the mandate of reducing government spending. Musk has openly criticized USAID, calling for its dissolution, and two top USAID security officials were removed for refusing DOGE access to restricted areas.

USAID manages billions in aid annually and plays a crucial role in foreign assistance, particularly in countries like Ukraine, Ethiopia, and Afghanistan. Historically, USAID was established during the Cold War to counter communism and has since been integral to U.S. diplomatic and geopolitical strategies. In India, USAID has contributed to major infrastructure and development projects but has faced declining influence due to India's shift away from conditional foreign aid.

## Key Takeaways

### 1. USAID's Role & Funding

- USAID is a major international humanitarian and development agency managing over \$43 billion in funds for assistance in 130 countries.
- The top recipients of USAID funds in FY2023 included Ukraine, Ethiopia, Jordan, and others.

### 2. Trump & Musk's Crackdown on USAID

- The Trump administration, aiming to reduce government spending and eliminate bureaucratic inefficiencies, has targeted USAID.
- Elon Musk, appointed head of DOGE, has aggressively criticized USAID, calling it a "criminal organization."
- Two USAID officials were removed after blocking DOGE access to restricted agency areas.

### 3. USAID's Historical Importance

- Created in 1961 by President John F. Kennedy, USAID was a Cold War tool to counter communism, starting with Latin America.
- The agency has long been an extension of U.S. foreign policy, using aid as leverage for geopolitical influence.

### 4. USAID in India

- The U.S. has provided aid to India since 1951, contributing to infrastructure, education, and health programs.
- India has gradually reduced its dependence on USAID due to conditions attached to aid and now accepts only limited assistance.
- In FY2024, U.S. aid obligations to India dropped to \$141 million from \$153 million in 2023.

### 5. Future Implications

- USAID's weakening could impact global humanitarian efforts and U.S. influence abroad.
- India, due to its decreasing reliance on foreign aid, is unlikely to face significant disruptions from USAID's restructuring.
- The Trump administration's broader effort to reform federal agencies may lead to further downsizing of international aid programs.





## Why scientists are monitoring asteroid with only 1% chance of hitting Earth-Indian Express Explained

Geography

### Easy Explanation

The asteroid **2024 YR4**, discovered in December 2023, has a **1% chance** of hitting Earth in **2032**, according to NASA. While the probability of impact is low, scientists are monitoring the asteroid closely due to its potential to cause **localized destruction** if it enters Earth's atmosphere. The asteroid, estimated to be **40 to 100 meters wide**, was first detected by the **Asteroid Terrestrial-impact Last Alert System (ATLAS)** in Chile. It made a close approach to Earth on **Christmas Day 2023**, passing within **800,000 kilometers** (twice the distance to the Moon).

Astronomers assess the threat level of near-Earth objects using the **Torino Scale**, where **2024 YR4 is currently rated a 3 out of 10**, indicating it warrants close observation. If it impacts, it could release **8 to 10 megatons of energy**, significantly larger than the **Chelyabinsk meteor** that exploded over Russia in 2013, which had the energy equivalent of **500 kilotons of TNT** and injured over **1,500 people**.

Despite daily asteroid entries into Earth's atmosphere, most are small and burn up. **Global catastrophe-causing asteroids (1 km or more in diameter) are extremely rare, occurring once in 260 million years.** However, **smaller asteroids** can still cause significant damage, depending on factors like speed and impact angle.

NASA and other space agencies are actively developing **planetary defense mechanisms** to prevent asteroid impacts. In 2022, NASA's **DART (Double Asteroid Redirection Test) mission** successfully altered the trajectory of an asteroid, demonstrating that **asteroid deflection** is a viable strategy for planetary defense.

### Key Takeaways

1. **Asteroid 2024 YR4 has a 1% chance of impacting Earth in 2032**, but monitoring is necessary to refine predictions.
2. **It is estimated to be 40-100 meters wide**, and could cause **localized destruction** if it hits a populated area.
3. **It recently passed Earth at a distance of 800,000 km** and will not be visible again until **2028**.
4. **NASA has rated it a 3/10 on the Torino Scale**, indicating close observation is required, but it is not an immediate global threat.
5. **If it impacts, it could release 8-10 megatons of energy**, significantly more than the **2013 Chelyabinsk meteor** (500 kilotons).
6. **Asteroids frequently enter Earth's atmosphere**, but most burn up. **Global catastrophe-causing asteroids are extremely rare.**
7. **NASA and other agencies are working on planetary defense measures**, including **DART**, which successfully altered an asteroid's trajectory in 2022.



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## Fentanyl: behind US tariffs on Mexico, China-Indian Express Explained

International relations

### Easy Explanation

The U.S. has imposed **tariffs on goods from Mexico and China**, citing the **threat of illegal drugs**, particularly **fentanyl**, a powerful synthetic opioid fueling the **opioid crisis** in the country. Fentanyl is **100 times more potent than morphine** and is responsible for a surge in overdose deaths in the U.S. since 2013.

**China and Mexico are central to the fentanyl supply chain:**

- **China** is the main source of **precursor chemicals** used to manufacture fentanyl.
- **Mexican cartels** process these chemicals into fentanyl pills and traffic them into the U.S.
- In **2023**, almost **9,600 kg of fentanyl** was intercepted at the **U.S.-Mexico border**, compared to just **19 kg at the U.S.-Canada border**.

The U.S. has taken steps to curb fentanyl trafficking:

- **The FEND Off Fentanyl Act (2024)** aims to crack down on traffickers in Mexico and precursor chemical suppliers in China.
- **China has shown some cooperation** by restricting precursor production, but trade tensions remain.
- **Mexico has been less cooperative**, though there is hope for improved intelligence-sharing under newly elected **President Claudia Sheinbaum**.

### Key Takeaways

1. **Fentanyl is a highly potent synthetic opioid** (100x stronger than morphine) that has fueled the **U.S. opioid epidemic**.
2. **China produces fentanyl precursors**, while **Mexican cartels manufacture and traffic the drug into the U.S.**
3. The **U.S.-Mexico border is the primary entry point for illicit fentanyl**, with nearly **9,600 kg seized in 2023**.
4. **The U.S. has imposed tariffs on China and Mexico**, citing their role in the fentanyl trade.
5. **China has taken steps to restrict precursor chemicals**, but tensions remain.
6. **Cooperation with Mexico has been difficult** due to distrust over U.S. operations and concerns about cartel infiltration in the government.
7. **The newly elected Mexican President, Claudia Sheinbaum, may improve intelligence-sharing**, but challenges persist.

## EXTRA LONG STAPLE (COTTON)-Indian Express Explained

Geography

### Easy Explanation



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Union Finance Minister **Nirmala Sitharaman** announced a **five-year mission** to improve the **productivity and sustainability** of cotton farming, with a special focus on **Extra-Long Staple (ELS) cotton**.

ELS cotton, known for its **high-quality, long fibers (30mm and above)**, is used to produce **premium fabrics**. It mainly comes from the species **Gossypium barbadense**, commonly called **Egyptian or Pima cotton**, and is grown in **China, Egypt, Australia, and Peru**. In India, **only small pockets in Maharashtra's Sangli district and Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu** cultivate ELS cotton.

India **imports over 90% of its ELS cotton**, despite being a leading cotton producer. Farmers prefer **medium staple cotton** (96% of total production) due to **higher yields (10-12 quintals per acre vs. 7-8 quintals for ELS)** and **better market linkages**.

The **Cotton Mission** aims to address these challenges by introducing **better seeds, modern technology, and scientific support**. Experts suggest **genetic modification (GM) technology**, such as **herbicide-tolerant Bt (HtBT) cotton**, could help, though it is currently **illegal in India**.

India's cotton yields (10-12 quintals per acre) **lag behind other countries** like **Brazil (20 quintals per acre) and China (15 quintals per acre)**. Increased access to **technology, better agronomic practices, and improved market linkages** could enhance ELS cotton production in India.

### Key Takeaways

1. **ELS cotton has fibers longer than 30mm**, making it ideal for **premium fabric production**.
2. **India primarily grows medium staple cotton** (96% of total production), with **limited ELS cultivation** in Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu.
3. **India imports over 90% of its ELS cotton**, despite being a major cotton producer.
4. **Low yield (7-8 quintals per acre) and poor market linkages** discourage Indian farmers from growing ELS cotton.
5. **The new Cotton Mission** will introduce **better seeds, technology, and scientific support** to boost productivity.
6. **Experts advocate for GM cotton (HtBT) for weed resistance**, but it remains illegal in India.
7. **India's cotton yields are lower than Brazil (20 quintals/acre) and China (15 quintals/acre)**—better seeds and technology could help bridge this gap.

### [The spirit of 1971-Indian Express Editorial](#)

International relations

### Easy Explanation

The **India-Bangladesh relationship** is deeply rooted in the **spirit of 1971**, when India played a crucial role in Bangladesh's liberation from Pakistan. The recent **political turmoil in Bangladesh**, marked by the **ouster of Sheikh Hasina** six months ago and the rise of **Muhammad Yunus's regime**, has led to instability, raising concerns for India. The new government has demanded **Hasina's extradition**, while India's response has been cautious.



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The instability in Bangladesh has **direct implications for India**, particularly in relation to **illegal immigration, communal tensions, and security issues in the Northeast**. The **violence faced by Bangladeshi Hindus** remains a concern. However, the current crisis is more a product of political shifts than a reflection of Bangladesh's socio-cultural ethos.

Historically, India's connection with Bangladesh runs deep, from **linguistic and cultural ties** to economic and strategic cooperation. India and Bangladesh share a **4,000 km border**, with significant historical, economic, and social interdependence. The **events leading to the 1971 war**, including Pakistan's oppression of Bengali-speaking East Pakistanis, the **Bengali language movement**, and **Operation Searchlight**, solidified India's role as a key ally of Bangladesh.

Despite fluctuations in relations, India and Bangladesh have seen major achievements, including **trade agreements, river water-sharing, and infrastructure cooperation**. The **economic partnership is strong**, with **Bangladesh as India's largest trade partner in the region**, significant cooperation in **power and energy**, and **Bangladeshis frequently visiting India for medical treatment and tourism**.

India's diplomatic approach should focus on **engagement with any government chosen by the Bangladeshi people through free and fair elections** while upholding values of **democracy, secularism, and minority rights**. The **spirit of 1971** must continue to guide **India-Bangladesh relations**, ensuring that political changes do not derail the deep ties between the two nations.

### Key Takeaways

1. **Sheikh Hasina was ousted six months ago**, and the new government under **Muhammad Yunus** has created political instability in Bangladesh.
2. **India has taken a cautious approach**, offering Hasina refuge while avoiding direct interference in Bangladesh's internal politics.
3. **Instability in Bangladesh affects India**, particularly in the **Northeast and with issues of illegal immigration**.
4. **Violence against Bangladeshi Hindus** is concerning, but it stems from current political conditions rather than Bangladesh's cultural fabric.
5. **India's historical role in Bangladesh's liberation (1971)** has shaped their deep-rooted ties.
6. **The Indo-Bangladesh border remains highly porous**, highlighting the cultural and social interdependence between the two nations.
7. **Bangladesh is India's largest trade partner in South Asia**, with strong cooperation in **energy, infrastructure, and tourism**.
8. **Despite political shifts, India should maintain diplomatic engagement with any Bangladesh government elected through free and fair elections**.
9. **The "spirit of 1971" must continue to define India-Bangladesh relations**, ensuring that political changes do not disrupt long-term cooperation.

[Delhi's gender budget: its decline and impact-The Hindu Editorial](#)

Governance



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## Easy Explanation

Despite the increase in **Delhi's gender budget** over the past decade, the **funds allocated for women's education have been steadily declining**. While **cash transfers and freebies** provide short-term relief to women, they do not contribute to **long-term economic and social empowerment**. **Investment in education and skills training** is essential to **bridge gender gaps in employment, wages, and leadership roles**.

Delhi's **gender budget has grown sevenfold** from ₹10 billion in 2011-12 to ₹71 billion in 2024-25, but spending on **women's education peaked in 2017-18 (₹24 billion) and has since declined**. In 2024-25, only ₹18 billion has been allocated, making up **just 27% of the gender budget**, down from **54% in 2017-18**.

This reduction in education funding has had **serious repercussions on female labor force participation**. According to **PLFS (2023-24)**, only **21% of Delhi's women are in the labor force**, significantly below the **national average of 45.2%**. Furthermore, **women are concentrated in low-paying jobs**, such as domestic help, with very few in **top leadership positions** (94% of top roles are held by men). Women also remain underrepresented in **technical and high-skilled jobs**.

For sustainable change, Delhi's government needs to **prioritize education and skill development for women** instead of focusing primarily on **freebies and cash transfers**. Investing in **technical education and vocational training** would help **bridge gender gaps in employment and reduce long-term economic disparities**.

## Key Takeaways

1. **Delhi's gender budget has increased sevenfold**, but funding for **women's education has declined since 2017-18**.
2. **The share of education in the gender budget has dropped from 54% (2017-18) to 27% (2024-25)**, with a **9% decline in just the past year**.
3. **Delhi's female labor force participation is only 21%**, the **lowest in India**, compared to the **national average of 45.2%**.
4. **Women in Delhi are concentrated in low-paying, low-skill jobs** like domestic work, while **94% of top leadership positions are held by men**.
5. **Women are underrepresented in high-skilled jobs**, with only **3.8% of the female workforce in technical fields**, compared to **10.34% of men**.
6. **Lack of technical and professional education** has led to **women being concentrated in traditional fields like teaching and healthcare**.
7. **Investing in education and vocational training is crucial for long-term gender empowerment**, rather than relying on **cash transfers and freebies**.

[How will the govt. produce the required fuel ethanol? -The Hindu Text and Context](#)

Economy

## Easy Explanation



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India is set to achieve its **target of 20% ethanol blending with petrol** in the next two months, a year ahead of schedule. To meet this goal, the country requires **1,100 crore litres of fuel ethanol annually**, sourced from **sugar, molasses, FCI rice, broken rice, and maize**. India's ethanol distillery capacity has been **expanded to 1,600 crore litres** due to government incentives and a **stable market for ethanol production**.

### Key Sources of Ethanol Production

1. **Sugar & Molasses** – Expected to contribute **400 crore litres** of ethanol in 2024-25.
2. **FCI Rice** – Government reduced the price of FCI rice for distilleries, facilitating **110 crore litres** of ethanol production.
3. **Maize** – Expected to produce **350-400 crore litres**, a major shift from **zero ethanol from maize until 2020**.

### The Role of Maize in Ethanol Production

- India's maize production is primarily used for poultry feed, livestock, and starch production, with **10% for human consumption**.
- As ethanol production from sugar was restricted, **maize imports surged from ₹100 crore (April-June 2024) to \$188 million (April-Nov 2024)**.
- Farmers have **increased maize cultivation by 10%** due to the high demand from ethanol producers.
- For 2024-25, maize output is expected to be **42 million tonnes**, with **9 million tonnes dedicated to ethanol production**.
- The byproduct (**DDGS - Distiller's Dried Grains with Solubles**) can be used for poultry feed, helping mitigate disruptions in the traditional maize market.

### Economic and Sustainability Impact

- **100 crore litres of ethanol production saves ₹6,000 crore on oil imports**, boosting the local economy.
- India's oil import bill is around **₹10.5 lakh crore annually**, and ethanol blending helps reduce dependence on crude oil.
- Long-term ethanol sustainability depends on **ensuring maize production does not negatively affect other food grain crops**.

### Key Takeaways

1. India will achieve 20% ethanol blending in petrol within two months, ahead of schedule.
2. The country requires 1,100 crore litres of ethanol annually, sourced from sugar, molasses, rice, and maize.
3. Maize, which previously played no role in ethanol production, is now expected to contribute 350-400 crore litres.
4. Maize imports surged in 2024 due to ethanol demand, but increased domestic production may reduce imports going forward.
5. Farmers have expanded maize cultivation by 10%, shifting focus from traditional uses to ethanol supply.





6. **A byproduct of ethanol production (DDGS) can support the poultry industry**, mitigating market disruptions.
7. **Ethanol blending will save ₹6,000 crore in oil imports**, supporting India's energy security and economic growth.
8. **Long-term sustainability depends on balancing maize-based ethanol production without harming food crop yields.**

## 5th February 2025

### [Why the RBI could cut repo rate, for the first time in 5 years-Indian Express Explained](#)

Economy

#### Easy Explanation

The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** is likely to cut the **repo rate by 25 basis points (bps) to 6.25%** in its **Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting from February 5-7, 2025**—the first rate cut in nearly **five years**. This move follows easing **inflation**, improved **liquidity measures**, and a **pro-growth Union Budget 2025-26**, which introduced **personal income tax cuts** to boost consumption.

The expected **rate cut cycle** may see at least **75 bps reductions in 2025**, with **two successive cuts in February and April**, followed by another round in **October 2025**. Meanwhile, **global uncertainties**, such as **U.S. President Donald Trump's new tariffs on Canada, Mexico, and China**, have contributed to **market volatility**, leading to a **record-low rupee value of 87.29 per USD**.

A rate cut would **lower borrowing costs**, bringing relief to **loan borrowers** and potentially boosting **economic growth**. The **GDP growth forecast for FY25** was revised downward to **6.6% from 7.2%**, and RBI may provide insights on **FY26 growth projections** in upcoming policies.

#### Key Takeaways

- **First Repo Rate Cut in 5 Years:** A **25 bps reduction** is expected, bringing the repo rate down to **6.25%**.
- **Favorable Economic Conditions:**
  - Inflation (CPI) eased to **5.22% in December 2024**.
  - The Union Budget **cut personal income tax** and revised **TDS limits**, stimulating consumption.
  - RBI already enhanced **liquidity measures**, including a **\$5 billion forex swap** and **₹60,000 crore OMO**.
- **Expected Rate Cut Cycle:**
  - **25 bps cut in February 2025**, followed by another in **April 2025**.
  - **Total expected rate cut of at least 75 bps** in 2025, with further reductions possible from **October 2025**.
- **Global Uncertainty & Trade Wars:**



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- **US President Donald Trump imposed tariffs** on Canada, Mexico, and China, raising global economic concerns.
- The **Indian Rupee hit an all-time low of 87.29 per USD** amid market volatility.
- **Potential Impact of the Rate Cut:**
  - Reduction in **lending rates** for borrowers, leading to **lower EMIs**.
  - Improved credit growth due to **lower cost of borrowing**.
  - Banks may **adjust MCLR-linked loan rates**, though past hikes were not fully passed on.
- **Growth Forecasts:**
  - RBI had already revised **GDP growth projection for FY25 to 6.6%** from 7.2%.
  - Possible insights on **FY26 growth estimates** in upcoming policies.

This anticipated rate cut aligns with RBI's goal of supporting economic growth while managing inflation in a challenging global environment.

### [Pulses& aatmanirbharta-Indian Express Explained](#)

Economy

#### Easy Explanation

The **2025-26 Union Budget** has introduced a **₹1,000 crore "Mission for Aatmanirbharta in Pulses"**, aiming to boost self-reliance in **tur/arhar (pigeon pea), urad (black gram), and masoor (red lentil)**. This initiative comes as India's **pulses imports surge** toward an all-time high, reversing the **near self-sufficiency** achieved between **2018-2023**. The scheme focuses on **MSP-based procurement and post-harvest warehousing**, with **NAFED and NCCF** ensuring farmers can sell their produce at fair prices.

#### Key Highlights

- **Rising Imports & Reversal of Aatmanirbharta:**
  - Pulses imports during **April-November 2024** surged **56.6% YoY** to **\$3.28 billion**.
  - Full-year imports could hit **\$5.9 billion**, exceeding the previous record of **\$4.24 billion (2016-17)**.
  - **Drought in 2023-24** contributed to lower domestic production and higher imports.
- **Success Stories of Chana & Moong:**
  - **Chana production** rose from **95.26 lt (2013-14)** to **135.44 lt (2021-22)**, driven by **short-duration, high-yielding varieties**.
  - **Moong farmers** now cultivate up to **four crops annually**, aided by **photo-thermo insensitive varieties**.
- **Challenges in Achieving Aatmanirbharta in Pulses Again:**
  - **Long crop duration** for tur/arhar (**150-180 days**) and relatively **low yields (15-16 quintals/ha)**.
  - **Zero import duties** on key pulses (tur/arhar, masoor, urad, matar) reduce farmer incentives.
  - **Policy ambiguity:** The government promotes pulses cultivation but allows **duty-free imports until March 2026**.



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## Key Takeaways

- **Surge in Pulses Imports** – India's pulses imports are expected to reach **\$5.9 billion in 2024-25**, reversing the **self-sufficiency** achieved between 2018-2023.
- **₹1,000 Crore "Mission for Aatmanirbharta in Pulses"** – The government has launched a **six-year plan** focused on **tur/arhar, urad, and masoor**, with **MSP-based procurement and warehousing support**.
- **Success of Chana & Moong** – Short-duration, high-yield varieties have boosted production, making these two pulses relatively self-sufficient.
- **Challenges in Self-Reliance for Other Pulses** – Tur/arhar still has a **long crop cycle (150-180 days)** and **low yields**, making self-sufficiency difficult.
- **Policy Ambiguity** – The government **encourages pulses cultivation** but continues **duty-free imports (extended until March 2026)**, reducing incentives for farmers.
- **Need for Research & Development** – India must **develop hybrid, short-duration, high-yield varieties of tur/arhar** to improve productivity.
- **Restoring Import Duties** – To achieve long-term self-reliance, the government may need to **reintroduce import duties** on pulses and ensure better price incentives for farmers.
- **Infrastructure & Mechanization** – Strengthening **warehousing, irrigation, and mechanized farming** in rainfed regions like **Marathwada-Vidarbha and Karnataka** can help boost domestic production.

## [Why Centre plans to establish a national cooperative university-Indian Express Explained](#)

Sociology

### Easy Explanation

The **Union Government** has introduced a bill in the **Lok Sabha** to establish **Tribhuvan Sahkari University**, India's **first national cooperative university**, on the **Institute of Rural Management Anand (IRMA)** campus in **Gujarat**. The university aims to **impart education, training, research, and development in the cooperative sector**, helping achieve global excellence.

The cooperative sector plays a **significant role in India's economy**, contributing to agricultural credit, fertilizer distribution, sugar and milk production, and crop procurement. However, the current **education and training infrastructure is fragmented**, leading to a demand for **skilled manpower in cooperative societies**. The proposed university will offer **sector-specific schools** covering **cooperative finance, banking, dairy, fisheries, sugar, laws, auditing, and multi-state cooperatives**.

IRMA, founded in **1979 by Dr. Verghese Kurien**, will be declared a **Centre of Excellence for Rural Management** while retaining its autonomy. The initiative follows global examples from **Germany, Kenya, Colombia, and Spain**, which have cooperative universities. The university also plans to **develop a pan-India network of cooperative education institutes** to strengthen the cooperative movement.

By providing **specialized education and training**, the Centre seeks to **enhance the cooperative sector's role in economic development** and achieve the vision of **"Sahkar se Samridhi"** (prosperity through cooperatives).



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## Key Takeaways

- **Tribhuvan Sahkari University Proposal** – The Centre introduced a bill to establish **India's first national cooperative university** on the campus of **IRMA (Institute of Rural Management Anand)**, Gujarat.
- **Objectives of the University** – It will focus on **technical and management education, training, research, and development in the cooperative sector** to achieve global standards.
- **IRMA's Role** – Founded in 1979 by **Dr. Verghese Kurien**, IRMA will become a **Centre of Excellence for Rural Management** under the new university, while maintaining its autonomy.
- **Need for the University** – The **cooperative sector plays a crucial role in India's economy**, contributing significantly to agricultural credit, fertilizer distribution, sugar and milk production, and procurement of essential crops.
- **Sector-Specific Schools** – The university will establish specialized schools for **dairy, fishery, sugar, banking, rural credit, cooperative finance, cooperative laws, auditing, and multi-state cooperatives**, among others.
- **Global Precedents** – Countries like **Germany, Kenya, Colombia, and Spain** already have cooperative universities.
- **Addressing Manpower Gap** – The Centre believes that existing **cooperative education and training facilities are fragmented and inadequate**, necessitating a structured **national-level institution**.
- **Pan-India Network** – The university aims to create a **nationwide network of cooperative education and training institutes** to strengthen the cooperative movement in India.

### [A nuclear recharge-Indian Express Editorial](#)

## International relations

### Easy Explanation

India's nuclear power sector has stagnated despite its early lead, with its installed nuclear capacity at **8,200 MW**, significantly lagging behind **China (58,000 MW)** and **South Korea (32,000 MW)**. Finance Minister **Nirmala Sitharaman's budget speech** announced plans to **amend key nuclear laws—Atomic Energy Act (1962) and Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act (CLNDA, 2010)—to unlock nuclear energy's potential and achieve 100,000 MW capacity by 2047.**

Historically, India's **nuclear progress was hindered** by the **Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1970**, global sanctions following **India's 1974 nuclear test**, and policy indecisions that left India **outside the global nuclear framework**. While the **2008 India-U.S. nuclear deal** opened doors for nuclear cooperation, **CLNDA's supplier liability clause discouraged foreign and domestic investment.**

Structural challenges also persist, as the **government's monopoly under the Atomic Energy Act (1962) blocks private sector participation**. Drawing from the **success of space-sector reforms**, India must **liberalize atomic energy laws** to encourage **private investment, innovation, and global collaboration.**

## Key Takeaways



| Click to Connect Now.



- **India's Nuclear Lag:** Despite early advancements, India's nuclear power capacity remains **8,200 MW**, while China and South Korea have surged ahead.
- **Missed Opportunities:** India's **late nuclear testing (1998)** and **CLNDA's liability clause (2010)** discouraged foreign and domestic participation.
- **Budget Reforms:** FM Sitharaman proposes amending **Atomic Energy Act (1962) & CLNDA (2010)** to attract **private and foreign investment**.
- **Structural Problems:** **Government monopoly** hinders nuclear sector expansion—private sector entry is crucial for innovation and growth.
- **Lessons from Space Sector:** **ISRO's partial privatization** led to a private-sector boom; similar reforms in nuclear energy could drive rapid growth.
- **Future Roadmap:** **Liberalizing nuclear energy laws** could accelerate India's **energy transition**, **strengthen energy security**, and **reduce carbon footprint**.

By **amending nuclear laws, embracing private investment, and fostering innovation**, India can **reclaim its nuclear leadership** and achieve its ambitious **100,000 MW goal by 2047**.

### [How beggar-thy-neighbour policies can make global trade come to a standstill-The Hindu Text and Context](#)

Economy

#### Easy Explanation

**Beggar-thy-neighbour policies** refer to **protectionist economic strategies** aimed at **benefiting one country's economy at the expense of others**. These policies typically include **trade wars** (high tariffs and strict quotas on imports) and **currency wars** (deliberate devaluation to boost exports and reduce imports). While they may provide short-term benefits to domestic industries, they often lead to **retaliatory actions, global trade disruptions, and economic downturns**.

The term was first used by **Adam Smith in 1776** in *The Wealth of Nations*, where he criticized **mercantilist policies** that sought to create trade surpluses by impoverishing other nations. While proponents argue that these policies **protect key industries, create jobs, and ensure national security**, critics highlight that they often lead to **inflation, higher consumer prices, and economic instability**.

Historically, beggar-thy-neighbour policies played a major role in the **Great Depression**, as countries retaliated with **tariffs and competitive currency devaluations**, reducing global trade. Recent examples include **China and Japan's alleged currency devaluation** and **U.S. trade wars under Donald Trump**, raising fears of trade stagnation.

Some economists suggest that **countries should avoid retaliation** and instead embrace **unilateral free trade**, which allows them to benefit from lower prices while avoiding economic self-damage. However, in a world of rising **economic nationalism**, the risk of these policies triggering a global trade slowdown remains high.

#### Key Takeaways



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- **Beggar-thy-neighbour policies** are **protectionist measures** that benefit a country at the **expense of other economies**.
- **Examples include:** High tariffs (trade wars) and deliberate currency devaluation (currency wars).
- **Proponents** argue these policies **protect domestic industries, jobs, and national security**.
- **Critics** warn they can lead to **global trade standstills, inflation, and economic crises**.
- **Historical impact:** These policies contributed to the **Great Depression** due to retaliatory tariffs and currency devaluations.
- **Recent concerns:** The **U.S.-China trade war** and alleged **currency devaluation by China and Japan** raised fears of economic instability.
- **Alternative approach:** Some economists suggest **unilateral free trade** as a better response to avoid retaliatory damage.
- **Overall risk:** Widespread use of such policies could **harm global trade and economic growth** in the long run.

### [Scans of seemingly empty space reveal black holes not far from earth-The Hindu Science](#)

Science

#### Easy Explanation

Astronomers have recently discovered three **massive black holes** close to Earth using the **Gaia telescope**, which tracks the motion of stars to infer the presence of invisible objects. These black holes, **Gaia BH1, Gaia BH2, and Gaia BH3**, were detected based on how their companion stars orbited seemingly empty space.

Black holes form when **massive stars collapse**, either through **supernova explosions** or direct collapse. While some black holes emit **X-rays** as matter swirls around them, the ones discovered by Gaia appear to be **silent**—not actively pulling in material.

Gaia BH1, the **closest black hole to Earth** at **1,560 light-years away**, was detected in 2022 when scientists noticed a star orbiting a dark mass about **nine times the Sun's mass**. Gaia BH2 was found in 2023 using a similar method. In 2024, Gaia BH3 was discovered as the **largest stellar-mass black hole in the Milky Way**, weighing **33 solar masses**. Located **2,000 light-years away**, it is the first black hole found in the **outer reaches of our galaxy** and provides a rare opportunity to study such objects up close.

Scientists believe **Gaia BH3 could be an ancient black hole**, similar to those observed merging in distant galaxies. The discovery highlights how advanced telescopes like **Gaia, LIGO, and VIRGO** are transforming our understanding of black holes, their formation, and their role in the cosmos.

#### Key Takeaways

- **Black holes warp spacetime**, making them invisible, but they can be detected through their **gravitational effects on nearby stars**.
- **Gaia BH1** (1,560 light-years away) is **the closest known black hole** and was identified in 2022.
- **Gaia BH2** was discovered in 2023 using the same method.
- **Gaia BH3** (2,000 light-years away) is **the largest stellar-mass black hole in the Milky Way** at **33 times the Sun's mass**.



| Click to Connect Now.



- Unlike traditional black holes, these **do not emit X-rays** and are **dormant**, making them harder to detect.
- Gaia BH3 is located in the **outer regions of the Milky Way** and is possibly an **ancient black hole**, similar to those detected merging in distant galaxies.
- The discoveries mark a **major breakthrough** in understanding **hidden black holes** and their evolution in the universe.

### India-Indonesia ties as a beacon for global relations-The Hindu Editorial

International relations

#### Easy Explanation

India and Indonesia share a **deep-rooted historical and strategic relationship**, which was further reinforced during **President Prabowo Subianto's visit** as the **chief guest at India's 76th Republic Day celebrations**. This visit marked a commitment to **strengthening bilateral ties in trade, security, and geopolitics**, making their partnership a **beacon for global relations**.

The two nations, among the **fastest-growing economies**, have the potential to **quadruple their bilateral trade**, currently valued at **\$30 billion**. Economic cooperation is set to expand in **energy, food & agriculture, healthcare, manufacturing, and technology**. With a strong focus on **investment in clean energy and supply chain integration**, both nations aim to **lead the fight against climate change**.

Security collaboration is another cornerstone, with **India and Indonesia strengthening maritime security and defense cooperation** under the **Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (2018)**. In addition to **counterterrorism and cybersecurity**, both nations aim to **maintain Indo-Pacific stability amid shifting global geopolitics**.

At the global level, **Indonesia's entry into BRICS** further aligns it with India in reshaping economic frameworks. Both nations also balance **relations with the US, China, and other Western powers**, navigating trade challenges and ensuring **free trade access** to global markets.

President Prabowo's visit reaffirmed **India-Indonesia's 76-year-old partnership**, emphasizing their **role in shaping the future of the Indo-Pacific** while contributing to a **more stable and prosperous global order**.

#### Key Takeaways

- **Historical Ties:** Indonesia's founding father, **Sukarno**, was India's **first Republic Day chief guest (1950)**; President **Prabowo Subianto's 2024 visit** highlights enduring relations.
- **Economic Partnership:** **\$30 billion** bilateral trade with a **goal to quadruple it** in the next decade by expanding cooperation in **energy, healthcare, manufacturing, and technology**.
- **Security & Defense Cooperation:** Under the **2018 Comprehensive Strategic Partnership**, India and Indonesia focus on **maritime security, counterterrorism, and cybersecurity**.
- **Geopolitical Influence:** Indonesia joins **BRICS** alongside India, strengthening their position in **global economic and diplomatic affairs**.



| Click to Connect Now.





- **Sustainable Future:** Both nations aim to **lead the energy transition** and **climate action** through clean energy investment and strategic collaborations.
- **Indo-Pacific Stability:** As **large, populous nations with growing military capabilities**, their cooperation is vital for ensuring **regional security and economic growth**.
- **Global Trade Dynamics:** Both nations must navigate **US trade policies, tariffs, and resource exports**, ensuring **open markets** and **fair trade policies**.

By reinforcing **trade, security, and geopolitical cooperation**, India and Indonesia can emerge as **key pillars of Indo-Pacific stability and global economic progress**.

## 6th February 2025

### [What does Rajasthan's Bill against 'unlawful' religious conversions say-Indian Express Explained](#)

Sociology

#### Easy Explanation

The **Rajasthan Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Bill** aims to prevent religious conversions through **coercion, force, fraud, or allurement**. It declares marriages conducted solely for conversion as void and imposes **strict penalties** on offenders.

#### Key Provisions:

1. **Unlawful Conversion:** Defined as conversion through **coercion, fraud, undue influence, or allurement** (e.g., monetary benefits, employment, education).
2. **Burden of Proof:** Lies on the person facilitating the conversion, reversing the usual legal principle of presumption of innocence.
3. **Punishments:**
  - **General Unlawful Conversion:** 1-5 years imprisonment, ₹15,000 fine.
  - **Conversion of minors, women, SC/ST individuals:** 2-10 years, ₹25,000 fine.
  - **Mass Conversions:** 3-10 years, ₹50,000 fine.
  - **Repeat Offenders:** Double punishment.
4. **Legal Provisions:**
  - FIR can be lodged by **family members or relatives**.
  - **Cognizable and non-bailable** offences (arrest without warrant).
5. **Process for Voluntary Conversion:**
  - Must submit a **60-day prior declaration** to the District Magistrate.
  - Priest conducting conversion must give **1-month notice**.
  - Failure to comply results in **up to 5 years imprisonment** and fines.
  - Police verification is required, and the convert must confirm before the DM.

#### Government's Justification:



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- Prevents forced conversions, particularly of **vulnerable communities like tribals and SC/STs**.
- Ensures religious freedom without coercion.
- BJP links it to preventing **"love jihad"**.

### Past Attempts & Challenges:

- **Similar Bills were introduced in 2006 and 2013-2018** but were rejected by the Centre and President.
- The current Bill aligns with **Madhya Pradesh, Uttarakhand** laws.
- Opposition parties and activists raise concerns over **personal liberty and legal complexities**.

### Key Takeaways

#### 1. Definition of Unlawful Conversion:

- Conversion through coercion, force, fraud, or allurement (e.g., cash, material benefits, employment, free education, etc.).
- The burden of proof lies on the person facilitating the conversion.

#### 2. Punishments & Penalties:

- **General unlawful conversion:** 1-5 years imprisonment, minimum fine of ₹15,000.
- **Conversion of minors, women, SC/ST individuals:** 2-10 years imprisonment, minimum fine of ₹25,000.
- **Mass conversions:** 3-10 years imprisonment, minimum fine of ₹50,000.
- **Repeat offenders:** Penalties doubled.

#### 3. Legal and Procedural Aspects:

- FIRs can be lodged by blood relatives, adopted family, or close relations.
- All offences are **cognizable (arrest without warrant) and non-bailable**.

#### 4. Voluntary Conversion Process:

- Convert must submit a declaration to the District Magistrate (DM) **60 days in advance**.
- The ceremony performer must give **one month's prior notice** to the DM.
- Failure to comply can lead to imprisonment (up to **5 years**) and fines.
- Police investigation is required to verify intent and purpose.
- The convert must confirm their declaration before the DM within **21 days**.

#### 5. Government's Justification:

- Aims to protect vulnerable communities from forced conversions.
- Prevents coercion under the pretext of religious freedom.
- BJP also associates it with preventing "love jihad."

#### 6. Previous Attempts:

- Similar Bills were introduced in **2006 and 2013-2018** but were rejected by the Centre and the President.
- The current Bill aligns with laws in states like **Madhya Pradesh and Uttarakhand**.

[Why temperatures at North Pole reached 20° Celsius above average-Indian Express Explained](#)





## Easy Explanation

On **February 2**, the North Pole experienced a **temperature spike of over 20°C above average**, briefly crossing the melting threshold during the Arctic winter. This extreme warming event, though not unprecedented, highlights the **accelerating impact of climate change** in the region. The Arctic has been warming **3.8 times faster than the global average** since the late 1970s, leading to severe global consequences, including **rising sea levels and disrupted weather patterns**.

### Key Reasons for the Unusual Warming:

#### 1. Deep Low-Pressure System Over Iceland

- This system allowed warm air from lower latitudes to flow into the Arctic, raising temperatures.

#### 2. Warmer Sea Surface Temperatures

- Exceptionally warm waters in the **northeast Atlantic** intensified the heat transported to the Arctic.

#### 3. Albedo Effect (Ice Loss and Heat Absorption)

- **Melting sea ice exposes darker ocean water**, which absorbs more heat, causing further warming.

#### 4. Weak Convection in Arctic Latitudes

- Unlike tropical regions where vertical mixing distributes heat, the Arctic **traps heat near the surface**, amplifying warming effects.

### Key Takeaways:

1. **Extreme Temperature Rise** - Over **20°C above average**, leading to melting conditions in winter.
2. **Arctic Warming 3.8x Faster Than Global Average** - Due to multiple feedback mechanisms.
3. **Loss of Sea Ice Accelerates Warming** - Reduced reflectivity increases heat absorption.
4. **Disrupted Global Weather Patterns** - Rising Arctic temperatures **alter ocean currents and atmospheric circulation**, impacting weather worldwide.
5. **Severe Consequences** - **Rising sea levels**, loss of biodiversity, and extreme climate events globally.

## [Story of NavIC: crucial indigenous Sat Nav system, hurdles in development path-Indian Express Explained](#)

Science and technology

## Easy Explanation

India's indigenous **Navigation with Indian Constellation (NavIC)** system, developed by ISRO, aims to provide **reliable satellite navigation services** for both **civilian and military** applications. However, the system has faced **multiple setbacks**, including **atomic clock failures and engine malfunctions**, limiting its operational capacity.

### Key Developments & Challenges:



| Click to Connect Now.



- **Origin & Purpose:** Conceived in **1999 after the Kargil War**, when India was denied access to the US GPS, NavIC aims to ensure **self-reliance in navigation services**.
- **Satellite Launches:** The first satellite **IRNSS-1A** was launched in **2013**, and the constellation was declared operational by **2016** with **seven satellites**.
- **Failures & Malfunctions:**
  - **Rubidium Atomic Clock Failures** affected **IRNSS-1A, 1C, 1D, 1E, and 1G**.
  - **IRNSS-1H launch failure (2017)** due to **heat shield malfunction**.
  - **NVS-02 (IRNSS-1K) failure (2024)** due to **engine non-firing**, leaving it in a **sub-optimal orbit**.
- **Current Operational Status:** Only **4-5 satellites** are fully functional, whereas **11 were launched**.
- **Next-Generation NavIC Satellites:** **NVS-01 (IRNSS-1J)** launched in **2023** is fully operational, with **three more (NVS-03, 04, 05)** planned to **enhance the system**.

#### Key Takeaways:

1. **Indigenous Navigation System** - Developed for India's **security and self-reliance**, unlike **US GPS** or **Russian GLONASS**.
2. **Technical Challenges** - **Atomic clock failures, launch issues, and engine malfunctions** have impacted the system's full deployment.
3. **Dual-Use Capability** - Provides **Standard Positioning Service (SPS)** for civilian use and **Restricted Service (RS)** for defense applications.
4. **Strategic Importance** - Crucial for **military operations, transportation, disaster management, and precision agriculture**.
5. **Growing Commercial Adoption** - **Qualcomm's 2023 agreement** to integrate NavIC into chipsets is a major step towards wider adoption.
6. **Future Plans** - **ISRO plans to launch three more second-gen satellites (NVS-03, 04, 05)** to improve reliability and expand capabilities.

#### Conclusion:

Despite setbacks, NavIC remains a **strategic asset for India's defense and technology ecosystem**. With continuous improvements and **greater integration into commercial devices**, it has the potential to **become a widely used alternative to global navigation systems**.

#### [Trump's plan to 'own' Gaza-Indian Express Explained](#)

International relations

#### Easy Explanation

Former U.S. President Donald Trump proposed a controversial plan for Gaza, suggesting that Palestinians be displaced and that the U.S. "own" Gaza, transforming it into a luxury hub. The plan contradicts international law and has been met with strong opposition from Jordan and Egypt, which view it as a threat to their stability. Meanwhile, Trump also reinstated his "maximum pressure" policy on Iran, reimposing sanctions and blacklisting the Houthis as a terrorist organization. However, his stance on Iran contradicts the recent



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diplomatic efforts by Gulf states, including Saudi Arabia and the UAE, to strengthen ties with Tehran. These developments create uncertainty regarding the Gaza ceasefire, regional stability, and future US-Arab relations.

## Key Takeaways

### 1. Trump's Gaza Proposal

- **Forcible Palestinian Displacement:** Calls for Palestinians to leave Gaza, with Jordan and Egypt expected to take them in.
- **US Control Over Gaza:** Trump proposed that America would "own" Gaza and develop it into a luxury hub.
- **Contradiction with UN Resolutions:** The proposal violates international law and Palestinian self-determination rights.
- **Massive Displacement:** The plan could lead to the biggest Palestinian refugee crisis since the **1948 Nakba**.

### 2. Jordan & Egypt's Opposition

- **Jordan:** Considers forced Palestinian displacement a "**declaration of war**" and a violation of its **1994 peace treaty with Israel**.
- **Egypt:** Fears political instability, especially as it has suppressed the **Muslim Brotherhood**, which could use this as a rallying point.

### 3. Iran and US Tensions

- **Return to "Maximum Pressure":** Trump reinstates sanctions and blacklists the Houthis as terrorists.
- **Contradictory Approach:** Despite the hardline stance, Trump indicated he is open to a deal with Iran.
- **Regional Diplomatic Shifts:** Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Iran have been improving ties, which **contradicts** Trump's aggressive Iran policy.

### 4. Broader Regional Implications

- **Uncertainty Over the Gaza Ceasefire:** Trump and Netanyahu's stance complicates post-war peace efforts.
- **Arab Rejection of Palestinian Resettlement:** Major Gulf states, including **Saudi Arabia, UAE, Jordan, and Egypt**, oppose Trump's proposal.
- **Potential Gulf-Iran Friction:** Renewed US pressure on Iran could **strain recent diplomatic gains** between Tehran and its Gulf neighbors.

[An asteroid might hit earth. How worried should we be?-The Hindu Science](#)

Geography

Easy Explanation



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A newly discovered asteroid, **2024 YR4**, measuring **40-90 meters wide**, has a **1.6% chance of striking Earth on December 22, 2032**. The asteroid follows a **highly elliptical four-year orbit**, passing between the inner planets and Jupiter. If it impacts, possible sites include the **Pacific Ocean, South America, the Atlantic, Africa, the Arabian Sea, and South Asia**.

Such an event would likely result in a **massive airburst explosion**, similar to the **1908 Tunguska Event**, releasing energy **500 times greater than the Hiroshima bomb**, causing city-level destruction or even triggering tsunamis if it lands near a coastline. However, experts believe that with further observations, **the impact probability will likely decrease to zero**, as happened with the asteroid Apophis in 2004.

### Key Takeaways

- **Current Risk:** 2024 YR4 has a **1.6% chance** of hitting Earth, making it a monitored threat.
- **Size & Potential Impact:** The asteroid falls into the “**city killer**” category, meaning an explosion over a populated area could destroy an entire city.
- **Possible Impact Zones:** If it strikes, it could hit land or ocean areas spanning from **the Pacific to South Asia**.
- **Similar Past Events:** The **Tunguska Event (1908)**, which flattened **80 million trees over 2,000 sq. km**, is the best comparison.
- **Scientific Optimism:** Experts believe that **further tracking will likely rule out an impact**, similar to Apophis (2004).
- **Time for Preparation:** Even if the asteroid remains a threat, **we have eight years to develop countermeasures**, such as deflection missions.

### [What is the SC directive on sacred groves?-The Hindu Text and Context](#)

Environment

### Easy Explanation

On **December 18, 2024**, the Supreme Court directed the **Rajasthan Forest Department** to **map and classify all sacred groves as ‘forests’ and notify them as ‘community reserves’** under the Wildlife Protection Act (WLPA) 1972. This ruling **transfers control of sacred groves from local communities to the Forest Department**, overriding the **Forest Rights Act (FRA) 2006**, which recognizes community rights over forest resources.

The case originated from **T.N. Godavarman v. Union of India**, where the SC defined ‘forest land’ broadly, covering both recorded forests and areas that meet ecological criteria. Rajasthan’s 2004 expert report only recognized large sacred groves as forests, but the SC’s **Central Empowered Committee (CEC)** rejected this, leading to the **2024 order mandating full mapping and protection**.

Sacred groves, also called ‘**orans**’ in Rajasthan, are **traditionally conserved by local communities** through cultural and religious practices. They serve as biodiversity hotspots, prevent natural disasters, and play a key role in ecological balance. The **WLPA’s ‘community reserve’ status** places them under government management, conflicting with the **FRA’s community-led governance system**.



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The Supreme Court also directed the **Union Environment Ministry** to **map sacred groves nationwide** and **create a management policy**. However, the shift in control to the **Forest Department** may threaten the **autonomy of communities** and their traditional conservation practices.

### Key Takeaways

- **SC Directive:** Sacred groves in Rajasthan must be mapped, classified as 'forests,' and designated as 'community reserves' under the **Wildlife Protection Act (WLPA) 1972**.
- **Governance Shift:** The ruling **transfers sacred grove control from local communities to the Forest Department**, reducing community-led conservation.
- **Conflict with Forest Rights Act (FRA) 2006:** The **FRA prioritizes community governance**, while the SC order **places sacred groves under government management**, potentially **undermining customary practices**.
- **Traditional Conservation Methods:** Sacred groves are **protected through religious beliefs, taboos, and cultural practices**, which prevent over-extraction and support biodiversity.
- **Significance of Sacred Groves:** They **stabilize ecosystems, prevent natural disasters, and serve as sources of medicinal plants and local water systems**.
- **Precedent from T.N. Godavarman Case:** The Supreme Court's **broad definition of 'forest land'** justifies bringing sacred groves under government control, despite prior recognition of community rights.
- **Potential National Policy Change:** The SC also **recommended mapping all sacred groves in India** and creating a unified policy for their governance.

[A Budget that is mostly good but with one wrong move-The Hindu Editorial](#)

Economy

### Easy Explanation

The **Union Budget for 2025-26** is largely positive, with **reasonable GDP growth projections** (10.1% nominal growth) and a **substantial increase in capital expenditure** (₹1.03 lakh crore more than the previous year's revised estimate). The **focus on accelerating growth and aiming for developed-country status** is welcomed, with measures such as **tax relief for the middle class**, which could potentially boost demand depending on consumption habits.

However, concerns arise from the **downward trend in tax revenue growth** over the past few years, particularly in **Goods and Services Tax (GST)**, with growth rates falling from **12.7% in 2023-24 to 10.9% in 2025-26**. While the shift from indirect to direct taxes (with a larger share in direct taxes) is seen as positive, **personal income tax growth** is also slowing down, partly due to income tax concessions.

**Government expenditure** is projected to grow at a slower rate (7.6%) than nominal GDP (10.1%), with an **increased focus on capital expenditure**, which is positive for long-term growth. However, **India's lag in AI infrastructure investment** compared to China and the U.S. is a notable concern, and there is a call for more **research and development support** for Indian tech companies.



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A significant flaw in the budget is the **discontinuation of fiscal deficit targets** as a key fiscal health indicator, shifting focus to the **debt-to-GDP ratio**, which is seen as a **less transparent and more ambiguous** measure. The budget's **fiscal discipline** could be compromised by this change, making it difficult for **private investment** to grow due to the government's larger claim on available resources.

### Key Takeaways

1. **Positive Growth Projections:** The budget sets a **realistic nominal GDP growth projection** of **10.1%**, with **capital expenditure** increasing by ₹1.03 lakh crore over 2024-25, signaling a push for development.
2. **Tax Revenue Trends:** **Tax revenue growth** has been declining, with **GST growth** falling to **10.9%** in 2025-26. Direct taxes now form a larger share, which is a positive shift, but **personal income tax growth** is slowing.
3. **Capital Expenditure Focus:** The government is **prioritizing capital expenditure**, with its share in total expenditure growing steadily. This is crucial for long-term infrastructure and development.
4. **Concerns Over AI Infrastructure:** India has fallen behind China and the U.S. in **AI infrastructure investment**, and there are calls to push Indian companies for **research and development** through **tax incentives**.
5. **Fiscal Deficit Shift:** The **discontinuation of specific fiscal deficit targets** in favor of the **debt-to-GDP ratio** is criticized for lacking **transparency** and clarity, which could affect **private investment**.
6. **Risk of Private Investment Crowding:** A larger government claim on **investible resources** could limit **private investment**, undermining growth and innovation in the economy.

7th February 2025

[US decision on G20: message for ICJ, diplomacy test for India-Indian Express Explained](#)

International relations

### Easy Explanation

The U.S. has escalated tensions with South Africa over its ICJ case against Israel, with Secretary of State Marco Rubio refusing to attend the G20 foreign ministers' meet in Johannesburg. The U.S. position reflects broader American skepticism toward the ICJ and ICC, particularly in the wake of South Africa's leadership in supporting Palestinian rights. The situation raises concerns over the future of the G20, especially with the possibility of a second Trump administration that may deprioritize multilateral diplomacy in favor of an "America First" approach. For India, the evolving dynamics present a diplomatic challenge as it balances its leadership in the Global South with its strategic partnership with the U.S.

### Key Takeaways:

1. **US-South Africa Tensions:** Rubio's boycott of the G20 foreign ministers' meeting stems from South Africa's ICJ case against Israel, escalating diplomatic friction.



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2. **US Opposition to the ICJ/ICC:** The Trump administration had imposed sanctions on the ICC, and a potential Trump 2.0 presidency could further weaken international legal institutions.
3. **G20's Uncertain Future:** The U.S.'s possible withdrawal or reduced participation in G20 under Trump could diminish the grouping's influence and shift power toward China and Russia.
4. **India's Diplomatic Challenge:** India has leveraged the G20 to strengthen its leadership in the Global South, but an isolationist U.S. approach under Trump could weaken this position.
5. **Potential Negotiations:** Rubio's statement may be a bargaining tool to push South Africa toward a more conciliatory stance in exchange for U.S. goodwill, reducing negative fallout for G20 and India.
6. **Impact on India's Global South Role:** A less engaged U.S. could complicate India's role as a bridge between the Global North and South, particularly if the U.S. adopts a more transactional approach to diplomacy.

### [India's repositioning on climate-Indian Express Explained](#)

Environment

#### Easy Explanation

India has recently shifted its climate policy stance, prioritizing economic growth and adaptation over emission reductions. This shift is driven by slow global mitigation efforts, unmet financial commitments by developed countries, and reduced international focus on climate action due to geopolitical tensions. India argues that rapid development is the best defense against climate change and is seeking flexibility in its climate actions. While continuing to pursue low-carbon pathways, India insists on determining its own energy transition strategy without external pressure. Indigenous technological advancements, including small modular nuclear reactors (SMRs), are crucial for achieving clean energy goals and reducing dependence on foreign supply chains.

#### Key Takeaways:

1. **Shift in India's Climate Approach:** India is moving away from an emissions-reduction-focused strategy to prioritizing adaptation and economic growth.
2. **Global Mitigation Failure:** Developed nations have failed to meet emission targets, making mitigation efforts less attractive for developing countries like India.
3. **Climate Action Deprioritized:** Geopolitical crises, including wars and technology conflicts, have diverted attention from climate commitments.
4. **Reduced Pressure on India:** With developed nations making energy choices that prioritize economic interests, India faces less scrutiny over its coal usage.
5. **Balancing Development with Decarbonization:** While focusing on economic growth, India acknowledges the need for a clean energy transition to remain competitive globally.
6. **Indigenous Technological Development:** To maintain energy independence, India is pushing for advancements in nuclear energy, including SMRs, alongside aggressive expansion in renewables like solar, wind, and hydrogen.



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## [HOW THE CLIMATE CRISIS IS INTENSIFYING MARINE HEATWAVES-Indian Express Explained](#)

Environment

### Easy Explanation

Marine heatwaves (MHWs) are becoming more frequent, intense, and prolonged due to climate change, severely impacting marine ecosystems. The recent MHWs off the coast of Western Australia, which led to the mass death of over 30,000 fish, were found to be up to 100 times more likely due to climate change, according to Climate Central. These heatwaves began in September 2024 and continue to persist, making them among the worst recorded in the region's history.

MHWs occur when sea surface temperatures (SST) rise 3-4°C above average for at least five days. Over the past decade, their frequency has increased by 50%, with longer durations and greater severity. Oceans have absorbed 90% of excess heat from global warming, leading to a 0.9°C rise in SST since the pre-industrial era. As global temperatures approach 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, MHWs are expected to become 16 times more frequent, and with 2°C warming, their frequency could increase by a factor of 23.

The ecological consequences of MHWs are dire. The 2010-11 MHWs in Western Australia led to widespread fish kills, destruction of kelp forests, and coral bleaching, which threatens entire marine food chains. Coral reefs, vital for marine biodiversity, become highly vulnerable to disease and collapse under prolonged heat stress. The intensification of MHWs across the world poses a major threat to marine biodiversity, fisheries, and coastal livelihoods, making climate action and ocean conservation more urgent than ever.

### Key Takeaways:

1. **Marine Heatwaves Defined:** MHWs occur when sea surface temperatures rise 3-4°C above average for at least five days, lasting weeks to years.
2. **Climate Change Connection:** Rising global temperatures have caused a 0.9°C increase in ocean temperatures since the pre-industrial era, intensifying MHWs.
3. **Increased Frequency & Severity:** MHWs have increased by 50% in the last decade and are projected to become 16 to 23 times more frequent with further warming.
4. **Ecological Devastation:** MHWs contribute to mass fish deaths, destruction of kelp forests, and widespread coral bleaching, disrupting marine ecosystems.
5. **Global Impact:** The phenomenon is not limited to Western Australia—MHWs are worsening worldwide, threatening biodiversity and oceanic food chains.

## [Tax cut will have multiplier effects-Indian Express Editorial](#)

Economy

### Easy Explanation

The **Budget 2025** has introduced a **personal income tax (PIT) cut**, effectively transferring **₹1 lakh crore** to India's **urban middle class**. The economic impact of this measure can be analyzed through the



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**consumption multiplier effect**, which estimates how extra disposable income leads to multiple rounds of spending and economic growth.

### Multiplier Concept:

- **Marginal Propensity to Consume (MPC):** The portion of extra income spent rather than saved.
- **Marginal Propensity to Save (MPS):** The portion of extra income saved.
- The **consumption multiplier** is calculated as  $1/\text{MPS}$ . Since the urban middle class in India has an estimated **MPS of 0.2**, the **multiplier effect is 5**.
- This means that the **₹1 lakh crore tax cut** could potentially generate **₹5 lakh crore** in additional consumption.

### Impact on Consumption & GDP:

- **Total real consumption:** ₹104 lakh crore
- **Real GDP:** ₹185 lakh crore
- With a **₹5 lakh crore increase in consumption**, estimated growth rates are:
  - **Consumption growth:** 4.8%
  - **GDP growth:** 2.7%
  - Even with a conservative multiplier of **3.3 (MPS = 0.30)**, growth would still be **3.2% in consumption and 1.8% in GDP**.
  - Adding this to the **baseline forecasts of 7.2% consumption growth and 6.3% GDP growth**, the overall estimated growth is:
    - **10% consumption growth**
    - **8% GDP growth**

### Key Takeaways:

1. **Boost to Urban Middle-Class Spending** – The PIT cut increases **disposable income**, driving higher spending on **electronics, consumer durables, healthcare, and education**.
2. **Multiplier Effect on Growth** – Consumption spending will have a **multiplier effect**, leading to a **potential ₹5 lakh crore increase in overall consumption**.
3. **Encouragement for Private Investment** – The rising demand will **encourage firms to invest in new projects**, increasing hiring and further stimulating growth.
4. **Limited Risks of Crowding Out** – Since India's **fiscal deficit (4.4% of GDP)** is under control, the tax cut is unlikely to significantly **increase borrowing costs or crowd out private investment**.
5. **Need for Complementary Monetary Policy** – The RBI should adopt an easy monetary policy to encourage private investment and long-term output growth.
6. **Short-Term vs. Long-Term Stimulus** – The PIT cut is a **short-term boost**, whereas **public investment (infrastructure, capex)** provides long-term productivity gains.

[Only a few will benefit-Indian Express Editorial](#)

Economy

### Easy Explanation



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The **2025-26 Budget** introduced significant **income tax concessions** targeting **urban, salaried, tax-paying middle-class individuals**. The key measure includes **making incomes up to ₹12 lakh tax-free** and lowering tax rates up to ₹24 lakh under the **new tax regime**, leading to a claimed **revenue sacrifice of ₹1 lakh crore**. However, a deeper analysis suggests that these tax benefits will have **limited impact** on India's overall economy and consumption growth.

## Key Tax Measures & Their Impact

- **Higher Tax-Free Income Limits:**
  - **No tax on income up to ₹12 lakh** (after rebate).
  - **30% tax rate now applies only above ₹24 lakh**, reducing the tax burden for those earning between ₹8 lakh to ₹24 lakh.
  - Claimed **tax savings** range from ₹30,000 to ₹1.10 lakh per taxpayer.
- **But the Benefits Are Limited:**
  - The **concessions apply only under the new tax regime**, which excludes key deductions (housing loan interest, medical insurance, etc.).
  - **Only 50 lakh taxpayers (out of 3 crore using the old regime) are expected to benefit**, meaning that **most middle-class taxpayers are left out**.
  - The **real fiscal impact may be only ₹25,000 crore**, much lower than the claimed ₹1 lakh crore loss.

## Broader Economic Context

- **Falling Real Incomes:**
  - **Real wages have declined between 2017-18 and 2022-23:**
    - **Salaried men:** ₹12,665 → ₹11,858 per month.
    - **Salaried women:** ₹10,116 → ₹8,855 per month.
    - **Self-employed men:** ₹9,454 → ₹8,591 per month.
    - **Self-employed women:** ₹4,348 → ₹2,950 per month.
  - **Declining real earnings** mean that tax relief does **not** address the core issue of weak purchasing power.
- **Limited Impact on Consumption:**
  - Private **final consumption expenditure** in 2024-25 is estimated at ₹200.30 lakh crore.
  - Even assuming ₹1 lakh crore in **additional disposable income**, it is **too small (0.5% of total spending)** to significantly boost consumption.
  - **Only a small urban segment benefits**, leaving **most workers and middle-class households with no impact**.
- **Tax Revenue Contradictions:**
  - **Personal income tax revenue is projected to increase by 21.15% in 2025-26** (₹14.38 lakh crore), far above the **11.2% growth in gross tax revenue**.
  - This contradicts the claim that the government is making a ₹1 lakh crore sacrifice—**real tax collections are actually increasing**.

## Key Takeaways



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1. **Limited Beneficiaries:** Only **50 lakh taxpayers (out of 3 crore using the old tax regime)** will gain significantly from the tax cuts.
2. **Exclusion of Lower-Income Groups:** Most middle-class and low-income workers **do not earn enough to pay income tax**, so the concessions **do not help them**.
3. **Falling Real Wages:** The **core problem** is the decline in **real earnings**, which **cannot be fixed through tax cuts**.
4. **Minimal Effect on Consumption:** The **increase in disposable income is too small** (relative to total consumption) to **drive a major spending boost**.
5. **Revenue Loss Is Overstated:** The government's tax revenue estimates **show higher growth**, contradicting the claim of a **₹1 lakh crore sacrifice**.

## Conclusion

While the **urban higher-income middle class** benefits from tax relief, the **majority of Indians will see no impact**. The **declining real incomes of workers and self-employed individuals** remain a major challenge, which **tax cuts alone cannot resolve**. For sustainable economic growth, policies should **focus on wage growth, employment generation, and broader structural reforms** beyond **income tax concessions**.

### [Under the scanner: Adani's project in Sri Lanka-The Hindu Text and Context](#)

International relations

#### Easy Explanation

Sri Lanka's Adani Green Energy wind power project in Mannar and Pooneryn is facing controversy over transparency, environmental concerns, and political opposition. Initially approved without competitive bidding in 2022, the \$442 million project aims to add 350 MW to Sri Lanka's grid by 2025.

#### Key Issues:

1. **Political Controversy:**
  - Sri Lanka's President Anura Kumara Dissanayake had promised to review the "corrupt" project before elections.
  - The government now seeks to renegotiate a lower tariff rate (below six cents per kWh, down from 8.26 cents).
  - The project was initially approved under President Gotabaya Rajapaksa without a tender process, raising concerns of political favoritism.
  - The former Ceylon Electricity Board (CEB) Chairman M.M.C. Fernando resigned after alleging that Indian PM Narendra Modi had pressured Sri Lanka to approve the project.
2. **Environmental Concerns:**
  - The project site in Mannar falls along the **Central Asian Flyway**, a crucial migratory route for birds.
  - Local fishermen and environmentalists fear the wind power plant could disrupt the region's ecology and marine-dependent livelihoods.



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- Multiple legal petitions have been filed against the project, with a Supreme Court hearing scheduled for March 2025.

### 3. Economic and Strategic Implications:

- Sri Lanka, recovering from a severe economic crisis, sees foreign investments like Adani's as vital.
- Despite allegations of corruption against Adani (e.g., Hindenburg Report in 2023), Sri Lankan authorities previously viewed the project as a government-to-government deal with India.
- Sri Lanka is caught between economic necessity and maintaining transparency in foreign investments.

### Current Status:

- While the project has not been canceled, its pricing and contractual terms are under review.
- The government aims to balance economic recovery, energy security, and environmental protection while addressing concerns over transparency in foreign investments.

### Key takeaways

**Project Under Review:** Sri Lanka's government is reviewing Adani Green Energy's \$442 million wind power project but has not canceled it.

**Tariff Renegotiation:** The government seeks to lower the agreed tariff from **8.26 cents per kWh to below 6 cents**.

**Lack of Transparency:** The project was approved in **2022 without a competitive bidding process**, raising concerns over favoritism.

### Political Controversy:

- President **Anura Kumara Dissanayake** previously pledged to cancel the "corrupt" project.
- Former CEB Chairman claimed **Indian PM Modi pressured Sri Lanka** to approve the deal.

### Environmental Concerns:

- The project **threatens the Central Asian Flyway**, a crucial migratory route for birds.
- Local **fishermen fear damage to livelihoods**.
- **Legal and Public Opposition:** Multiple petitions challenge the project, with a **Supreme Court hearing in March 2025**.

### Economic and Strategic Impact:

- Sri Lanka, recovering from an economic crisis, sees **foreign investments as crucial**.
- The project is part of **India-Sri Lanka energy cooperation**, despite global scrutiny of Adani's business practices.

**Current Status:** The project **remains in limbo**, with environmental, political, and economic factors influencing its future.



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## On the appointment of ad-hoc judges to High Courts-The Hindu Text and Context

Polity

### Easy Explanation

To address the backlog of **62 lakh pending cases** in High Courts, the Supreme Court has allowed the appointment of **retired judges on an ad-hoc basis** to hear **criminal appeals**. This decision **relaxes the 2021 Lok Prahari ruling**, which restricted such appointments to High Courts with **over 20% judicial vacancies**.

Under **Article 224-A**, retired judges can be appointed with **Presidential approval** and must serve **alongside a sitting judge**. The number of ad-hoc judges **cannot exceed 10%** of a High Court's sanctioned strength.

The Court identified "**trigger points**" for ad-hoc appointments, including **high vacancies, prolonged case pendency, and low case disposal rates**. Historically, such appointments have been rare, with only **three documented instances** (1972, 1982, and 2007).

This move is expected to **accelerate criminal justice**, reduce delays, and ease the burden on High Courts, though it is a **temporary measure** and does not replace the need for **permanent judicial appointments**.

### Key takeaways

**New Rule for Ad-Hoc Judges:** The Supreme Court has allowed **High Courts to appoint retired judges on an ad-hoc basis** to exclusively hear **criminal appeals**, relaxing earlier restrictions.

**Reason for the Decision:** India's **High Courts have 62 lakh pending cases**, including **18.2 lakh criminal cases** (as of January 25, 2025). This move aims to **reduce the backlog of criminal appeals**.

**Change in Lok Prahari (2021) Rule:** Previously, ad-hoc judges could only be appointed **if judicial vacancies exceeded 20%** of sanctioned strength. This restriction has now been **removed**.

### Eligibility & Conditions:

- Only **retired High Court judges** can be appointed.
- They must serve **alongside a sitting judge** on a Bench.
- The **President of India's approval** is required.
- The number of ad-hoc judges **cannot exceed 10%** of a High Court's sanctioned strength (2-5 judges per High Court).

**Trigger Points for Appointments:** Ad-hoc judges can be appointed when:

- **Vacancies exceed 20%, OR**
- **Cases in a specific category have been pending for 5+ years, OR**
- **10% of cases in the High Court are over 5 years old, OR**
- **Case disposal rate is lower than new case filings.**

**Limited Past Use:** There have been only **three instances** of ad-hoc judicial appointments—in 1972 (Madhya Pradesh HC), 1982 (Madras HC), and 2007 (Allahabad HC).



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**Impact of the Decision:** This move aims to **speed up criminal justice**, reduce **delays in appeals**, and provide **temporary relief** to overburdened High Courts. However, it does not replace the need for **permanent judicial appointments**.

### [Should India build a sovereign, foundational AI model?-The Hindu Editorial](#)

Science and technology

#### Easy Explanation

The debate over whether India should invest in **building a sovereign foundational AI model** revolves around concerns of **national pride, sovereignty, economic feasibility, and technological capability**. OpenAI CEO Sam Altman's comments in 2023 on the high costs of training foundational AI models sparked discussions on whether India should commit resources to this endeavor.

Experts **Pranesh Prakash and Tanuj Bhojwani** highlight that while India should **develop expertise in AI**, the need for a **sovereign AI model** is debatable. Instead of focusing solely on **sovereignty**, India should prioritize **building applications on top of existing models**, leveraging **open-source AI**, and addressing **fundamental challenges in research, infrastructure, and investment**.

Key challenges include **high costs** (hundreds of millions of dollars), **lack of indigenous chip manufacturing** (dependency on U.S. and Taiwan for GPUs), and **a limited domestic AI market**. Government initiatives like the **IndiaAI Mission** and **GPU subsidies** are positive steps, but experts argue that investments should be **strategically focused** on niche AI applications such as **Indic language models** rather than competing with global giants like **OpenAI and DeepSeek**.

#### Key Takeaways:

1. **Sovereignty vs. Feasibility** – India does not need to build its own AI model solely for sovereignty, as open-source alternatives exist.
2. **Infrastructure Gaps** – India lacks **high-end chip manufacturing**, which is crucial for AI model training.
3. **Economic Considerations** – Training an AI model costs **hundreds of millions of dollars**, and the Indian market may not justify the investment.
4. **Focus on AI Applications** – Instead of creating a foundational model, India should invest in **AI applications** tailored to local needs.
5. **Government Initiatives** – Programs like **IndiaAI Mission's GPU subsidies** can support AI startups but must be **wisely allocated** to maximize impact.
6. **Need for Better R&D** – India must **enhance AI research, innovation, and funding** to create a sustainable AI ecosystem.

#### Conclusion:

India should **strategically allocate resources** toward **AI applications in local languages, governance, and enterprise solutions** rather than attempting to build a **foundational AI model from scratch**. Strengthening **AI infrastructure, research, and private investments** will be more beneficial in the long run.



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# 8th February 2025

## Push for spending and investment: Why RBI has cut the repo rate-Indian Express Explained

Economy

### Easy Explanation

The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has cut the **repo rate by 25 basis points** to **6.25%**, its first reduction in nearly five years. This move aims to **boost economic activity** by making borrowing cheaper, encouraging **spending, investment, and job creation**. With inflation at **5.2% (Dec 2024)**, within the **4% ± 2%** target, RBI sees room for monetary easing.

The cut will lower **loan interest rates**, reducing **EMIs on home and personal loans**. Businesses will benefit from **cheaper credit**, fostering investment. However, lower rates may **raise inflation** and **reduce savings returns**.

India's **GDP growth forecast for FY 2024-25 is 6.6%**, revised from **7.2%**, while **2025-26 is projected at 6.7%**. Inflation is expected to **moderate to 4.5%**. However, the **rupee's depreciation to ₹87 per USD** raises concerns. While the cut supports growth, **managing inflation and financial stability** remains crucial.

### Key Takeaways

#### Repo Rate Cut:

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) reduced the **repo rate by 25 basis points (bps)** to **6.25%** from **6.50%**.
- This is the first repo rate cut in nearly five years.

#### Reason for the Rate Cut:

- To **stimulate economic activity** by making borrowing cheaper for individuals and businesses.
- Encourages **spending and investment**, leading to potential job creation and growth.
- Inflation is within RBI's target range (**4% ± 2%**), allowing room for an accommodative policy.
- Aligns with **global monetary easing trends**.

#### Impact of the Rate Cut:

- **Lower borrowing costs** for individuals and businesses (EMIs on home & personal loans will reduce).
- **External Benchmark Lending Rates (EBLR)** and **MCLR-linked loan rates** will decrease.
- May result in **higher inflation** due to increased money supply and spending.
- Interest earned on savings may decline, discouraging savings.

#### GDP Growth & Inflation Projections:

- **GDP Growth Projections:**



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- FY 2024-25: **6.6%** (earlier 7.2%)
- FY 2025-26: **6.7%**
- **Inflation Projections:**
  - December 2024: **5.2%**
  - Expected to decline to **4.5% in the next few months**
  - RBI projects **4.2% inflation for 2025-26**

### Concerns & Challenges:

- The **rupee has weakened to ₹87 per USD**, raising concerns over inflation sustainability.
- While **headline inflation is moderating**, long-term stability is uncertain.
- **Global factors**, such as softening edible oil prices, may help ease inflation pressures.

### [Budget, beyond the tax break-Indian Express Explained](#)

#### Economy

#### Easy Explanation

The **Union Budget 2025-26** has introduced a **historic ₹1 lakh crore income tax relief**, aimed at **boosting consumption and pushing GDP growth above 6%**. Lower taxes leave consumers with more disposable income, potentially driving economic activity. However, despite this tax cut and an increase in capital expenditure, research suggests that the **fiscal impulse of the Budget may be neutral or even negative**, indicating limited direct impact on growth.

Over the past decade, while India's **nominal GDP grew at 10% annually**, **government expenditure expanded at 11.8%**, contradicting the government's "**Minimum Government, Maximum Governance**" claim. However, allocations to **education (5.2%) and health (1.7% of total expenditure)** have remained **chronically underfunded**. Meanwhile, corporate profits have **soared by 18% annually**, highlighting economic disparity.

The fiscal deficit has increased to **4.8% of GDP**, exceeding the recommended 3% limit. The budget **shrinks India's tax base**, raising concerns about long-term **fiscal sustainability and equitable growth**.

#### Key Takeaways: Budget 2025-26

- **₹1 Lakh Crore Tax Relief:** The income tax cut aims to boost **consumption and GDP growth** beyond 6%.
- **Neutral/Negative Fiscal Impulse:** Despite tax cuts and higher capital spending, research (HSBC, Nomura) suggests a **limited impact on growth**.
- **Mismatch in Growth Rates:** While **nominal GDP grew at 10% annually**, government expenditure increased at **11.8%**, contradicting the "**Minimum Government, Maximum Governance**" claim.
- **Underfunded Critical Sectors:** Education spending grew at **5.2% annually**, shrinking from **4% to 2.2% of the Budget**, while **health allocation remains at just 1.7%**.
- **Corporate Profits vs. Public Welfare:** Corporate profits surged **18% annually**, yet essential public sectors face **chronic underfunding**.



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- **Rising Fiscal Deficit:** The deficit increased to **4.8% of GDP**, exceeding the **3% fiscal prudence norm**.
- **Shrinking Tax Base:** The tax cuts primarily benefit higher earners, potentially reducing India's **long-term tax revenue** and equity in economic growth.

### [What issues will the SC consider in the TN govt-Governor dispute case?-Indian Express Explained](#)

Polity

#### Easy Explanation

The Supreme Court is hearing the Tamil Nadu government's case against Governor RN Ravi over **delays in granting assent to Bills** passed by the state legislature. The case revolves around **Article 200** of the Constitution, which mandates that the Governor must either approve, reject, or refer a Bill to the President **"as soon as possible."** Tamil Nadu argues that indefinite delays **undermine democracy** and disrupt governance. The case is significant as similar disputes have arisen in other opposition-ruled states, such as **Kerala, Punjab, and Telangana**.

The key legal debate includes whether a Governor can **withhold assent multiple times**, the scope of **Presidential referrals**, and the **constitutional validity of a "pocket veto"** (indefinite delay). Past Supreme Court rulings have emphasized that **Governors are bound by the aid and advice of the state government**. The verdict will set a **precedent for defining the Governor's role in legislative processes**.

#### Key Takeaways

1. **Governor's Role in Lawmaking:** The Governor must act on Bills **within a reasonable timeframe** under Article 200.
2. **Limits of Withholding Assent:** The SC will decide if a Governor can **reject a Bill a second time** after it is re-enacted.
3. **Presidential Referral:** The court will examine whether the Governor can refer **any Bill** to the President or only those affecting High Court powers.
4. **Validity of Pocket Veto:** The SC will determine if Governors can **indefinitely delay** their decision on Bills.
5. **Time Frame for Assent:** The SC has previously ruled that Governors **cannot hold Bills indefinitely**, reinforcing the urgency of timely action.

### [India's voice must resonate in global AI conversations-The Hindu Editorial](#)

Science and technology

#### Easy Explanation

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is reshaping industries and geopolitics, requiring a unified global governance approach. India, one of the world's fastest adopters of AI, **lacks a national AI safety institute** and is absent from key international discussions, including the **International Network of AI Safety Institutes** launched in the U.S. in 2024.



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With AI transcending national borders, India must **actively participate in setting global AI safety standards** to ensure security, ethics, and competitiveness. Geopolitical factors, such as U.S. export controls on advanced AI technology, could impact India's access to cutting-edge AI tools, making international collaboration even more crucial.

India's **Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) successes**, such as Aadhaar and UPI, show its capability in large-scale tech implementation. By engaging in AI safety initiatives, India can **position itself as a global leader in AI governance**, securing its interests while fostering innovation and investment. The **time to act is now**, as AI becomes central to economic and geopolitical strategies.

### Key Takeaways

1. **AI Risks and Governance** – AI's borderless nature requires international cooperation to ensure safety, accountability, and innovation.
2. **India's Absence in Global AI Regulation** – Despite being a major AI adopter, India has not joined the **International Network of AI Safety Institutes**.
3. **National AI Safety Framework Needed** – India must establish a national AI safety institute to **participate in global AI policymaking**.
4. **Geopolitical Risks** – U.S. export controls on AI technology could **limit India's access to advanced AI tools**, necessitating proactive engagement in global forums.
5. **Leverage India's Strengths** – India's experience with **Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)** positions it to lead in AI governance and shape international AI regulations.
6. **Strategic Necessity** – Without active participation, India risks being left out of key **global AI policy decisions** that could shape its future in AI-driven industries.

### [Technology and the challenge of equitable education-The Hindu Editorial](#)

#### Sociology

#### Easy Explanation

India has witnessed multiple technological revolutions—from computers and the internet to mobile devices and now artificial intelligence (AI). While these advancements have **created new educational possibilities**, they have **not significantly improved learning outcomes for the underprivileged**. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated digital adoption, particularly in rural areas, where smartphone ownership rose sharply.

Despite growing **hardware accessibility and language barriers being removed through AI-driven translation tools**, equitable education remains a challenge. A significant proportion of **mothers remain unschooled or undereducated**, limiting their ability to support their children's learning. A structured **digital learning ecosystem**, potentially using **community-based learning hubs or AI-powered guidance systems**, could address these gaps.

However, **profit-driven technological innovations** often bypass underprivileged groups. India must **develop a strategic roadmap** to ensure **technology benefits those who need it most**, possibly through **philanthropic initiatives and public policy interventions**.



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## Key Takeaways

1. **Smartphone penetration in rural India is growing** – Over **84% of rural households** now have smartphones, reducing hardware constraints.
2. **Digital learning tools exist but remain underutilized** – AI-driven **language translation and dictation tools** can enable learning in local languages.
3. **Parental education is critical** – **40% of mothers** have little or no formal education, affecting children's learning outcomes. Investing in their education could yield **multigenerational benefits**.
4. **Education access is not the same as attendance** – Despite school availability, **attendance remains inconsistent**, creating fragmented learning experiences.
5. **Need for community-based digital learning models** – Broadcasting structured lessons in villages (as done during the pandemic in Maharashtra) could **enable collective learning**.
6. **Profit-driven tech limits accessibility** – **For-profit models** dominate ed-tech, making **philanthropy and government intervention** necessary for widespread impact.
7. **India needs a digital education roadmap** – A **long-term strategy** should focus on **leveraging AI and digital tools** to bridge educational inequities.

## 9th February 2025

[What will be the impact of Trump's trade war?: TH FAQ](#)

International Relations

### Easy Explanation

U.S. President Donald Trump has taken aggressive action early in his second term by imposing steep tariffs on Canada, Mexico, and China. These tariffs, which include a 25% levy on Canadian and Mexican goods and a 10% tax on energy products from Canada and Chinese imports, are part of his strategy to curb illegal immigration, combat drug trafficking, and encourage American companies to manufacture domestically. However, these measures have rattled global financial markets, with major stock indices witnessing sharp declines.

While Mexico and Canada initially resisted, they eventually agreed to take stronger measures to curb migration and drug smuggling in exchange for a temporary pause on tariffs. Meanwhile, China has responded by imposing its own tariffs on U.S. goods, launching an antitrust probe into American tech giants, and restricting exports of critical minerals.

The most concerning aspect of this tariff policy is that Trump is using trade measures to address issues like border security and drug control, rather than focusing on correcting trade imbalances. This move sets a precedent where tariffs could be used as political weapons, leading to long-term instability in global trade.

Many experts warn that these tariffs could backfire by increasing the cost of imported goods in the U.S., causing inflation and hurting American consumers. Additionally, if other countries respond with counter-tariffs, a full-blown trade war could emerge, negatively affecting global economic growth.



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Despite the current tensions, both the U.S. and China have avoided extreme retaliatory actions, leaving room for possible negotiations between Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping. However, Trump has signaled that he may extend similar tariff actions to the European Union and other major U.S. trading partners, increasing concerns that the global economy could face severe disruptions.

## Key Takeaways

### 1. Trump's Tariffs Shake Global Markets

- The U.S. imposed a **25% tariff** on Canadian and Mexican goods and a **10% tariff** on Canadian energy products and various Chinese goods.
- The announcement caused panic in financial markets, particularly in Asia, due to fears of an escalating trade war.
- Trump claims these tariffs will **reduce illegal immigration and drug trafficking** while encouraging companies to create jobs in the U.S.

### 2. Canada and Mexico Forced to Make Concessions

- Mexico agreed to **deploy 10,000 National Guard troops** to its northern border to prevent illegal crossings into the U.S.
- Canada pledged to **appoint a "fentanyl czar"** and establish a **U.S.-Canada joint task force** to fight organized crime and drug smuggling.
- As a result, Trump temporarily **paused tariffs on Canada and Mexico for 30 days** to allow further discussions.

### 3. China Responds with Countermeasures

- **China imposed 15% tariffs** on U.S. coal, crude oil, liquefied natural gas, agricultural machinery, and certain automobiles.
- Beijing **launched an antitrust investigation into Google** and placed restrictions on several major U.S. companies.
- China also **limited exports of critical minerals**, which could impact high-tech industries that rely on these materials.

### 4. Economic Risks: Inflation and a Global Trade War

- Tariffs will **increase costs for American consumers**, making imported goods more expensive.
- U.S. businesses relying on foreign materials and components will **face higher production costs**, which may lead to **job losses or price hikes**.
- If other countries retaliate, a **chain reaction of tariffs** could slow down global trade and harm economic growth.
- Trump's **broad justification for tariffs** (illegal immigration and drugs) sets a **dangerous precedent**, where trade policies could be used as political tools rather than economic measures.

### 5. Future Uncertainty: Will Trump Expand Tariffs?



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- Trump has hinted that **similar tariffs may be imposed on the European Union and other U.S. trading partners**.
- If expanded, these measures could **trigger further economic retaliation from other countries**, worsening global trade tensions.
- The U.S. and China have left room for potential **negotiations**, but Trump's aggressive stance suggests further conflicts could arise.

### [Are freebies and welfare schemes different?: TH FAQ](#)

#### Polity

#### Easy Explanation:

In the Delhi Assembly elections, all major political parties—BJP, AAP, and Congress—offered subsidies and cash benefits to attract voters. These included cash allowances for women, cheaper LPG cylinders, and free electricity. This has reignited the debate on whether such benefits are essential welfare measures or just political tactics to win elections.

The problem lies in the lack of a clear definition of what constitutes a "freebie." Some argue that these promises are a form of bribery that influences voter decisions, while others believe they are necessary welfare measures that improve people's quality of life. Programs like subsidized transport, mid-day meals, and direct cash transfers have been shown to help marginalized communities, but excessive subsidies can lead to financial strain on state governments.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has warned that state governments are spending too much on freebies, increasing their debt burden. In Delhi, the revenue surplus has been declining sharply due to rising subsidy costs, and experts predict that this could lead to higher taxes in the future.

There is also a legal aspect to this debate. The Supreme Court has been asked to examine whether electoral freebies violate the principles of free and fair elections. However, previous rulings have stated that such measures are part of legislative policy and cannot be easily challenged in court. Experts believe that it is up to lawmakers, not judges, to regulate competitive populism.

The key issue remains balancing social welfare with fiscal responsibility. While targeted benefits can help the poor, unchecked political giveaways may hurt long-term economic stability.

## Key Takeaways

### 1. The Freebie Debate in Elections

- In the Delhi elections, all major parties offered **cash benefits and subsidies** to woo voters.
- AAP promised **₹2,100 per month for women**, an extra **₹21,000 for pregnant women**, and **subsidized LPG at ₹500** for poor households.
- BJP countered with **₹2,500 per month for low-income women** and **free electricity via solar energy**.
- Congress also announced its own subsidy programs.



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## 2. Are These Benefits Welfare or Election Bribes?

- There is **no universal definition of a freebie**—some consider them necessary welfare, while others call them election bribes.
- Critics argue that such handouts **influence voter decisions** and create a culture of dependence.
- Supporters claim that benefits like **free transport, mid-day meals, and direct cash transfers** improve the lives of marginalized communities.
- Nobel laureate **Amartya Sen's "capability approach"** suggests that welfare programs enhance human potential, while excessive subsidies can lead to economic inefficiency.

## 3. Economic Impact of Freebies on State Finances

- The **National Food Security Act (2013)** turned many welfare programs into legal entitlements, covering nearly **800 million people**.
- Studies show that **cash transfers to women improve economic independence** and reduce domestic violence.
- However, the **RBI's report on state finances** warns that excessive subsidies are increasing fiscal deficits.
- Delhi's **revenue surplus fell from ₹14,457 crore (2022-23) to ₹3,231 crore (2024-25)**, a **35% decline**, largely due to rising subsidy costs.
- Experts predict that, unless revenue generation increases, **states may be forced to raise taxes or cut essential services**.

## 4. Legal Challenges to Freebies

- A petition in the **Supreme Court (2022)** argued that election freebies violate the principles of **free and fair elections**.
- The Court previously ruled in **S. Subramaniam Balaji vs Govt. of Tamil Nadu (2013)** that welfare spending is a **policy decision** and **not a corrupt practice**.
- The case has not been heard since **November 2023**, leaving the issue unresolved.
- Legal experts believe **regulating election freebies should be a legislative decision**, not a judicial one.

## 5. The Larger Debate: Balancing Welfare and Fiscal Responsibility

- Some welfare programs **empower people and create long-term economic benefits**, while excessive subsidies **strain government budgets**.
- **Smart welfare policies** (such as investing in education, healthcare, and job creation) can improve economic opportunities.
- If **uncontrolled freebies continue**, it may lead to **higher taxes, inflation, and reduced government spending on critical infrastructure**.

[Is private investment expected to rise?: TH FAQ](#)







## Easy Explanation

The Indian government has introduced **tax cuts and lower interest rates** to encourage **consumer spending and private investment**. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has expressed optimism that private investment will pick up in the coming months. She cited anecdotal evidence of **increasing orders for FMCG (Fast Moving Consumer Goods)** as a sign of economic recovery.

However, private investment in India has been declining for more than a **decade**. In the latest quarter, **private investment fell by 1.4%**, even though **public investment by the government grew significantly**.

Private investment is crucial for economic growth as it **creates jobs, improves infrastructure, and boosts productivity**. However, factors such as **weak consumer demand, policy uncertainty, and slow economic reforms** have discouraged businesses from making long-term investments.

To stimulate private investment, the government has made **incomes up to ₹12 lakh tax-free**, hoping that increased disposable income will boost spending. However, historical trends show that **private investment and consumer spending often move in opposite directions**—when people spend more, businesses invest less, and vice versa.

One key issue is **bank credit growth**—the rate at which banks lend money. During the period of high growth (2005-2014), bank credit growth averaged **22%**, but from 2014-2021, it dropped to **9%**, slowing investment.

Ultimately, experts believe that **unfriendly policies and slow economic reforms** are the main reasons why private investors are hesitant. Without **long-term policy certainty and better business conditions**, private investment is unlikely to increase significantly.

## Key Takeaways

### 1. Government Measures to Boost Investment

- The government has provided **tax breaks and interest rate cuts** to encourage private investment.
- Incomes up to **₹12 lakh are now tax-free** to increase consumer spending.
- Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman believes there are early signs of recovery, with rising **FMCG orders**.

### 2. Why Private Investment is Declining

- **Private investment dropped by 1.4%** in the latest quarter, despite overall investment rising due to public spending.
- **Public investment grew by 11.8% (Central Govt) and 34.6% (State Govts)**, keeping growth numbers high.
- **Private investment is more efficient** than public investment because businesses are driven by profits, ensuring money is used effectively.

### 3. Role of Bank Credit Growth



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- Investment depends on **how much banks lend**, not just how much people save.
- **Bank credit growth was 22% (2005-2014) but fell to 9% (2014-2021)**, leading to slower investments.
- **More lending by banks means more private sector investment**, which drives economic growth.

#### 4. Relationship Between Investment and Consumer Spending

- Historically, **private investment and consumer spending move in opposite directions**.
- In 1950-51, consumer spending was **90% of GDP**, while investment was low.
- By **2007-08**, private investment reached **27% of GDP**, while consumption fell.
- Since **2011-12**, consumer spending has risen while private investment has declined.
- This suggests that **higher spending does not automatically lead to more investment**.

#### 5. Policy Uncertainty as a Key Factor

- Businesses hesitate to invest due to **unclear government policies and slow economic reforms**.
- A **lack of long-term policy certainty** discourages companies from starting major projects.
- Many analysts believe that **faster economic reforms** are needed to boost investor confidence.

#### Tribunal at the receiving end: TH Profiles

International Relations

#### Easy Explanation

##### What happened?

On February 6, 2025, U.S. President Donald Trump **imposed sanctions on the International Criminal Court (ICC)**. His administration warned of "**serious consequences**" for those involved in investigations that threaten U.S. national security or its allies, particularly Israel. The move came after **ICC Chief Prosecutor Karim A. Khan issued arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Yoav Gallant** over alleged war crimes in Gaza.

##### Why is this significant?

This isn't the first time the U.S. has taken action against the ICC. In 2020, the Trump administration **sanctioned ICC officials** when the court launched an investigation into **alleged war crimes by U.S. troops in Afghanistan**. The Biden administration later reversed these sanctions, but Trump's latest action has reignited global tensions.

Many countries, including **the U.K., France, and Germany**, have reaffirmed their support for the ICC. However, the U.S. has a long history of **opposing the court** and has never ratified the Rome Statute, which established the ICC.

##### Why does the U.S. oppose the ICC?

While the U.S. initially helped negotiate the creation of the ICC in the 1990s, **every American administration since then has resisted its authority**. The fear is that **U.S. military personnel and allies could be prosecuted for war crimes**, which Washington wants to avoid.



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Former U.S. President **George W. Bush aggressively opposed the ICC**, passing laws to prevent U.S. citizens from being tried in The Hague. The **American Service Members' Protection Act (2002)**, even authorized **military action against the ICC**, earning it the nickname "**The Hague Invasion Act.**"

Later, **President Barack Obama cautiously engaged with the ICC**, supporting investigations that aligned with U.S. interests but **never allowing U.S. personnel to be held accountable.**

### Double standards in U.S. foreign policy

Under the Biden administration, the U.S. **supported** the ICC's arrest warrant for **Russian President Vladimir Putin**, calling it a step toward international justice. However, when the ICC issued an **arrest warrant for Netanyahu**, the U.S. dismissed it as "**outrageous.**" This contradiction exposes how **the U.S. selectively supports international law when it benefits its own interests.**

### The ICC's global struggle for legitimacy

The ICC was founded in **1998 through the Rome Statute** to prosecute individuals responsible for **war crimes, genocide, and crimes against humanity**. However, it has struggled to gain legitimacy worldwide. Major powers like **the U.S., China, and Russia have never joined.**

Several countries have also withdrawn from the ICC:

- **Burundi left in 2017** after the ICC began investigating its crackdown on political opposition.
- **The Philippines withdrew in 2019** after the ICC launched an inquiry into President Duterte's brutal war on drugs.

Many African nations argue that the **ICC unfairly targets Africa**, as most of its prosecutions have involved African leaders or warlords. The first non-African investigation was launched only in **2016 in Georgia**, reinforcing perceptions that the ICC serves **Western political interests.**

### Challenges facing the ICC

1. **Lack of enforcement power** – The ICC **has no police force**, so it relies on countries to arrest suspects.
2. **Selective justice** – The court is accused of **targeting weak nations** while avoiding cases against powerful states.
3. **Declining caseload** – The ICC currently has **only one ongoing trial**, a sharp decline from previous years.
4. **Internal scandals** – The court is dealing with **sexual harassment allegations** against its chief prosecutor, which have damaged its credibility.

### What's next for the ICC?

With Trump back in office, the ICC faces **severe U.S. retaliation**. How the court handles external pressure from Washington, internal corruption scandals, and declining cases will determine its future. If it cannot stand up to powerful nations, it risks becoming **a weak and ineffective tribunal.**

## Key Takeaways

### 1. Trump's Latest Action Against the ICC



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- Trump **signed an executive order on February 6, 2025**, imposing sanctions on ICC officials.
- The move came after the ICC issued **arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu and Defense Minister Gallant**.
- The U.S. warned of **"significant consequences"** for ICC personnel involved in the investigation.

## 2. U.S. Opposition to the ICC

- The U.S. **never ratified the Rome Statute**, fearing scrutiny of its own military actions.
- **George W. Bush aggressively opposed the ICC**, passing laws to protect U.S. military personnel.
- The **American Service Members' Protection Act (2002)** allows the U.S. to **use force** if an American is detained by the ICC.
- **Biden supported the ICC's arrest warrant for Putin** but dismissed charges against Israel, showing **double standards**.

## 3. ICC's Struggles and Criticism

- **Lack of enforcement** – The ICC **relies on member states to arrest suspects**, limiting its power.
- **Perception of bias** – The ICC has mostly prosecuted **African leaders**, leading to claims of **Western influence**.
- **Declining cases** – The ICC has **only one trial scheduled this year**, a sharp drop from previous years.
- **Internal issues** – **Sexual harassment allegations against the ICC's chief prosecutor** have hurt its reputation.

## 4. Global Reactions to U.S. Sanctions

- **European allies (U.K., France, Germany) reaffirmed support** for the ICC.
- **China and Russia oppose the ICC** but have criticized the U.S. for its selective use of international law.
- **Israel welcomed Trump's move**, seeing it as protection against international prosecution.

## 5. Future of the ICC Under Trump

- The ICC could **face four years of U.S. sanctions** under Trump's presidency.
- It must **prove its legitimacy** by showing it can **stand up to powerful nations** and apply justice fairly.
- If the ICC **cannot enforce its rulings or maintain credibility**, it risks becoming a **weak institution**.

[Port of contention: TH Profiles](#)

International Relations

## Easy Explanation

### What happened?

U.S. President Donald Trump issued a **Presidential National Security Memorandum (PNSM-2) on February 4, 2025**, calling for **"maximum pressure"** on Iran. This was expected, as Trump has always been tough on Iran. However, what shocked India was the **specific mention of Chabahar Port** in the memo.



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Chabahar is **India's first international port**, strategically developed to bypass **Pakistan** and connect to **Iran, Afghanistan, and Central Asia**. The port is critical for India's regional influence and trade expansion. Trump's move puts India in a tough spot, as it risks sanctions for its involvement in Chabahar.

### Why is Chabahar important for India?

India **developed Chabahar Port** to avoid **Pakistan's control over land routes** and use an alternative sea route to Iran. This also allowed India to support **Afghanistan's development** by using the **Zaranj-Delaram highway**, built by India in 2009.

Chabahar is often seen as India's **counter to Pakistan's Gwadar Port**, which is **funded and operated by China** under the **Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)**. China had also shown interest in investing in Chabahar, signing a **25-year agreement with Iran in 2021** worth \$300 billion.

### Why did the U.S. support Chabahar earlier?

Between **2010-2015**, the **U.S. encouraged India** to increase trade with Iran and develop Chabahar. The reason? The U.S. wanted to use India's investment **as leverage to pressure Iran into signing the nuclear deal**, known as the **Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)**.

However, when Trump became president in **2016**, he **pulled out of the JCPOA**, reimposed **strict sanctions on Iran**, and **banned oil trade with Iran**. India had to stop **importing Iranian oil** in 2018, but it **lobbied hard to continue its Chabahar operations**.

### How did India keep Chabahar operational despite U.S. sanctions?

In **2018**, Trump's administration granted India a **waiver** from the **Iran Freedom and Counter-Proliferation Act (IFCA)**. This allowed Chabahar to be used for:

1. **Humanitarian aid for Iran**
2. **Reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan**

With this waiver, India **increased trade and investments** in Chabahar. However, after the **Taliban took over Afghanistan in 2021**, U.S. interest in Chabahar declined. Meanwhile, India **sent aid to Afghanistan via Chabahar and strengthened ties with the Taliban**.

### India's latest investments in Chabahar

Despite geopolitical tensions, **India signed a 10-year contract in May 2024** to further develop Chabahar:

- **\$120 million investment in equipment**
- **A \$250 million credit window**
- Plans to **connect Chabahar to the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC)** to improve trade with **Central Asia and Russia**

Though the **Biden administration warned India of "sanction risks,"** it did not act on the threat. However, **Trump's new memo revives this concern**.

### What's next for India?

The **sanctions order comes just days before Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the U.S.** Indian



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officials **hope to negotiate another waiver**, just like they did in 2018. However, **Trump may demand a diplomatic or trade bargain in return** before granting India any exceptions.

## Key Takeaways

### 1. Trump's New Sanctions on Iran

- Trump issued **PNSM-2 on February 4, 2025**, increasing pressure on Iran.
- The **special mention of Chabahar Port** was unexpected and concerns India.
- Chabahar plays a **vital role in India's regional trade strategy** and its **connectivity with Afghanistan and Central Asia**.

### 2. Why is Chabahar Important for India?

- **Bypasses Pakistan** – Provides an alternative trade route to **Iran, Afghanistan, and Central Asia**.
- **Counter to China-Pakistan's Gwadar Port** – Chabahar was seen as a **response to China's influence** in the region.
- **Key to India-Afghanistan trade** – The **Zaranj-Delaram highway** built by India connects Chabahar to Afghan markets.

### 3. U.S. Support for Chabahar Before 2016

- **2010-2015** – The U.S. **encouraged India to invest in Chabahar** as part of its Iran nuclear deal strategy (JCPOA).
- India's involvement was seen as a **way to integrate Iran into the global economy** and keep Tehran aligned with the U.S.

### 4. U.S. Policy Shift After Trump Took Office in 2016

- **Trump pulled out of the Iran nuclear deal in 2018** and reimposed **strict sanctions on Iran**.
- **India stopped buying Iranian oil** but lobbied to continue using Chabahar.
- In **November 2018**, India received a **U.S. waiver** allowing Chabahar to be used for:
  1. **Humanitarian aid to Iran**
  2. **Rebuilding Afghanistan**

### 5. India's Continued Investments in Chabahar

- Despite U.S. pressure, India **signed a 10-year contract in May 2024** to:
  - Invest **\$120 million** in equipment.
  - Provide a **\$250 million credit window**.
  - Connect Chabahar to **the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC)** for trade with **Russia and Central Asia**.

### 6. What's Next? Can India Secure Another Waiver?



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- Trump's memo revives the risk of U.S. sanctions on India's Chabahar project.
- India is hoping to negotiate an exemption, just like in 2018.
- Trump may demand trade or diplomatic concessions from India in exchange for a waiver.

### Domestic interests, global cost: TH Profiles

## Easy Explanation

### What happened?

U.S. President **Donald Trump**, with support from **Elon Musk**, issued an **executive order freezing all U.S. foreign aid funding for 90 days**. This affects **USAID (United States Agency for International Development)**, which provides **humanitarian aid and development support to over 130 countries**.

The Trump administration also attempted to **slash USAID's workforce from 10,000 to just 294 employees**, but a U.S. court **temporarily blocked this decision**. Meanwhile, senior USAID officials were **placed on leave**, its Washington office was **locked**, and its website **shut down**.

The ultimate goal? **Shutting down USAID entirely or absorbing it into the U.S. State Department**, which is now controlled by Secretary of State **Marco Rubio**, a strong supporter of Trump's "America First" policy.

### Why is this happening?

Trump and Musk **accused USAID of corruption** and claimed its projects **did not align with U.S. national interests**.

- They criticized **grants for LGBTQ rights groups in Serbia** and **funding for an electric vehicle company in Vietnam**.
- Trump alleged that USAID **shipped \$50 million worth of condoms to Gaza**, claiming they were used as makeshift bombs. However, **fact-checkers debunked this**, confirming no such shipments occurred.

### Why does USAID matter?

Despite criticism, **USAID is the largest source of U.S. foreign aid**, handling **\$40 billion out of the \$68 billion the U.S. spent on international assistance in 2023**. It supports:

- **Girls' education in Taliban-controlled Afghanistan**
- **HIV/AIDS treatment programs in Africa** (PEPFAR, credited with saving 20 million lives)
- **Famine prevention programs worldwide**
- **War recovery efforts in Ukraine**, including **supporting farmers and providing prosthetic limbs to soldiers**

### Historical background

USAID was **created in 1961** during the Cold War by **President John F. Kennedy** to counter **Soviet influence**. It started under the **U.S. State Department**, but Congress **made it an independent agency in 1998** to allow it to operate in **hostile countries like Iran and North Korea** under humanitarian programs.

### What's the impact?

Experts warn that **China may step in to fill the gap left by USAID**. However, China's focus has been **large**



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infrastructure projects (like the Belt and Road Initiative), which cannot fully replace USAID's humanitarian and development aid.

## Key Takeaways: Trump and Musk's USAID Freeze

### 1. Executive Order Freezes Foreign Aid

- Trump halts all U.S. foreign aid for 90 days, affecting USAID operations worldwide.
- USAID's workforce slashed from 10,000 to 294, though a court temporarily blocked the move.
- USAID's office was locked, and its website was taken offline.

### 2. Justifications for the Move

- Trump and Musk claim USAID is corrupt and misaligned with "America First" policies.
- Criticized projects include:
  - \$1.5 million LGBTQ rights grant in Serbia
  - \$2.5 million funding for an electric vehicle company in Vietnam
- Trump falsely accused USAID of sending condoms to Gaza for use as bombs (debunked by fact-checkers).

### 3. USAID's Global Importance

- USAID is America's largest foreign aid agency, handling \$40 billion in aid across 130 countries.
- Key programs include:
  - Education for Afghan girls under Taliban rule
  - HIV/AIDS treatment program (PEPFAR) in Africa (credited with saving 20 million lives)
  - Famine prevention efforts and disease monitoring (e.g., Ebola in Uganda)
  - War recovery support for Ukraine, including prosthetic limbs for soldiers

### 4. Historical Context

- Founded in 1961 by President John F. Kennedy during the Cold War to counter Soviet influence.
- Became independent from the State Department in 1998 to allow operations in hostile nations like Iran and North Korea.
- Republicans have always favored cutting foreign aid, arguing it does not benefit U.S. taxpayers directly.

### 5. Potential Consequences

- China may step in to replace USAID's influence, but its focus is on large-scale infrastructure (Belt and Road Initiative), not humanitarian work.
- The world's poorest and most vulnerable communities will suffer the most due to the cuts.

[Heart failure patients in India die 10 years earlier: study- TH Science](#)

Science Tech



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## Easy Explanation: India's First National Heart Failure Registry Findings

A large-scale study on **heart failure patients in India** has revealed some alarming trends. Indian patients develop heart failure **almost a decade earlier** than people in high-income countries. The **one-year mortality rate** is **over 20%**, which is higher than many common cancers like **breast cancer**. The study highlights the urgent need for **better awareness, early diagnosis, and timely treatment** to reduce heart failure-related deaths.

### What is Heart Failure?

Heart failure occurs when the **heart muscle becomes too weak to pump blood efficiently**. This means that essential **organs do not receive enough oxygen and nutrients**, leading to serious health complications.

### The Study: What Did Researchers Find?

- Conducted in **2019**, with data collected from **53 hospitals across 24 states and 2 Union Territories** in India.
- Total **10,850 patients** enrolled in the **National Heart Failure Registry (NHFR)**.
- **Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute for Medical Sciences and Technology (SCTIMST), Thiruvananthapuram**, led the study.
- Researchers tracked **patients for one year** to analyze survival rates.

### Key Findings: Why Is Heart Failure Deadly in India?

#### 1. Indian Patients Develop Heart Failure at a Younger Age

- The study found that **Indians suffer heart failure almost 10 years earlier** than patients in high-income countries.
- This suggests **poor lifestyle choices, lack of awareness, and delayed medical intervention** as major contributors.

#### 2. High One-Year Mortality Rate

- **1 in 4 patients (25%)** dies within a year of diagnosis.
- Some conditions, such as **infective endocarditis, congenital heart disease, and restrictive cardiomyopathy**, have **even higher mortality rates (34% to 50%)**.
- These rates are **far worse than what is seen in high-income countries**.

#### 3. Most Common Causes of Heart Failure in India

Condition	% of Patients	One-Year Mortality Rate
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<b>Ischemic Heart Disease</b> (Blocked arteries due to cholesterol buildup)	<b>71.9%</b>	<b>21.1%</b>
<b>Dilated Cardiomyopathy</b> (Weakening of the heart muscle)	<b>17.3%</b>	<b>23.7%</b>
<b>Rheumatic Heart Disease</b> (Caused by untreated throat infections)	<b>5.4%</b>	<b>27.5%</b>
<b>Congenital Heart Disease</b> (Present from birth)	<b>0.7%</b>	<b>34.6%</b>
<b>Infective Endocarditis</b> (Heart infection)	<b>0.1%</b>	<b>50.0%</b>

- **Ischemic heart disease** (blockage in heart arteries) is the leading cause of heart failure but has **relatively lower mortality rates** due to **better medical management**.
- **Rheumatic heart disease, congenital heart disease, and infective endocarditis** have **very high mortality rates**, especially in **low- and middle-income countries (LMICs)** like India.

#### 4. Why Are Some Conditions More Deadly?

- **Rheumatic heart disease (RHD):**
  - Caused by **untreated strep throat infections** that damage heart valves.
  - **Lack of awareness** and **delayed valve replacement surgeries** make it **more fatal** in India.
- **Congenital heart disease:**
  - If not **treated early**, it can lead to **irreversible lung damage and heart failure**.
  - **Early surgical interventions** can **prevent complications**, but access to specialized care is limited.
- **Infective endocarditis:**
  - **50% mortality rate**—the highest among all heart conditions.
  - Occurs due to **bacterial infections in the heart**, often linked to **poor dental hygiene or untreated infections**.

#### Why is India's Heart Failure Death Rate So High?

- **Poor medication adherence:** Many patients **do not take medicines regularly**, leading to worsening symptoms.
- **Late diagnosis:** Symptoms are often ignored until the disease reaches an **advanced stage**.
- **Unhealthy lifestyle:** High **salt intake, poor diet, smoking, and lack of exercise** contribute to early heart failure.



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- **Limited access to specialized healthcare:** Many patients **cannot afford surgeries** or **reach hospitals too late** for effective treatment.

## Solutions: How to Reduce Heart Failure Deaths in India?

1. **Improve Awareness & Early Diagnosis**
  - Educate people about **heart failure symptoms** and encourage **early medical checkups**.
  - **Screening programs** should be implemented, especially in rural areas.
2. **Better Management of Risk Factors**
  - Promote **healthy diets** (low salt, low cholesterol, high fiber).
  - Encourage **regular physical activity** and **smoking cessation programs**.
3. **Ensure Medication Adherence**
  - Patients should be educated about **why taking medicines regularly is important**.
  - **Free or subsidized medicines** should be provided for low-income patients.
4. **Improve Access to Surgery & Specialized Care**
  - **Faster referrals for surgeries** like **valve replacements** for rheumatic heart disease.
  - **Affordable and accessible cardiac surgery** for congenital heart defects.
5. **Strengthen Healthcare Infrastructure**
  - More investment in **specialized heart centers** across India.
  - Training more **cardiologists and heart surgeons** to handle increasing cases.

[How do bacteria resist antibiotics?: TH Science](#)

Science

### Easy Explanation:

Antibiotics have been a life-saving invention, helping fight bacterial infections for decades. However, overuse of antibiotics in healthcare has led to the rise of **antimicrobial resistance (AMR)**, making many bacterial infections harder to treat. In 2021 alone, **1.2 million deaths** worldwide were linked to drug-resistant bacteria, and studies in India show that infections caused by such bacteria have a **13% mortality rate**. This has made the **search for new antibiotics** a major area of scientific research.

### What are Antibiotics and How Do They Work?

- Antibiotics **kill bacteria** or **stop their growth** without harming human cells.
- They **target unique features of bacteria**, such as their **cell walls**, which human cells do not have.
- The bacterial cell wall is mainly made of **peptidoglycan**, a special substance that provides **strength and protection** to bacteria.

### How Do Bacterial Cell Walls Work?

- The bacterial cell wall is a **protective mesh-like structure** made of **sugar molecules (NAM and NAG)** and **peptide (protein) crosslinks**.



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- The **NAM-NAG sugars form long chains**, while **peptides create crosslinks**, giving bacteria a **strong, interconnected cell wall**.
- Our **immune system** recognizes these bacterial walls and attacks invading bacteria.
- The first discovered antibiotic, **penicillin**, works by **blocking the crosslinking process**, which **weakens the bacterial cell wall and causes the bacteria to burst and die**.

## How Do Bacteria Develop Resistance to Antibiotics?

Bacteria **evolve rapidly** and develop resistance to antibiotics in different ways:

1. **Producing special enzymes** (like penicillinase) that **break down antibiotics** before they can work.
2. **Modifying their own structures** so that antibiotics **can't attach** and disrupt their functions.

## Understanding How Bacteria Grow and Divide

- Bacteria **divide quickly**, needing **constant cell wall synthesis** to grow and multiply.
- Think of bacterial cell division like **building a LEGO wall**:
  - To grow, bacteria **expand their walls** by adding new pieces.
  - Some links **must be broken** before new ones can be added.
- Special bacterial enzymes **break and rebuild** the cell wall to **allow for proper growth and division**.

## New Research on Bacterial Survival and Cell Wall Repair

- A research team in **Hyderabad (Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology)** has discovered new mechanisms that bacteria **use to survive attacks** on their cell walls.
- Bacteria can **compensate for missing enzymes** by **increasing production of others** that perform a similar function.
- This **smart adaptation** helps bacteria survive even when their **cell wall formation is disrupted**, making it harder to kill them.
- Understanding these survival strategies **can help scientists develop new antibiotics** that can effectively target bacteria.

## Why Is This Research Important?

- As **current antibiotics are becoming less effective**, new strategies are needed to **outsmart bacteria**.
- By studying **how bacteria repair themselves**, scientists can **find new ways to block their survival mechanisms**.
- This research may lead to **the development of next-generation antibiotics**, helping combat the growing **threat of antimicrobial resistance (AMR)**.

## Key Takeaways: Antibiotic Resistance and New Research

### 1. The Growing Threat of Antibiotic Resistance

- Overuse of antibiotics has led to **antimicrobial resistance (AMR)**, making bacterial infections **harder to treat**.



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- In 2021, AMR was responsible for 1.2 million deaths worldwide.
- Infections with drug-resistant bacteria in India have a 13% mortality rate.

## 2. How Do Antibiotics Work?

- Antibiotics **kill bacteria or stop their growth** by targeting **unique bacterial structures** like **cell walls**.
- The **bacterial cell wall** is made of **peptidoglycan**, which provides **strength and protection** to bacteria.
- **Penicillin** was the first antibiotic and works by **blocking the crosslinking process in bacterial cell walls**, causing bacteria to **burst and die**.

## 3. How Do Bacteria Develop Resistance?

- Bacteria **mutate and adapt** to survive antibiotics.
- They develop **enzymes (like penicillinase) to break down antibiotics**.
- Some bacteria **modify their structures** so that antibiotics **can't bind and attack them**.

## 4. Understanding Bacterial Growth and Cell Wall Formation

- Bacteria **must constantly repair and grow their cell walls** to survive.
- Enzymes called **endopeptidases** and **lytic transglycosylases (LTs)** break old wall structures to allow new growth.
- **If these enzymes stop working, bacterial cells cannot divide properly and die.**

## 5. New Research in India: How Bacteria Outsmart Antibiotics

- Scientists in **Hyderabad (Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology)** discovered how bacteria **compensate for missing enzymes** by producing **extra copies of others**.
- This **helps bacteria repair their cell walls even when attacked**, making them **harder to kill**.
- Understanding these **defense strategies** can help **develop new antibiotics** that bacteria **cannot easily resist**.

## 6. Why This Research Matters

- **Current antibiotics are losing effectiveness**—new antibiotics must be developed.
- Research into **bacterial survival mechanisms** can help **find new ways to kill them**.
- Scientists are looking at **ways to disrupt bacteria's ability to repair themselves**, making it easier to treat infections.
- **Fighting antimicrobial resistance is crucial** to prevent a **future where bacterial infections become untreatable**.

10th February 2025

[What is South Africa's new land law that Trump finds 'immoral'?-Indian Express Explained](#)





## Easy Explanation

The new **Expropriation Act** in South Africa allows the government to seize land without compensation for public purposes, addressing historical land ownership imbalances caused by apartheid. The law replaces the **1975 Expropriation Act**, which favored white landowners through the "**willing seller, willing buyer**" principle.

Former US President **Donald Trump** has condemned the law as "unjust and immoral," citing alleged **racism against white farmers**. He signed an **Executive Order** ending financial aid to South Africa, citing its land policies, actions against the US and Israel at the **International Court of Justice (ICJ)**, and **relations with Iran**.

The law has been criticized by South Africa's **Democratic Alliance (DA)** and parts of the international community, but **President Cyril Ramaphosa** insists it is a constitutional process aimed at equitable land access. Trump previously voiced concerns about white farmer killings in South Africa during his first term. Additionally, US-South Africa relations have worsened due to Pretoria's strengthening ties with Russia and Iran and its **genocide case against Israel at the ICJ**.

A significant consequence of Trump's decision is the potential loss of **PEPFAR (HIV/AIDS assistance)**, a crucial US-funded program that has supported South Africa's fight against HIV/AIDS.

## Key Takeaways:

1. **New South African Land Law:** The **Expropriation Act** allows land seizure without compensation in certain cases, aiming to redress historical apartheid-era injustices.
2. **Trump's Reaction:** He condemned the law, calling it **racist and immoral**, and ended **US financial aid** to South Africa.
3. **White Land Ownership Disparity:** Despite 30 years of democracy, **white South Africans (7% of the population) still own 72% of agricultural land**.
4. **US-South Africa Relations Deteriorate:** Tensions have grown due to South Africa's **relations with Iran and Russia** and its **genocide case against Israel at the ICJ**.
5. **HIV/AIDS Funding at Risk:** The **PEPFAR program**, which provides significant aid for HIV/AIDS treatment in South Africa, faces an uncertain future.
6. **Political Opposition:** The **Democratic Alliance (DA)** opposes the law, calling it unconstitutional, while Ramaphosa defends it as a legal and fair process.

## [Private property and the state's right to acquire according to law-Indian Express Explained](#)

### Polity

## Easy Explanation

The **right to private property** and the **state's authority to acquire land** for public purposes (also known as **eminent domain**) have deep historical roots in legal traditions from **Europe, the US, India, and South Africa**.



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The concept of **eminent domain** was first articulated by **Hugo Grotius** in 1625, who stated that governments could seize private property for public use in cases of necessity. This principle was later codified into various national laws, including:

- **The Land Acquisition Act of 1894 (India)**
- **The Expropriation Act of 1975 (South Africa)**
- **The Fifth Amendment (1791) of the US Constitution**

In **South Africa**, **Section 25** of the Constitution allows for land expropriation **only for public purposes and with compensation**, aligning with global norms. However, disputes arise over **whether expropriation without compensation is constitutional**.

In the **US**, the Supreme Court's 2005 ruling in **Kelo v. City of New London** expanded eminent domain to include **private economic development**, which led to **restrictions in states like Alabama and Texas**.

In **India**, land acquisition laws have evolved from the **1894 Land Acquisition Act**, which primarily benefited the state, to the **2013 Right to Fair Compensation Act**, which includes provisions for rehabilitation and public participation.

**President Cyril Ramaphosa**, responding to **Donald Trump's criticism** of South Africa's land laws, stated that expropriation policies are **not unique** and exist in many countries, including the **United States**.

#### Key Takeaways:

1. **Eminent Domain Origins:** The legal concept of **state land acquisition** dates back to **17th-century European legal theory** and has influenced laws worldwide.
2. **Common Global Legal Framework:** South Africa, the US, and India all have laws allowing the **government to take private land for public use with compensation**.
3. **South African Law (Section 25):** Land can only be expropriated **for public purposes** and with **compensation**, similar to **US and Indian legal principles**.
4. **Trump's Criticism:** **Donald Trump** condemned **South Africa's land policies**, but **Ramaphosa** defended them, citing **global legal precedents**.
5. **US Land Seizure Policies:** The **Kelo v. City of New London (2005)** case allowed **private development projects** to be considered "public use," sparking **state-level restrictions**.
6. **India's Evolving Laws:** The **2013 Right to Fair Compensation Act** improved transparency and **required compensation and rehabilitation** for affected communities.
7. **Comparison Across Nations:** Despite differences, all three nations recognize that **private property** can be acquired by the state, provided it serves a **public purpose** and follows **legal due process**.

[Keeping a watch on the growing arc of violence-The Hindu Editorial](#)

International relations

Easy Explanation



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The world is experiencing a **rising arc of violence**, with conflicts in **Ukraine, Gaza, and West Asia** escalating, and global security institutions like the **United Nations Security Council (UNSC)** and **International Court of Justice (ICJ)** appearing ineffective. The breakdown of the **post-1945 world order** has led to increased instability, and traditional moral and legal frameworks governing war and peace are eroding.

A **new phase of Islamist terrorism** is emerging, characterized by **digital radicalization, decentralized structures, and AI-driven recruitment**. While **al-Qaeda and ISIS** seemed weakened in recent years, they are now **resurging**, with al-Qaeda establishing new **training camps in Taliban-controlled Afghanistan** and **ISIS-K (ISKP) expanding operations beyond South Asia**. The recent terror attacks in the **U.S. and Europe** signal a potential new wave of terrorism, with concerns that **modern technology is enabling extremists to adapt and recruit more effectively**.

#### Key Takeaways:

1. **Erosion of Global Order:** The effectiveness of international security institutions is in question as violence spreads across multiple regions.
2. **Conflicts in West Asia:** The war in **Gaza, Lebanon, and beyond** is **reshaping geopolitical dynamics**, with no clear path to lasting peace.
3. **Persistence of Islamist Terrorism:** Despite setbacks, **al-Qaeda and ISIS** are **reorganizing and spreading** their influence through online radicalization and decentralized networks.
4. **Resurgence of Terror Attacks:** Recent attacks in the **U.S. (Las Vegas, New Orleans)** and **Europe** highlight the **revival of IS-style terrorism**, raising concerns about **new recruits with military backgrounds**.
5. **Digital Radicalization:** **AI and social media** are being used to **spread extremist ideologies**, making counterterrorism efforts more challenging.
6. **Security Agencies on Alert:** Authorities must act swiftly to **disrupt new terror networks** before they gain momentum, as **early warnings suggest a potential wave of future attacks**.

The overarching concern is that **complacency in counterterrorism efforts** could lead to a **revival of large-scale terrorist threats**, requiring a **proactive global response**.

### [An aerospace expo to further India's global presence-The Hindu Editorial](#)

Science and technology

#### Easy Explanation

Aero India 2025, held at **Yelahanka Air Force Station, Bengaluru (February 10-14)**, is a **strategic aerospace and defense exhibition** that showcases India's growing technological and manufacturing capabilities. The event, themed "**The Runway to a Billion Opportunities**," serves as a **global hub for innovation, defense collaboration, and self-reliance in defense production**. It features participation from leading **domestic and international manufacturers**, including **major defense players from 19 countries**. Key highlights include the **Su-57 (Russia)** and **F-35 (U.S.)**, the unveiling of India's **AMCA (5th-generation stealth fighter)**, and the '**Manthan**' initiative for startups and innovation. With over **seven lakh visitors expected**, enhanced **infrastructure, security, and engagement activities** make this a landmark event in India's aerospace journey.



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## Key Takeaways:

### 1. India's Growing Aerospace Power:

- Aero India has evolved from a **1996 exhibition** into a **major global defense event**.
- Strengthens India's **Aatmanirbhar Bharat and Make in India** initiatives in defense.

### 2. Global Participation & Strategic Alliances:

- **106 OEMs, including 55 foreign and 35 Indian manufacturers**.
- Participation from major defense powers: **U.S., Russia, France, Israel, U.K., Japan, South Korea**.
- Collaboration between **DPSUs and private firms (L&T, BrahMos, Mahindra, Adani Defence)**.

### 3. Technological Milestones & Key Exhibits:

- **First-time showcase of Su-57 (Russia) and F-35 (U.S.) in India**.
- India's **5th-generation AMCA model** to highlight indigenous fighter aircraft development.
- **'Manthan' and iDEX Pavilion** to boost **startups and innovation** in defense technology.

### 4. Enhanced Visitor Experience:

- **7 lakh+ visitors** expected; improved **traffic, security, transport, and infrastructure**.
- **Aerial displays, live tech demonstrations, and defense seminars** for deeper industry engagement.

## What does the Budget offer Railways?-The Hindu Text and Context

### Economy

### Easy Explanation

The **Union Budget 2025** provided **no major financial focus** on Indian Railways (IR), continuing the trend since its merger with the general Budget in 2017. While **capital expenditure (capex)** has been a key area of interest in previous years, **this year's allocation remained at ₹2.62 lakh crore**, effectively stagnating. The post-Budget press conference highlighted **infrastructure development, station modernization, and safety improvements**, but **critical issues such as Kavach expansion, pending freight corridors, and high-speed rail projects remained unaddressed**. Despite ambitious announcements like **electrification progress and future high-speed rail aspirations**, the IR's **financial struggles, execution delays, and freight inefficiencies** continue to pose major challenges.

## Key Takeaways:

### 1. Stagnation in Capital Expenditure (Capex):

- Capex remains at **₹2.62 lakh crore**, indicating a pause in aggressive expansion.
- **Electrification reached 95%**, but concerns remain over **underutilized diesel locomotives worth ₹30,000 crore**.

### 2. Infrastructure & Safety Improvements:

- **₹1.16 lakh crore allocated to safety**, yet **no increase in Kavach coverage** beyond the initial 1,465 km.
- **Station modernization is slow**—only **six key stations** show tangible progress, with **New Delhi station redevelopment still stuck in re-tendering**.



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### 3. Freight & Passenger Growth Challenges:

- Freight traffic **grew at just over 2%**, failing to capitalize on India's booming economy.
- IR aims to become the world's second-largest freight carrier, yet **freight speed and share remain major issues**.
- **200 new Vande Bharat trains announced**, but **no clear timeline for deployment**.

### 4. Lack of Clear Strategy for Key Mega Projects:

- **No updates on Western Dedicated Freight Corridor and Mumbai-Ahmedabad High-Speed Rail**.
- **Lofty plans for 7,000 km of high-speed rail by 2047 remain visionary but lacking concrete execution strategy**.

### Conclusion:

Despite **bold claims about transformation**, the **Budget offers little real progress** for Indian Railways. **Execution delays, financial sustainability concerns, and the absence of strategic freight and passenger reforms** indicate that IR is **struggling to move beyond incremental growth**. The railway sector continues to **await a substantial, well-defined roadmap for true modernization**.

## How has the Budget allocated funds for urban development?-The Hindu Text and Context

### Economy

#### Easy Explanation

The **Union Budget 2025** allocates **₹96,777 crore** for urban development, an increase from last year's **₹82,576.57 crore**. However, **inflation-adjusted figures indicate a decline** in real spending. A significant **22.9% underutilization** of allocated funds is evident, particularly in **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY-U)**, which saw its **revised estimate (RE) slashed by more than half**. The Budget **prioritizes capital-intensive projects**, such as metro rail expansion, while **funding for Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) and key schemes like Smart Cities and Swachh Bharat remains stagnant or reduced**. The introduction of a **₹10,000 crore Urban Challenge Fund** and an ambitious **₹1 lakh crore urban redevelopment program**—half of which relies on private investment—raises concerns about feasibility and inclusivity.

### Key Takeaways:

#### 1. Urban Development Allocation & Shortfalls:

- **₹96,777 crore allocated**, but **real spending power declines** when adjusted for inflation.
- **₹63,669.93 crore actual expenditure** projected for FY 2024-25, indicating **22.9% underutilization**.
- **PMAY-U allocation cut from ₹30,170.61 crore to ₹13,670 crore**, reflecting a gap between promises and execution.

#### 2. Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) Face Financial Stress:

- **Direct transfers to ULBs reduced from ₹26,653 crore to ₹26,158 crore**.







- With **GST replacing octroi**, cities lost **21% of their revenue**, yet central support **has not increased**.
  - This forces cities to **raise local taxes**, increasing the financial burden on citizens.
3. **Capital-Intensive Projects Take Priority:**
- Metro rail and **Mass Rapid Transit Systems (MRTS)** funding increased from ₹21,335.98 crore (FY 2024-25) to **₹31,239.28 crore for FY 2025-26 (46% jump)**.
  - In contrast, **PMAY (CSS component)** funding dropped 30%, and **Swachh Bharat (Urban)** saw a **56% underutilization** of funds.
4. **Urban Challenge Fund & Redevelopment Plans:**
- **New ₹10,000 crore Urban Challenge Fund** introduced to address urban issues.
  - **₹1 lakh crore urban redevelopment** plan announced, but **half of the funding is expected from private investments**, raising concerns given **poor private participation in Smart Cities Mission**.
5. **Limited Focus on Employment & Social Equity:**
- The **Budget leans toward infrastructure** rather than **employment generation, green jobs, or sustainable urban policies**.
  - Over-reliance on capital-intensive projects **risks widening social and economic disparities** in urban areas.

#### Conclusion:

The Budget continues **prioritizing urban infrastructure projects like metro expansion** while **reducing support for key urban schemes and local governance funding**. While large-scale investments are critical, **neglecting employment-driven, sustainable urban development could deepen inequality and financial stress on cities**.

## 11th February 2025

### [India, France, and AI-Indian Express Explained](#)

International relation

#### Easy Explanation

India and France are strengthening ties across sectors, with a focus on Artificial Intelligence (AI). French President Emmanuel Macron invited Prime Minister Narendra Modi to co-chair the AI Action Summit, highlighting India's leadership in AI and emerging technologies. The summit will address Public Interest AI, Future of Work, Trust in AI, and Global AI Governance. India will advocate for democratizing AI, bridging the AI divide, and advancing Global South priorities through initiatives like its Rs 10,371 crore IndiaAI Mission.

Modi's visit also aims to deepen defense partnerships, including Rafale aircraft and Scorpene submarine projects. Collaborations in renewable energy, trade, innovation, and people-to-people ties are expanding, with plans for India-France Triangular Development Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific. The long-standing relationship, built on trust and strategic autonomy, is rooted in shared values and France's support during



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critical moments like the 1998 nuclear tests. Both nations are now poised to shape global AI governance and sustainable development.

### Key Takeaways:

#### 1. India and France AI Collaboration:

- French President Emmanuel Macron invited Prime Minister Narendra Modi to co-chair the AI Action Summit in Paris, highlighting India's role in shaping global AI rules.
- The summit focuses on inclusive, responsible, and equitable AI development and addresses risks.

#### 2. India's Global Role in AI:

- India will advocate for AI democratization and focus on bridging the AI divide, empowering voices from the Global South, and promoting fair global cooperation on AI.
- India's Rs 10,371 crore IndiaAI Mission aims to ensure equitable distribution of AI benefits.

#### 3. AI Summit Themes and Global Cooperation:

- The Paris Summit will build on previous AI summits and focus on Public Interest AI, Future of Work, Innovation, Trust in AI, and Global AI Governance.
- India's participation includes co-chairing the AI Governance Working Group, attending the Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI), and contributing to summit discussions.

#### 4. India-France Strategic Partnership:

- India and France share a long-standing partnership based on strategic autonomy and respect, focusing on defense, space, nuclear energy, and tech collaboration.
- Key defense projects include the P-75 Scorpene Project and Rafale aircraft purchases, with discussions for additional fighter jets and submarines ongoing.

#### 5. Modi's Visit and Expanding Ties:

- Modi and Macron will unveil the India-France Innovation Year 2026 logo and inaugurate a new Indian Consulate in Marseille.
- They will also launch the India-France Triangular Development Cooperation initiative for climate and SDG projects in the Indo-Pacific region.

#### 6. Historical Strength of the Relationship:

- France has historically supported India in sensitive situations, such as refraining from joining global sanctions after India's 1998 nuclear tests, showcasing commitment and pragmatism in the partnership.

[Jan 2025 was warmest ever:Why LaNiña did not bring down temperatures-Indian Express Explained](#)

### Geography

### Easy Explanation

January 2025 was the hottest January ever recorded, with global surface air temperatures 1.75°C above pre-industrial levels despite the expected cooling effect of La Niña, which emerged late and weak. The El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) cycle, which includes La Niña, affects global temperatures, but each cycle varies in strength and timing. This La Niña's weak influence was compounded by rising atmospheric carbon levels,



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which remained high in 2024 and early 2025. Additionally, reduced aerosol concentrations, due to cleaner air policies in some regions, may have contributed to warmer temperatures since aerosols typically reflect sunlight. While one warm January does not dictate long-term weather trends, scientists warn that the ability of natural climate phases to moderate global temperatures is diminishing. This highlights the urgent need for drastic reductions in greenhouse gas emissions to curb global warming and mitigate the risk of crossing critical climate thresholds.

## Key Takeaways

### Record January Heat:

January 2025 became the hottest January ever recorded, with global average surface air temperatures rising significantly above historical norms. This record-breaking heat is a sign of the planet's accelerating warming trend.

### Temperature Increase:

The temperature increase of  $1.75^{\circ}\text{C}$  above pre-industrial levels highlights how close the world is to breaching the critical  $1.5^{\circ}\text{C}$  threshold set by the Paris Agreement. This underscores the urgency for global climate action.

### Weak La Niña Impact:

Despite the emergence of La Niña, which typically cools the global climate, the cooling effect was minimal due to its delayed development and weakened intensity. This phase of the El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) could not offset warming trends.

### ENSO Variations:

ENSO phases (El Niño, La Niña, and neutral) impact global weather and temperatures. However, no two cycles are identical, and factors such as intensity, timing, and location of influence vary significantly.

### High Carbon Levels:

Greenhouse gas emissions remained elevated in 2024 and early 2025, contributing to January's record warmth. These heat-trapping gases prevent heat from escaping the Earth's atmosphere, driving higher global temperatures.

### Reduced Aerosols:

Decreased levels of atmospheric aerosols due to clean air policies may have contributed to warming. Aerosols typically reflect sunlight and promote cloud formation, which cools the planet. Their reduction led to greater sunlight absorption and higher temperatures.

### Diminishing Cooling Phases:

The reduced effectiveness of natural cooling phases like La Niña suggests the planet's ability to self-regulate temperatures is weakening. This highlights the growing need to cut greenhouse gas emissions and mitigate human-driven climate change before more critical thresholds are breached.

[TURNING ON THE HEAT-Indian Express Editorial](#)

Internal security



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## Easy Explanation

The Chhattisgarh government, led by Vishnu Deo Sai since December 2023, has intensified operations against Maoist insurgents, leading to significant gains. Nearly 280 militants have been killed, over 1,000 arrested, and 925 have surrendered. Recent attacks in Maoist strongholds, including inside the Indravati National Park, have restricted insurgent movement. Improved coordination between state and central forces (BSF, CRPF, ITBP) has bolstered these efforts. Maoism, once a significant internal threat, is now confined to a few pockets, with the number of affected districts declining from over 220 to fewer than 40. Chhattisgarh's insurgency history is marked by past reliance on civilian militias like Salwa Judum before shifting focus to training police and welfare outreach. However, the government must continue its efforts while ensuring civilians remain unharmed to avoid fueling insurgency sentiments.

## Key Takeaways:

1. **Increased Operations:** The Chhattisgarh government has mounted a large-scale offensive, killing and capturing many Maoist insurgents.
2. **Recent Successes:** Crackdowns on Maoist strongholds, especially in Bastar and South Bastar, have restricted insurgent movements.
3. **Improved Coordination:** Collaboration between state and central forces has strengthened anti-Maoist operations.
4. **Decline of Maoism:** Maoism has weakened significantly, with the number of affected districts reduced to less than 40.
5. **Geographical and Social Factors:** Maoism initially thrived in South Chhattisgarh due to poor infrastructure and socio-economic deprivation.
6. **Past Mistakes and Corrections:** Chhattisgarh shifted from using civilian militias like Salwa Judum to professional policing and welfare measures.
7. **Civilian Safety:** The government must balance military operations with protecting civilians to prevent fueling further insurgency.

## [What has the Budget offered scientists?-The Hindu text and Context](#)

### Economy

## Easy Explanation

The Union Budget for 2025-26 emphasizes research and innovation with ₹20,000 crore allocated to the Department of Science & Technology (DST) and support for private R&D, especially in deeptech and biotech. The National Geospatial Mission has also been funded. The Department of Biotechnology's (DBT) budget increased by 51.45%, focusing on gene-editing, personalized medicine, and sustainable agriculture. Nuclear energy research is prioritized with the inclusion of Small Modular Reactors (SMRs). However, concerns about the underfunding of universities and basic research were raised, with some pointing to bureaucratic hurdles and the risk of corporatization of science. Investments in AI and healthcare research are also highlighted, but experts stress the need for broader support for curiosity-driven and basic research.



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## Key Takeaways:

### 1. Increased DST and Private R&D Funding:

₹20,000 crore is allocated to DST and private research to foster innovation in deeptech and sunrise sectors.

### 2. Biotech Advancements:

The DBT's increased funding will enhance research in gene-editing, sustainable agriculture, and personalized medicine, supported by a light regulatory framework.

### 3. Nuclear Energy Focus:

Investment in SMRs and nuclear energy aims to expand India's nuclear power capabilities, supported by regulatory advancements.

### 4. Geospatial and Clean Tech Missions:

National Geospatial and Green Hydrogen Missions receive funding to support geospatial data infrastructure and clean energy transitions.

### 5. Public-Private Partnerships:

Public-private partnerships are promoted across industries, with missions in agriculture, manufacturing, and education to accelerate innovation.

### 6. Concerns on University Funding:

Inadequate support for basic science research and higher education was criticized, especially with reduced funding for universities and research institutes like IISER and UGC.

### 7. Health and AI Research:

Healthcare research and AI initiatives receive budget boosts, but implementation needs to prioritize societal benefits beyond current trends.

[Is global warming accelerating?-The Hindu Science](#)

Environment

## Easy Explanation

Global warming may be accelerating, as January 2025 set a new heat record, surpassing January 2024. It was 1.75°C warmer than pre-industrial levels, with 18 of the last 19 months reaching or exceeding 1.5°C above that baseline. This occurred despite cooling La Nina conditions, which usually reduce warming effects. Former NASA scientist James Hansen argues that the last 15 years have seen double the warming rate of the previous 40 years, partly due to reduced sulfur pollution that had previously reflected sunlight. However, scientists like Michael Mann and Gabe Vecchi are skeptical, attributing temperature increases to natural variability and falling within expected climate model forecasts. The debate highlights uncertainty over whether current warming trends are natural fluctuations or a long-term acceleration. If warming is indeed accelerating, it underscores the urgency of further reducing greenhouse gas emissions to avoid surpassing critical climate thresholds.

## Key Takeaways:



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### 1. **January 2025 Heat Record:**

Global temperatures in January 2025 were 1.75°C higher than pre-industrial levels, setting a new monthly record despite La Nina conditions.

### 2. **Study on Accelerated Warming:**

Former NASA scientist James Hansen argues that the past 15 years have seen double the warming rate compared to the prior 40 years and expects this trend to continue.

### 3. **Natural Cycles and Human Influence:**

While El Nino typically drives temperature spikes and La Nina cools global temperatures, recent warming occurred despite La Nina. Reduced sulfur pollution may also play a role by decreasing the reflective barrier against warming.

### 4. **Scientific Division:**

Some scientists, like Jonathan Overpeck, agree with Hansen's assertion that global warming is accelerating. However, others, like Michael Mann and Gabe Vecchi, argue that observed temperature increases are within the range of expected climate model predictions and could be due to natural variability.

### 5. **Implications for Climate Action:**

If global warming is indeed accelerating, it may signal the need for more urgent climate action to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions and address rising temperatures.

## [The problem of regulating live-in relationships-The Hindu Editorial](#)

Sociology

### Easy Explanation

Uttarakhand's Uniform Civil Code (UCC) mandates the compulsory registration of opposite-sex live-in relationships and criminalizes unregistered cohabitation. It legitimizes children born out of such relationships and provides maintenance in cases of desertion, but not after termination. Same-sex relationships remain unprotected. The UCC's vague definition of live-in relationships as "marriage-like" and its one-month registration rule disregard the fluid nature of such relationships. This legal-social mismatch may compel unnecessary registrations of casual relationships. The Supreme Court's 2018 ruling on sexual autonomy is undermined by the UCC, which allows parents to be informed of relationships involving individuals under 21. This could enhance parental control and risks honor-based violence. Mandatory notification to the police further increases state surveillance of private relationships. Instead of offering protections akin to marriage, the UCC seems to regulate live-in relationships as societal problems, thereby diminishing personal autonomy and reinforcing state and social control over sexual choices.

### Key Takeaways

1. **Mandatory Registration:** Uttarakhand's UCC requires the compulsory registration of opposite-sex live-in relationships within one month, with penalties for non-compliance.
2. **Limited Protections:** It legitimizes children born from live-in relationships and provides maintenance for desertion but not for relationship termination.
3. **Same-Sex Relationships:** These relationships are entirely unprotected under the UCC.



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4. **Definition Issues:** The UCC defines live-in relationships as "marriage-like," which may compel the registration of casual relationships.
5. **Violation of Autonomy:** Relationships involving those under 21 trigger notifications to parents, risking honor-based violence and parental control.
6. **State Surveillance:** Registration information is forwarded to the police, intensifying state control over private relationships.
7. **Conceptual Flaws:** The UCC treats live-in relationships as societal issues rather than offering welfare measures, weakening personal autonomy and reinforcing external control over sexual choices.

### [India as a bridge between the Global North and South-The Hindu Editorial](#)

International relations

#### Easy Explanation

India is positioning itself as a bridge between the Global North and South, advocating for inclusive global governance and championing the interests of the Global South. Unlike its past alignment with the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), India now seeks to create a distinct identity by deepening partnerships with traditional powers like the U.S. and Europe while simultaneously expanding influence in the Global South. While India's efforts are often viewed as countering China's dominance, its broader strategy focuses on fostering equal partnerships and human-centric development. Initiatives like Mission LiFE and Skill India emphasize sustainable practices and capacity building to support domestic industry and promote inclusive growth. India also facilitated the African Union's entry into the G-20, signaling its intent for inclusive international reforms. To lead effectively, India must continue to listen to partner nations, create robust systems for cooperation, and avoid the perception of dominance.

#### Key Takeaways

1. **India's Position in Global Governance:** India is championing the Global South while simultaneously deepening relationships with traditional partners like the U.S. and Europe.
2. **Strategic Identity:** India aims to establish its individual identity as an emerging power, distinct from both China and Western institutions.
3. **China Factor:** India is perceived as competing with China for influence in the Global South, especially in Africa, but its efforts extend beyond this rivalry.
4. **Inclusive Development:** India advocates an alternative, equal partnership model of development cooperation that avoids traditional donor-recipient dynamics.
5. **Capacity Building:** Human-centric approaches such as skill development and schemes promoting women entrepreneurship are key to India's strategy for cooperation with developing nations.
6. **Inclusive Governance:** India facilitated the African Union's inclusion in the G-20 and is working towards establishing its own robust systems for global cooperation.
7. **Leadership Approach:** India aspires to lead the Global South by promoting inclusivity and mutual learning, avoiding the perception of dominance.



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# 12th February 2025

## [Trump's trade wars: Implications for american farmers-Indian Express Explained](#)

International relations

### Easy Explanation

The trade wars initiated by former U.S. President Donald Trump in early 2024 imposed tariffs of 25% on imports from Canada and Mexico and 10% on Chinese goods. While China's retaliation targeted a small fraction of U.S. exports, the main risk lies in potential retaliatory actions from China, Canada, and Mexico targeting U.S. agriculture. U.S. agricultural exports reached \$191.2 billion in 2024, with China, Mexico, and Canada as key buyers. Shifts to alternative suppliers like Brazil and Argentina could harm U.S. farmers, particularly in the Midwest. Farmers, though a small portion of the U.S. population, have significant political influence, as shown by strong support for Trump during the 2024 election. India could face indirect pressure to open its markets due to a trade surplus with the U.S. in agricultural goods. A prolonged trade war could alter global trade patterns and U.S. trade policy.

### Key Takeaways

1. **Trade War Targets:** The U.S. targeted China, Canada, and Mexico with tariffs.
2. **Limited Immediate Impact:** China's retaliatory actions impacted only a small fraction of total U.S. exports.
3. **Agricultural Vulnerability:** Potential retaliation could hurt key exports like soybeans, corn, and pork.
4. **Export Value:** U.S. agricultural exports totaled \$191.2 billion in 2024, heavily relying on China, Mexico, and Canada.
5. **Political Clout of Farmers:** Farmers, though a small part of the population, wield political influence, demonstrated by their election behavior in 2024.
6. **India's Position:** India may face pressure to liberalize its agricultural market due to its trade surplus with the U.S.
7. **Market Shifts:** Brazil and Argentina could benefit from any loss of U.S. agricultural export market share.
8. **Broader Implications:** A prolonged trade war could reshape U.S. trade policies and the agricultural economy.

## [EARTH'S INNER CORE MAY HAVE CHANGED-Indian Express Explained](#)

Geography

### Easy Explanation

A recent study suggests that Earth's inner core may have changed shape over the past few decades, possibly due to the outer core tugging on it. Published in *Nature Geoscience*, the study reveals that the inner core's rotation rate has slowed down compared to its faster pace a few decades ago. The inner core plays a vital role in generating Earth's magnetic field and even influences the length of days. Scientists analyzed



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earthquake data from the South Sandwich Islands, comparing seismic readings from Fairbanks, Alaska, and Yellowknife, Canada. Differences in seismic signals at Yellowknife suggest changes near the boundary of the inner core, potentially due to turbulent outer core flow or gravitational forces from denser mantle regions.

### Key Takeaways

1. **Shape Change in Inner Core:** Earth's inner core may have changed shape over recent decades, likely due to external forces from the outer core.
2. **Rotational Variability:** The inner core's spin was faster than Earth's outer layers a few decades ago, but it has since slowed.
3. **Role in Earth's Magnetic Field:** The inner core plays a critical role in generating Earth's protective magnetic field and impacts the length of days.
4. **Earthquake Pair Data:** Scientists studied seismic data from earthquakes in the South Sandwich Islands from 1991 to 2004 to detect changes.
5. **Signal Differences:** Seismic signals from Yellowknife differed from Fairbanks, suggesting boundary changes near the inner core.
6. **Potential Causes:** The changes may result from turbulent outer core flow or gravitational forces from denser mantle regions near the inner core.
7. **Core Properties:** The inner core is soft and near its melting point, making it susceptible to deformation.

### [President's rule among options for Manipur: the provision and its history - Indian Express Explained](#)

#### Polity

#### Easy Explanation

Following the resignation of Manipur's Chief Minister N. Biren Singh, the BJP is exploring options for leadership. If a consensus candidate is not found, the state may be placed under President's Rule, which the party prefers to avoid. President's Rule is imposed under Article 356 of the Constitution, transferring state government functions to the Centre. It can remain in force for two months, with parliamentary approval required for extensions up to three years under specific conditions. Historically, President's Rule has been imposed 134 times, with Jammu & Kashmir, Punjab, and Puducherry spending the longest durations under it. The Supreme Court's 1994 *S. R. Bommai v. Union of India* ruling emphasized judicial review of the imposition of President's Rule to prevent misuse.

### Key Takeaways

1. **Trigger for President's Rule:** It is imposed under Article 356 when the President is satisfied that a state cannot be governed per constitutional provisions.
2. **Duration and Extension:** Initial duration is two months, extendable up to three years with parliamentary approval and specific conditions like emergencies or election difficulties.
3. **Historical Usage:** Since 1950, President's Rule has been imposed 134 times, with Manipur and Uttar Pradesh being the most frequent. Jammu & Kashmir has spent the most time under it due to law and order issues.





4. **Supreme Court Guidelines:** The *S. R. Bommai* case subjected Article 356 to judicial review, limiting misuse by the Centre. Courts can examine the legality and rationale for imposing President's Rule.
5. **State Autonomy:** The SC upheld the independence of state governments, ruling that only the legislature would be suspended unless both Houses of Parliament approved the imposition.
6. **Recent Cases:** The last imposition of President's Rule occurred in Puducherry in 2021 after the Congress government lost a vote of confidence.
7. **Reduced Instances:** Following the *Bommai* ruling, instances of President's Rule have significantly declined, reflecting its restricted use.

### [The Modi-Trump meeting-Indian Express Explained](#)

International relations

#### Easy Explanation

Prime Minister Modi's upcoming visit to the US to meet President Trump is expected to focus on trade, immigration, and strategic issues. With a history of positive rapport, the leaders will likely address Trump's concerns over India's tariffs and trade surplus, seeking common ground to ease tensions. Immigration challenges, including the deportation of Indian illegal immigrants under harsh US protocols, will also be key discussion points, with India pushing for humane treatment and unhindered legal movement. Strategically, the US and India's shared concerns over China's growing aggression will drive discussions on enhancing the Quad partnership and boosting cooperation in defense, artificial intelligence, and emerging technologies. Both nations are expected to align on continuing efforts to counter China's influence in the Indo-Pacific region while promoting bilateral trade and strategic ties.

#### Key Takeaways

1. **Timing:** This meeting is among Trump's earliest with world leaders in his second presidency.
2. **Immigration:** India is concerned about US deportation policies for Indian illegal immigrants and wants assurances on fair treatment. Legal migration, especially for work and study, is a key Indian priority.
3. **Trade and Tariffs:** Trump has criticized India's protectionist policies and imposed tariffs that impact Indian steel and aluminum exports. A trade deal could ease tensions, but US demands for market access remain high.
4. **Strategic Alliance:** Both leaders are aligned on the strategic threat posed by China's increasing assertiveness, which has driven India closer to the US.
5. **Defense and Tech Cooperation:** Trump wants India to buy more US defense equipment. Tech partnerships focusing on AI, space, and quantum computing are expected to deepen.
6. **Personal Rapport:** Modi and Trump's past interactions have helped build mutual trust, which may smoothen negotiations during the visit.
7. **Quad and Regional Security:** The Quad alliance (India, US, Australia, and Japan) is likely to be discussed, especially in the context of countering China's influence.

### [THE SECOND STRIKE-Indian Express Editorial](#)

International relations



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## Easy Explanation

U.S. President Donald Trump imposed a 25% tariff on steel and aluminum imports without exemptions, escalating global trade tensions. Major trading partners like Canada, Mexico, South Korea, and the European Union have expressed strong opposition and promised retaliatory measures. Trump may use these tariffs as a negotiating tool, similar to previous deals with Canada and Mexico.

For the U.S., tariffs aim to boost domestic production but risk raising inflation, limiting the Federal Reserve's policy flexibility. India's exports to the U.S. of steel (\$450 million) and aluminum (\$820 million) are relatively small, but global dumping concerns may drive price pressures. Indian steel stocks have already shown signs of market anxiety.

India must tread carefully amid the tariff uncertainty. Ahead of Prime Minister Modi's U.S. visit, the government has signaled pragmatism by reducing tariffs on U.S. exports, such as high-end motorcycles and cars. It should now leverage its diplomatic goodwill with Washington to negotiate favorable terms and adapt to evolving global trade dynamics.

### Key Takeaways:

#### 1. Tariff Imposition:

- U.S. President Donald Trump imposed a 25% tariff on all steel and aluminum imports, affecting multiple countries.
- There are no exemptions, but the move may be used as a negotiating tool.

#### 2. Global Reactions:

- Canada, Mexico, and the European Union have expressed strong opposition and hinted at retaliatory measures.
- Canada's industry minister warned of a "clear and calibrated" response, and the EU vowed to respond accordingly.

#### 3. Domestic Impact on the U.S.:

- Tariffs aim to boost U.S. domestic production.
- They may, however, push up inflation, limiting the Federal Reserve's ability to implement flexible monetary policy.

#### 4. India's Trade Concerns:

- India's steel (\$450 million) and aluminum (\$820 million) exports to the U.S. are small but could face indirect pressure from increased global supply and potential dumping.
- Investor concerns are reflected in falling steel company shares and the Nifty Metal Index.

#### 5. Strategic Approach by India:

- India has shown signs of pragmatism by reducing tariffs on U.S. high-end motorcycles and cars in recent budget proposals.
- Ahead of Prime Minister Modi's U.S. visit, the Indian government should leverage diplomatic goodwill to negotiate favorable trade terms.
- India must adapt to the shifting global trade landscape amid rising uncertainty.





## [Asian elephants change scientists' minds on why they trumpet-The Hindu Science](#)

Environment

### Easy Explanation

A new study on Asian elephants has shed light on their complex vocal communication. Researchers observed elephants in Bandipur and Mudumalai National Parks, documenting four primary call types: trumpets, roars, rumbles, and chirps. While previously thought to only express disturbance, trumpeting was found to occur during social and playful interactions. The study also documented the first "combination calls" in southern Indian populations. Younger elephants used higher-pitched calls to attract attention, while older elephants used lower pitches. Roars by calves served similar purposes as in African elephants, signaling distress or need. This research paves the way for further studies on elephant communication and includes the creation of a publicly accessible Asian Elephant Sound Library to deepen understanding of their vocal behaviors.

### Key Takeaways:

1. **Vocal Communication Types:** Asian elephants use four primary call types—trumpets, roars, rumbles, and chirps—each with distinct functions.
2. **New Findings on Trumpets:** Trumpeting occurs in varied contexts like social interactions and play, not just in response to disturbances.
3. **Combination Calls:** First documentation of combination calls in southern Indian Asian elephants, such as roar-rumbles, which may maintain contact or signal disturbances.
4. **Age-Based Differences:** Younger elephants use higher-pitched calls to gain attention, while older ones use lower-pitched calls, likely due to body size changes.
5. **Universal Purpose of Roars:** Calf roars in Asian elephants mirror those of African elephants, signaling distress or emotional states.
6. **Future Research:** Researchers plan to launch an "Asian Elephant Sound Library" to explore acoustic behaviors in wild and captive environments.

## [How will freeze on USAID affect the world?-The Hindu Text and Context](#)

International relations

### Easy Explanation

On January 20, U.S. President Trump imposed a 90-day freeze on USAID funding to assess programmatic efficiency and alignment with U.S. foreign policy, halting aid distribution globally and placing most personnel on leave. USAID, established in 1961, provides development assistance across sectors like health, food security, education, and humanitarian aid in over 100 countries. Key programs include PEPFAR (HIV/AIDS relief) and Feed the Future.

The freeze could critically impact countries like Ukraine, Ethiopia, and Afghanistan, risking lives due to halted projects. The UN warns of over six million HIV/AIDS-related deaths if funding is pulled.



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In India, USAID funding has decreased, but its suspension may have a moderate effect, especially in healthcare projects. Critics view the freeze as politically motivated, and former USAID officials warn of severe consequences for global humanitarian efforts and the Global South.

### Key Takeaways:

1. **USAID Freeze:** U.S. President Trump imposed a 90-day freeze on USAID funding, halting global disbursement and placing most personnel on administrative leave.
2. **Key Sectors:** USAID is involved in health (HIV/AIDS, TB), food security, education, climate change, and humanitarian assistance across over 100 countries.
3. **Impact on Global South:** Countries like Ukraine, Ethiopia, and Afghanistan will face severe disruptions in critical aid projects, potentially endangering millions of lives.
4. **HIV/AIDS Crisis:** The UN warns that pulling global HIV/AIDS funding could cause over six million deaths in the next four years.
5. **India's Situation:** India has seen reduced USAID funding in recent years. While health remains a focus, the impact may be moderate as USAID has ordered project suspensions.
6. **Criticism:** The move is viewed as political retaliation, with former USAID officials warning it will be disastrous for global humanitarian efforts.

## 13th February 2025

[Ranveer Allahbadia row: What does law say about obscenity?-Indian Express Explained](#)

Polity

### Easy Explanation

Ranveer Allahbadia, founder of the YouTube channel BeerBiceps, and comedian Samay Raina have been charged under Section 296 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023, for alleged obscenity during a guest appearance on the YouTube show "India's Got Latent." The laws related to obscenity in India are defined under Section 294 and Section 296 of the BNS and Section 67 of the Information Technology Act, 2000. Courts have shifted from the older "Hicklin test" to a more contextual and evolving "community standards" test in evaluating cases of obscenity.

### Key Takeaways

#### 1. Relevant Laws:

- Section 294 (BNS): Punishes the selling, import, export, or display of obscene material with imprisonment up to 2 years and a fine of ₹5,000 for first-time offenders. Repeat offenders face 5 years and a ₹10,000 fine.
- Section 296 (BNS): Punishes obscene acts or utterances in public places with imprisonment up to 3 months and/or a fine of ₹1,000.
- Section 67 (IT Act, 2000): Punishes the publication or transmission of obscene material online with harsher penalties—up to 3 years imprisonment and a fine of ₹5 lakh for first-time offenses.



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## 2. Court Interpretations of Obscenity:

- Historically, the Supreme Court of India used the "Hicklin test," which judged obscenity by its potential to deprave or corrupt.
- Modern rulings now use the "community standards" test, which judges material based on contemporary societal norms and the work's overall theme.
- Landmark cases like *Aveek Sarkar vs State of West Bengal (2014)* and a 2024 YouTube web series case applied the community standards test to dismiss charges against creators.

## 3. Recent Context:

- Courts have acknowledged evolving social norms and no longer judge isolated passages out of context.
- Language and themes used in media must be viewed as reflective of human emotions rather than automatically deemed obscene.

## [EINSTEIN RING-Indian Express Explained](#)

Science and technology

### Easy Explanation

The European Space Agency's Euclid telescope recently captured an Einstein ring around galaxy NGC 6505, located 590 million light-years from Earth. Einstein rings are caused by gravitational lensing, a phenomenon where the gravity of a massive object bends and magnifies light from a more distant galaxy behind it. In this case, NGC 6505 acted as a lens for a galaxy 4.42 billion light-years away. Einstein rings are named after Albert Einstein, whose theory of general relativity predicted this light-bending effect. These rings are rare, seen in fewer than 1% of galaxies, and require powerful space telescopes for observation. Their study is essential for investigating dark matter, which interacts only through gravity but is believed to compose 85% of all matter in the universe. Einstein rings also help scientists study distant galaxies and gather data on the universe's expansion and the stretching of space over time.

### Key Takeaways

#### 1. What is an Einstein Ring?

- A ring of light that forms around a massive celestial body (e.g., galaxy or dark matter), caused by gravitational lensing.
- The phenomenon occurs when light from a distant galaxy is bent by the gravitational field of a closer object in the same line of sight.
- NGC 6505 acted as a gravitational lens for the light from a galaxy 4.42 billion light-years away.

#### 2. Significance of Einstein Rings:

- **Dark Matter Investigation:**  
Einstein rings allow indirect detection of dark matter, which does not interact with light but influences gravity.
- **Distant Galaxies:**  
They enable the study of far-off galaxies that would otherwise be invisible.



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- **Cosmic Expansion:**

Einstein rings can provide insights into the universe's expansion and the stretching of space between galaxies.

- 3. **Observational Rarity:**

- Einstein rings are extremely rare, with fewer than 1% of galaxies exhibiting this phenomenon.
- Only powerful telescopes like Euclid can detect and study these rings effectively.

### [For good and for all-Indian Express Editorial](#)

#### Governance

#### Easy Explanation

India's National AI Mission champions a **globally relevant and responsible approach to AI development**, centered on **accessibility and democratization**. It aims to share its experience with the world, emphasizing **responsible AI development** grounded in **transparency, trust, and innovation**. India advocates for **AI governance that balances risk management with the promotion of innovation and equitable access**, particularly for underserved regions. Key strategies include **open-source systems, bias reduction in data, and robust cybersecurity** to ensure AI is **people-centric and locally relevant**.

India leverages its **cost-efficient Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)**, built for over 1.4 billion citizens, and **AI-driven solutions** in governance and public services. Recognizing potential **job disruptions**, the nation is actively investing in **reskilling initiatives for an AI-driven economy**. Furthermore, India promotes **Sustainable AI**, focusing on **energy efficiency** in AI models. Boasting a **large AI talent pool** and a **public-private partnership model**, India is positioned to **share its expertise** globally, contributing to a future where AI benefits all humanity responsibly.

#### Key Takeaways:

- **Democratization and Accessibility at Core:** India's AI Mission prioritizes making AI accessible and beneficial to all, not just a select few, both domestically and globally.
- **Responsible AI is Paramount:** Transparency, trust, and innovation are the cornerstones of India's AI development, highlighting a commitment to ethical and safe AI.
- **Balanced Governance for Innovation and Equity:** India envisions AI governance that fosters innovation and ensures equitable access, especially for underserved populations, beyond just risk mitigation.
- **Leveraging DPI for AI Solutions:** India is effectively utilizing its existing Digital Public Infrastructure to deploy AI-driven solutions for governance and public services, showcasing a practical approach.
- **Addressing Societal Impact Proactively:** India is taking concrete steps to address potential negative impacts of AI, such as job displacement, through reskilling initiatives and promoting Sustainable AI.
- **Global Collaboration and Expertise Sharing:** India positions itself as a global leader willing to share its AI expertise and contribute to a responsible and beneficial AI future for all humanity.
- **People-Centric and Locally Relevant AI:** The ultimate goal is to develop AI solutions that are tailored to the needs and contexts of people and local communities, ensuring practical and meaningful impact.





## Some surprises, many challenges-Indian Express Editorial

Sociology

### Easy Explanation

The Telangana Cabinet's release of its caste survey data reveals significant OBC populations (46.25% non-Muslim, 10.08% Muslim), Scheduled Castes (17.43%), and Scheduled Tribes (10.45%). A surprising finding is the high percentage of Muslims identifying as OBCs. This state-level survey, the first by a Congress government, has major implications for national welfare politics, aligning with Rahul Gandhi's push for a national caste census to challenge the BJP's OBC support base. The survey results embolden OBC groups to demand increased reservations, potentially exceeding the 27% cap and mirroring Bihar's attempt (later struck down). Telangana now faces pressure to fulfill its promise of 42% OBC reservation in local body elections, encountering legal hurdles like the 50% reservation cap and the need for central government approval. The survey's findings and subsequent political actions could reshape reservation politics nationally and regionally, challenging existing caste-based political equations.

### Key Takeaways

- **Telangana Survey Reveals High OBC Population:** The survey highlights a substantial OBC population in Telangana (56.33% combined), with a surprisingly high number of Muslim OBCs.
- **Congress Uses Survey for Political Leverage:** Rahul Gandhi leverages the Telangana survey to advance his national caste census agenda and challenge BJP's OBC support.
- **OBC Reservation Demands Intensify:** The survey data strengthens OBC demands to increase reservation quotas, potentially exceeding the Supreme Court's 27% cap.
- **50% Reservation Cap Remains a Hurdle:** Telangana faces significant legal challenges in increasing OBC reservation beyond the 50% limit, requiring central approval.
- **National Caste Census Debate Fueled:** Telangana and Bihar's surveys bring the national caste census debate to the forefront, forcing political parties to address the issue.
- **BJP's OBC Vote Base Challenged:** The caste census and subsequent reservation demands could potentially disrupt the BJP's strong OBC support, especially in North India.
- **New Political Equations Possible:** Caste survey data has the potential to reshape political alliances and vote banks based on evolving caste demographics and reservation policies.

## What is contributing to the downturn in Indian markets?-The Hindu Text and Context

Economy

### Easy Explanation

Indian stock markets are facing a downturn primarily driven by substantial selling from Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs). This outflow is fueled by several factors: tepid domestic earnings growth, high valuations in mid and small-cap segments, persistent inflation, and uncertainty stemming from U.S. trade policies, particularly President Trump's tariff hikes on steel and aluminum. These tariffs raise fears of Asian export



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dumping in India, increasing competition for domestic industries. Crucially, rising U.S. bond yields attract FII's seeking safer, higher returns, exacerbating capital outflow and weakening the Rupee. While domestic investors offer some cushion, negative market sentiment prevails. The near-term outlook is uncertain, contingent on global trade dynamics, geopolitical stability, and signs of Indian economic recovery, with SIP inflows providing limited support against these headwinds.

### Key takeaways

1. **Relentless FII Selling is the Core Problem:** The dominant factor driving the market decline is the consistent and large-scale selling by Foreign Institutional Investors, indicating a significant shift in their investment strategy away from Indian equities.
2. **Trump's Trade Policies Exacerbate Negative Sentiment:** U.S. tariff hikes on steel and aluminum have amplified market anxieties, triggering fears of increased import competition and broader trade protectionism impacting India.
3. **Rising US Bond Yields Draw Away Foreign Capital:** More attractive returns offered by U.S. bonds are luring foreign investors seeking safer havens, leading to a significant outflow of capital from Indian stock markets.
4. **Weakening Rupee Reflects Capital Outflow Pressure:** The exodus of foreign investment is directly contributing to the depreciation of the Indian Rupee, further diminishing the attractiveness of Indian assets for international investors.
5. **Domestic Economic Vulnerabilities Add to Market Weakness:** Underlying issues like tepid earnings growth, elevated stock valuations (especially in mid and small caps), and persistent inflation make the Indian market more susceptible to external pressures.
6. **Near-Term Outlook Remains Highly Uncertain and Globally Dependent:** The market's recovery is contingent on unpredictable global factors like U.S. trade policy direction, geopolitical stability, and a broad-based improvement in the global economic climate.
7. **Domestic SIP Inflows Offer Limited Relief, Not a Solution:** While Systematic Investment Plans from domestic investors provide some support and stability, they are currently insufficient to fully counteract the overwhelming selling pressure from FIIs and the prevailing negative market sentiment.

### [AI can make drug-testing precise, and relevant to human biology-The Hindu Science](#)

Science and technology

#### Easy Explanation

Acknowledging the rapid integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in pharmaceutical submissions, the U.S. FDA has proposed draft guidelines for AI's role in assessing drug safety and efficacy. This move recognizes AI's potential to revolutionize drug development by overcoming limitations of traditional animal models, accelerating discovery, reducing costs, and improving predictions of human drug responses and side effects. However, the guidelines address critical challenges inherent in AI, particularly data dependency ("garbage in, garbage out"), lack of transparency in model workings, and potential biases.

The FDA framework emphasizes establishing AI model credibility through clear objectives, context-specific applications, and rigorous risk assessments, primarily focusing on the preclinical stage crucial for human trial



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approval. Key elements include ensuring data quality, mitigating bias, and continuous monitoring of AI models. These guidelines align with global efforts from agencies like EMA and ICH, and India's recent regulatory amendments allowing computational models for drug assessment. While not mandates, these guidelines serve as a crucial anchor for harmonizing regulatory approaches, industry practices, and research strategies, ultimately aiming to ensure consumer safety and foster responsible innovation in an AI-driven pharmaceutical future.

## Key takeaways

### 1. FDA's Proactive Response to AI in Pharma:

- FDA issues draft guidelines to manage the growing use of AI in drug development and assessment.
- This acknowledges the increasing integration of AI/ML in drug submissions from pharmaceutical companies.

### 2. AI's Potential for Drug Development Revolution:

- AI offers faster, cheaper drug discovery & development, potentially overcoming limitations of animal models.
- It promises better prediction of human responses, reduced costs, and faster identification of promising drug candidates.

### 3. Data Dependency: A Critical Vulnerability:

- AI model accuracy is fundamentally limited by the quality and representativeness of training data.
- "Garbage in, garbage out" is a significant concern; biased data leads to flawed results.

### 4. Transparency and Risk: Core Challenges for Trust:

- "Black box" nature of AI models hinders independent scrutiny and performance evaluation.
- Incorrect AI predictions, especially in safety assessments, can have severe, even life-threatening consequences.

### 5. FDA Guidelines Prioritize Credibility and Safety:

- Framework emphasizes clear objectives, context-specific use, rigorous risk assessment for AI models.
- Focus is on data quality, bias mitigation, and continuous monitoring throughout the AI model lifecycle.

### 6. Global Movement Towards AI in Drug Regulation:

- FDA guidelines align with similar initiatives from EMA, ICH, and India's regulatory updates.
- This indicates a global consensus on integrating AI while ensuring safety and efficacy.

### 7. Guidelines as a Harmonizing Anchor:

- Serve as a central point for aligning government policies, industry practices, and research strategies.
- Crucial for ensuring consumer safety and building trust in AI-driven drug development within a dynamic field.







## [Averting Engels' pause-The Hindu Editorial](#)

### Governance

#### Easy Explanation

At the AI Action Summit in Paris, PM Modi advocated for AI governance grounded in shared values, risk mitigation, and trust, mirroring India's commitment to responsible AI development. While recognizing AI's potential for efficiency and innovation, the article highlights two key priorities for India: **labor market impact and energy sustainability**. The risk of an "Engels' pause" – where firms profit from AI while wages stagnate – is a serious concern for India's economy, especially within the significant IT and services sector. Proactive policies are essential to avert this. Simultaneously, the summit's focus on sustainable AI is critical given AI's surging energy demands, necessitating a shift towards renewable energy sources. India's strategy should prioritize developing tailored, efficient AI models and leveraging initiatives like the IndiaAI Mission. Crucially, building a robust AI talent pipeline through widespread education and skills training is vital for India to not just adapt to, but thrive in the AI-driven transformation and maintain global competitiveness.

#### Key Takeaways

- **Responsible AI Governance:** India champions AI governance based on shared values, trust, and risk mitigation on the global stage.
- **Labour Market Disruption is a Key Concern:** India must proactively address potential job losses and wage stagnation ("Engels' pause") in its IT sector due to AI-driven efficiencies.
- **Sustainable AI is Imperative:** Energy efficiency and renewable energy sources are crucial for India's AI growth to align with global climate goals.
- **Tailored AI Models for India's Needs:** Developing foundational AI models specific to Indian contexts and leveraging efficiencies is essential.
- **IndiaAI Mission - Encouraging Steps:** Initiatives like subsidized GPU access and project funding are positive moves towards AI development in India.
- **Talent Pipeline is Paramount:** Investing in widespread AI education and skills training is vital for India's AI competitiveness.
- **Proactive Policy Needed:** India requires proactive policies in labor, energy, and education to effectively navigate and benefit from the AI revolution.

## [Nuclear energy — dangerous concessions on liability-The Hindu Editorial](#)

### Science and technology

#### Easy Explanation

The Indian government's plan to amend the Atomic Energy Act and the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act to indemnify nuclear suppliers is a dangerous concession, prioritizing U.S. corporate interests over Indian safety. Undermining the "right of recourse" clause, which allows operators to seek compensation from suppliers for accidents caused by faulty equipment, removes crucial financial incentives for suppliers to prioritize reactor safety. Historical precedents like Fukushima and Three Mile Island demonstrate that design flaws and supplier negligence can contribute significantly to nuclear disasters. Furthermore, importing



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expensive U.S. reactors like AP1000, with their track record of cost overruns and questionable economics, is not in India's interest. The push to indemnify suppliers, driven by U.S. lobbying, exposes the hollowness of safety claims by nuclear vendors and raises serious questions about the Modi government's commitment to protecting Indian citizens' rights and safety against powerful corporate pressures. Maintaining supplier liability is essential for nuclear safety and accountability, and any dilution would be a detrimental step backward.

### Key Takeaways

- **Indemnifying Suppliers Undermines Safety:** Amending the liability law to protect suppliers removes their financial incentive to prioritize nuclear safety and quality control.
- **"Right of Recourse" is Crucial for Victim Protection:** Diluting this clause harms potential victims by limiting their recourse to compensation from suppliers for accidents caused by supplier fault.
- **US Reactors are Economically Unsound:** Importing expensive U.S. reactors is economically questionable for India, especially given cheaper alternatives and the AP1000's problematic history.
- **US Lobbying Prioritizes Corporate Profits:** U.S. pressure to amend the law reveals a focus on U.S. corporate profits over Indian safety and legal rights.
- **Safety Claims are Contradicted by Indemnity Demands:** Nuclear industry's insistence on indemnity contradicts their exaggerated safety claims, highlighting inherent risks.
- **Accountability is Essential for Nuclear Safety:** Holding suppliers liable is a critical mechanism for ensuring accountability and driving continuous improvement in nuclear safety standards.
- **Government Concession Shows Weakness:** The proposed amendment demonstrates a concerning inability of the Modi government to stand up for Indian citizens' interests against U.S. corporate pressure.

14th February 2025

[What's new in I-T Bill, 2025-Indian Express Explained](#)

Economy

### Easy Explanation

The Income-Tax Bill, introduced in Lok Sabha, aims to modernize and simplify India's direct tax system. Replacing the 1961 Act, it focuses on clarity and conciseness. Key changes include introducing the "tax year" aligned with the financial year, replacing the "assessment year," and defining "virtual digital space" to encompass online platforms and social media for tax purposes. Cryptocurrencies are formally recognized as property. While deductions for common expenses are listed, the absence of a tax rate table for the old regime hints at a push towards the new tax regime. The bill streamlines deductions and removes outdated capital gains exemptions. Its structure is significantly shorter, with fewer chapters and sections, and utilizes tables for easier comprehension of deductions, exemptions, and tax rates. Dispute resolution processes are clarified. The bill emphasizes clearer language and removal of redundant provisions to reduce complexity and litigation. It now proceeds to a Parliamentary Committee for review before final implementation, likely by a future date. The goal is a more user-friendly and efficient tax system.



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## Key takeaways

1. **Simplified and Concise:** The new bill significantly reduces the complexity and length of the income tax law, making it easier to understand and navigate.
2. **Modernized Approach:** It incorporates digital aspects of modern life, including social media and cryptocurrencies, into the tax framework.
3. **Shift Towards New Regime?:** The omission of the old tax regime's rate table suggests a possible push towards the new, simpler tax regime.
4. **Focus on Clarity:** The bill prioritizes clear language, removes redundant provisions, and uses tables and visual aids to enhance understanding.
5. **Streamlined Processes:** Changes to the "tax year" concept and dispute resolution mechanisms aim to simplify tax administration and reduce litigation.
6. **No Major Structural Overhaul:** While simplifying and modernizing, the bill largely maintains the existing direct tax structure.
7. **Future Implementation:** The bill is still under review and will likely be implemented at a later date.

## [HIGH ENERGY NEUTRINO DETECTED UNDER MEDITERRANEAN SEA:STUDY-Indian Express](#) [Explained](#)

Science

### Easy Explanation

A submerged neutrino detector in the Mediterranean Sea has identified the most energetic neutrino ever observed, surpassing the previous record by 30 times. Scientists believe this ultra-energetic "ghost particle" originated from beyond the Milky Way. Neutrinos are produced by stars, supernovae, cosmic rays, and radioactive decay. These nearly massless particles interact so rarely with matter that trillions pass through the human body each second unnoticed. Detecting them is extremely challenging, so specialized detectors are placed deep underwater, underground, or in polar ice to capture rare collisions with matter. The detector responsible for this discovery is still under construction. This finding is crucial in advancing our understanding of the universe's most extreme energy processes, its origins, and how cosmic forces hold it together. The study, led by co-author Aart Heijboer, was published in *Nature* and is part of ongoing efforts to decode the universe's high-energy mysteries.

### Key Takeaways

1. **Record Energy:** The detected neutrino was 30x more powerful than any previous one.
2. **Extraterrestrial Source:** The particle likely came from beyond the Milky Way.
3. **Ghost Particle:** Neutrinos have near-zero mass and rarely interact with matter.
4. **Extreme Rarity:** Trillions of neutrinos pass through the body unnoticed every second.
5. **Detection Challenge:** Deep-sea, underground, or polar ice detectors capture rare neutrino collisions.
6. **Scientific Importance:** Neutrino studies help understand the universe's origins and structure.
7. **Ongoing Research:** The detecting device is still under construction, demonstrating ongoing innovation.



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## Defence to energy,deepening of India-France ties amid geopolitical shifts-Indian Express

### Explained

International relations

#### Easy Explanation

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to France from February 10-12 focused on deepening India-France relations amid global geopolitical shifts. The visit included co-chairing the AI Action Summit and reviewing the 'Horizon 2047' Roadmap. France, concerned over Europe's strategic dependence on the U.S. following Trump's presidency, seeks stronger ties with India. Defence cooperation remains a cornerstone, with ongoing projects like Scorpene submarines and Rafale jets, alongside India's offer of the Pinaka rocket system. India-France economic ties also advanced with plans for the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), offering a strategic trade route alternative. Additionally, France aims to construct nuclear power reactors in India, despite past challenges under India's 2010 Civil Liability for Nuclear Damages Act. Both nations now explore Small and Advanced Modular Reactor (SMR/AMR) technologies to boost energy security. Overall, the visit strengthened bilateral cooperation in defence, connectivity, and energy amidst evolving global dynamics.

#### Key Takeaways

##### 1. AI and Horizon 2047 Roadmap

Modi co-chaired the AI Action Summit with Macron, emphasizing innovation and technology collaboration. Both leaders also reviewed progress on the 'Horizon 2047' Roadmap to strengthen the India-France strategic partnership.

##### 2. Geopolitical Shifts

Amid growing European concerns over Trump's potential return and the U.S. stance on Russia's invasion of Ukraine, France aims to reduce dependence on the U.S. and deepen ties with India.

##### 3. Defence Cooperation

India and France continue to strengthen defence ties through ongoing projects like Rafale jets and Scorpene submarines. France remains a key defence supplier and reliable partner since India's 1998 nuclear tests.

##### 4. IMEC Trade Corridor

The proposed India-Middle East-Europe Corridor aims to improve connectivity and reduce India's reliance on traditional shipping routes. Marseille was proposed as a strategic hub for this corridor.

##### 5. Nuclear Energy Projects

France's offer to build nuclear reactors in Jaitapur faces challenges under India's 2010 liability law. Both sides now explore amendments to attract foreign investment in civil nuclear energy.

##### 6. SMR/AMR Technologies

India and France signed an agreement to explore Small and Advanced Modular Reactors. These technologies require less space and investment, making them suitable for India's energy goals.

##### 7. Economic and Security Alignment

India and France continue to align on Indo-Pacific strategies, climate change, and economic connectivity. Their shared vision for a multipolar world enhances their strategic partnership.



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## IN THE LIGHT-Indian Express Editorial

Governance

### Easy Explanation

The Waqf Amendment Bill (2024) addresses unresolved issues from the Waqf Act of 1995 related to the management of waqf properties. However, its formulation without consultation, especially with the All India Muslim Personal Law Board, drew criticism. The Bill's referral to a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) was welcomed for fostering inclusive dialogue. Controversy erupted on February 13, with the Opposition alleging redaction of dissenting remarks from the JPC report. Critical concerns include the appointment of non-Muslims to Waqf Boards, government arbitration in disputed properties, and the Centre's audit authority over any waqf. These provisions have raised fears of potential erosion of minority rights, especially over religious and charitable properties. Home Minister Amit Shah responded by inviting dissenting remarks and retabling the report. Moving forward, transparent, thorough debates are crucial to balancing reform and minority rights, especially on emotive issues concerning religious properties.

### Key Takeaways

#### 1. Waqf Amendment Bill Concerns

The 2024 Waqf Amendment Bill has raised concerns due to a lack of consultation with key stakeholders, particularly the All India Muslim Personal Law Board.

#### 2. Panel Controversy

The tabling of the Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) report led to controversy, with the opposition claiming their dissenting remarks were removed, a claim denied by the ruling party.

#### 3. National Importance

Waqf Boards manage vast landholdings, many of which face encroachment or ownership disputes, making the Bill significant to national governance.

#### 4. Controversial Amendments

Provisions such as allowing non-Muslim members on Waqf Boards, executive arbitration of disputes, and central audits have sparked fears of undermining Muslim religious and cultural rights.

#### 5. Balance and Transparency Needed

Reform should respect minority rights and religious properties. The government's willingness to retable the JPC report is a positive step, but broader discussions are essential to avoid rushed legislation.

## AFTER TRUMP'S CALL WITH PUTIN-Indian Express Editorial

International relations

### Easy Explanation

Following a phone call between U.S. President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin, negotiations to end the nearly three-year-long Ukraine war may begin. Trump expressed optimism but



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potentially sacrificed leverage by revealing the U.S. stance before talks. U.S. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth stated that Ukraine's pre-2014 borders and NATO membership were unrealistic, and U.S. troops would not participate in post-war security. Ukraine seeks full Russian withdrawal and NATO membership, while Russia demands territorial concessions and neutrality. NATO's support has been minimal, with internal divisions hindering Ukraine's accession. The U.S. may continue supplying arms through a "minerals for weapons" deal but won't guarantee security. This leaves the European Union with an opportunity to lead its military revival as a prerequisite for Ukraine's security. While obstacles remain, concessions like "no NATO" may help bring Russia to the negotiating table.

## Key Takeaways

### 1. Negotiation Announcement

Trump and Putin agreed to initiate peace talks immediately after a productive phone call. This marks a significant shift in diplomatic efforts after nearly three years of war.

### 2. U.S. Position

The U.S. dismissed the possibility of Ukraine returning to pre-2014 borders or joining NATO. This stance signals an effort to find middle ground for negotiations with Russia.

### 3. Ukraine's Stance

Ukraine demands the full withdrawal of Russian forces and NATO membership for credible security guarantees. Zelenskyy remains open to negotiations if allies ensure robust protections.

### 4. Russia's Demands

Russia seeks territorial concessions, particularly in Donbas, and Ukraine's permanent neutrality as key conditions for peace. These demands complicate a potential settlement.

### 5. NATO Support Gaps

NATO's assistance to Ukraine has been slow and uncoordinated, with logistical issues hindering swift delivery. Internal divisions within the alliance have also impacted its support.

### 6. NATO Divisions

Major NATO members like Germany, Spain, and Belgium have expressed reservations about Ukraine joining the alliance. This hesitancy undermines unity on the matter.

### 7. Russian Manpower Issues

Russia's reliance on foreign troops, including North Koreans, underscores its manpower struggles. Moscow's military losses remain significant despite its battlefield gains.

### 8. European Union's Role

The European Union must play a larger role in providing security guarantees for Ukraine. A strengthened EU military revival is essential for ensuring future regional stability.

### 9. Potential Concessions

A "no NATO membership" concession could encourage Russia to seriously engage in peace talks. However, Ukraine's territorial integrity remains a major point of contention.

## [What is happening in the DRC? -The Hindu Text and Context](#)







## Easy Explanation

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is embroiled in renewed conflict as the M23 militia, reportedly backed by Rwanda, captured Goma, a strategic and mineral-rich city on the eastern border. This ongoing conflict is deeply rooted in ethnic tensions between Hutus and Tutsis dating back to colonial times and intensified after the 1994 Rwandan genocide. The M23, formed in 2012, claims to protect Tutsis but also seeks control of the DRC's lucrative mineral resources, particularly Coltan. Rwanda denies involvement but has hinted at the legitimacy of M23's claims. Regional responses vary: Burundi has issued warnings against Rwanda's support of M23, Uganda is taking a neutral stance, and DRC President Félix Tshisekedi has condemned the group's actions as an act of war. The conflict is driven by both ethnic divisions and competition for resources, which keeps the region in turmoil.

## Key Takeaways

### 1. Renewed M23 Offensive:

The M23 militia captured Goma, sparking fresh conflict in eastern DRC.

### 2. Ethnic Tensions and Colonial Legacy:

The roots of the conflict trace back to colonial-era Hutu-Tutsi tensions, intensified by the 1994 Rwandan genocide.

### 3. Mineral Wealth and Resource Competition:

DRC's east is home to Coltan, a key mineral in electronics manufacturing, which makes control of Goma highly desirable.

### 4. M23's Formation and Evolution:

M23 was formed after a failed peace deal in 2009. It resurfaced in 2022 after accusing the DRC of breaking promises to protect Tutsis.

### 5. Rwanda's Alleged Role:

Rwanda, led by Paul Kagame, is accused of supporting M23, though it denies direct involvement. Kagame's statements often hint at M23's legitimacy.

### 6. Regional Responses:

DRC's President Tshisekedi labeled M23's actions as war, while Burundi issued warnings against Rwanda, fearing conflict spillover. Uganda remains neutral but is suspected of allowing M23 to operate within its borders.

### 7. Conflict's Dual Nature:

The crisis is driven by both ethnic strife and competition for control of DRC's valuable resources, further destabilizing the region.

## [Challenges of malaria vaccination, as elimination becomes achievable-The Hindu Science](#)

Science

## Easy Explanation

Malaria remains a significant global health challenge, causing over 240 million cases and 600,000 deaths annually. Despite advances, its vaccine development is hindered by the parasite's complex life cycle and ability to evade immunity. The RTS,S vaccine, the first WHO-approved malaria vaccine, reduces cases by



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36% after four doses but shows inconsistent protection and logistical challenges in low-income regions. Second-generation vaccines, such as R21/Matrix-M and transmission-blocking candidates, offer hope but are not yet widely available. Underfunding remains a key obstacle, as malaria primarily affects low-income countries, limiting research and healthcare resources. Additionally, the parasite's adaptability allows it to evolve quickly, reducing vaccine efficacy over time. A holistic strategy that combines effective vaccines, mosquito control measures, and improved treatments is essential to achieving a malaria-free world. While the road is long, recent progress indicates elimination is an achievable goal with continued global efforts and investment.

## Key Takeaways

### 1. Discovery of Transmission

- Ronald Ross proved in 1897 that malaria is transmitted by *Plasmodium* via female Anopheles mosquitoes.
- This discovery initially enabled European colonization of malaria-prone regions.

### 2. Malaria Parasite's Complexity

- The life cycle involves multiple stages across humans and mosquitoes.
- Parasite's antigenic variation allows it to outmaneuver the immune system.
- Reinfections are common due to genetic adaptability.

### 3. Malaria Vaccine Progress

- RTS,S vaccine, targeting the liver stage, reduces cases by 36% after 4 doses but has inconsistent protection.
- R21/Matrix-M and other second-generation vaccines are showing promise, but long-lasting solutions are elusive.

### 4. Challenges in Vaccine Development

- High cost and low financial returns deter pharmaceutical investments.
- Malaria mostly affects low-income regions, leading to underfunded research.

### 5. Future Strategies

- A combination of more effective vaccines, mosquito control, and enhanced treatments is critical for achieving malaria elimination.

[China's dam project opens the floodgates of concern-The Hindu Editorial](#)

International relations

Easy Explanation



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China's plan to build a massive hydroelectric dam on the Yarlung Zangbo river in Tibet raises significant concerns for India, as the river becomes the Brahmaputra upon entering Assam. This project is part of China's push to transition from coal to renewable energy. However, environmental, legal, and geopolitical challenges persist. Both China and India are not signatories to the UN Watercourses Convention, leaving them without a formal framework for managing shared water resources. India is particularly vulnerable, as it relies on Tibetan-origin rivers for one-third of its water supply. The dam's location in a seismically active region raises environmental risks, including habitat disruption and erosion. Bangladesh's muted response, shaped by its evolving ties with China, complicates regional dynamics. While diplomatic talks offer hope for renewing MoUs and better cooperation, the absence of a collective South Asian water management strategy remains a key hurdle.

## Key Takeaways

### 1. Project Overview

China's proposed dam on the Yarlung Zangbo river in Tibet aims to enhance hydroelectric power as part of its renewable energy transition.

### 2. India's Concerns

India, a lower riparian state, is concerned about the potential impact on downstream water flow and its reliance on Tibetan-origin rivers for one-third of its water supply.

### 3. Environmental Risks

The dam's location in a seismically active region could lead to habitat destruction, riverbank erosion, and disrupted ecosystems.

### 4. Legal Challenges

Neither China nor India are signatories to the UN Watercourses Convention, leaving no formal framework for managing shared water resources.

### 5. Regional Dynamics

Bangladesh's muted response reflects its improved ties with China, while other South Asian countries like Nepal and Bhutan could also be affected.

### 6. Diplomacy and Cooperation

India and China's recent diplomatic engagements offer hope for renewing expired MoUs and improving trust through information-sharing mechanisms.

# 15th February 2025

[How reciprocal tariffs work-Indian Express Explained](#)

International relations

Easy Explanation



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President Trump has announced a plan to implement **reciprocal tariffs**, meaning the U.S. will impose tariffs on imports at the same level that other countries charge on U.S. exports. This policy represents a significant shift from decades of free trade and the special treatment historically given to developing nations. The U.S. Trade Department is set to work out the details, which will include assessing the subsidies and support that foreign governments provide to their domestic industries. This approach is expected to heavily impact countries like India, which has used measures like the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme to boost exports. The strategy is largely aimed at addressing trade deficits—viewed by Trump as a sign of unfair trade practices—by forcing other countries to either import more U.S. goods or invest in domestic operations in the U.S. While this could narrow the trade deficit with India, it might also lead to a weaker rupee due to increased demand for U.S. dollars, and potentially undercut India's domestic consumption goals despite recent tax incentives. In the long run, however, cheaper U.S. goods may benefit Indian consumers, even as the move challenges India's ambition for greater self-reliance.

### Key Takeaways

- **Reciprocal Tariffs Defined:** The U.S. will match the tariffs imposed on its exports by applying equivalent tariffs on imported goods.
- **Shift in Trade Policy:** This policy marks a departure from post-World War II free trade norms and the special considerations once given to developing countries.
- **Impact on Subsidized Exporters:** Nations that provide significant subsidies to boost exports, such as India with its PLI scheme, may face higher tariff burdens.
- **Addressing Trade Deficits:** Trump's initiative is primarily aimed at eliminating trade deficits by compelling other nations to purchase more American goods or invest in the U.S.
- **Effects on India:**
  - **Trade Balance:** India may import more U.S. products (defense equipment, oil, gas), which could narrow its trade deficit with the U.S.
  - **Currency Impact:** Increased demand for U.S. dollars might lead to a further weakening of the Indian rupee.
- **Domestic Economic Implications:** The recent significant tax break in India, intended to boost domestic consumption, might be offset if wealthy consumers use the savings to buy cheaper U.S. goods.
- **Long-Term Outlook:** Although there are short-term challenges, Indian consumers could benefit from lower prices on American products, even if this trend conflicts with India's goal of achieving self-reliance (Atmanirbhar).

### [US-designed reactors, SMRs, and why the 123 Agreement could finally realise its full potential- Indian Express Explained](#)

International relations

### Easy Explanation

India and the U.S. are reaffirming their bilateral energy partnership and moving forward on the **123 Civil Nuclear Agreement** to build American-designed nuclear reactors in India. Legislative amendments are required in India to ease nuclear liability laws and open the private sector to nuclear plant operations. Additionally, India is seeking an exemption from the U.S. "810" authorization, which restricts American



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companies from performing nuclear work outside the U.S. without approval. This is crucial for India's ambition to co-produce **Small Modular Reactors (SMRs)** domestically. SMRs are key to India's clean energy transition and global leadership ambitions in nuclear technology. The U.S. is expected to revisit this authorization, potentially unlocking the full commercial potential of the Indo-U.S. nuclear partnership nearly two decades after the agreement's inception.

### Key Takeaways

- **123 Agreement Progress:** India and the U.S. are pushing forward with plans for U.S.-designed nuclear reactors and deeper civil nuclear collaboration.
- **Legislative Changes in India:**
  - **Atomic Energy Act (1962):** Proposed changes aim to allow private sector participation in nuclear power operations and SMR production.
  - **Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act (2010):** Amendments will address liability issues that have deterred foreign companies from investing.
- **U.S. "810" Authorization:** India seeks an exemption from this provision, which limits American nuclear companies' manufacturing or design work outside the U.S., essential for India's SMR goals.
- **SMRs' Importance to India:**
  - These reactors (30-300MWe) are critical to India's clean energy transition and leadership aspirations in the nuclear sector.
  - India is in talks with Holtec International for SMR collaboration.
- **Global SMR Projects:** Two SMR projects are operational globally—the Akademik Lomonosov in Russia and HTR-PM in China—highlighting growing global interest in this technology.

[Note of caution: what bilateral trade deal with US could mean for India-Indian Express Explained](#)

International relations

### Easy Explanation

India and the U.S. have announced plans to negotiate a **Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA)**, aiming to double bilateral trade to **\$500 billion by 2030**. Unlike a Free Trade Agreement (FTA), a BTA focuses on specific goods. The agreement seeks to reduce tariffs and non-tariff barriers to improve market access. However, concerns remain over India's higher tariff structure and Trump-era protectionist policies, including tariffs on steel and aluminum. The U.S. has expressed dissatisfaction with India's tariffs on goods such as motorcycles. India's trade surplus with the U.S. has doubled in recent years, with increased energy purchases from the U.S. being seen as a way to help reduce the trade imbalance.

### Key Takeaways

- **BTA Scope:** A BTA is narrower than an FTA, focusing on specific goods and aiming to reduce trade barriers.
- **Market Access & Tariffs:** India may lower tariffs on U.S. goods, as U.S. average tariffs are already among the lowest globally. U.S. concerns about India's high tariffs remain an issue.



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- **Trade Deficit Reduction:** India's increased imports of American energy could help address the U.S. trade deficit.
- **Historical Tensions:** Past issues like the termination of the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) and U.S. tariffs on steel and aluminum add caution to BTA negotiations.
- **India's Trade Surplus:** India's goods trade surplus with the U.S. doubled from 2019-20 to 2023-24, driven by energy, electronic goods, and engineering exports.

### [FACING THE WEATHER-Indian Express Editorial](#)

Environment

#### Easy Explanation

The latest Global Climate Risk Index reveals that extreme weather events—ranging from floods and cyclones to severe heatwaves—have taken a devastating toll over the past three decades, with over 9,400 incidents causing more than 765,000 fatalities and inflicting over \$4 trillion in economic losses. The report highlights that India is significantly impacted, accounting for one in every ten climate-related casualties and ranking as the sixth worst-affected nation. It warns that global temperatures continue to rise, exacerbated by factors like the delayed onset of La Niña, and underscores that regions like South Asia are increasingly vulnerable to heatwaves. While initiatives such as Ahmedabad's Heat Action Plan show promise, the report stresses that current global efforts—hampered by inadequate finance and limited technology transfer from developed to developing countries—are insufficient. It calls for a broader, multi-forum approach, including collaboration at the G-20 level and among neighboring countries, to build robust climate resilience across borders.

#### Key Takeaways

- **Rising Climate Impact:** Over 9,400 extreme weather events between 1993 and 2022 have resulted in more than 765,000 deaths and \$4 trillion in economic losses.
- **India's Vulnerability:** India experienced one in every ten climate casualties and ranks as the sixth worst-affected country, with heightened risk from heatwaves.
- **Global Temperature Rise:** Recent trends, including the delayed La Niña effect, indicate a continued warming trend, with January recording record-high global temperatures.
- **Inadequate Global Response:** There are significant shortfalls in climate resilience efforts, particularly in finance and technology transfer from the Global North to the Global South.
- **Need for Broader Cooperation:** Effective climate adaptation requires engagement beyond traditional UNFCCC negotiations, involving forums like the G-20 and regional cooperation.
- **Positive Local Initiatives:** Adaptation projects, such as Ahmedabad's Heat Action Plan, demonstrate that proactive local measures can mitigate some impacts of climate change.

### [Dealing with China's weaponisation of e-supply chains-The Hindu Editorial](#)

International relations

#### Easy Explanation



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China is leveraging its control over critical components and skilled manpower to disrupt India's burgeoning electronics manufacturing sector—especially the Apple-Foxconn supply chain, a linchpin of India's ambition to become a global manufacturing hub. By preventing Chinese engineers from traveling to India and restricting the export of specialized manufacturing equipment, China aims to slow down production and hinder technology transfer. This strategic move is part of broader geopolitical competition, as China seeks to maintain its dominance in global electronics production amid rising trade tensions and diversification efforts like the "China Plus One" strategy. Despite India's robust initiatives under the 'Make in India' programme and the Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme—which have led to significant investments and the assembly of major iPhone models—the disruption underscores India's reliance on Chinese components and technology. The text concludes by urging India to involve key industry players in negotiations with China and to accelerate the development of a self-reliant, technologically advanced manufacturing ecosystem.

### Key Takeaways

- **China's Disruptive Actions:**
  - Restricted travel for Chinese engineers and technicians at Foxconn's facilities in India.
  - Recalled Chinese staff already working in India.
  - Limited the export of specialized manufacturing equipment over which it holds a monopoly.
- **Impact on India's Manufacturing Ambitions:**
  - Disruptions affect the crucial Apple-Foxconn supply chain, impeding India's goal of becoming a global manufacturing power.
  - Highlights India's heavy reliance on Chinese components and expertise.
- **Geopolitical Strategy:**
  - China aims to curb India's rise and control the flow of technology and production know-how.
  - These actions are part of a broader strategy amid escalating global trade tensions and efforts by companies to diversify supply chains ("China Plus One").
- **India's Progress and Initiatives:**
  - Significant investment in electronics manufacturing through the 'Make in India' programme and the PLI scheme.
  - Successful assembly of iPhone 15 and iPhone 16 Pro models in India.
  - State-level prioritization of Apple-Foxconn investments, reinforced by high-level accolades (e.g., awarding Foxconn's chairman the Padma Bhushan).
- **Recommendations for India's Future Strategy:**
  - Engage key stakeholders like Apple and Foxconn to negotiate with China and ease current restrictions.
  - Develop a more holistic manufacturing ecosystem by enhancing local capabilities, technology transfer, and skill development.
  - Encourage private capital to build a robust network of indigenous contract manufacturers, reducing overreliance on foreign components and expertise.

### [The Teesta dam and the long shadow of climate change-The Hindu Editorial](#)

Environment



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## Easy Explanation

In January 2025, an expert committee recommended rebuilding the Teesta-3 dam in Sikkim, which was destroyed in October 2023 by a glacial lake outburst flood (GLOF) from the South Lhonak lake. The flood, triggered by moraine collapse and exacerbated by climate change, killed over 100 people and displaced thousands. While the new design incorporates improvements like larger spillways and early-warning systems, concerns remain about building in an earthquake-prone region. The proliferation of glacial lakes and unpredictable risks linked to global warming complicate flood modeling and dam resilience. Experts caution that decisions about rebuilding must prioritize minimizing local risks and enhancing socio-economic resilience rather than focusing solely on commercial viability.

## Key Takeaways

- **Dam Destruction and Casualties:**
  - In October 2023, a GLOF destroyed the Teesta-3 dam in Sikkim, killing over 100 and displacing 80,000 people.
  - Moraine collapse led to the rapid release of 50 billion liters of water downstream.
- **Climate Change Impact:**
  - Himalayan glaciers are melting faster due to global warming and black carbon, increasing glacial lake formation and risk of outburst floods.
  - Between 2011 and 2024, glacial lakes in the region increased by 10.8%, and their surface area grew by 33.7%.
- **Committee's Decision to Rebuild:**
  - The Teesta-3 dam was deemed commercially viable, and most of its power equipment remained intact.
  - The new dam will be built with concrete, have larger spillways, and feature a flood early-warning system.
- **Expert Concerns:**
  - Environmentalists and hydrogeologists worry about building dams in a landslide-prone region.
  - Current flood models inadequately capture risks from erosion, sediment transport, and slope failures.
- **Balancing Commercial Viability and Risk:**
  - Climate change multiplies risk, and restoring the dam could increase future flood damage if unexpected events occur.
  - Socio-economic resilience should be prioritized, with costs factored into hydroelectric tariffs rather than externalized.
- **Call for Long-term Solutions:**
  - Experts emphasize the need for risk matrices, disaster response plans, and thresholds for unacceptable risks.
  - Social security systems must be strengthened to protect livelihoods and lives in disaster-prone areas.





# 16th February 2025

## The river and a city: Why Yamuna isn't the problem: IE Opinion

### Environment

Whenever elections take place in Delhi, political parties suddenly start talking about **pollution in the Yamuna River**, claiming that it is the city's lifeline and must be cleaned. However, these claims are often **based on false assumptions**, and the real problem is **not the river itself but the way it is being polluted**.

### Is the Yamuna Really Delhi's Lifeline?

Contrary to common belief, the **Yamuna has not historically been the primary source of water for Delhi**. The **seven capitals of Delhi** were mostly built far from the river and relied on **stepwells, wells, and rainwater collection** for their water needs. Even during **Mughal times**, Shah Jahan extended a canal from Hisar to bring water to Red Fort and Chandni Chowk.

### Why Was the Yamuna Less Used for Drinking Water?

- The **riverbed in Delhi contains quartz rock**, which holds **mica and silica**—substances that **made the water unfit for drinking**.
- Over time, **people preferred stepwells and rainwater collection instead of drinking Yamuna water**.
- The **British introduced the Chandrawal waterworks in the 1890s**, and from then on, **Delhi started depending on modern water supply systems**.

### How Did the Yamuna Start Getting Polluted?

- Before modern sewage systems, **people relied on deep wells and rain-fed lakes for water**.
- **Delhi had over 1,367 natural water bodies**, including lakes like **Hauz Khas, Hauz-i-Shamsi, and Naraina Jheel**.
- Over time, **many of these water bodies were lost or encroached upon**—nearly **half of them are now gone** according to an April 2024 Delhi High Court submission.
- Streams flowing from the **Aravalli hills, like those in Defence Colony, Lodi Garden, and IIT Delhi**, **used to bring fresh water to the Yamuna**.
- **Today, these streams carry industrial waste and sewage instead of fresh water**.

### Why Are Current Cleanup Efforts Failing?

- The **Yamuna does not produce pollution by itself**—it is the **sewage and industrial waste from its tributaries that pollute it**.
- The government spends **millions of taxpayer money** every year to clean the river, but **these efforts fail because they do not address the real issue—dirty tributaries**.
- Without stopping **untreated waste from entering the stormwater drains**, the Yamuna **will never be clean**.



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## How Can the Yamuna Be Truly Cleaned?

- Instead of cleaning the Yamuna itself, clean the tributaries that bring waste into it.
- Set up small water treatment plants every half a kilometer along these tributaries to filter out waste before it reaches the river.
- Ensure that **stormwater drains do not carry untreated sewage** into the river.
- If these solutions are implemented, **clean water will start flowing into the Yamuna again.**

## Why This is a Simple Solution?

- The solution is **practical and does not require importing expensive foreign technology.**
- **Instead of wasting millions every year**, the government can use a **straightforward approach to fix the problem permanently.**

## Key Takeaways: Understanding Yamuna Pollution and Solutions

### 1. The Yamuna Was Never Delhi's Primary Water Source

- Historically, Delhi relied on **stepwells, wells, and rain-fed lakes** for drinking water.
- **Seven historical capitals of Delhi** were built far from the Yamuna.
- The **riverbed contains quartz rocks**, which made the water **unsuitable for drinking.**

### 2. The Real Causes of Yamuna Pollution

- Delhi had **1,367 natural water bodies**—many have been **lost or encroached upon.**
- Freshwater **streams from the Aravallis** used to feed the Yamuna, but today **they carry industrial waste and sewage.**
- The **problem is not the Yamuna itself but the polluted tributaries that flow into it.**

### 3. Why Current Cleanup Efforts Are Failing

- **Millions of rupees are spent each year** to clean the river, but **the real problem (polluted tributaries) is ignored.**
- The Yamuna **does not produce pollution**—waste from factories, untreated sewage, and stormwater drains pollute it.

### 4. The Right Way to Clean the Yamuna

- **Stop untreated waste from entering tributaries** and stormwater drains.
- **Set up small water treatment plants** every half a kilometer along these tributaries.
- Instead of **cleaning the Yamuna directly**, **focus on cleaning the sources of pollution.**
- Once clean water starts flowing into the Yamuna, **it will recover naturally.**

### 5. A Practical, Cost-Effective Solution

- This solution is **simple, does not require foreign technology**, and **saves money.**
- **Millions of rupees spent every year on failed cleanup efforts can be redirected to real solutions.**



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- A clean Yamuna is achievable by focusing on cleaning its tributaries first.

### [Why is a new Bill on foreigners coming?: TH Editorial](#)

Polity

## Easy Explanation: Immigration and Foreigners Bill, 2025 – What You Need to Know

The Indian government is planning to introduce a new law that will change how immigration and foreigner-related issues are handled in the country. The Immigration and Foreigners Bill, 2025, set to be introduced in March, will replace four old laws that currently govern the entry, stay, and deportation of foreigners in India. These include:

1. The Passport (Entry into India) Act, 1920
2. The Registration of Foreigners Act, 1939
3. The Foreigners Act, 1946
4. The Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act, 2000

This new bill will streamline all immigration-related rules into one single document. It will clearly define the responsibilities of immigration officers, rules for passport and visa, registration of foreigners, and deportation procedures.

### What's New in This Bill?

1. **Legal Backing for the Bureau of Immigration (BoI)**
  - The BoI already exists, but this bill will give it legal powers to regulate immigration matters.
  - Immigration officers will have clear responsibilities in processing visas and monitoring foreigners.
2. **New Rules for Foreigners in India**
  - Foreigners will still need to register with authorities, similar to the existing Foreigners Regional Registration Office (FRRO) system.
  - Institutions like universities, hospitals, and hotels will have stricter rules regarding foreign admissions and stays.
3. **Stronger Measures for National Security**
  - The bill introduces new grounds to deny entry or remove foreigners if they pose a threat to national security, India's sovereignty, relations with other countries, or public health.
  - The decision of the immigration officer will be final, meaning foreigners can be refused entry without much legal challenge.
4. **Harsher Penalties for Illegal Entry and Overstaying**
  - Entering India without valid documents: Punishable by up to five years in prison and a fine of ₹5 lakh.
  - Using fake passports or forged documents: Punishable by 2 to 7 years in prison and fines ranging from ₹1 lakh to ₹10 lakh.
  - Overstaying beyond visa limits: Can lead to 3 years in prison and a fine of up to ₹3 lakh.



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## 5. State Governments Can Detect and Deport Illegal Foreigners

- The **central government does not have a separate police force** to handle illegal immigration.
- Instead, **state police** have been given the authority to **identify and deport illegal migrants**.
- The **deportation process will depend on whether the foreigner has valid travel documents**.

## 6. Detention Centers and Holding Facilities

- Instead of using the term “**detention centers**,” the bill states that illegal foreigners will **stay in restricted areas under supervision** until they are deported.
- States **do not need special approval** from the Home Ministry to set up such centers.
- These centers **must be outside jails** and should be **large enough to accommodate all illegal foreigners awaiting deportation**.

## 7. Tracking Foreigners and Preventing Fraudulent Documents

- States must create **two committees** to identify foreigners who **overstayed after January 1, 2011**.
- The **e-FRRO portal** will track visa violations, and state police will have **access to foreigners' biometric and personal details**.
- The **government will block Aadhaar cards issued fraudulently to illegal foreigners**.

## What Does This Mean for India?

- The **Immigration and Foreigners Bill, 2025**, is one of the most comprehensive reforms in India's immigration laws.
- It aims to **control illegal migration, ensure national security, and improve tracking of foreigners in the country**.
- However, **it also gives a lot of power to immigration officers**, whose decisions cannot be easily challenged, raising concerns about **misuse and lack of transparency**.
- States now **have a bigger role in deporting illegal migrants**, which means **more responsibility for local law enforcement agencies**.

This bill could **significantly impact foreign students, businesses, and migrant workers in India**. While it **brings stricter rules**, it also creates a **more organized immigration system** that replaces outdated laws.

## Key Takeaways: Immigration and Foreigners Bill, 2025

### 1. What is the Immigration and Foreigners Bill, 2025?

- A **new law that replaces four existing laws** governing immigration.
- Aims to **streamline rules** on entry, stay, and deportation of foreigners.
- Strengthens **security measures and penalties for illegal entry and overstaying**.

### 2. Key Provisions of the Bill

- **Legalizes the Bureau of Immigration (BoI)** to oversee immigration.
- **Defines the powers of immigration officers** and foreigner registration rules.
- **Tighter regulations** for universities, hospitals, hotels hosting foreigners.

### 3. Entry and Stay Rules for Foreigners



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- Foreigners can **be denied entry** if they pose a **threat to national security, sovereignty, or public health**.
- **Immigration officers' decisions will be final and binding**.
- The **government has broader powers to remove foreigners**.

#### 4. Stricter Penal Provisions

- **Illegal entry: Up to 5 years in jail and ₹5 lakh fine.**
- **Fake documents: 2-7 years in jail and ₹1-10 lakh fine.**
- **Overstaying visas: Up to 3 years in jail and ₹3 lakh fine.**

#### 5. Role of State Governments in Detecting and Deporting Foreigners

- **State police will handle the detection and deportation** of illegal foreigners.
- Foreigners **can only be deported if they have valid travel documents**.
- If they lack documents, the **Indian government will coordinate with foreign embassies** to arrange their return.

#### 6. Detention Centers for Illegal Foreigners

- The bill does **not use the term "detention centers"** but allows for **"supervised residence areas"** for foreigners awaiting deportation.
- States **do not need special approval** to set up holding centers.
- **Centers must be outside jails** and accommodate foreigners until deportation.

#### 7. Tracking and Preventing Fraudulent Documentation

- **State-level committees** will track foreigners overstaying beyond January 1, 2011.
- **E-FRRO portal** will help **police track foreigners violating visa norms**.
- **Aadhaar cards issued fraudulently** to foreigners will be **blocked**.

### [What is the cancer vaccine Russia is offering?: TH Editorial](#)

Science Tech

## Easy Explanation: Russia's mRNA Cancer 'Vaccine' – What It Means

Russia has announced the development of an **mRNA-based personalized cancer 'vaccine'** that could be available for free to patients by 2025. The vaccine, developed by the **Gamaleya National Research Center for Epidemiology and Microbiology**, has reportedly shown promise in **pre-clinical trials**, suppressing tumor development and potential metastases (spread of cancer).

### What is an mRNA Cancer 'Vaccine'?

Unlike vaccines for infectious diseases, **cancer vaccines do not prevent cancer but are used for treatment**. The term "vaccine" can be misleading because it suggests prevention, but these treatments are a form of **immunotherapy** that helps the immune system target and destroy cancer cells.



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## How does it work?

- **mRNA vaccines carry genetic instructions** that teach the body's cells to make specific proteins (antigens).
- In cancer immunotherapy, **these antigens help the immune system recognize and attack cancer cells**.
- Unlike chemotherapy, which harms both healthy and cancerous cells, **this method targets only cancer cells, reducing side effects**.

## Why is This Important?

- **Cancer cells often evade detection** by the immune system.
- mRNA vaccines **train the immune system to recognize and attack these cells** before they spread.
- This **personalized approach** targets specific antigens in each patient's tumor, making it potentially more effective.

## Is Russia the Only Country Working on a Cancer 'Vaccine'?

No. Several countries and pharmaceutical companies are also developing similar treatments:

- **U.K.'s National Health Service (NHS):** Launched the **Cancer Vaccine Launch Pad** to speed up access to clinical trials.
- **U.S.-based CureVac:** Their **CVGBM cancer vaccine** showed promise in early trials for **brain cancer (glioblastoma)**.
- **Over 120 clinical trials** worldwide are testing mRNA-based cancer immunotherapy.

## Challenges and Unanswered Questions

- **Cancer is not caused by a single organism like viruses or bacteria**, making vaccine development more complex.
- Unlike the **HPV vaccine (for cervical cancer)** or **Hepatitis B vaccine (for liver cancer prevention)**, mRNA cancer vaccines do not prevent cancer; they treat it after diagnosis.
- **There is limited public data on Russia's treatment.** Clinical trials usually take years, and without transparency, it's unclear how safe and effective this treatment is.
- Immunotherapy **does not work for all cancer types**, and further research is needed to determine **who will benefit the most**.

## What's Next?

- The scientific community is **waiting for more data** on Russia's mRNA cancer treatment.
- If successful, **mRNA-based cancer treatments could revolutionize cancer care**, making it more personalized and less harmful than traditional treatments like chemotherapy.
- However, **years of testing and trials are still needed** before such treatments become widely available.



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## Key Takeaways: Russia's mRNA Cancer 'Vaccine'

### 1. What is an mRNA Cancer 'Vaccine'?

- A **treatment, not a preventive vaccine** – it helps the immune system attack cancer cells.
- Uses **mRNA technology** to train the body to recognize and destroy tumors.
- More **precise and personalized** than traditional treatments like chemotherapy.

### 2. How Does It Work?

- Teaches the body's cells to produce **specific proteins (antigens)** found on cancer cells.
- **The immune system detects and attacks cancer cells** when these antigens are present.
- Reduces side effects by **targeting only cancer cells**, unlike chemotherapy, which affects healthy cells too.

### 3. Is Russia the Only One Working on This?

- **No, other countries and companies** are developing similar treatments.
- **U.K.'s NHS** is running a cancer vaccine trial program.
- **U.S. company CureVac** has tested an mRNA vaccine for **brain cancer**.
- Over **120 clinical trials** worldwide are exploring mRNA-based cancer therapies.

### 4. What Are the Challenges?

- **Cancer is not caused by a single factor**, making treatment complex.
- Unlike **HPV and Hepatitis B vaccines**, this does not **prevent cancer** but treats it.
- **No public data yet on Russia's trials**, raising concerns about safety and effectiveness.
- Immunotherapy **doesn't work for all cancers**, and further research is needed.

### 5. Future of mRNA Cancer Treatment

- If proven effective, **mRNA-based treatments could revolutionize cancer care**.
- More **personalized and potentially less harmful** than chemotherapy.
- Still **years away from widespread availability** due to long clinical trial processes.

[Loggerhead turtles use geomagnetic field to navigate large distances: TH Science](#)

Science Tech

## Easy Explanation: How Loggerhead Turtles Use Earth's Magnetic Field for Navigation

A recent study published in *Nature* has revealed that **loggerhead sea turtles can learn and remember the magnetic signatures of different locations**. They use this ability to navigate vast distances in the ocean. The research suggests that turtles have **two distinct geomagnetic senses**, helping them **find food, return to familiar sites, and navigate during migration**.



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Scientists from the **University of North Carolina** conducted an experiment where juvenile turtles were placed in artificial **magnetic fields that replicated real-world locations**. They were **fed in only one of these magnetic zones**. The turtles learned to associate that specific magnetic signature with food and **performed a "turtle dance" when placed in the same field again**, showing anticipation of feeding.

## How Do Turtles Use Magnetic Fields?

Sea turtles rely on the **Earth's magnetic field as both a map and a compass**. This study found that they have **two separate mechanisms** for navigation:

1. **Magnetic Map Sense** – Helps turtles recognize specific locations based on their unique magnetic signature.
2. **Magnetic Compass Sense** – Helps turtles orient themselves and determine direction.

Interestingly, **only the compass sense was disrupted** when scientists introduced radiofrequency oscillating magnetic fields, a method that usually affects magnetoreception in other animals. This suggests that the **map and compass senses function through different biological mechanisms**.

This discovery is significant because it improves our understanding of **how migratory species navigate over long distances**. It could also have implications for **conservation efforts**, as human-made magnetic disturbances (such as undersea cables) could interfere with turtle navigation.

## Key Takeaways: How Loggerhead Turtles Navigate Using Earth's Magnetic Field

### 1. Turtles Can Learn and Remember Magnetic Signatures

- Loggerhead sea turtles **use Earth's magnetic field to recognize locations**.
- When exposed to a specific magnetic field where they were fed earlier, turtles **performed a "turtle dance" in anticipation of food**.
- This suggests that turtles **store and recall magnetic field information** to aid in navigation.

### 2. Turtles Have Two Separate Magnetic Senses

- **Magnetic Map Sense**: Helps turtles recognize different geographical locations.
- **Magnetic Compass Sense**: Helps them orient in the correct direction during migration.
- These two systems work independently, meaning **if one is disrupted, the other may still function**.

### 3. Experiment Details

- Juvenile turtles were **placed in artificial magnetic fields mimicking real locations**.
- They were fed in only one of these fields.
- When placed in the same magnetic field later, **they showed excitement (turtle dance) in anticipation of food**, proving they could associate magnetic fields with locations.

### 4. Magnetic Navigation Mechanisms





- Scientists **tested the effects of radiofrequency oscillating magnetic fields**, which usually disrupt magnetoreception.
- **Only the compass sense was affected**, while the magnetic map sense remained functional.
- This suggests that **two different biological mechanisms control the turtle's navigation system**.

## 5. Importance of This Discovery

- **Helps explain how migratory species navigate vast distances.**
- Could have **implications for conservation**, as human activities (such as electromagnetic pollution from undersea cables) might interfere with turtle migration.
- Offers insights into **how animals use Earth's magnetic field for long-distance travel**.

### [Stubble burning contributes only 14% PM2.5 in Delhi-NCR: study- TH Science](#)

Environment

## Easy Explanation: Debunking the Link Between Stubble Burning and Delhi's Air Pollution

A recent study published in *Climate and Atmospheric Science* challenges the common belief that **stubble burning in Punjab and Haryana is the primary cause of air pollution in Delhi-NCR**. The study, based on **air quality measurements, wind patterns, and satellite data**, found that **stubble burning accounts for only 14% of Delhi's PM2.5 pollution**.

Despite a **50% decline in stubble burning between 2015 and 2023**, **PM2.5 levels in Delhi have remained persistently high**, particularly in winter (December-February). This suggests that other **local sources** like **vehicular emissions, industrial activities, construction dust, and biomass burning** play a much larger role in worsening air quality.

The research also found that **pollution levels in Delhi-NCR increase at night**, which wouldn't happen if stubble burning was the primary cause. Instead, this nighttime pollution rise **points to local sources like fossil fuel combustion and industrial emissions**.

The study also observed that during **strict air pollution control measures** (such as when Delhi enforces Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) Stage III & IV), **PM2.5 levels drop significantly**. However, when these restrictions are lifted, **pollution levels surge again**, reinforcing the need for **better regulation of local pollution sources** rather than blaming stubble burning alone.

## Key Takeaways: Why Stubble Burning is Not the Main Cause of Delhi's Pollution

### 1. Stubble Burning Only Contributes 14% to Delhi's Air Pollution

- The study found that **stubble burning in Punjab and Haryana contributes only 14% to Delhi-NCR's PM2.5 pollution**.
- In contrast, **Delhi's transport sector contributes 30%**, **local biomass burning 23%**, **construction activities 10%**, and **industries 5-7%**.



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- Stubble burning occurs mainly in **October-November**, but **Delhi's air quality remains poor even in December-February**, proving that **other sources play a bigger role**.

## 2. No Linear Correlation Between Stubble Burning and PM2.5 Levels

- Even though **stubble burning incidents in Punjab and Haryana dropped by over 50% between 2015 and 2023**, Delhi's **PM2.5 levels remained unchanged**.
- In 2023, **stubble-burning incidents fell by 31% in Punjab and 37% in Haryana**, yet **Delhi's PM2.5 levels increased by 20%** at the U.S. Embassy air monitoring station.
- This suggests that **reducing stubble burning alone is not enough to control Delhi's air pollution**.

## 3. Local Emissions Play a Bigger Role

- **Delhi's PM2.5 levels rise at night**, which wouldn't happen if stubble burning was the primary cause.
- Instead, nighttime pollution suggests **local sources like vehicle emissions, fossil fuel burning, and industrial pollution** are more responsible.
- **Carbon monoxide (CO) levels also increase at night**, further proving that **pollution in Delhi-NCR comes from local sources, not Punjab and Haryana's farm fires**.

## 4. Wind and Weather Conditions Impact Pollution Levels

- **Wind speed, temperature, and atmospheric inversion** also play a key role in determining Delhi's pollution levels.
- **If wind speeds are strong**, some stubble-burning smoke reaches Delhi.
- However, during **low wind speeds and temperature inversions in winter**, pollutants from **local sources get trapped, making air quality worse**.
- Thus, **weather conditions, not just stubble burning, drive pollution levels in Delhi**.

## 5. Air Quality Improves with Strict Pollution Control Measures

- During **GRAP Stage III & IV**, when strict pollution controls on **vehicles, construction, and industries** were enforced, **Delhi's PM2.5 levels dropped significantly**.
- But as soon as **these measures were lifted, pollution levels shot up again**, proving that **local sources are the real contributors**.

## 6. The Real Major Polluters in Delhi-NCR

According to IIT Kanpur's Dr. Sachchida Tripathi (not part of the study), the **biggest contributors to Delhi's air pollution** are:

- **Transport sector: 30%**
- **Local biomass burning: 23%**
- **Construction & road dust: 10%**
- **Industries & cooking: 5-7%**
- **Stubble burning: Only 13%, and only in October-November**

## Conclusion



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This study **debunks the myth that stubble burning is the biggest reason for Delhi's winter pollution**. While **farm fires do contribute to air pollution**, they are **not the primary cause**. Instead, **local emissions from vehicles, industries, construction, and biomass burning play a much bigger role**. Controlling these **local pollution sources** through stricter **transport and industrial regulations** is the **only effective way to improve Delhi's air quality**.

## 17th February 2025

### [Chhattisgarh HC extends marital rape exception: Why this matters-Indian Express Explained](#)

Polity

#### Easy Explanation

The Chhattisgarh High Court's ruling extends the marital rape exception to Section 377 of the IPC, which criminalized "unnatural sex." This effectively removes a legal recourse previously available to married women experiencing non-consensual sex, even within the context of "unnatural acts." This decision coincides with the omission of Section 377 from the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), creating a legal vacuum concerning non-consensual sexual acts against men and LGBTQIA+ individuals. Experts argue the BNS, by focusing primarily on male perpetrators and female victims, fails to address these scenarios. The marital rape exception itself is under Supreme Court challenge. While a PIL sought the revival of Section 377, the Supreme Court dismissed a similar plea, deferring the definition of offenses to Parliament. The BNS lacks an equivalent to Section 377, and the Transgender Persons Act offers limited protection with comparatively lenient punishments. The High Court's decision and the BNS omission significantly weaken legal safeguards against non-consensual sexual activity, particularly within marriage and for men and LGBTQIA+ individuals.

#### Key Takeaways:

- **Marital Rape Exception Extended:** The ruling extends the controversial marital rape exception to Section 377, meaning even "unnatural sex" within a marriage is not considered an offense if the wife is of legal age.
- **Section 377 and Marital Rape:** Section 377, while historically used against homosexuality, was also a legal tool for married women experiencing non-consensual sex. The ruling eliminates this avenue.
- **BNS Omission Issue:** The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) omits Section 377 entirely, raising concerns about the lack of legal recourse for non-consensual sexual acts against men and LGBTQIA+ individuals. Experts argue this leaves a gap in protection.
- **Legal Challenges:** The marital rape exception itself is under challenge in the Supreme Court. A PIL was filed in Delhi HC to revive Section 377, but the SC dismissed a similar plea, stating it's the Parliament's domain to define offenses.
- **Lack of Equivalent in BNS:** The BNS lacks an equivalent to Section 377, and its provisions largely focus on men as perpetrators and women as victims, neglecting other scenarios of sexual assault.
- **Limited Protection for Transgender Persons:** While the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act exists, its maximum punishment for harming a transgender person is only two years, which is seen as insufficient.



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## PRIME MINISTER DHAN-DHAANYA KRISHI YOJANA: SCHEME'S NEED, AIMS-Indian Express Explained

Governance

### Easy Explanation

The Prime Minister Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana (PMDKY), announced in the Union Budget, aims to boost agricultural productivity and sustainability across 100 districts. Modeled after the Aspirational Districts Programme (ADP), the scheme will target areas with low productivity, moderate cropping intensity, and below-average credit availability. It focuses on enhancing irrigation, promoting crop diversification, improving post-harvest storage at local levels, and facilitating access to short- and long-term credit. Cropping intensity, which reflects efficient land use, will be a key factor in district selection. The program is expected to benefit 1.7 crore farmers. While no separate budget allocation was announced, funding will be drawn from existing schemes under the Ministry of Agriculture and related departments, with additional provisions likely after Union Cabinet approval. PMDKY seeks to address rural agricultural challenges holistically, leveraging collaboration and competition among districts for better outcomes.

### Key Takeaways

- **Launch Announcement:** Prime Minister Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana (PMDKY) was announced by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman during the Union Budget presentation on February 1.
- **Inspiration from ADP:** The scheme follows the model of the Aspirational Districts Programme (ADP) launched in 2018, which transformed 112 underdeveloped districts using convergence, collaboration, and competition.
- **Target Districts:** PMDKY will cover 100 districts identified based on low productivity, moderate cropping intensity, and below-average credit parameters.
- **Objectives:** The programme aims to:
  - Enhance agricultural productivity.
  - Promote crop diversification and sustainable agricultural practices.
  - Improve post-harvest storage at local levels.
  - Enhance irrigation facilities.
  - Facilitate the availability of both long-term and short-term credit.
- **Farmer Impact:** The scheme is expected to benefit approximately 1.7 crore farmers.
- **Funding Mechanism:** Although no separate allocation is provided in the Budget documents, funds will be drawn from various existing schemes under the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare and other related ministries, pending formal approval by the Union Cabinet.

### India's Middle Class 2.0-Indian Express Explained

Economy

### Easy Explanation



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"India's Middle Class 2.0" highlights the post-1991 economic reforms that shifted employment from the public to private sectors, driven by the rise of industries like IT and private banking. Major IT firms (TCS, Infosys, Wipro, HCL, Tech Mahindra) now employ more people than Indian Railways or the armed forces. Private banks also surpassed public sector banks in workforce size by 2023-24. This shift has given rise to a new middle class benefiting from well-paying, skilled jobs in finance, IT, and other modern services. However, the growth has been largely confined to educated workers, with manufacturing contributing little to job creation. India faces a key employment challenge as surplus agricultural labor struggles to transition to higher-productivity sectors. While services like gig work have expanded, these low-paying jobs are insufficient to drive further middle-class expansion, underscoring the need for more inclusive and diversified economic growth.

### Key Takeaways

- **Private Sector Surge:** India's top 5 IT firms now employ more people than traditional giants like the Indian Railways or the armed forces, marking a shift from public to private sector dominance.
- **Employment Shift Post-Reforms:** Since the economic reforms of 1991, there's been a steady decline in public sector jobs (e.g., in Railways and Central Public Sector Enterprises) and a corresponding rise in private sector opportunities, especially in IT and banking.
- **Banking Industry Transformation:** Once dominated by public sector banks, the employment landscape in banking has changed, with private banks overtaking state-owned banks in workforce numbers by 2023-24.
- **Middle Class 2.0 Emergence:** The expansion of services, particularly in IT and financial services, has spurred the rise of a new middle class, although this growth is largely benefiting the more educated segments.
- **Structural Employment Challenge:** Despite overall job growth, most new opportunities are concentrated in services, with limited expansion in manufacturing, leaving many low-skilled workers in informal, low-paying jobs.

### [AI-enabled cameras in Similipal Tiger Reserve send poaching plummeting-The Hindu Science](#)

Environment

#### Easy Explanation

**AI-enabled cameras in Similipal Tiger Reserve** have dramatically reduced poaching incidents. Using TrailGuard AI, 100-150 cameras with built-in AI chips capture and classify movement as 'animals,' 'humans,' or 'vehicles,' transmitting images within 40 seconds if needed. This early alert system helped officials arrest 96 poachers and seize over 86 country-made guns in the last 10 months. Proactive enforcement includes house raids based on photographic evidence. TrailGuard AI cameras, developed by Nightjar Technologies, are compact and durable, with a battery life of 6-12 months. The system operates across five states, including Kanha Tiger Reserve and Dudhwa National Park, to mitigate human-wildlife conflict. However, increased surveillance has affected tribal communities' forest access, prompting discussions for safer alternatives. Naturalists believe the technology could transform wildlife monitoring and patrolling across protected areas, improving conservation efforts and reducing illegal activities.



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## Key Takeaways:

### 1. Effective Poaching Prevention

- TrailGuard AI cameras helped arrest 96 poachers and seize over 86 guns in the past 10 months.
- Over 40 poachers were arrested in December alone, demonstrating significant progress.

### 2. Camera Technology Features

- Cameras operate in low-power mode until movement is detected.
- AI chips classify objects and transmit images within 30-40 seconds if necessary.
- The compact design includes a pen-sized camera unit and a notepad-sized battery/communication unit.

### 3. Durability & Cost

- Battery life ranges from 6 months to 1 year.
- Each camera costs ₹50,000-53,000.

### 4. Deployment Expansion

- Currently used at over 14 sites in five states, including Kanha Tiger Reserve and Dudhwa National Park.

### 5. Impact on Local Communities

- Surveillance has reduced forest access for tribal communities, prompting discussions on safer access options.

### 6. Future Potential

- Experts see TrailGuard AI as a game-changer for wildlife monitoring and patrolling across protected areas.

## [The silent crisis of rat-hole mining-The Hindu Editorial](#)

### Geography

### Easy Explanation

The Gauhati High Court has taken suo motu cognizance of the January 6 mine flooding tragedy in Assam's Umrangso, where nine laborers were trapped and at least four died. This incident is part of a larger crisis of rat-hole mining in Assam and Meghalaya, which has claimed over 30 lives in five years. Despite a 2014 National Green Tribunal (NGT) ban and a 2019 Supreme Court ruling, illegal mining persists due to weak enforcement and the influence of powerful coal mafias and bureaucrats. Rat-hole mining endangers workers and is tied to bonded labor, including child labor. States like Meghalaya exploit legal loopholes to bypass national mining regulations. To address this, stricter penalties, state-level enforcement, alternative livelihoods, and satellite-based monitoring are recommended. With renewed judicial scrutiny, the hope is



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that proactive government action will finally curb the hazardous practice and uphold the right to life guaranteed under Article 21.

### Key Takeaways

- **Mining Tragedies:** The January 6 mine flooding in Assam, which killed at least four miners, highlights ongoing risks in illegal mining in Northeast India, where at least 30 miners have died in the past five years.
- **Rat-Hole Mining Practices:** Rat-hole mining, characterized by narrow, dangerous tunnels, continues despite a 2014 NGT ban due to weak enforcement and influence from coal mafias. The practice leads to hazardous conditions, child labor, and bonded labor.
- **Lack of Accountability:** Both Assam and Meghalaya have failed to enforce mining regulations effectively, allowing illegal mining to thrive despite legal frameworks and Supreme Court rulings.
- **Political and Economic Drivers:** Local governments are pressured by economic interests, with coal mining providing significant revenue and employment, which leads to reluctance in enforcing bans.
- **Recommended Solutions:** A multi-faceted approach is necessary, including stricter penalties under the MMDR Act, alternative livelihoods for mining communities, satellite-based monitoring, and more robust state enforcement mechanisms.

### [The panchayati raj movement is in distress-The Hindu Editorial](#)

#### Polity

#### Easy Explanation

The 73rd Amendment to the Indian Constitution, passed in 1992, established the panchayati raj system to decentralize governance and promote local democracy. It created a three-tier structure for rural governance, with significant reservations for women, SCs, and STs, aiming to ensure local participation and inclusivity. Over time, however, the momentum behind the panchayati raj movement has stalled. Factors contributing to this decline include a plateau in administrative decentralization, reduced financial autonomy due to cuts in untied grants, a shift toward cash transfers bypassing panchayats, and the increasing urbanization of India. These shifts have relegated panchayats to mere delivery instruments for central government schemes, diminishing their role in local governance.

Despite these challenges, there is still potential to revive the system. A new vision for panchayati raj is needed, one that integrates technology, citizen engagement, and local decision-making, while focusing on issues like water conservation, renewable energy, and disaster management. Revitalizing panchayats can help bridge the rural-urban divide and ensure that rural India continues to play a crucial role in the country's development.

### Key Takeaways

- **Historical Importance:**
  - The 73rd Amendment (1992) was a landmark, institutionalizing the panchayati raj system and promoting grassroots democracy in rural India through decentralization and reservation for women, SCs, and STs.



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- **Current Distress:**
  - Momentum has stalled due to declining public participation, overreliance on centrally sponsored schemes, and increased politicization.
- **Administrative and Fiscal Constraints:**
  - Administrative decentralization has plateaued, with less than 20% of states devolving all 29 subjects.
  - Although direct fiscal transfers have increased, the decline in untied grants has limited local autonomy, with central controls persisting through tied grants.
- **Impact of Welfare Reforms and Urbanization:**
  - Direct cash transfers via platforms like JAM (e.g., PM-KISAN) have reduced the intermediary role of panchayats.
  - Rapid urbanization shifts focus and resources away from rural governance.
- **Path to Revival:**
  - Embracing technology and citizen engagement, enhancing fiscal and administrative powers, and expanding roles in resource management and disaster risk reduction are crucial for revitalizing panchayati raj.

## 18th February 2025

### [The dawn quake in Delhi-Indian Express Explained](#)

Geography

#### Easy Explanation

On Monday, Delhi experienced a rare magnitude 4 earthquake originating near Dhaula Kuan—the strongest in at least five years. Delhi, located in a seismically active zone, falls under Zone 4 on India's earthquake hazard map, indicating its vulnerability to moderate damage during earthquakes. The earthquake likely resulted from stress within the Aravalli-Delhi Fold Belt, a geological region characterized by ancient deformations. While some residents heard unusual sounds during the quake, experts believe these were likely building vibrations rather than the earthquake itself. Historical records show a few significant quakes in Delhi's past, but experts believe a large earthquake in the region is highly unlikely due to the area's tectonic stability.

#### Key Takeaways

##### 1. Earthquake Details

- A magnitude 4 earthquake occurred near Dhaula Kuan, Delhi—the strongest in five years.
- Another earthquake of similar magnitude was recorded later near Siwan, Bihar.

##### 2. Delhi's Seismic Risk

- Delhi is in Zone 4, indicating susceptibility to MSK-8 level shaking, which can cause major damage.
- Seismic activity in the region is primarily due to the Aravalli-Delhi Fold Belt.



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### 3. Geological Insights

- The region's ancient geological deformations still release mild earthquakes.
- Delhi's setup makes large earthquakes unlikely.

### 4. Historical Earthquakes

- Quakes in 1720 and 1803 reportedly caused significant damage, but newer data suggests the 1803 event likely originated in Uttarakhand.

### 5. Unusual Sounds

- Some residents reported hearing sounds during the quake, possibly from vibrating structures.
- Such sounds are uncommon but can occur with larger earthquakes.

## [As US position on Ukraine-NATO shifts, here's what to call—and why it matters-Indian Express Explained](#)

International relations

### Easy Explanation

This article examines a significant shift in the U.S. stance on Ukraine's potential NATO membership—a policy once embraced in declarations such as the 2008 Bucharest Summit but now considered unrealistic by key U.S. officials. It contrasts historical assurances and commitments made by Western leaders with current statements from figures like Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth and former President Donald Trump, highlighting that Ukraine's NATO membership is no longer seen as a viable outcome of any negotiated settlement. The discussion is framed within the broader context of NATO's eastward expansion since the 1990s, a process that has steadily increased Russian insecurity. For Moscow, Ukraine joining NATO has long been a red line and is seen as a direct threat to its national security, while recent shifts in U.S. policy signal potential realignments in the alliance and in the dynamics of the ongoing conflict.

### Key Takeaways

- **Policy Shift:**
  - In 2008, NATO leaders welcomed Ukraine's aspirations for membership.
  - Recent U.S. statements, including those from Secretary Hegseth and remarks by Trump, indicate that Ukraine joining NATO is now viewed as impractical in any negotiated settlement.
- **Historical Context:**
  - Western assurances in the early 1990s (e.g., Baker's promise to Gorbachev) contrasted sharply with NATO's subsequent eastward expansion, incorporating former Soviet allies.
  - This expansion has contributed to Moscow's persistent security concerns.
- **Russian Perspective:**
  - For Russia, NATO's growth—especially the prospect of Ukraine joining—is seen as a direct threat and a casus belli, with the security dilemma intensifying hostility.
  - Moscow views NATO expansion as encroachment akin to a "creeping" threat, reminiscent of Cold War tensions.



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- **Diplomatic Dynamics:**

- The change in U.S. policy reflects broader strategic recalibrations in transatlantic security arrangements.
- Upcoming discussions between American and Russian representatives (e.g., the meeting in Riyadh) could further influence the conflict's direction, though Ukraine insists on being directly involved in any negotiations.

- **Implications for the Future:**

- This policy shift may alter the strategic landscape in Eastern Europe and complicate efforts to resolve the ongoing conflict.
- The redefined stance on NATO membership underscores the challenges of balancing alliance commitments with evolving geopolitical realities.

### [How did a DDoS attack cripple Kaveri 2.0?-The Hindu Text and Context](#)

Science and technology

#### **Easy Explanation**

In January 2025, Karnataka's Kaveri 2.0 portal—used for property registrations—faced a crippling Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attack. This attack overwhelmed the portal with excessive traffic, severely disrupting services and reducing registrations. The attack exploited multiple IP addresses and fake accounts, generating 6.2 lakh requests within two hours. Kaveri 2.0 was restored on February 5. DDoS attacks disrupt services by overwhelming servers with traffic from botnets. Organizations can mitigate such attacks with advanced traffic filtering, monitoring tools, rate limiting, bot detection, and robust cybersecurity strategies. Other platforms, including Elon Musk's X (formerly Twitter), have also been recent DDoS victims.

#### **Key Takeaways**

- **Incident Overview:**

- Kaveri 2.0 portal faced performance issues in late 2024 and January 2025 due to a DDoS attack.
- The attack involved high traffic from multiple IP addresses and fake accounts.

- **Attack Mechanism:**

- DDoS attacks flood servers with requests from compromised systems (botnets), causing service downtime.
- They may serve as distractions for other cyberattacks but primarily cause operational disruption.

- **Kaveri 2.0's Response:**

- The portal was restored on February 5 after experiencing significant downtime and reduced registrations.
- Authorities filed a cyber-crime complaint under the IT Act, 2000, to investigate the attack.

- **Mitigation Strategies:**

- Organizations can defend against DDoS attacks by using traffic filtering, rate limiting, CAPTCHA challenges, and regular security audits.



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- Strong authentication mechanisms and collaboration with cybersecurity agencies are essential for defense.
- **Similar Attacks:**
  - Elon Musk's X platform faced a DDoS attack in August 2024, causing disruptions before Musk's scheduled conversation with Donald Trump.
  - In 2015, GitHub was attacked by a China-based botnet targeting anti-censorship tools.

### [What is the Aravali safari park project?-The Hindu Text and Context](#)

Environment

#### Easy Explanation

The Haryana government has proposed a 3,858-hectare Aravali Safari Park project across Gurugram and Nuh, intended to be the world's largest safari park. The park is expected to feature animal enclosures, hotels, restaurants, aquariums, botanical gardens, and more. However, 37 retired Indian Forest Service officers have opposed the project, citing ecological risks. They argue that the project prioritizes tourism over conservation and could harm aquifers critical to the water-starved districts of Gurugram and Nuh. The Aravali hills are ecologically significant and protected under various laws, including the Forest Conservation Act, 1980.

#### Key Takeaways

- **Project Overview:**
  - Spanning 3,858 hectares across 18 villages in Gurugram (11 villages) and Nuh (7 villages).
  - Planned features include animal enclosures, hotels, restaurants, botanical gardens, aquariums, and a tunnel walk.
- **Environmental Significance:**
  - The Aravali hills combat desertification and serve as critical aquifers for groundwater recharge.
  - The region is home to diverse plant and wildlife species and is protected under multiple environmental laws.
- **Opposition by Forest Officers:**
  - Retired officers argue the project's aim is tourism, not conservation.
  - They highlight concerns about aquifer disturbance and construction impacts in a water-scarce region.
  - The project area falls under forest land protected by the Forest Conservation Act, 1980.
- **Legal Protections:**
  - The Aravalis are safeguarded by the Punjab Land Preservation Act (PLPA), Supreme Court orders, and the National Green Tribunal (NGT).
  - Gurugram-based analysts suggest declaring the area a national park or sanctuary for better conservation.

### [Constitutional morality: the origins and nuances of the concept-The Hindu Text and Context](#)

Polity



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## Easy Explanation

Constitutional morality refers to a civic culture of adherence to constitutional rules, respect for institutions, and the vigilant application of public reason, self-restraint, and critique. British historian George Grote, in his reflections on Athenian democracy, emphasized its role in ensuring adherence to both constitutional form and procedure to resolve disputes. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar invoked this concept during the framing of the Indian Constitution, arguing that democracy in India needed to adopt and diffuse constitutional morality to ensure a peaceful and free society. He highlighted that it was possible to pervert the Constitution's spirit without changing its form, stressing self-restraint as a prerequisite for preserving democracy.

In modern times, constitutional morality has been used by the courts to adjudicate landmark issues related to civil liberties and equality. It demands non-transactional adherence to the Constitution, balancing respect for constitutional forms with the right to critique and reform. Unlike constitutional patriotism, which focuses on identity-based allegiance, constitutional morality emphasizes managing differences through agreed-upon procedures. It offers a mature framework that navigates stability and change, showing how commitment to constitutional principles can coexist with reform.

## Key Takeaways

- **Concept of Constitutional Morality:**
  - A civic culture of respect for constitutional forms, offices, and processes.
  - Encourages public reason, self-restraint, and critique to preserve democracy.
- **Origins in Grote's Philosophy:**
  - George Grote viewed "constitutional morality" as essential for Athenian democracy's longevity.
  - Emphasized adherence to constitutional procedures in resolving disputes.
- **Dr. Ambedkar's Invocation:**
  - Stressed the need for constitutional morality to preserve Indian democracy.
  - Warned against perverting the Constitution through administrative changes.
- **Modern Interpretations:**
  - Adherence must be non-transactional, accepting outcomes that differ from personal beliefs.
  - Balances reverence for the Constitution with the freedom to critique and reform it.
- **Comparison to Constitutional Patriotism:**
  - Unlike Jürgen Habermas' singular-identity model, constitutional morality focuses on navigating differences through agreed processes.
- **Relevance Today:**
  - Shows how to maintain constitutional commitment without fundamentalism.
  - Offers a framework for balancing stability with necessary reforms.

[China's EAST reactor keeps the fire of magnetic fusion burning-The Hindu Science](#)

Science and technology

## Easy Explanation



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China's Experimental Advanced Superconducting Tokamak (EAST) recently set a record by maintaining plasma at 100 million degrees Celsius for 1,066 seconds. EAST, a testbed for the international ITER project, is critical for advancing nuclear fusion. Nuclear fusion, unlike fission, produces no harmful radioactive waste, making it a promising clean energy source. However, fusion requires immense heat to overcome proton repulsion and achieve particle bonding through the strong nuclear force. EAST uses a combination of toroidal and poloidal magnetic fields to confine and stabilize plasma for sustained reactions.

While ITER faces criticism for delays and high costs, EAST's successes provide hope. Alternative methods like the stellarator and laser inertial fusion are being explored, with the U.S.'s National Ignition Facility achieving ignition in 2022. EAST's steady progress keeps magnetic fusion in contention, but achieving sustainable, large-scale nuclear fusion remains a technological challenge. The future depends on breakthroughs in sustaining high temperatures and producing tritium for reactions.

## Key Takeaways

### 1. EAST Reactor's Recent Milestone

EAST maintained plasma at 100 million °C for 1,066 seconds, breaking its previous record and marking a significant advancement in nuclear fusion technology.

### 2. Importance of Nuclear Fusion

Fusion produces no harmful radioactive waste and offers a clean, sustainable energy source compared to nuclear fission, which generates hazardous byproducts.

### 3. Challenges in Fusion Technology

Achieving fusion requires extremely high temperatures to overcome proton repulsion and initiate bonding through the strong nuclear force.

### 4. EAST's Magnetic Confinement

EAST uses toroidal and poloidal magnetic fields to confine plasma, preventing particle collisions with reactor walls and enabling longer plasma stability.

### 5. ITER's Role and Criticisms

ITER, an international fusion project, faces delays and cost overruns. EAST's progress is crucial to ITER's future success.

### 6. Alternative Fusion Methods

Stellarators and laser inertial fusion are being explored as alternatives. The National Ignition Facility achieved ignition in 2022 with laser fusion.

### 7. Future Outlook

Sustainable nuclear fusion depends on technological advances in temperature maintenance and tritium production, with both private and public sectors working toward breakthroughs.



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# 19th February 2025

## [New CEC, under new law-Indian Express Explained](#)

Polity

### Easy Explanation

For the first time, India's Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) was appointed following the new *Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service, and Term of Office) Act, 2023*. The law stipulates the appointment process involves a Search Committee, which shortlists candidates, followed by a Selection Committee (Prime Minister, Leader of Opposition, and a nominated Cabinet Minister). This change came after a Supreme Court intervention due to concerns over the executive's unchecked power in selecting the CEC and Election Commissioners (ECs). Rahul Gandhi raised a dissent note, seeking a delay until the court reviewed the new law, which is still being challenged for excluding the Chief Justice of India from the Selection Committee.

### Key Takeaways:

- **New Appointment Law:** The new Act of 2023 changes how India's CEC and ECs are appointed, requiring a more structured process.
- **Search and Selection Committee:** A Search Committee creates a shortlist, then a Selection Committee (PM, Leader of Opposition, Cabinet Minister) makes the final selection.
- **Past Appointment Process:** Before 2023, the Prime Minister advised the President on appointments, often based on seniority.
- **Supreme Court's Role:** The law was enacted after the Supreme Court expressed concerns over executive control and ruled for a Selection Committee in 2023.
- **Legal Challenges:** There are ongoing petitions questioning the exclusion of the Chief Justice from the Selection Committee and whether Parliament can override judicial decisions through legislation.

## [What is deposit insurance cover, and how will raising it help you?-Indian Express Explained](#)

Economy

### Easy Explanation

The Indian government is considering increasing the deposit insurance cover, which is currently capped at Rs 5 lakh, to better protect depositors in the event of a bank failure. This insurance is provided by the Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC), a subsidiary of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). The cover protects depositors in commercial and co-operative banks by ensuring they receive compensation up to Rs 5 lakh for their deposits. The change follows concerns raised during cases like the New India Co-operative Bank, where the RBI imposed restrictions. The government aims to strengthen trust in the banking system by enhancing this coverage, which would help depositors feel more secure.

### Key Takeaways:



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- **DICGC Insurance:** Provides coverage up to Rs 5 lakh per depositor in case of bank failure, including savings, fixed, current, and recurring deposits.
- **New Proposal:** The government is actively considering raising the deposit insurance limit to better protect depositors.
- **Impact of Increased Coverage:** Increasing the coverage will provide greater protection for depositors, improve confidence in the banking system, and help mitigate concerns in case of bank failures like the New India Co-operative Bank.
- **Eligibility and Claims:** Depositors can claim up to Rs 5 lakh, which includes both principal and interest. The DICGC insures deposits across all branches of insured banks.
- **Previous Increases:** Deposit insurance has been increased six times since 1962, with the last hike from Rs 1 lakh to Rs 5 lakh in 2020.
- **Future of the Scheme:** An increase in coverage is seen as a response to the growing banking sector and would strengthen depositor trust.

### [What is the 'rarest of rare' doctrine?-The Hindu Text and Context](#)

Polity

#### Easy Explanation

On January 22, two separate murder convictions resulted in contrasting sentences, highlighting how the death penalty is applied in India. In the R.G. Kar Medical College case, the accused, Sanjay Roy, who raped and murdered a postgraduate trainee doctor, was sentenced to life imprisonment instead of the death penalty. The court did not classify it as a "rarest of rare" case. In contrast, Greeshma, who poisoned her partner Sharon Raj, was sentenced to death in the Sharon murder case, which was deemed one of the "rarest of rare" cases. The application of the death penalty is guided by the "rarest of rare" doctrine, established by the Supreme Court, but the lack of a statutory definition for this term allows for judicial discretion.

#### Key Takeaways:

- **R.G. Kar Medical College Case:** Sanjay Roy, convicted of rape and murder, was sentenced to life imprisonment as the crime did not meet the "rarest of rare" standard.
- **Sharon Murder Case:** Greeshma, who poisoned her partner Sharon, was sentenced to death, as the crime was considered a "rarest of rare" case.
- **Death Penalty Doctrine:** The Supreme Court's "rarest of rare" doctrine, established in 1980, specifies that the death penalty should be applied only in exceptional cases, but lacks a clear statutory definition.
- **Judicial Discretion:** The unclear definition of "rarest of rare" allows judges to exercise discretion in determining whether the death penalty is appropriate for a particular crime.
- **Legal Revisions:** The Supreme Court has provided guidelines on when the death penalty may be applied, but there is ongoing debate regarding its consistency and fairness.

### [Why are marriages in China on the decline?-The Hindu Text and Context](#)

International relations



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## Easy Explanation

Marriages in China have significantly declined, with only 6.1 million couples registering to marry in 2024, marking a 20.3% drop from the previous year. This decrease is part of a broader population decline, exacerbated by the legacy of China's one-child policy, which has led to a shrinking working-age population and a growing elderly demographic. The Communist Party of China (CPC) and President Xi Jinping have introduced policies like the two-child and three-child policies to reverse the trend, but these have had limited success. The government's continued top-down approach, including financial incentives and calls for cultural change in attitudes toward marriage and childbearing, faces resistance due to the high cost of raising children and evolving societal attitudes.

## Key Takeaways:

- **Marriage Decline:** In 2024, marriage registrations in China dropped by 20.3%, the lowest since 1986, driven by rising living costs and unemployment.
- **One-Child Policy's Impact:** Introduced in the 1980s, the one-child policy has contributed to an aging population and an imbalance in the sex ratio, with long-lasting effects on China's demographic structure.
- **Aging Population:** The number of people above 60 years in China is currently 22% and may reach 50% by 2050, placing strain on pensions and healthcare systems.
- **Government Response:** The Chinese government has raised the retirement age and continues to promote policies aimed at encouraging marriage and childbearing, but these top-down measures have not significantly reversed the trends.
- **Economic and Social Impact:** The population decline is causing economic instability, with a reduced workforce, rising care demands, and challenges in sustaining the pension system.
- **Cultural Disconnect:** Xi Jinping's push for a "new culture" of marriage and childbirth underscores the CPC's ongoing interference in personal choices, reflecting a disconnect between government policies and changing societal values in China.

## [A planet on the edge: are Saturn's rings older than they look?-The Hindu Science](#)

Science

## Easy Explanation

A debate over the age of Saturn's rings has been reignited with a new study suggesting they could be as old as the Solar System itself. Previous estimates placed the rings' age at around 100 million years, based on the unexpected lack of dust in the rings. Scientists assumed the rings were too young to accumulate such particles. However, new research by the Institute of Science Tokyo and the Paris Institute of Planetary Physics suggests that Saturn's rings might be much older than previously thought. The rings' cleanliness is not due to their youth, but rather to the way they eject foreign particles, allowing them to maintain their bright appearance. This new understanding could have broader implications, particularly for studying the evolution of Saturn's icy moons like Enceladus, and even providing insights into the diverse ring systems of the gas giants.



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### Key Takeaways:

- **Declining Dust:** Saturn's rings appear unusually clean due to a process where dust particles collide with the ice and are ejected from the rings, preventing accumulation.
- **New Age Estimate:** Based on new models, Saturn's rings could be as old as the Solar System, potentially around 4 billion years old, rather than the previously thought 100 million years.
- **Scientific Debate:** The lack of dust and clean rings led scientists to hypothesize the rings are young, but recent findings suggest they are much older, with the rings' bright appearance linked to their ability to expel foreign particles.
- **Implications for Enceladus:** The study's findings could influence understanding of Enceladus, one of Saturn's moons, and its potential habitability, as the moon's plumes are linked to Saturn's rings.
- **Broader Solar System Insights:** The study may help explain the differences in the ring systems of the Solar System's gas giants, such as Saturn and Jupiter.

### [Quakes may well sharpen India's seismic readiness-The Hindu Editorial](#)

#### Geography

#### Easy Explanation

On February 6, 2023, a devastating earthquake struck Turkey and Syria, killing at least 17,000 people. This tragedy highlighted the unpredictable and violent nature of fault lines, particularly in regions like the Himalayas. Seismologists have long warned that the Indian-Eurasian plate boundary, running along the Himalayan arc, is due for a major earthquake. The January 7, 2025 earthquake in Tibet further underscored this risk, killing hundreds. In light of these events, experts are urging for better infrastructure planning, seismic insurance, and enhanced preparedness to mitigate the impact of future earthquakes. While current building codes offer some protection, they may not be sufficient for the high-risk seismic zones in India. Prompt action is needed to protect vulnerable areas, particularly in the context of ongoing urban development in the Himalayas.

### Key Takeaways:

- **Recent Earthquakes:** The 2023 earthquake in Turkey and Syria, and the 2025 tremor in Tibet, underline the volatility of seismic fault lines, particularly in the Himalayas.
- **Risk in the Himalayas:** The Indian-Eurasian tectonic boundary, responsible for the Himalayas, poses significant earthquake risks, and scientists predict the pressure between these plates is nearing release.
- **Infrastructure Vulnerabilities:** The Himalayas and surrounding regions are prone to landslides and glacial lake outbursts, which have destroyed infrastructure in the past. Existing building codes are not enough to mitigate these risks.
- **Urgent Government Action:** To minimize the impact of potential earthquakes, immediate action is required, including revising seismic zoning maps, retrofitting vulnerable structures, and implementing a seismic insurance scheme.



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- **Preparation Over Prediction:** Earthquakes cannot be predicted, but the country can prepare through improved infrastructure, planning, and collaboration with international experts in earthquake resistance.

## 20th February 2025

### India's Qatar opportunity-Indian Express Explained

International relations

#### Easy Explanation

The **State Visit of Qatar's Amir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, to India on February 17-18, 2025**, marked a major diplomatic milestone, elevating bilateral ties to a **Strategic Partnership**. The visit, coinciding with the **India-Qatar Joint Business Forum**, focused on trade, energy, infrastructure, and finance. Qatar, India's top supplier of **liquefied natural gas (LNG)**, committed **USD 10 billion in investments**, with plans to **double bilateral trade to USD 28 billion in five years**. A new **Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT)** and MoUs between business associations will further boost economic cooperation.

Qatar, having gained diplomatic influence by **mediating Gaza ceasefires and hosting Taliban negotiations**, is now a key player in West Asia. India must balance relations with **Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Israel** while engaging Qatar. Protecting **800,000+ Indian workers** in Qatar remains crucial. However, **secure energy supplies, growing trade, and regional engagement** present significant opportunities. Moving forward, India-Qatar cooperation will focus on **long-term energy contracts, investment partnerships, and diplomatic coordination**, cementing Qatar as a **strategic economic and geopolitical ally** in West Asia.

#### Key takeaways

1. **Strategic Partnership Upgrade**
  - India and Qatar **elevated their bilateral ties** to a **Strategic Partnership**, expanding cooperation beyond energy and trade to **investment, security, and regional diplomacy**.
2. **Energy Security Strengthened**
  - Qatar remains **India's top supplier of liquefied natural gas (LNG)**, with new **long-term agreements ensuring stable and affordable energy supplies**.
3. **Major Economic Commitments**
  - Qatar pledged **USD 10 billion in investments** in India.
  - Bilateral trade aims to **double to USD 28 billion** in the next five years.
  - A **new Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT)** is in progress to encourage more economic collaboration.
4. **Qatar's Growing Regional Influence**
  - Qatar's diplomatic role in **Gaza, Taliban negotiations, and broader Middle East affairs** makes it a key **geopolitical ally** for India.
5. **Diaspora and Labor Welfare**



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- With **800,000+ Indian workers** in Qatar, labor laws and protections remain an essential area of bilateral discussions.

#### 6. Institutional and Business Cooperation

- New **MoUs between business organizations and investment agencies** will enhance commercial and trade engagement.

#### 7. Balancing Gulf Relations

- India must navigate its **ties with Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Israel** while deepening engagement with Qatar.

#### 8. Future Outlook

- **Long-term LNG contracts, investment growth, and stronger diplomatic engagement** will solidify Qatar's role as a **strategic partner for India** in West Asia.

### [MPID ACT-Indian Express Explained](#)

#### Economy

#### Easy Explanation

The **Maharashtra Protection of Interest of Depositors (MPID) Act, 1999**, is a critical legal framework aimed at protecting investors from fraudulent financial establishments. It allows for the **attachment and sale of assets** acquired by such establishments, ensuring equitable distribution of the proceeds among the victims. This law is currently being applied in the **Torres Ponzi scam**, where the **Economic Offences Wing (EOW)** of Mumbai Police is auctioning properties of the accused to recover approximately **Rs 40 crore** for the victims.

The MPID Act holds individuals responsible for managing fraudulent financial businesses accountable, with penalties including **up to six years in prison** and fines. The Act's unique feature is its **speedy procedure** for asset attachment and distribution, distinguishing it from general criminal fraud laws.

The law faced challenges in the judiciary, with the **Bombay High Court** declaring it unconstitutional in 2005, but the **Supreme Court** upheld its constitutionality in 2011 and reaffirmed it in 2022. This ensures the Act remains a crucial tool in combating financial fraud in Maharashtra.

#### Key takeaways

##### 1. Protection for Investors

- The **MPID Act** aims to safeguard investors by allowing the **attachment and sale of assets** from fraudulent financial establishments to compensate victims.

##### 2. Fraud Accountability

- Individuals responsible for fraudulent defaults can face **up to six years in jail** and fines of **up to Rs 1 lakh**.

##### 3. Speedy Recovery Process

- The Act enables **faster asset recovery** and distribution of proceeds, distinguishing it from general criminal laws dealing with fraud.

##### 4. Torres Ponzi Scam





- In the **Torres Ponzi scam**, victims are expected to receive **Rs 40 crore** through the auction of seized assets, using provisions of the MPID Act.

#### 5. Judicial History

- The **Bombay High Court** initially ruled the MPID Act unconstitutional in 2005, but the **Supreme Court** upheld its constitutionality in 2011 and again in 2022, affirming its validity.

#### 6. Crucial Legal Tool

- The **MPID Act** remains a key tool for ensuring justice for investors defrauded by financial establishments in Maharashtra.

### [Why global sea ice cover has dipped to record low—what this means-Indian Express Explained](#)

#### Geography

#### Easy Explanation

Global **sea ice cover** has reached a new record low, with the combined extent of Arctic and Antarctic sea ice dropping to **15.76 million sq km** by February 13, 2025, marking a significant decline from the previous record low. This decline is linked to several factors, including **warm air temperatures**, **warm seas**, and **ice-breaking winds**, especially in the **Antarctic**. While Arctic sea ice is at its lowest for this time of year, Antarctic sea ice is nearing a new low, continuing a trend of ice loss in both regions. Since the 1970s, the **Arctic** has seen a consistent decrease of **12.2% per decade** in its sea ice extent, while the **Antarctic** experienced fluctuations, including a significant loss between 2014 and 2017.

The dip in sea ice cover has serious environmental implications. **Reduced sea ice** exposes more water to the Sun, increasing **heat absorption** and further accelerating **temperature rise**. This accelerates **global warming**, especially in the polar regions, which are warming at a faster rate than the rest of the world. Furthermore, the loss of sea ice can disrupt ocean circulation, affecting the **global climate**, **marine food chains**, and the stability of ice shelves.

#### Key takeaways

##### 1. Record Low Sea Ice

- Global sea ice cover reached a **new record low** of **15.76 million sq km** in February 2025, driven by a combination of **warm temperatures** and **ice-breaking winds**.

##### 2. Arctic and Antarctic Ice Loss

- **Arctic sea ice** is at its **lowest recorded extent** for this time of year, while **Antarctic sea ice** is nearing a new low, continuing a broader trend of ice loss since the 1970s.

##### 3. Impact of Warm Air and Ocean Temperatures

- Warmer **air temperatures** and **ocean waters** have been significant contributors, particularly affecting the **Antarctic**, which is vulnerable to **ice-breaking winds**.

##### 4. Environmental Consequences

- The reduction in sea ice results in **more heat absorption** by exposed water, **accelerating global warming**, especially in the polar regions, which are warming faster than other parts of the world.

##### 5. Disruption to Ocean Circulation







- Melting sea ice is slowing the flow of water in the oceans, **disrupting ocean circulation**, which could severely impact the **global climate**, **marine life**, and the **stability of ice shelves**.

#### 6. Worsening Climate Change Effects

- The loss of sea ice may be contributing to the **accelerated warming of the polar regions** and could have long-term effects on **global climate patterns**.

### [Why Europe 'Dunki' route is gaining popularity-Indian Express Explained](#)

International relations

#### Easy Explanation

The **"Dunki" route**, historically associated with South Asian migrants traveling through South America to the United States, has recently seen a shift, with many migrants now opting to take a **European route**. This new path involves obtaining a **Schengen visitor visa** to travel across multiple European countries, after which migrants proceed to **Central America**, often via **Nicaragua, El Salvador, or Mexico**. This route is gaining popularity because it is **quicker** and **less dangerous** compared to the traditional South American path, which includes treacherous journeys through dense forests and the **Darien Gap** in Panama.

While the **South American route** involves long and perilous on-foot travel, the European route primarily relies on air travel for most of the journey, with migrants only needing to walk short distances through Central America. The migration process, however, remains **expensive**, with agents charging inflated fees of **Rs 40 to 60 lakh** for the entire journey, profiting from the desperation of migrants seeking to reach the US. Migrants do not choose their path; the decision is made by the **agents**, who hold significant influence over the entire process.

#### Key takeaways

##### 1. New European Route

- Many South Asian migrants are now opting for a **European route** to reach the US, bypassing the traditional South American journey.

##### 2. Schengen Visitor Visa

- Migrants secure a **Schengen visa**, enabling them to travel across European countries, before proceeding to Central America.

##### 3. Quicker and Safer

- The European route is considered **quicker** and **safer**, with much of the journey covered by air travel, unlike the **dangerous Panama route**.

##### 4. High Costs and Agents' Role

- The journey remains costly, with migrants paying **Rs 40 to 60 lakh** to agents, who decide the route and control the process.

##### 5. Human Trafficking Networks

- The migration routes are heavily controlled by **agents and human traffickers**, who exploit migrants' desperation for financial gain.



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## Trumpism vs Collective West-Indian Express Editorial

International relations

### Easy Explanation

US President **Donald Trump's** policies and rhetoric are challenging the **post-WWII Western order**, advocating for a shift toward **conservative internationalism**. His push for **direct peace talks with Russia** on Ukraine and a **reduced American role** in Europe and Asia has caused a significant rift with traditional European allies. Trump's stance is that the **cost of American leadership** in global security and trade is no longer acceptable, advocating for **bilateral deals** over multilateral frameworks. This approach has gained traction, with figures like **JD Vance** and **Elon Musk** pushing right-wing agendas in Europe, creating a growing **conservative international** challenging liberal values on **immigration, gender identity, and climate change**. While Russia and China denounce the "**Collective West**", they still seek diplomatic ties with the US. **India** takes a more balanced approach, engaging with both the West and Russia to secure its national interests, signaling a **reworking of global security and trade**.

### Key takeaways

1. **Trumpism and Conservative Internationalism**
  - **Trump's policies** and rhetoric are **challenging the post-WWII Western order** by pushing for a shift to **conservative internationalism**, focusing on **sovereignty** and **bilateral relations**.
2. **Ideological Divide**
  - The **ideological divide** between the US and Europe has widened, with Trump opposing traditional Western multilateralism and advocating for a **new global trade framework** and **reduced American commitments** to Europe and Asia.
3. **Europe's Response**
  - Europe has been left shocked by Trump's **peace initiatives with Russia** and criticisms of **European democracies**, highlighting the deepening **transatlantic rift**.
4. **Rise of a "Conservative International"**
  - A **conservative international** (akin to the **Comintern** of the 20th century) is emerging, with right-wing forces within the West challenging liberal values on **immigration, gender identity, and climate change**.
5. **Russia and China's Propaganda War**
  - Both **Moscow** and **Beijing** criticize the "**Collective West**" but are actively pursuing **diplomatic deals** with the US, highlighting the ongoing global **geopolitical shift**.
6. **India's Position**
  - India, recognizing the **contradictions within the West**, is engaging with both **Russia** and the **US** to **secure its national interests**, signaling a more pragmatic approach to global politics.
7. **Potential Reworking of Western Ties**
  - The current crisis may lead to a **reworking of Western security, trade, and social ties**, with long-term consequences for global diplomacy and governance.



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## Sociology

### Easy Explanation

Two recent student suicides in **Odisha** and **Haryana** highlight the growing **mental health challenges** within India's higher education system. Both cases, involving a student from **KIIT** and **Ashoka University**, underscore the need for universities to better address the **emotional and psychological needs** of an increasingly diverse student body. The tragic incident at KIIT involved a student who had filed a harassment complaint, but the university's inadequate response, offering basic counseling, failed to prevent the tragedy. Many universities, particularly those with a large number of **outstation or international students**, such as **KIIT**, struggle with issues of **alienation, discrimination, and cultural shock**.

As India's **higher education sector** continues to diversify, institutions must evolve to provide **nuanced support** that addresses students' complex needs, including mental health, social integration, and academic challenges. The idea of a **one-size-fits-all approach** is increasingly ineffective. Solutions, such as **personalized engagement, awareness training**, and inclusive campus cultures, are crucial in fostering a supportive environment. The tragic deaths reflect the urgent need for universities to adopt **kinder and more empathetic approaches** for students to thrive.

### Key takeaways

1. **Mental Health Crisis in Indian Universities**
  - Suicides at **KIIT** and **Ashoka University** highlight the **mental health** issues that affect students in India's **higher education institutions**.
2. **Diversity and Support Needs**
  - The **diversity** of the student body, including **international and outstation students**, requires institutions to provide **personalized support** tailored to **different cultural and social backgrounds**.
3. **Inadequate Institutional Response**
  - In the case of KIIT, the **university's failure** to adequately address **harassment complaints** and provide meaningful counseling contributed to the tragedy.
4. **Cultural Shock and Discrimination**
  - Many students, especially from **Nepal** and **African nations**, face **alienation, discrimination, and cultural shock**, affecting their emotional well-being.
5. **Need for Sensitivity and Training**
  - There is a **critical need for sensitivity training** for university staff and a more **nuanced approach** to addressing student well-being.
6. **Personalized Engagement**
  - Instead of a **one-size-fits-all** approach, universities must create more **personalized engagement** with students, considering their academic, social, and mental health needs.
7. **Collaborative Campus Culture**
  - Universities must foster a **collaborative and empathetic campus culture**, providing a **supportive environment** that helps students navigate life away from home.





## Myanmar, Manipur, and strained borders-The Hindu Text and Context

International relations

### Easy Explanation

The political instability in **Myanmar**, particularly following the **military coup in 2021**, has created significant challenges for Northeast India, especially in terms of **security, economy, and border management**. The conflict in Myanmar has led to a large influx of **refugees**, particularly into the border states of **Mizoram** and **Manipur**, which share ethnic ties with Myanmar's population. The **Free Movement Regime (FMR)**, which facilitated border crossings for local populations, has been increasingly restricted in response to growing tensions. This has disrupted cross-border trade and economic activities, particularly in towns like **Moreh** in Manipur, undermining plans to boost Northeast India's economic ties with Southeast Asia.

To maintain stability, India needs a more **calibrated response** to Myanmar's crisis, which includes improving **humanitarian relief**, strengthening **border security**, and engaging with ethnic organizations within Myanmar. Additionally, India must pursue a comprehensive strategy to ensure **economic growth** and **regional peace**, despite the ongoing border challenges and the **Myanmar civil war**.

### Key takeaways

1. **Myanmar's Instability Impacting Northeast India**
  - Political turmoil in Myanmar has led to **security and economic strains** in India's Northeast, especially **Manipur** and **Mizoram**.
2. **Refugee Influx Disrupts Border Management**
  - Over **95,600 refugees** have entered India, causing challenges to **border security** and **ethnic stability**, particularly in **Manipur**.
3. **Decline in Cross-Border Trade**
  - **Moreh**, once a key trade hub, has seen its economy suffer due to **restricted border movement** and a decline in **cross-border trade**.
4. **Response to Refugees and Security Concerns**
  - India has shifted its **Free Movement Regime (FMR)**, limiting border access to **10 km** for **security and demographic reasons**.
5. **Urgent Measures Required**
  - India must engage with **ethnic groups** in Myanmar, improve **humanitarian aid**, and develop **healthcare and education** in border areas.
6. **Geopolitical Context**
  - India's lack of UNSC membership contrasts with **China's greater influence** in Myanmar, necessitating a more **comprehensive diplomatic approach** from India.
7. **Long-Term Economic Focus**
  - India should focus on enhancing **economic engagement** with Southeast Asia once regional stability improves, despite the current security challenges.



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# 21st February 2025

## Remission without application: What Supreme Court held, why-Indian Express Explained

Polity

### Easy Explanation

#### 1. Context & Departure from Earlier Judgments:

- In two 2013 decisions (Sangeet v. State of Haryana and Mohinder Singh v. State of Punjab), the Supreme Court had held that remission could not be granted suo motu (on the government's own) and required a convict's application.
- In its recent ruling (In Re: Policy Strategy for Grant of Bail), the Supreme Court has reversed this stance, directing states to consider remission for eligible prisoners even if they do not apply.

#### 2. Legal Framework:

- **Section 473 of BNSS, 2023 and Section 432 of CrPC, 1973:** Grant state governments the power to remit sentences "at any time."
- **Restrictions on Remission:** Section 475 of BNSS (Section 433A of CrPC) mandates that convicts serving life sentences for offences punishable by death must serve at least 14 years of imprisonment before becoming eligible for remission.

#### 3. Key Reasoning:

- The Court noted that various state prison manuals already empower prison authorities (e.g., the Superintendent) to initiate remission proceedings.
- A blanket requirement for a formal application can lead to arbitrariness and unfair discrimination if otherwise-eligible prisoners are overlooked simply because they did not file an application. This, the Court held, would violate Article 14 (right to equality).

#### 4. Obligation on States:

- States have a duty to prepare (or update) comprehensive remission policies within two months, ensuring specific eligibility criteria and fair procedures for all convicts.
- Guidelines issued aim to ensure that criteria are "reasonable," facilitating genuine rehabilitation rather than being excessively stringent or arbitrary.

#### 5. Safeguards & Procedure:

- The Court reaffirmed that remission can be withdrawn only under clearly justified grounds. Minor breaches should not automatically lead to cancellation.
- Before cancellation, authorities must give the convict notice and an opportunity to respond, preserving due process.

### Key Takeaways

1. **Remission Without Application:** States must actively consider remission for eligible convicts; an application from the prisoner is no longer mandatory.
2. **Policy Update:** Every state must quickly formulate or revise its remission policy to ensure consistent, non-discriminatory treatment of convicts.



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3. **Reasonable Criteria:** Conditions for eligibility must be practical, focused on rehabilitation, and not so harsh that they prevent convicts from benefitting.
4. **Due Process in Cancellation:** Convicts must receive notice and a chance to reply before remission is revoked; minor infractions shouldn't automatically lead to cancellation.
5. **Equality Under Article 14:** The overarching rationale is to avoid arbitrary or discriminatory practices, reinforcing the constitutional guarantee of equality.

### ARTICLE 101(4)-Indian Express Explained

Polity

#### Easy Explanation

##### 1. Context & Key Issue

- Khadoor Sahib MP Amritpal Singh, detained under the National Security Act (NSA), has sought permission from the Punjab and Haryana High Court to attend the ongoing Parliament session. His concern stems from Article 101(4) of the Constitution, which could result in his seat being vacated if he is absent from parliamentary sittings for 60 consecutive days without permission.

##### 2. Article 101(4) Explained

- Under Article 101(4), an MP's seat may be declared vacant if the member is absent for 60 days of parliamentary sittings "without permission of the House."
- The critical point is that "60 days" only covers days when Parliament is actually in session; periods of prorogation or adjournment for more than four days do not count.

##### 3. Seeking Leave & Committee Oversight

- MPs can formally seek leave for extended absences. The 'Committee on Absence of Members from the Sittings of the House' reviews these applications.
- This committee's recommendations are usually accepted and formally ratified by the full House.
- Precedents exist where MPs imprisoned for various reasons have been granted leave to be absent from the House (e.g., Ghosi MP Atul Rai).

##### 4. Practical Application & Historical Context

- Former Lok Sabha Secretary General P D T Achary notes there is no known instance of Article 101(4) actually resulting in an MP losing their seat because leave is almost always granted if requested.
- Even if an MP crosses the 60-day absence threshold, the House would still have to formally "declare" the seat vacant through a vote.

#### Key Takeaways

##### 1. MPs' Right to Seek Leave

- Detained or otherwise unable to attend, Members of Parliament can appeal to a dedicated parliamentary committee for permission to be absent.

##### 2. Avoiding Seat Vacancies



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- The Constitution's 60-day absence rule does not automatically lead to seat vacation; it must be confirmed by the House if the member has not obtained formal permission.

### 3. Limited Historical Use

- While the rule exists, Parliament historically has been lenient, granting leave applications for genuine reasons, including imprisonment. There is no precedent of an MP losing the seat under Article 101(4).

### 4. Procedure Over Automatic Action

- Even after reaching 60 days of absence, the seat is not automatically declared vacant; it requires the House's deliberate decision, reinforcing the importance of due parliamentary procedure.

### 5. Practical Implications for Detained MPs

- MPs under detention can still exercise their right to formally request leave; courts or parliamentary committees generally consider such requests sympathetically, ensuring representation and preventing undue seat loss.

## Trump's European turn-Indian Express Explained

International relations

### Easy Explanation

#### 1. Shift in US Position on Russia-Ukraine War

- US President Donald Trump's recent diplomatic outreach to Russia marks a drastic pivot from the earlier Biden-era policy of isolating Russia and supporting Ukraine militarily.
- High-level talks in Riyadh between American and Russian delegations excluded Ukraine, reminiscent of great-power deals such as the 1945 Yalta Conference.

#### 2. Background: Pre-Trump Policy

- Under President Biden, the US policy primarily aimed at (i) politically and economically isolating Russia, and (ii) assisting Ukraine with significant financial and military support (though without deploying US troops).
- European allies and the US were in lockstep, with the shared stance that Ukraine must be at the table for any negotiated peace.

#### 3. New Diplomacy and European Reaction

- Trump administration officials (including Secretary of State Marco Rubio, NSA Mike Waltz, and Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth) signaled that returning Ukraine to its pre-2014 borders and offering NATO membership may be "unrealistic."
- European leaders are stunned by these developments. They see this as a reversal of the transatlantic alliance's long-held commitments, leaving them uncertain about the future of NATO and the post-1945 US-European security umbrella.

#### 4. Implications for Ukraine

- Ukraine was neither consulted nor included in the talks, which is a stark departure from the principle that no decisions about Ukraine would be made without Ukraine.
- President Zelenskyy criticized Trump's stance, while Trump openly disparaged Zelenskyy's leadership and questioned the war's origins.



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## 5. Impact on the Global Order

- Moscow sees potential relief from its political and economic isolation. The US and Russia agreed to restart talks and possibly restore diplomatic staff.
- The swift changes have prompted comparisons to major historic deals that reshape security dynamics, with concerns over a diminished role of Europe in transatlantic policy.

## 6. India's Position & Possible Role

- India has taken a neutral stance, consistently calling for dialogue and diplomacy.
- New Delhi has engaged with both Moscow and Kyiv but lacks sufficient leverage to mediate a direct settlement. It must now navigate a scenario where Russia is negotiating with the US, but Ukraine is sidelined.
- India continues to maintain ties with Russia (via G20, SCO, BRICS) and also values its relationship with Europe, highlighting the diplomatic tightrope it must walk.
- Looking ahead, India will watch how peace negotiations unfold, mindful of its own interests in rebuilding Ukraine and in monitoring China's moves in the broader geopolitical landscape.

## Key Takeaways

### 1. Radical Departure in US-Russia Relations

- Trump's negotiations indicate a marked pivot from the previous US policy of isolating Russia, potentially easing Moscow's strategic and economic isolation.

### 2. Europe's Sense of Betrayal

- Traditional transatlantic partners are unsettled by the Trump administration's readiness to discount NATO membership for Ukraine and hold high-level talks without Europe's or Kyiv's involvement.

### 3. Ukraine Left Out

- Despite being central to the conflict, Ukraine's absence at the negotiating table signals a potential shift to great-power bargaining that bypasses Kyiv's agency.

### 4. Reshaping the Post-1945 Order

- If America significantly reduces its role as Europe's security guarantor, it raises questions about the solidity of NATO and the broader transatlantic partnership.

### 5. India's Non-Aligned Calculus

- India's neutral stance and diplomatic ties with both Russia and the West enable some flexibility, but New Delhi will face growing pressure to define its position.
- India's goal of contributing to Ukraine's rebuilding and maintaining a balanced approach with major powers is now more challenging in this rapidly shifting environment.

### 6. Looking Forward

- The immediate path of US-Russia relations will directly affect global alignments.
- India, Europe, and smaller players must adapt diplomatically as the US's Indo-Pacific posture and the rise of China remain key strategic factors in parallel.

[What mineral resources does Ukraine have – and can the US take them?-Indian Express explained](#)





## Easy Explanation

### 1. Ukraine's Critical Mineral Wealth

- Ukraine possesses significant deposits of key minerals — such as lithium, cobalt, titanium, graphite, and certain rare earths — potentially worth up to USD 11.5 trillion.
- These resources are critical for high-tech industries, weapons systems, clean energy, and advanced manufacturing. A portion of these deposits remains under-surveyed, with incomplete or outdated data from the Soviet era.

### 2. Trump's 50% Proposal

- US President Donald Trump has demanded access to 50% of Ukraine's mineral resources in return for the financial and military aid the US has provided since 2014.
- Kyiv appears wary. President Zelenskyy recently withheld ministerial sign-off on any such agreement, citing insufficient protections for Ukraine's interests.

### 3. Legal and Practical Hurdles

- **Legal Barrier:** The Ukrainian constitution vests subsoil resources in the people of Ukraine, raising questions about the legality of any bulk transfer of rights.
- **Data Gaps:** Ukrainian mineral exploration lacks modern survey results, making it difficult to ascertain the exact quantity and quality of resources.
- **Existing EU Partnership:** Ukraine already has a strategic partnership with the EU (signed in July 2021) covering extraction of these resources.
- **Russian Occupation:** A sizeable portion of Ukraine's mineral deposits, including certain lithium reserves, lies in areas currently occupied or contested by Russian forces.

### 4. Geopolitical Implications

- The push by the US underscores the global race for critical minerals, particularly as China dominates much of the world's supply chain.
- Any unilateral resource deal could complicate Ukraine's ties with European allies, who have their own agreements in place, and raise concerns about sovereignty and external influence.

## Key Takeaways

1. **Vast Untapped Potential:** Ukraine's mineral wealth, especially in critical materials, presents enormous economic promise — but also fuels great-power competition.
2. **Trump's Controversial Demand:** A proposal giving the US half of Ukraine's strategic minerals in exchange for aid has alarmed Kyiv, highlighting sovereignty concerns.
3. **Constitutional & Contractual Constraints:** Under Ukrainian law, resources belong to the nation, and existing EU partnerships further limit bilateral deals.
4. **Russian Occupation Factor:** Ongoing territorial disputes in eastern Ukraine mean large swaths of resource-rich areas are outside Kyiv's direct control, complicating exploitation.
5. **Global Race for Critical Minerals:** As countries seek to secure future-ready supply chains (e.g., for EV batteries, semiconductors), competition over deposits in places like Ukraine is set to intensify.

[The transformation of Koraput's tribal food basket-The Hindu Editorial](#)





## Easy Explanation

1. **Context & Challenge:** Koraput district in Odisha is home to a largely tribal population facing persistent poverty and undernutrition. Despite multiple government welfare programs, surveys (NFHS-5) indicate high levels of stunting, underweight among children, and anemia among women.
2. **Community-Based Approach:** Between 2013 and 2022, the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF) implemented a model focused on nutrition literacy. It combined nutrition-sensitive agriculture, hygiene, and Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) practices.
3. **Capacity Building & Participation:**
  - **Residential Training:** Local men and women from multiple villages were trained on balanced diets, sanitation, crop diversity, and government entitlements.
  - **Collective Planning:** The training fostered dialogue on social and cultural barriers (e.g., caste, gender roles), encouraging collective decision-making and community-driven strategies.
4. **Visible Outcomes:**
  - **Diversification of Food Production:** Revival of home gardens, increased crop varieties, incorporation of pulses and vegetables in diets, and utilization of previously fallow land.
  - **Nutritional Awareness & Empowerment:** Community champions spread messages on dietary diversity, sanitation, and women's health. Many partnered with local health workers (ASHA, Anganwadi) to track nutrition, build Anganwadi centers, and ensure access to government schemes.
  - **Sustainability & Scale:** Over time, 1,000+ men and women trained in agriculture, poultry, pisciculture, organic practices, ensuring a self-sustaining resource network for nutrition security.

## Key Takeaways

1. **Integrated Nutrition Literacy:** Grassroots education on dietary diversity, sanitation, and health practices can empower communities to address undernutrition more effectively than top-down schemes alone.
2. **Gender & Social Inclusion:** Involving both men and women, and acknowledging caste and class dimensions, fosters collective ownership and more equitable decision-making.
3. **Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture:** Encouraging diverse crop production (home gardens, pulses, vegetables) helps households secure a variety of nutrient-rich foods and reduces dependency on single-crop systems.
4. **Leveraging Local Governance:** Mobilizing village committees and gram sabhas ensures effective monitoring of entitlements and fosters accountability in government programs (e.g., Anganwadis, community grain banks).
5. **Community Champions:** Training a core group of facilitators who lead by example and disseminate knowledge is crucial for sustaining long-term behavior change and dietary improvements.

## [Watering down-The Hindu Editorial](#)

## Environment

## Easy Explanation



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### 1. Context: The Maha Kumbh Mela in Prayagraj

- Officials estimate that around 45 crore (450 million) people have already participated in the ongoing Maha Kumbh Mela in Prayagraj.
- Such large gatherings increase the risk of disease transmission, especially when devotees bathe in and drink from the Ganga, a potential hotspot for microbial contamination.

### 2. Pollution Monitoring & Findings

- The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) regularly monitors water quality at Prayagraj.
- **Faecal coliform levels** (an indicator of contamination from human and animal waste) were found to be *well above permissible limits* on certain days, especially auspicious bathing days.
  - On Makar Sankranti (January 14), levels were over 11,000 units at Sangam Ghat (limit 2,500 units) and a still higher 33,000 units at Old Naini Bridge Ghat.
- Other parameters such as **biochemical oxygen demand (BOD)** and **dissolved oxygen (DO)** also fluctuated, indicating occasional severe contamination.
- The CPCB report to the National Green Tribunal (NGT) noted that Ganga water was “not fit for bathing, let alone drinking,” on some days.

### 3. Causes and Patterns

- **Mass Bathing:** The surge in devotees on auspicious days leads to temporary spikes in pollution.
- **Flow and Dilution:** The river’s capacity to self-purify depends on the volume of fresh water flowing in; water quality often improves with better flow, then dips when flow is reduced or more pollutants enter.

### 4. Government Response and Issues

- The Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister’s dismissal of CPCB data as “baseless” undermines scientific findings.
- The **National Mission for Clean Ganga** aims to improve the Ganga’s health; Uttar Pradesh, a major beneficiary, must prioritize consistent clean-up rather than denying pollution concerns.

### 5. Significance & the Way Forward

- Large-scale events like the Kumbh Mela expose chronic pollution challenges that extend beyond festival times.
- There is a **pressing need for long-term solutions**—improving sewage treatment, regulating industrial effluents, and ensuring effective wastewater management.
- Upholding scientific monitoring and transparency is essential to protect public health, maintain faith, and safeguard the river’s ecological future.

## Key Takeaways

1. **Persistent Pollution:** Recurrent high faecal coliform counts and fluctuating BOD/DO levels show Ganga at Prayagraj often fails basic bathing and drinking standards.
2. **Massive Gatherings, Greater Risk:** Large festivals significantly stress the river’s ecosystem; short-term spikes reveal deeper systemic issues in water management.
3. **Science vs. Denial:** Politically dismissing scientific data hinders effective policy; collaborative efforts with credible environmental monitoring are crucial.
4. **National Mission for Clean Ganga:** Requires consistent intervention—industrial regulations, enhanced sewage treatment, and sustained river-flow management.





5. **Long-Term Commitment:** Beyond festival optics, a holistic approach to river rejuvenation, pollution control, and public-health safeguards is essential to ensure the Ganga's vitality.

### Is consumption enough to drive growth?-The Hindu Text and Context

Economy

#### Easy Explanation

##### 1. Two Sides of Economic Growth

- Growth in an economy depends on both **supply** (production of goods and services, captured by GDP) and **demand** (expenditure on those goods and services).
- If **demand outpaces supply**, it can fuel inflation. Conversely, if **supply outpaces demand**, production may remain unsold, leading to lower future investment, job losses, and a negative growth spiral.

##### 2. Components of Aggregate Demand

- **Private Consumption:** Households' spending on food, clothing, mobiles, etc.
- **Investment:** Firms' and households' spending on new factories, machines, buildings, etc.
- **Government Expenditure:** Both government consumption (day-to-day functioning) and government investment (infrastructure, capital formation).
- **Net Exports (Exports - Imports):** External demand for domestic goods and services.

##### 3. Why Investment is Key

- **Multiplier Effect:** An increase in investment (say by ₹100) can boost GDP by more than the initial amount (e.g., ₹125). This arises from new economic activity (roads, factories, infrastructure) which spurs related services and industries.
- **Consumption's Passive Role:** While rising incomes raise consumption, consumption alone does not strongly drive an economy-wide multiplier effect in the same manner that investment does.

##### 4. India vs. China

- **Divergent Growth Paths:** In the early 1990s, both countries had similar per capita income. However, China has grown much faster due to **consistently higher investment rates**.
- After the 2008 financial crisis, **China ramped up public investment** (infrastructure, green energy, advanced tech), whereas India's investment rate declined.
- As of 2023, **China's per capita income** is several times India's, with **higher investment share** of GDP and **lower consumption share** than India.

##### 5. India's Consumption-Led Growth

- India's recent growth is heavily **consumption driven (~ 60% of GDP)**, partly because other demand sources (public investment, private corporate investment, net exports) lag.
- **Job Growth & Equity Concerns:** Consumption-led growth risks exacerbating inequalities since many remain unemployed or underemployed, limiting broad-based income gains.

##### 6. Policy Implications

- **Need for Strong Government Intervention:** When private "animal spirits" (investment confidence) are weak, the public sector must boost investment, especially in critical infrastructure.



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- **Budget Choices:** Recent budget decisions appear to favor tax concessions and moderate government spending, indicating a preference for sustaining a **low-growth, consumption-led** trajectory rather than robust public investment.

## Key Takeaways

1. **Investment-Driven Growth Matters:** Sustained, rapid economic development hinges on higher investment, which triggers larger multiplier effects than consumption alone.
2. **Public Investment as a Catalyst:** In periods of weak private investment, proactive government spending can boost investor confidence, create jobs, and foster inclusive growth.
3. **Consumption Alone is Insufficient:** While crucial for short-term demand, consumption-led growth often fails to generate the scale of productivity gains or job creation that strong investment can.
4. **India-China Contrast:** China's higher and sustained investment rates highlight why it has eclipsed India in per capita income growth.
5. **Equity and Growth:** Heavy reliance on consumption-led growth risks deepening inequality; broad-based investment initiatives can help distribute benefits more evenly.

## The silent victims of cancer: the indirect consequences on children-The Hindu Science

Science

### Easy Explanation

1. **Background and Scale of the Problem**
  - Cancer in India increasingly affects not just patients but also children, both those diagnosed with the disease and those whose parents are diagnosed.
  - While *childhood cancers (0-14 years)* represent around 4% of all cancer cases, adult cases near a million annually. This leaves *lakhs of children* vulnerable to hidden financial strains.
2. **Indirect Costs and Their Consequences**
  - **Education Disruptions:** Due to financial strain (loss of parental income, increased caregiving responsibilities), children often drop out of school or older siblings forego further education to earn income.
  - **Financial Stress on Families:** Even if direct treatment costs are partly covered by government or insurance, *indirect expenses* (travel, special diets, caregiver job loss) exacerbate poverty.
  - **Generational Poverty:** Families already on the margins risk a downward spiral of lost education, depleted savings, and reduced earning potential, trapping the next generation in hardship.
3. **Existing Support Mechanisms**
  - **Government Health Schemes (e.g., AB-PMJAY):** Provide coverage for direct medical costs but rarely address non-medical or indirect expenses.
  - **Insurance Disability Riders:** Offer lump-sum payouts to cover lost wages or daily expenses but often come with high premiums or strict eligibility, limiting accessibility.
  - **Transport and Pension Concessions:** Some states offer transport fare reductions, monthly pensions, or other provisions, but these are patchy and insufficient for extensive non-medical needs.



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#### 4. Policy Imperatives & Solutions

- **Caregiver and Educational Support:** Financial aid (e.g., caregiver allowances, scholarships, subsidized boarding) can ensure children remain in school despite parental illness.
- **Employment Protections:** Families need job security, flexible leave policies, and legal safeguards to prevent income loss and maintain consistent caregiving.
- **Local-Level Interventions:** Simple measures (extended deadlines, free meals, psychosocial support in schools) can keep children on track academically.
- **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Community Engagement:** Partnerships can fund targeted programs—such as after-school tutoring or mental health counseling—to reduce dropout rates and emotional distress.

#### Key Takeaways

1. **Beyond Treatment Costs:** Policymakers, NGOs, and insurers must recognize that **non-medical and indirect costs** (educational disruption, caregiver wage loss) are as critical as direct health expenses.
2. **Children as “Silent Victims”:** Interrupted schooling and early workforce entry can perpetuate **long-term cycles of poverty**—interventions must prioritize safeguarding children’s education.
3. **Strengthening Safety Nets:** Expanded government schemes (disability riders, travel subsidies, pensions) and robust CSR initiatives can **mitigate indirect burdens**.
4. **Empowering Households:** Flexible job policies, caregiver allowances, and **mental health support** can preserve household stability and protect future generations.
5. **Focus on Equity: Inclusive, empathetic measures**—like subsidized textbooks, remedial classes, psychosocial help—can counter the socioeconomic fallout of cancer and preserve **children’s opportunities** for growth and advancement.

22nd February 2025

#### [Why LNG is central to the future expansion of India-Qatar trade-Indian Express Explained](#)

International relations

#### Easy Explanation

1. **What is LNG and why is it important?**
  - **LNG (Liquefied Natural Gas)** is simply natural gas that has been cooled to a liquid form for easier and safer transportation.
  - As India’s economy grows, the country needs more energy. Natural gas is cleaner than coal and oil, so India wants to increase its share of natural gas usage to meet future energy needs.
2. **India’s Energy Goal**
  - India aims to raise the share of natural gas in its primary energy mix from around 6% now to 15% by 2030.
  - India does not produce enough natural gas domestically, so it must import a lot more LNG.



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### 3. Why Qatar?

- Qatar is one of the world's largest LNG exporters and already India's top supplier of LNG.
- India and Qatar have a strong energy partnership, which is expected to grow because India will need even more LNG in the coming years, and Qatar is expanding its capacity to export more.

### 4. Trade Imbalance

- A large portion of India's imports from Qatar is LNG and related fuels, which makes India import more from Qatar than it exports.
- India wants to double its total trade with Qatar (both imports and exports) to about \$28 billion by 2030, but it's clear that LNG will remain the main factor driving this growth.

### 5. Competition from the US

- The United States has also become a major LNG supplier and is increasing its export capacity.
- Indian oil companies are looking to sign more LNG deals with both Qatar and the US to secure long-term supplies.

## Key Takeaways

### 1. India's Rising Demand

- India's push to use more natural gas will cause LNG imports to jump significantly in the next few years.

### 2. Qatar's Central Role

- Qatar currently supplies the largest share of India's LNG. With huge expansion plans, Qatar is likely to remain a top energy partner for India.

### 3. Long-Term LNG Contracts

- India has multiple long-term deals with Qatar, ensuring a steady flow of LNG. These contracts are a major part of the two nations' trade.

### 4. Balancing Trade

- While India aims to boost exports to Qatar, the trade balance is skewed by India's large need for energy imports (mainly LNG). Still, it benefits India's energy security and fuels Qatar's export revenue.

### 5. Future Outlook

- LNG will continue to be the centerpiece of India-Qatar trade, especially as India strives to meet ambitious gas usage targets and Qatar ramps up its export capacity.

## [How the government spends-Indian Express Explained](#)

## Economy

## Easy Explanation

### 1. Why Measure "Quality" of Spending?

- Governments spend on many things: building roads, paying salaries, paying interest on loans, etc.
- Not all spending helps the economy grow in the long run. Spending on new roads, bridges, and infrastructure (capital expenditure) boosts productivity for years to come.



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- The RBI wanted to see how well the Centre and the states are allocating money to capital expenditure and other growth-promoting activities.

## 2. Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act

- Passed in 2003, it aimed to keep **fiscal deficit** (the amount borrowed each year) around **3% of GDP**.
- Also aimed for **zero revenue deficit**, meaning the government should ideally not borrow money just to pay its everyday expenses (like salaries, subsidies).

## 3. Push for More Capital Expenditure

- Capital expenditure (capex) creates long-term assets that help the economy grow (e.g., highways, railways).
- In contrast, revenue or current expenditure (e.g., salaries, pensions) does not directly expand the nation's productive capacity.

## 4. RBI's QPE (Quality of Public Expenditure) Index

- The index captures five variables:
  - **Capital Outlay to GDP Ratio:** Higher capex (as % of GDP) is better.
  - **Revenue Expenditure to Capital Outlay Ratio:** Lower is better (i.e., spend less on day-to-day and more on building assets).
  - **Development Expenditure to GDP Ratio:** Higher is better. (Development expenditure includes healthcare, education, infrastructure, nutrition subsidies, etc.)
  - **Development Expenditure to Total Expenditure:** Higher is better (it shows more of the budget goes to growth and welfare).
  - **Interest Payments to Total Expenditure:** Lower is better (it means the government isn't burdened by too much debt).

## 5. Six Phases (1991–present)

- **Phase 1** (early 1990s): Centre's index improved slightly; states' index dipped because of fiscal pressures after the 1991 economic reforms.
- **Phase 2** (late 1990s): Both Centre and states saw a decline due to factors like the Fifth Pay Commission (raising salaries and pensions) and higher interest payments.
- **Phase 3** (early 2000s to 2008): Marked improvement because of **FRBM** discipline and strong economic growth. More funds were available for capital and developmental spending.
- **Phase 4** (post-2008 crisis): Governments gave fiscal stimulus packages to revive the economy. Although this supported growth, higher deficits began to hurt spending quality over time.
- **Phase 5** (mid-2010s): Divergent trends.
  - **States** improved their spending quality with higher devolution (share of tax revenues) recommended by the 14th Finance Commission.
  - **Centre** struggled with GST revenue challenges and other expenditures.
- **Phase 6** (2020 onwards, COVID era): More stimulus again. But a stronger focus on capex led to an overall improvement in the QPE index.

## 6. Current Scenario

- According to the RBI, both Centre and states are near their highest level of “quality” in public expenditure since 1991.





- This suggests that despite setbacks (like economic crises and the COVID pandemic), fiscal responsibility and an emphasis on infrastructure spending have generally improved how governments spend public money.

## Key Takeaways

### 1. Better Spending Mix

- Over time, India's governments (Centre & states) have been trying to allocate more money toward building assets (capex) and development activities rather than only on wages, pensions, or interest payments.

### 2. Importance of FRBM

- Laws like the FRBM Act aimed to limit deficits and encourage the government to borrow mainly for capital formation, not day-to-day expenses.

### 3. Crisis Impact

- Major crises (like the 2008 global recession and the COVID-19 pandemic) forced the government to spend more in the short term, sometimes weakening spending quality, but it rebounded with a renewed focus on infrastructure.

### 4. States vs. Centre

- States have sometimes been able to spend better due to increased devolution of funds (especially after the 14th Finance Commission), whereas the Centre faced pressure from slower revenue growth and new taxation structures.

### 5. Positive Outlook

- Overall, the RBI's index suggests improvement in how public money is spent, with higher capital/development expenditure and relatively controlled interest payments, indicating improved long-term benefits for the economy.

[A LAW, WEAPONISED-Indian Express Editorial](#)

## Polity

## Easy Explanation

### 1. What is the Special Marriage Act (SMA)?

- Enacted in 1954 to allow **interfaith couples** (or couples belonging to different religions/castes) to marry legally without changing their religion.
- Under the SMA, if a man is above 21 and a woman is above 18, they can give a month's notice to the marriage registrar and get married, provided there are no valid objections (like already having a spouse, mental incapacity, etc.).

### 2. What is the 'No Objection' Provision?

- The SMA requires that couples publish a **public notice** of their intention to marry.
- This 30-day notice period allows *anyone* (not just relatives) to object.
- In principle, objections should be valid only if one partner is **legally ineligible** (for instance, not of legal age or already married). But in practice, this provision opens the door for **moral policing** and harassment, especially for interfaith couples.

### 3. Problem Highlighted in Bhopal Incident



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- An interfaith couple (Muslim man, Hindu woman) gave notice under the SMA in a local court.
- A vigilante group, informed (or “tipped off”) about the couple’s interfaith marriage, **assaulted** the man.
- Instead of providing a safe legal route, the SMA’s requirement for a public announcement **exposed** the couple, putting them at risk of violence.

#### 4. Right to Privacy vs. Public Notice

- In 2017, the Supreme Court (SC) in **Justice K S Puttaswamy vs Union of India** acknowledged **privacy** as a **fundamental right**.
- Marriage decisions fall under personal autonomy and privacy. Publicly disclosing one’s intent to marry can **violate** this right to privacy—particularly in a climate of religious tensions.

#### 5. Weaponization of Law

- The original purpose of the SMA was to **protect** interfaith couples by providing a neutral, secular framework for marriage.
- Today, the 30-day notice requirement can be **misused**:
  - Harassers or vigilante groups exploit public information to intimidate couples.
  - This defeats the law’s primary intention of **safe and voluntary** marriage across religious lines.

### Key Takeaways

#### 1. SMA’s Notice Period Creates Risk

- The public posting of marriage intentions makes couples vulnerable to social, communal, or family backlash.

#### 2. Privacy is a Fundamental Right

- The Supreme Court has clarified that personal decisions about marriage are part of one’s **right to privacy**, but the SMA’s procedure can undermine this principle.

#### 3. Law’s Irony

- A statute meant to **empower** interfaith marriages often ends up exposing couples to harm, instead of safeguarding them.

#### 4. Need for Reform

- Many legal experts and activists suggest **removing or modifying** the mandatory public notice to protect consenting adult couples from harassment.

#### 5. Balancing Checks & Autonomy

- While ensuring marriages comply with age and consent requirements is crucial, it should not come at the cost of **individual freedom** and **safety**.

### [PULSES NEED PRIORITY-Indian Express Editorial](#)

Economy(Agriculture)

### Easy Explanation

#### 1. Rising Pulse Imports & Recent Developments

- India’s pulses imports have increased significantly (56.6% higher in Nov 2024 than the previous year) and may cross a record \$5 billion in 2024-25.



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- This was primarily because poor rains in Maharashtra and Karnataka hurt domestic production of some pulses, especially tur (pigeon pea) and urad (black gram).
- However, with **pulses inflation dropping** to 2.6% in January 2025 (down from double digits), the government feels **less pressure to import**. As a result, they may stop duty-free imports of matar (yellow peas).

## 2. Self-Reliance in Pulses

- Between 2018-19 and 2022-23, India was nearly self-sufficient in pulses, mostly driven by **increased production** of **chana (chickpea)** and **moong (green gram)**.
- Important factors were **shorter-duration** seed varieties (needing minimal irrigation) and **effective government procurement** at the Minimum Support Price (MSP) for these crops.
- **Moong success**: Farmers have managed up to four crops a year thanks to varieties that can be planted multiple times due to their short growing period and resistance to climate factors.

## 3. Need to Support Tur & Urad

- Despite recent success with chana and moong, **tur (pigeon pea)** and **urad (black gram)** haven't received the same level of support.
- Current tur varieties take around 160-180 days to mature, which is **too long**. Farmers need **shorter-duration varieties** (120-130 days), ideally insect- and disease-resistant, and suitable for **mechanical harvesting**.
- These innovations can improve yields, help achieve self-reliance in tur and urad, and reduce the need for imports.

## 4. Pulses' Importance & Policy Ambiguity

- Pulses are not only a key **protein source** but also **fix nitrogen** in the soil, making them environmentally beneficial (requiring less fertilizer).
- **Policy inconsistency**: Unlike rice, wheat, and sugarcane, pulses often lack a **guaranteed procurement** at MSP. Tur is currently selling below MSP, and the soon-to-harvest chana crop may face a similar fate if it's large.
- Farmers need **assurance** that pulses will be procured at MSP or earn reasonable market prices, just like major cereal and sugarcane growers.

## Key Takeaways

### 1. Government Intervention Critical

- **Stable MSP procurement** and **scientific research** (shorter-duration seed varieties) helped make India nearly self-sufficient in chana and moong. Similar emphasis on **tur and urad** could replicate this success.

### 2. Shorter-Duration Varieties Needed

- Breeding more **pest-resistant** and **faster-maturing** tur/urad varieties will reduce crop losses and encourage farmers to cultivate these pulses.

### 3. Environmental & Nutritional Benefits

- Pulses require **less water**, provide **protein**, and enrich soil **nitrogen** levels—factors that should motivate policy support.

### 4. Reduce Imports, Achieve Aatmanirbharta

- With better R&D, government backing, and reliable MSP procurement, India can cut back on costly pulse imports (currently at \$5 billion) and strengthen **food security**.



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## 5. Equal Support for Pulse Farmers

- Rice, wheat, and sugarcane farmers enjoy consistent government procurement. **Pulse cultivators** deserve the same—both financial and technological support—to ensure stable incomes and an adequate domestic supply.

### Converting court case backlogs into treasure troves-The Hindu Editorial

Polity

#### Easy Explanation

##### 1. Huge Backlog in Courts

- India's judicial system faces a massive backlog: over 5 crore cases in lower courts, 62 lakh in High Courts, and 82,000 in the Supreme Court. Some cases have been pending for over a decade.
- This is partly due to:
  - A **low judge-to-population ratio** (around 21 judges per million people).
  - The **adversarial legal system**, which often has multiple interim applications and appeals.
  - The **government** being involved in almost half of all litigation.

##### 2. Challenges of the Current System

- Judges generally work hard, but the system itself is slow and under-resourced.
- **Infrastructure limitations** (court buildings, finances, staff) and no strong deterrents for filing cases (e.g. low use of punitive costs for frivolous lawsuits) add to the backlog.
- Government bodies tend to litigate instead of exploring quicker settlements, clogging courts further.

##### 3. Mediation as a Solution

- **Mediation** involves a neutral third party helping disputing sides find a **mutually acceptable solution**, rather than imposing a judgment.
- It is often faster, cheaper, and more likely to preserve or restore relationships compared to lengthy, adversarial court battles.
- Starting in the 1990s, mediation in India has grown, especially within the court system. Many judges now encourage it because:
  - It **shortens case durations** from years to possibly weeks or months.
  - **Costs are significantly lower** for everyone.
  - **Outcomes** can be more **flexible** and **practical** than a strict court verdict.

##### 4. Turning Backlog into Opportunity

- The huge backlog, instead of being a hopeless problem, could become a **"treasure trove"** for mediators — a large pool of cases ready for out-of-court settlement.
- By **systematically identifying** which cases are suitable for mediation and assigning trained mediators, courts can drastically cut waiting times and reduce the backlog.
- Mediation also frees judges to focus on complex cases that truly need a court trial.

#### Key Takeaways



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### 1. Court Backlog is Enormous

- Over 5 crore cases are pending, indicating a systemic issue, not just overburdened judges.

### 2. Adversarial Model Slows Justice

- Multiple appeals and interim applications extend case durations, increasing costs and delays.

### 3. Mediation Offers a Fast, Cost-effective Alternative

- By allowing disputing parties to collaborate on a mutually beneficial outcome, mediation reduces hostility and clears cases faster.

### 4. Government's Role is Vital

- Since the government is a party in about half of all cases, it must be more open to out-of-court settlements and limit unnecessary litigation.

### 5. Transforming a Problem into a Solution

- The court backlog can serve as a ready “**pipeline**” for mediation, relieving judges, saving litigants time and money, and delivering speedier justice.

## Judges' dilemma-The Hindu Editorial

Polity

### Easy Explanation

#### 1. Context: Lokpal's Jurisdiction over Judges

- The **Lokpal Act, 2013** is designed to tackle corruption among public servants, and it typically covers a wide range of officials.
- Recently, the Lokpal stated that **High Court judges** come under its jurisdiction, but it excluded **Supreme Court judges** because the Supreme Court was created by the **Constitution**, not by an Act of Parliament.
- This ruling was quickly challenged, and the **Supreme Court** stayed it on its own motion, citing concerns over **judicial independence**.

#### 2. Independence vs. Accountability

- The **independence of the judiciary** means judges should be free from external pressures, including those from the executive or legislative bodies.
- **Accountability** means there needs to be a proper mechanism to handle credible allegations of corruption or wrongdoing by judges.
- The editorial highlights the dilemma: **how to ensure judges are held accountable without compromising their independence**.

#### 3. What the Law Says

- In the **K. Veeraswami vs Union of India (1991)** case, the Supreme Court stated that judges are indeed **public servants** under the Prevention of Corruption Act, but **no case can be registered** against a judge without **consulting the Chief Justice of India (CJI)**.
- This is meant to preserve judicial independence while acknowledging that judges can be investigated for corruption.

#### 4. Current Procedure for Allegations

- Complaints against High Court and Supreme Court judges are handled through an “**in-house procedure**”.



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- If a Chief Justice (of a High Court) or the CJI or the President of India receives a complaint and finds substance in it, possible actions include:
  1. Asking the judge to **resign**.
  2. **Transferring** the judge to another High Court (though reasons are not usually disclosed).
  3. Advising **Parliament** to begin **impeachment** proceedings (the only formal way to remove a judge).
- **Criminal prosecution** under the regular legal framework is rare and not straightforward.

#### 5. Need for Reform

- The editorial suggests that **merely transferring** a judge or requesting resignation might not be enough in serious cases.
- It calls for **enhancing accountability mechanisms**—perhaps by providing for supervised, independent prosecution when credible corruption charges arise.
- The key challenge is to **balance** these reforms with the need to **protect judicial independence** from frivolous or politically motivated complaints.

### Key Takeaways

#### 1. Lokpal's Ruling Raises Concerns

- Claiming High Court judges fall under the Lokpal Act has led to fears about threats to **judicial independence**.

#### 2. Judicial Independence Is Paramount

- Courts have historically sought to protect judges from undue interference, meaning **no corruption case** can be initiated without the **Chief Justice of India's approval**.

#### 3. Accountability Must Not Be Overlooked

- There should be a **robust mechanism** for dealing with credible corruption charges—beyond the current “in-house” approach.

#### 4. Balancing Act

- The **real question** is how to **reform** the existing system to **include credible and transparent follow-up** without undermining the judiciary's core independence.

#### 5. Way Forward

- The **Supreme Court's stay** on the Lokpal ruling indicates the judiciary is taking the matter seriously.
- A **revamped framework** could ensure judges are both **independent** and **properly accountable**, reinforcing public trust in the judicial system.

## 23rd February 2025

[What is India's dilemma over fighter jets?: TH FAQ](#)

Internal Security

Easy Explanation: India's Fighter Jet Dilemma - F-35 vs. Indigenous Options



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At the Aero India 2025 event, Russia's **SU-57** and the **U.S.'s F-35** grabbed attention as leading **Fifth-Generation Fighter Aircraft (FGFA)**. Following this, U.S. President Donald Trump hinted at the possibility of India acquiring **F-35 stealth fighters**, though it is **not yet a confirmed offer**.

The **F-35**, developed by **Lockheed Martin**, is an advanced **single-seat, single-engine stealth fighter** with three variants for different branches of the U.S. military. It is a widely used aircraft, with **1,110 jets already delivered** and expected to serve until **2080s**. However, each **F-35 costs over \$100 million**, and integrating it into India's Air Force (IAF) would require **new infrastructure, training, and maintenance facilities**.

India had earlier collaborated with Russia to develop the **SU-57 FGFA**, but due to **high costs and limited technology transfer**, India withdrew and focused on developing its own **Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA)**. Meanwhile, **China has already developed multiple Fifth-Generation Fighters**, and Pakistan is reportedly acquiring **40 J-35 fighters from China**, increasing security concerns for India.

The **IAF currently operates 31 squadrons**, well below its **sanctioned strength of 42.5 squadrons**. India has ambitious plans to add **over 500 fighters**, mostly indigenous **LCA-Mk1A, LCA-Mk2, and AMCA**, but their development is facing **delays**. While acquiring **F-35s could be a short-term solution**, it would take nearly a **decade to receive them**, as seen in the **Rafale deal from France**.

Diversification of India's defense purchases started in the early **2000s**, but shifting from Russian dependency to **U.S. and French fighter engines** brings new challenges. **Indigenous fighter jet production must be accelerated** to avoid long-term reliance on foreign technology.

## Key Takeaways: India's Fighter Jet Strategy

### 1. U.S. Offers Possible F-35 Fighters to India

- The **F-35 is a cutting-edge Fifth-Generation stealth fighter** developed by Lockheed Martin.
- It has **three variants** (F-35A, F-35B, F-35C) used by the U.S. Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps.
- The **F-35 program involves 20 nations**, and **1,110 jets have already been delivered**.
- Each **F-35 costs over \$100 million**, making it a costly investment for India.
- India has never operated a **U.S. fighter jet**, so adding the **F-35 would require new infrastructure, training, and maintenance facilities**.

### 2. India's Past FGFA Project with Russia (SU-57)

- India **originally partnered with Russia** in 2010 to develop a **Fifth-Generation Fighter Aircraft (FGFA)**.
- Due to **high costs, limited technology transfer, and the absence of a twin-seat variant**, India **withdrew from the project**.
- India instead decided to develop its own **Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA)**.

### 3. India's Fighter Jet Shortage & Need for More Squadrons

- The **IAF needs 42.5 squadrons** but currently operates **only 31 squadrons**.
- China has **multiple Fifth-Generation Fighters**, and Pakistan is reportedly acquiring **40 J-35 jets from China**, increasing security concerns.



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- A **high-level committee** was set up in December 2024 to address these gaps, but the **final report is still pending**.

#### 4. India's Indigenous Fighter Jet Production Plans

- India plans to **acquire 500+ fighter jets**, mostly **LCA-Mk1A, LCA-Mk2, and AMCA**.
- **Delays in deliveries** have affected the **LCA-Mk1A program**, with 83 jets already contracted but facing delays.
- The **LCA-Mk2's first flight is expected in 2026**, while **AMCA's first prototype will roll out by 2026-27** and enter service by **2034**.
- India also **proposed importing 114 Multi-Role Fighter Aircraft (MRFA)**, but progress has stalled.

#### 5. Challenges with Importing Foreign Fighter Jets

- The **Rafale deal took a decade** to finalize and deliver 36 jets from France.
- The **F-35 purchase would also take years**, making it a **long-term investment, not an immediate solution**.
- Acquiring **U.S. jets like the F-35 comes with operational restrictions and potential compromises on India's independent defense policies**.

#### 6. India's Shift from Russian Dependence to U.S. & French Engines

- India historically **relied on Russian military hardware**, including **fighter jets**.
- By **2040**, India will have **220 LCA-Mk1, 120 LCA-Mk2, and AMCA jets**, all powered by **U.S. and French engines (GE F-404, F-414, and Safran engines from France)**.
- However, this shift **increases reliance on the U.S. and France for critical components**, creating **long-term strategic dependency**.

[Why is three-language policy controversial?: TH FAQ](#)

Polity

### Easy Explanation: Tamil Nadu vs. Centre on the Three-Language Policy

The **Union Government has withheld ₹2,152 crore** in education funds meant for Tamil Nadu under the **Samagra Shiksha scheme** because the State refused to join the **Prime Minister Schools for Rising India (PM SHRI) initiative**. Tamil Nadu **wants to participate in PM SHRI**, but it **opposes the requirement to implement the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020**, especially the **three-language formula**.

Tamil Nadu follows a **two-language policy (Tamil and English)** and has historically **opposed Hindi imposition**. The Centre, however, insists that the **three-language policy must be followed** and has refused to make any exceptions. **Chief Minister M.K. Stalin** has strongly opposed this, calling it **"blackmail"** and vowing that Tamil Nadu **will not abandon its two-language system**.

The **three-language policy** was first introduced in **1968**, requiring Hindi-speaking states to learn **Hindi, English, and a South Indian language**, while non-Hindi states had to learn their **regional language, Hindi,**



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and English. NEP 2020 gives more flexibility, stating that students can choose any two Indian languages, but critics argue that it still encourages Hindi indirectly.

Tamil Nadu's opposition to Hindi dates back to 1937, when C. Rajagopalachari tried to make Hindi compulsory, leading to major protests. The 1965 anti-Hindi agitation turned violent, with several deaths. Since then, the State has steadfastly opposed the three-language formula, arguing that it is a hidden attempt to impose Hindi.

Despite Tamil Nadu's high literacy rate and successful education policies, the Union Government insists that the three-language policy is mandatory. The way forward would be for the Centre and Tamil Nadu to engage in dialogue rather than using education funds as leverage in a political battle.

## Key Takeaways: Tamil Nadu vs. Centre on Education Policy

### 1. Why Did the Union Government Withhold ₹2,152 Crore?

- Tamil Nadu refused to implement the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 as part of the PM SHRI scheme.
- The key issue is the three-language policy, which Tamil Nadu staunchly opposes.
- Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said Tamil Nadu must comply with the Constitution, but CM M.K. Stalin has rejected this claim, saying there is no constitutional basis for the mandate.

### 2. What Does the NEP 2020 Say About Language Policy?

- NEP retains the three-language formula introduced in 1968.
- Unlike before, NEP 2020 does not mandate Hindi, but it requires students to learn at least two Indian languages.
- The policy emphasizes bilingual education, particularly in mother tongue and English.
- Sanskrit is given special emphasis, which some see as another form of linguistic imposition.

### 3. Why Does Tamil Nadu Oppose the Three-Language Formula?

- Tamil Nadu has a long history of opposing Hindi imposition:
  - 1937: C. Rajagopalachari tried to make Hindi compulsory, leading to violent protests.
  - 1965: The anti-Hindi agitation saw at least 70 deaths, including self-immolations.
  - 1968: Tamil Nadu officially removed Hindi from its school curriculum under CM C.N. Annadurai.
- Since then, Tamil Nadu has only taught Tamil and English in schools, rejecting the three-language policy.
- The DMK, AIADMK, and other Tamil parties have consistently opposed any changes to this policy.

### 4. Is the Three-Language Policy a Hidden Hindi Imposition?

- Tamil Nadu leaders argue that adding a third language would inevitably lead to Hindi being taught.
- In 2019, ₹50 crore was allocated for hiring Hindi teachers in non-Hindi states, while no similar support was given for South Indian languages in North India.





- The **lack of Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, or Malayalam in Kendriya Vidyalayas** contradicts the claim that the **policy promotes regional languages**.

#### 5. What Has Been the Centre's Justification?

- **Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan** says Tamil Nadu should **"rise above politics"** and implement **NEP 2020**.
- He argues that **the policy is about flexibility** and does not impose Hindi.
- However, **Tamil Nadu sees this as an attempt to control state education policies**.

#### 6. What Has Tamil Nadu's Response Been?

- **CM Stalin** has vowed that **Tamil Nadu will never accept Hindi imposition**.
- He has accused the Centre of **"blackmailing"** the State by **withholding funds**.
- Tamil Nadu has **successfully maintained high education standards with its two-language policy**.

#### 7. What is the Way Forward?

- **Education was moved to the Concurrent List during the Emergency**, which gives the Centre more power over State policies.
- A **compromise through dialogue** is the **only practical solution**.
- **Samagra Shiksha funds** should not be **withheld over a language dispute**, as this affects **millions of students**.
- The **focus should be on improving education quality, not enforcing linguistic policies**.

[How glacier ice algae accelerate Greenland ice sheet melting: TH Science](#)

Science tech

### Easy Explanation: How Microalgae Are Speeding Up Greenland's Ice Melt

A new study has found that **dark-colored microalgae** growing on the **Greenland Ice Sheet** are **accelerating the melting process**. These **tiny organisms absorb more heat**, which leads to **faster ice melting and rising sea levels**.

Researchers discovered that **these algae do not need extra nutrients from outside sources to grow**. Instead, they **store nutrients internally** and **absorb carbon efficiently**, allowing them to **spread quickly over melting ice**. This means that as the ice continues to **recede and expose more bare surfaces**, these algae will **keep expanding and worsening the situation**.

The **Greenland Ice Sheet is the largest source of freshwater contributing to rising sea levels**. Earlier research showed that **algal blooms on ice can increase melting by 10-13%**, but scientists didn't fully understand **why** these algae thrived. This study **solves that mystery**, showing that **they can survive in nutrient-poor conditions and spread rapidly**.



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Because of this, scientists are now saying that **climate models predicting ice melt need to include the effects of biological processes like algal growth**. Without considering how **microalgae impact the ice**, we might **underestimate the speed of ice melt and rising sea levels**.

## Key Takeaways: How Microalgae Are Speeding Up Ice Melt

### 1. What Did the Study Find?

- **Microalgae on Greenland's ice** absorb heat, making the ice melt **faster**.
- These algae are **highly efficient at absorbing nutrients**, allowing them to **survive and spread** even in **low-nutrient conditions**.
- As the ice melts, **more surface area is exposed**, giving algae **more space to grow** and further **speeding up melting**.

### 2. How Do These Algae Survive in Harsh Conditions?

- They **store phosphorus internally** and **use carbon efficiently**, helping them survive in **nutrient-poor environments**.
- **Unlike other organisms, they don't need large amounts of external nutrients** to thrive.
- This means they will **continue spreading without external help**, worsening the **melting crisis**.

### 3. Why Is This a Problem?

- **Greenland's ice sheet is the biggest contributor to rising sea levels**, releasing vast amounts of **freshwater into the oceans**.
- Algal blooms on **the ice sheet's western margin** can **increase melting by 10-13%**, according to past research.
- More melting means **higher sea levels**, which **threaten coastal cities and ecosystems worldwide**.

### 4. What Needs to Change?

- **Climate models** predicting ice melt need to **include the role of biological processes** like algal growth.
- Ignoring this factor **underestimates how fast the ice is melting**.
- Future climate action needs to **consider the impact of algae on ice sheets** to make **better predictions and solutions**.

[Why are States asked to use untested AI tool for TB screening?: TH Science](#)

Science tech

## Easy Explanation: How AI is Being Ignored in India's Fight Against TB

Despite Prime Minister Narendra Modi's goal of eliminating TB by 2025, the **Health Ministry has been slow and unmotivated in implementing key AI-based screening tools** that could speed up diagnosis. Two **indigenous AI solutions, qXR (by Qure.ai) and Genki (by DeepTek)**, were approved by top health bodies for



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use in **analyzing chest X-rays to detect TB**. However, the **Central TB Division (CTD)** has **not implemented them**, delaying progress.

Instead, the CTD recommended another AI tool, **DeepCXR**, developed by the **Institute for Plasma Research**, which has **no published research proving its accuracy in the field**. Even after this decision, the **CTD did not officially inform the states** about the AI tool's availability, only responding when states reached out asking for AI solutions.

The importance of **AI in TB screening is critical**. Chest X-rays detected **more than 40% of TB cases in the National TB Prevalence Survey**. AI-based tools like **qXR and Genki** have already been successfully deployed in **over 3,100 sites across 90 countries**, including **490 sites in India**. They **work quickly (under a minute)**, **reduce costs**, and are **highly accurate**, making them **ideal for resource-limited settings** like rural India.

Ignoring these tools **puts India's TB elimination goal at risk**, as **early and efficient detection is key to stopping the spread**. Experts warn that **bureaucratic inefficiencies, selective approvals, and lack of urgency** could derail efforts to eradicate TB.

## Key Takeaways: Why AI-Based TB Screening is Being Ignored

### 1. AI-Based TB Screening Tools Were Approved But Not Implemented

- **qXR (Qure.ai) and Genki (DeepTek)** are **two AI-powered tools** that use **chest X-ray interpretation to detect TB**.
- **Both tools were evaluated and approved** by India's **Health Technology Assessment (HTA)** and the **Medical Technology Assessment Board (MTAB)**.
- Despite approval, the **Central TB Division (CTD)** has **not implemented them** in India's national TB program.

### 2. Instead, an Unverified AI Tool Was Recommended

- The **CTD recommended another AI tool, DeepCXR**, developed by the **Institute for Plasma Research** in Gandhinagar.
- **DeepCXR lacks published research on accuracy and field performance**.
- The **CTD did not even officially inform states about DeepCXR** and only responded when states requested AI solutions.

### 3. AI Can Significantly Improve TB Detection and Elimination

- **Chest X-rays are crucial for detecting TB**, especially for **subclinical cases**.
- **AI-assisted X-ray interpretation**:
  - **Takes less than a minute**
  - **Has high accuracy**
  - **Reduces the cost of TB detection**
  - **Works well in resource-limited settings**
- In India's TB surveys, **over 40% of TB cases were detected only because of chest X-rays**.



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#### 4. qXR and Genki Have Proven Effectiveness Globally

- qXR and Genki meet WHO's accuracy standards for TB screening.
- qXR has over 90% sensitivity and 70% specificity for TB detection.
- Both tools are cost-effective, with a cost of ₹30 per screening for qXR and ₹22 for Genki.
- qXR is already being used in 3,100 sites across 90 countries and 490 sites in India.

#### 5. Delays and Bureaucratic Hurdles Put India's TB Goal at Risk

- India aims to eliminate TB by 2025, but slow decision-making is a major obstacle.
- The CTD's selective approvals and failure to communicate key decisions slow down progress.
- Ignoring AI-based solutions delays early detection, making TB elimination harder.

### Powering a sustainable future: TH Science

Science tech

## Easy Explanation: How Coal-Fired Power Plants Are Hurting India's Agriculture and What Alternatives We Have

Burning coal to generate electricity causes severe **air pollution**, which affects **human health, animal health, and even crop production**. A new study by **Dr. Kirat Singh and colleagues from Stanford University** has found that **pollutants like nitrogen dioxide and ozone from coal-fired power plants are reducing wheat and rice yields in India by over 10%**. This **reduces six years' worth of agricultural growth**, posing a serious concern for **food security**.

India has relied on **coal-fired power generation since 1920**, and the **country has enough coal reserves to last for another 120 years**. However, **continuing to burn coal for energy will further damage health, environment, and agriculture**. It is time for **India to transition to cleaner sources of energy**.

There are **five cleaner and more sustainable alternatives** to coal:

1. **Wind energy**: Using windmills to generate electricity in windy regions.
2. **Solar power**: Installing solar panels on rooftops and solar farms.
3. **Hydropower**: Using dams to generate electricity from flowing rivers.
4. **Osmotic power**: Harnessing the energy from river water meeting seawater.
5. **Nuclear power**: Using nuclear reactors to generate electricity without emissions.

Switching to **these renewable sources of energy will reduce pollution, protect crops, and ensure sustainable electricity for future generations**.

## Key Takeaways: Why India Needs to Shift from Coal to Cleaner Energy Sources

### 1. Coal-Fired Power Plants Are Hurting Agriculture



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- Burning coal releases nitrogen dioxide and ozone, which harm human health, environment, and crops.
- Rice and wheat yields have dropped by over 10% in polluted regions, equivalent to six years of lost agricultural progress.
- India has enough coal reserves for 120 years, but its use is becoming unsustainable.

## 2. Wind Energy: Harnessing the Power of Wind

- India is the 4th largest wind energy producer in the world.
- Windmills generate over 50 GW of electricity across nine windy states.
- Private companies are already installing wind farms to provide clean power.

## 3. Solar Power: Using Sunlight for Electricity

- Solar panels can be installed on rooftops and large solar farms.
- Government subsidies are available to promote solar adoption.
- Solar energy is becoming one of the cheapest and most reliable alternatives.

## 4. Hydropower: Dams for Electricity and Irrigation

- Dams generate electricity by controlling water flow and also support irrigation.
- India's five largest dams generate 50 GW of hydroelectric power.
- It is a clean, renewable, and reliable source of energy.

## 5. Osmotic Power: Generating Electricity from Rivers Meeting the Sea

- A new technology generates electricity when river water meets seawater due to differences in salt concentration (osmotic pressure).
- Researchers in Australia and the U.S. have demonstrated the potential of this method.
- With India's 7,500 km coastline, this could be a major untapped energy source.

## 6. Nuclear Power: A Clean and Reliable Energy Source

- Nuclear power plants generate electricity without air pollution.
- India currently has 8 nuclear power plants producing 3.5 GW of energy.
- Expanding nuclear power can help reduce dependence on coal.

**24th February 2025**

[Melting Glaciers Caused 2cm Sealevel rise this century:the likely impact-Indian Express Explained](#)

Geography

Easy Explanation



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Melting glaciers—responsible for a 2 cm sea-level rise since 2000—are part of a broader trend of rising seas driven by both ice melt and thermal expansion of ocean waters. The rate of increase has accelerated, with global sea levels now rising at more than twice the pace observed in the early 1990s. Regionally, changes can differ, especially around the Indian Ocean, where certain areas (like southwestern Indian Ocean and cities such as Mumbai) are seeing above-average increases.

These changes pose significant threats: coastal flooding, erosion, heightened storm surges, damage to critical ecosystems (mangroves, coral reefs), and contamination of freshwater supplies. With roughly one-third of humanity living near coastlines, unchecked greenhouse gas emissions could cause a further 20 cm rise by 2050, escalating risks of displacement and infrastructural damage worldwide.

### Key Takeaways

1. **Significant Glacier Melt:** Melting glaciers have contributed to nearly 2 cm of global sea-level rise in this century alone—equivalent to losing 273 billion tonnes of ice per year.
2. **Two Main Drivers of Rising Seas:**
  - **Glacier & Ice Sheet Loss:** The Greenland and Antarctic Ice Sheets also contribute significantly (around 150 billion and 270 billion tonnes per year, respectively).
  - **Thermal Expansion:** Oceans warm up and expand in volume due to global temperature rise.
3. **Accelerating Rise:** Global sea levels have risen by 21–25 cm since 1880, but the rate has doubled from about 0.18 cm/year in 1993 to 0.42 cm/year currently.
4. **Regional Variations:** Sea-level change is not uniform worldwide. In the southwestern Indian Ocean, it is rising at about 2.5 mm/year—faster than the global average—while other areas see smaller increases.
5. **Impacts on Indian Cities:**
  - **Mumbai:** Sea-level rise of 4.44 cm between 1987 and 2021 (city is just ~10 m above sea level).
  - **Haldia (West Bengal):** 2.73 cm
  - **Visakhapatnam (Andhra Pradesh):** 2.381 cm
  - **Kochi (Kerala):** 2.213 cm
6. **Consequences:**
  - **Coastal Flooding & Erosion:** More frequent, intense flooding and loss of land.
  - **Storm Surges:** Stronger storm surges push water further inland, impacting ecosystems and contaminating soil/freshwater.
  - **Population Displacement:** Large coastal populations (nearly 29% of the world within 50 km of a coast) face higher risks.
7. **Future Outlook:** Without significant emissions cuts, the current acceleration puts global sea level on course to rise another 20 cm by 2050, doubling the rise seen in the past century.

### [Three years of war in Ukraine-Indian Express Explained](#)

International relations

### Easy Explanation



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Three years after Russia's invasion of Ukraine began, the war has become a draining conflict for all involved. Russia holds a fifth of Ukrainian territory but is militarily and economically weakened; Ukraine is devastated. Despite the heavy toll, peace efforts were scant until Donald Trump's second presidency, which upended prior U.S. foreign policies.

Trump's "end the war" strategy bypasses European stakeholders, striking a deal directly with Moscow. Early outlines suggest Ukraine remains outside NATO, Russia keeps Crimea, and certain eastern territories' status is negotiated. U.S. sanctions could be lifted in exchange for Russia's ceasefire agreement, while Washington extracts commitments on Ukrainian resources.

Europe, meanwhile, finds itself marginalized and anxious about a U.S.-Russia accord. The war's end could relieve global economic stress—particularly on energy and food markets—but the nature of the agreement could resemble historic power-broker deals, where local interests are sidelined. Ultimately, the settlement's durability is uncertain, potentially leaving another frozen conflict in Europe's backyard.

### Key Takeaways

1. **Stalemate and Attrition:** Three years into the conflict, there is no clear winner. While Russia controls significant territory and maintains a nuclear deterrent, Ukraine's resilience—bolstered by Western backing—has kept Russia from total victory.
2. **Trump's Role in a Prospective Peace:** In a dramatic shift, Donald Trump (in a hypothetical second presidency) pushes for a quick resolution. This is driven by a desire to avoid prolonged military engagements and to leverage deals with Russia directly.
3. **Future Peace Terms:** Tentative frameworks suggest Ukraine would remain outside NATO, while Russia retains Crimea and negotiates status over eastern regions it occupies. Sanctions relief for Russia and U.S. economic interests in Ukraine's resources are key bargaining chips.
4. **Europe on the Sidelines:** European nations and Ukraine are largely bypassed or ignored in direct U.S.-Russia discussions, leaving them anxious and scrambling for influence. The war has also laid bare Europe's lack of a unified or effective diplomatic strategy.
5. **Global Ramifications:**
  - **Economic Disruption:** Energy and food supply chains have been strained globally; a settlement could bring relief.
  - **Geopolitical Shifts:** With the conflict winding down, the U.S. appears intent on recalibrating relations with Russia to focus on countering China.
  - **Uncertain Stability:** Whether such a U.S.-Russia deal would lead to lasting peace or merely freeze the conflict remains unclear.

### [Why Microsoft's claims of quantum computing breakthrough matter-Indian Express Explained](#)

Science and technology

### Easy Explanation



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Microsoft's announcement of a quantum-computing breakthrough revolves around a new technique to produce more stable qubits—topological qubits. In principle, greater qubit stability reduces the extensive need for error correction, thereby letting researchers pack more effective (logical) qubits into a machine.

If verified, Microsoft's method could fast-track the creation of large-scale quantum computers from an anticipated wait of decades to just a few years. Such a development would have profound implications, enabling unprecedented computational power for tasks where classical computers struggle (e.g., simulating complex molecules, optimizing global supply chains, or advancing AI). However, because this claim hinges on achieving a physical state never previously attained, many in the scientific community remain rightly cautious and await further evidence to validate Microsoft's results.

### Key takeaways

#### Claimed Breakthrough in Qubit Stability:

- Microsoft says it has a new method to produce qubits (topological qubits) that are inherently more stable, potentially reducing errors significantly.

#### Faster Path to Large-Scale Quantum Computers:

- Stable qubits require less overhead for error correction, so Microsoft believes it could build a million-qubit system far sooner than expected (within years instead of decades).

#### Physically Unverified State:

- The type of qubit Microsoft is describing involves a quantum state scientists have theorized but never conclusively observed, so outside experts remain cautious until there is independent verification.

#### High Stakes for Real-World Applications:

- Quantum computing at this scale could tackle major challenges in fields like drug discovery, materials science, cryptography, and climate modeling—areas beyond the reach of classical computers.

#### Importance to Physics and Computing:

- If validated, Microsoft's approach would be a significant advance not just in quantum computing but also in fundamental physics, as it confirms a long-predicted but elusive topological state.

### [STEPPING IN, WITH EMPATHY-Indian Express Editorial](#)

International relations

### Easy Explanation

As gender-affirming healthcare services in the United States face new legal restrictions and funding cuts, India has an opportunity to emerge as a leader in transgender healthcare. Bolstered by the 2014 Supreme Court ruling (NALSA vs. Union of India) and the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, India offers a legal framework protecting transgender people's rights and mandating non-discrimination. The



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country's recognized medical expertise, budding private health sector, and existing policy initiatives—like Ayushman Bharat's TG Plus scheme—lay the groundwork for India to become a hub for gender-affirming surgeries and holistic trans healthcare. However, to realize this potential, India must strengthen implementation of its pro-trans laws, update its medical curricula, train healthcare professionals in specialized transgender care, and adequately fund transgender health services.

## Key Takeaways

### 1. US Policy Rollback Creates an Opportunity for India

- Recent executive orders in the U.S. have severely restricted trans healthcare services and funding, shutting down clinics and impeding access to puberty blockers, hormone therapy, and other supports.

### 2. India's Supportive Legal Framework

- India's Supreme Court (2014) and the Transgender Persons Act (2019) legally protect and recognize transgender identities, mandating non-discrimination in employment, education, and healthcare.

### 3. Existing Gaps in Implementation

- Despite legal mandates, India still lacks systematic provision of transgender healthcare services. The Ayushman Bharat TG Plus card, for instance, is yet to be fully rolled out, and medical curricula are only beginning to remove transphobic content.

### 4. Potential to Become a Medical Hub

- With cultural acceptance of gender minorities, a robust private healthcare sector, and globally recognized medical expertise, India could serve as a leading center for gender-affirming surgeries, similar to Thailand's role.

### 5. Action Items for Growth

- Strengthen Public Healthcare:** Enforce existing trans-friendly laws, expand the availability of gender-affirming procedures in government hospitals, and roll out TG Plus nationwide.
- Enhance Medical Training:** Update curricula, train doctors in specialized transgender surgery, and set professional standards.
- Increase Funding & Policy Support:** Allocate sufficient budgetary resources and simplify passport, visa, and document-change processes for transgender individuals.

By concretizing these measures, India can build a world-class ecosystem for transgender healthcare and serve as a beacon of empathy and innovation in an era when many countries are curtailing trans rights.

[WAR AND POLITICS-Indian Express Editorial](#)

International relations

## Easy Explanation

Three years into the Russia-Ukraine conflict—one of the bloodiest in Europe since World War II—both countries have suffered immensely, and neither can truly claim victory. Although Russia made significant territorial advances early on, Western sanctions and economic isolation have exacted a heavy toll. Ukraine, too, has been shattered by relentless Russian strikes, and its ongoing fight depends heavily on international



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support. However, the geopolitical terrain is shifting as the U.S. reconsiders its backing for Kyiv and Russia seeks an opportunity to negotiate a settlement with Washington.

Amid these developments, India's policy of strategic neutrality—refusing to condemn Russia outright while emphasizing dialogue—now appears prescient. The war shows how, in global politics, national interests and shifting alliances can overshadow the ostensible moral rationale for war. Moreover, India's approach highlights that Moscow's ultimate objective was never to permanently break with the U.S. but to secure more favorable terms of engagement.

### Key Takeaways

1. **Mutual Destruction:** Both Russia and Ukraine have suffered severe losses; neither side has achieved a decisive or beneficial outcome from the prolonged conflict.
2. **Geopolitical Realities:** Western unity over supporting Ukraine has begun to fracture, and the U.S. has pivoted in its stance after a change of administration—signaling shifting global power equations.
3. **India's Calculated Neutrality:** India's reluctance to overtly criticize Russia stems from longstanding ties and its balanced foreign-policy posture; this stance now appears vindicated in light of rapidly changing Western positions.
4. **Moscow's Real Goal:** Contrary to perceptions of Russia leading an anti-American axis, recent diplomatic overtures suggest Moscow's principal aim was to renegotiate its strategic relations with Washington.
5. **Lessons in Pragmatism:** War's outcomes are often driven more by political calculation than moral conviction. India's emphasis on negotiation and diplomacy underscores the importance of looking beyond immediate pressures to long-term strategic interests.

[A RIVER MUST FLOW-Indian Express Editorial](#)

Environment

### Easy Explanation

India's capital city, Delhi, has long been grappling with a severely polluted Yamuna River, primarily due to untreated sewage, industrial effluents, and domestic waste. Although the Yamuna runs only 22 km within Delhi's borders, this stretch accounts for a staggering 75% of the river's total pollution load. The Lieutenant Governor's recently announced three-year plan to clean the river—which includes overhauling sewage treatment plants (STPs) and dealing with the city's drains—comes after multiple previous attempts that failed, often because of inadequate coordination with neighboring states and insufficient infrastructure upgrades. With the scheduled renegotiation of the interstate Yamuna water-sharing agreement, the Delhi government must collaborate effectively with other basin states to ensure sufficient water flow and successful long-term rejuvenation of the river.

### Key Takeaways

1. **Severity of Yamuna Pollution:**
  - Delhi, despite having only 22 km of the river's 1,400-km course, contributes three-quarters of the pollution load.



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- In some places, pollutant levels are more than 700 times over permissible limits.

## 2. Infrastructure Gaps:

- Delhi generates about 790 MGD of sewage daily, but while STPs theoretically can handle 700+ MGD, most fail to meet basic standards.
- Many STPs lack essential bacterial disinfection facilities; older, unfinished interceptor projects also impede comprehensive waste treatment.

## 3. Past Inaction and Political Hurdles:

- Previous clean-up plans stalled because Delhi's government and the L-G did not coordinate well.
- Efforts have also been hampered by strained relations with neighboring states like Haryana, which affect water sharing and flow.

## 4. Urgent Need for Upgrades and Coordination:

- The new plan must factor in both infrastructure renewal and expanded capacity to handle ever-increasing sewage loads.
- Forthcoming renegotiations of the Yamuna water-sharing agreement require proactive diplomacy to secure sufficient upstream flows.

## 5. Path Forward:

- Properly upgrading STPs, completing interceptor drain projects, and ensuring genuine cooperation with neighboring states are essential to finally turn the Yamuna's fortunes around.

## [First detailed map of moon's south pole made from Chandrayaan data-The Hindu Science](#)

Science and technology

### Easy Explanation

Indian scientists have produced the first detailed geological map of the Moon's south polar region using data from the Chandrayaan-3 mission. Notably, the rover Pragyan's findings confirm the existence of a global layer of subsurface magma, extending our understanding of the Moon's volcanic past well beyond the equatorial zones studied by previous missions. By examining the impact craters and debris fields in this high-latitude area—dated to roughly 3.7 billion years ago—researchers are gaining new insights into the Moon's origin and its parallel evolutionary track with Earth. However, concerns are growing about the long-term impact of human activities—such as landings and potential lunar mining—on the Moon's pristine landscape and its thin exosphere.

### Key Takeaways

#### 1. Detailed South Pole Map:

- Researchers combined data from Chandrayaan-3's Pragyan rover to create a high-resolution geological map of the Moon's south polar region, a first of its kind.

#### 2. Confirmation of Global Magma Ocean:

- Rover measurements confirm a subsurface reservoir of molten rock beneath the pole, suggesting the Moon once harbored a global ocean of magma.

#### 3. Geological Dating:



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- The mapped region is around 3.7 billion years old, coinciding with early microbial life on Earth—reinforcing theories of a shared planetary history.

#### 4. Crater Studies:

- Proximity to the South Pole-Aitken Basin (among the largest impact craters in the solar system) offers a window into ancient collision events crucial for understanding planetary formation.

#### 5. Environmental Concerns:

- With increased lunar missions and potential resource extraction, scientists warn that lunar litter, exhaust contamination, and disturbance of ice reserves threaten the Moon's delicate environment and exosphere.

### Indian industry needs innovation, not mindless toil-The Hindu Editorial

## Governance

### Easy Explanation

In much of India's industrial landscape, the dominant strategy for competitiveness remains the exploitation of cheap labor rather than a focus on innovation, technology, or managerial advancement. Many workers—particularly migrants—are forced to work extremely long hours under informal arrangements with little legal or social protection. These conditions suppress domestic demand, erode workers' well-being, and ultimately hinder the long-term growth and competitiveness of Indian industry on the global stage.

#### 1. Extremely Long Working Hours:

- Migrant workers in places like Ludhiana toil 11–12 hours daily, often without breaks during peak order periods.
- Contrary to calls from some industry leaders for longer workdays, most Indian workers—being informal—already endure extended, labor-intensive hours.

#### 2. Predominance of Informal Work:

- Around 78% of Indian workers are either casual or self-employed, lacking social security or formal contracts.
- Even among regular wage earners, nearly half do not receive basic benefits such as written contracts, paid leave, or social security.

#### 3. Cheap Labor vs. Innovation:

- India's competitive advantage is still based on cheap labor rather than innovation, advanced technology, or modern management.
- Profits in India's factory sector surged (31.6% to 46.4% of value added between 2019–20 and 2021–22), but this growth hinges on depressed wages and precarious working conditions rather than robust technical upgrade.

#### 4. Fragmented Production Networks:

- Large firms subcontract to small, often unregistered workshops, driving a “race to the bottom” in wages and working conditions.
- Small firm owners suffer from late payments, tight profit margins, and minimal state support—further hindering technological upgrading.

#### 5. Garment Industry Stagnation:



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- India's global share of garment exports has plateaued at ~3%, lagging behind China, Bangladesh, and Vietnam.
- Reliance on cheap labor rather than modernizing and innovating has restricted India's garment exports to niche segments.

#### 6. Consequences of Low Wages and High Profits:

- Suppressed purchasing power among workers hampers domestic demand.
- This over-reliance on cheap labor limits opportunities for high-value, knowledge-driven growth, including in IT.

#### 7. Need for a Shift in Strategy:

- Continuing to push longer working hours undermines worker welfare and eventually stifles the economy's capacity for sustainable development.
- A better path forward involves investing in worker skills, deploying advanced technologies, paying living wages, and fostering innovation.

### Key Takeaways

- **Current Reality:** India's industrial sector disproportionately depends on informal labor working excessively long hours for low pay.
- **Missed Innovation:** This cheap-labor model discourages R&D, technology adoption, and managerial improvements.
- **Global Competitiveness:** Industries like garment manufacturing underperform internationally because firms do not modernize, despite India's labor surplus.
- **Impact on Workers and Demand:** Widespread low wages reduce the domestic consumer base, ultimately constraining India's economic growth potential.
- **Sustainable Approach:** Long-term competitiveness demands more equitable labor practices, investment in technology, and the development of robust domestic markets.

## 25th February 2025

### [Strategy on fertilisers-Indian Express Explained](#)

Economy

#### Easy Explanation

India is trying to reduce its usage of three major fertilisers — **urea**, **DAP (di-ammonium phosphate)**, and **MOP (muriate of potash)** — because all of them involve large imports (either as finished fertilisers or in the form of raw materials like natural gas for urea, phosphoric acid for DAP, or potash for MOP). This is expensive and uses up foreign exchange.

Moreover, these fertilisers each contain very high amounts of a single nutrient (urea has 46% nitrogen, DAP has 46% phosphorus, MOP has 60% potash), and crops often don't need that much of just one element. Instead, they need a **balanced mix** of nutrients (nitrogen, phosphorus, potash, sulphur, and micronutrients).



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A big alternative that's emerged is **APS (ammonium phosphate sulphate)**, commonly called **20:20:0:13** because it has 20% nitrogen, 20% phosphorus, 0% potash, and 13% sulphur. It uses less of the costly phosphoric acid compared to DAP, and it also supplies sulphur, which many crops need. That's why many fertiliser companies are pushing APS over DAP, and APS usage has shot up significantly.

Similarly, there are other complex fertilisers (like 10:26:26:0, 12:32:16:0, 15:15:15:0, etc.) that balance out nutrients better and can be more efficient for plant uptake. The overall goal is to **promote balanced fertilisation** rather than rely heavily on "high-analysis" fertilisers such as urea, DAP, and MOP.

## Key Takeaways

### 1. High Import Dependence

- Urea, DAP, and MOP are either directly imported or made from imported raw materials.
- This reliance on imports strains India's foreign exchange reserves.

### 2. Excess Nutrient Content

- Urea (46% N), DAP (46% P), and MOP (60% K) each focus on a single nutrient too heavily, whereas plants often need a more balanced combination (including sulphur and micronutrients).

### 3. Rise of Complex Fertilisers (especially APS)

- **APS (20:20:0:13)** has become an effective substitute for DAP because it:
  - Uses less expensive phosphoric acid,
  - Supplies sulphur (which many crops need),
  - Is profitable for manufacturers to produce under current pricing/subsidy conditions,
  - Offers more balanced nutrients for a variety of crops.
- APS is now India's third most-used fertiliser (after urea and DAP).

### 4. Balancing Crop Nutrition

- Various crops require different combinations of N, P, K, and S, plus micronutrients.
- Overuse of DAP, urea, and MOP can lead to imbalanced soil health and nutrient deficiencies in plants.

### 5. Policy & Economic Drivers

- The government wants to keep retail prices of DAP and other fertilisers low for farmers.
- But producers lose money on DAP if not adequately subsidised, so they make (and promote) APS instead.
- Imports of DAP have fallen because it's currently unprofitable to bring in.

### 6. The Overall Goal

- **Reduce direct use of high-analysis fertilisers** (urea, DAP, MOP) and replace them with complex/balanced fertilisers, which helps:
  - Cut down on imports,
  - Save foreign exchange,
  - Improve soil health,
  - Provide the right nutrient mix to crops.





## The historic Tea Horse Road, connecting India and China through Tibet-Indian Express

### Explained

History

#### Easy Explanation

The Tea Horse Road was an ancient network of trade routes stretching over 2,000 km that connected China to India via Tibet. Unlike the more famous Silk Road, it was primarily used to exchange Chinese tea for Tibetan horses and other valuable goods. Traders braved treacherous, high-altitude terrains across Yunnan, Tibet, and the Indian subcontinent. This route not only enabled the movement of tea and horses but also facilitated the trade of textiles, spices, and medicinal herbs, fostering deep cultural and economic ties between regions. Over time, the route evolved—from its origins during the Tang dynasty to its significant role during later historical periods—and today, parts of it are celebrated as important cultural heritage sites, drawing tourists and historians alike.

#### Key Takeaways

- **Vast Network:**  
The Tea Horse Road was not a single path but a branching network of routes that spanned more than 2,000 km, linking southwest China with the Indian subcontinent through Tibet.
- **Trade of Tea and Horses:**  
It was central to the exchange of Chinese tea for Tibetan horses, which were crucial for both transportation and military purposes, along with other goods like textiles, spices, and medicinal herbs.
- **Cultural and Economic Exchange:**  
The route enabled not only commercial trade but also significant cultural interactions, contributing to shared traditions and knowledge between China, Tibet, and India.
- **Challenging Journey:**  
Traders navigated dangerous, high-altitude terrains—some routes reached elevations of up to 10,000 feet—making the journey arduous yet vital for regional connectivity.
- **Historical Evolution:**  
Originating during the Tang dynasty, the route saw various phases of prominence and decline, influenced by political changes and economic shifts over the centuries.
- **Modern Significance:**  
Today, the historical legacy of the Tea Horse Road is recognized through tourism and heritage conservation, with places like Lijiang (a UNESCO World Heritage Site) celebrating its rich past.

### TALK IT OUT-Indian Express Editorial

Polity

#### Easy Explanation

There's renewed tension between Karnataka and Maharashtra over the city of Belagavi (formerly Belgaum). A recent incident—where Maratha students reportedly clashed with a KSRTC bus conductor for not speaking



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Marathi—has reignited a long-standing dispute between the two states. Historically, both Karnataka and Maharashtra have laid claim to Belagavi, with roots going back to the colonial era when the region was part of the Bombay Presidency. Although later administrative changes and commissions, such as the Mahajan Commission in 1966, largely favored Karnataka, Maharashtra continues to argue that its Marathi-speaking population in the area feels insecure. Over the decades, political actions and resolutions from both states have only added to the complexity. The ongoing disagreement highlights the need for effective mechanisms within India's federal framework to resolve such disputes peacefully—ideally through dialogue between state leaders rather than through public clashes and politicization.

### Key Takeaways

- **Historical Background:**
  - Belagavi's roots go back to the colonial era as part of the Bombay Presidency, with significant populations of both Kannada and Marathi speakers.
  - The 1956 state reorganisation and the Mahajan Commission in 1966 largely established Karnataka's claim, yet the dispute continues.
- **Recent Incidents:**
  - A recent altercation between Maratha students and a KSRTC bus conductor over language issues has escalated tensions.
  - Similar incidents in other areas, like Chitradurga, have led to the suspension of bus services and raised the issue at national forums.
- **Political Dimensions:**
  - Both Karnataka and Maharashtra have passed resolutions reinforcing their respective claims.
  - Actions such as including Marathi-speaking areas in certain state schemes have further muddied the waters.
- **Need for Effective Dispute Resolution:**
  - The dispute underscores the importance of robust mechanisms within India's federal structure to settle state-level disagreements.
  - There is a strong call for dialogue between the chief ministers of Karnataka and Maharashtra to calm tensions and address the dispute constructively.
- **Broader Implications:**
  - The issue is not just about administrative borders but also touches on language, cultural identity, and the rights of regional communities.
  - Resolving such disputes peacefully is crucial for maintaining cooperative federalism and national integration.

### [How does space travel affect the health of an astronaut?-The Hindu Science](#)

Science

### Easy Explanation

Space travel exposes astronauts to conditions very different from those on Earth, which can significantly affect their health. The absence of gravity causes bodily fluids to shift upward, increasing pressure in the head and sometimes impairing vision. Without the usual resistance from gravity, bones and muscles can



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weaken, leading to density loss and atrophy. Additionally, astronauts face a much higher level of high-energy radiation than on Earth, increasing their risk for DNA damage, cancer, and other long-term issues. The confined and isolated nature of spacecraft also adds psychological stress, leading to sleep problems and mood changes. Although many of these effects may reverse after returning to Earth—especially after short missions—some issues, like vision changes, can persist longer with extended time in space.

### Key Takeaways

- **Microgravity Effects:**
  - Fluids shift upward, increasing intracranial pressure and potentially impairing vision.
  - Lack of mechanical stress leads to bone density loss and muscle atrophy.
- **Radiation Exposure:**
  - Astronauts face high-energy cosmic radiation without the Earth's atmospheric protection, raising risks of DNA damage, cancer, and neurodegenerative effects.
- **Cardiovascular and Sensory Changes:**
  - The cardiovascular system struggles to regulate blood pressure post-flight.
  - Changes in the inner ear can disrupt balance and coordination.
- **Psychological Challenges:**
  - Isolation, confinement, and lack of natural stimuli can result in stress, sleep disturbances, and mood disorders.
- **Recovery Variability:**
  - Short missions allow for almost complete recovery of many systems, while longer missions can lead to persistent issues such as spaceflight-associated neuro-ocular syndrome.

[The RTI is now the 'right to deny information'-The Hindu Editorial](#)

### Governance

### Easy Explanation

The Right to Information (RTI) Act was originally created to empower citizens by allowing them to access government information, thus promoting transparency and accountability. Over time, however, several changes have eroded its original intent. Initially, the RTI was celebrated as a tool for ensuring that citizens could monitor government actions and curb corruption. Yet, as the law evolved, bureaucratic hurdles, delayed responses, and judicial reinterpretations have weakened its impact. Information commissioners—often retired bureaucrats—have been less proactive, leading to significant backlogs. Additionally, court rulings have narrowed the scope of the law by allowing authorities to withhold information under broad definitions of "personal information." This shift has effectively transformed RTI from a means of transparency into what some now call the "right to deny information."

### Key Takeaways

- **Empowerment Intent:**

The RTI Act was meant to transfer power from public servants to citizens by making government actions transparent.



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- **Erosion Through Bureaucracy:**

Appointments of information commissioners (often ex-bureaucrats) and their lack of proactive enforcement have led to significant delays and reduced efficiency.

- **Judicial Narrowing:**

Court decisions, notably in the Deshpande case, have interpreted exemptions—especially those concerning personal information—in ways that allow more government information to be withheld.

- **Shift in Focus:**

What began as a tool for enhancing government accountability is increasingly being used to restrict access to information, effectively turning it into a “right to deny information.”

- **Need for Vigilance:**

Citizens and the media must actively defend the original promise of the RTI Act to prevent further dilution of this fundamental right.

## 26th February 2025

### [The UN vote on Ukraine-Indian Express Explained](#)

International relations

#### Easy Explanation

Two separate resolutions were brought to the UN regarding the Ukraine conflict. One was introduced by Ukraine calling for Russia's withdrawal, a de-escalation, and a move toward a lasting, just peace. The United States proposed its own resolution, urging a quick end to the conflict and a lasting peace between Ukraine and Russia—but it notably did not call out Russia's aggression directly.

- **For Ukraine's Resolution:**

It was passed by a large majority (93 votes for, 18 against) with many countries choosing to abstain, indicating a strong call for Russia to leave Ukrainian territory and a push for an early cessation of hostilities.

- **For the US Resolution:**

When the US resolution was put forward, France suggested changes to clearly condemn Russia's actions. After these amendments were made, the US chose to abstain from voting on its own proposal. A similar resolution was also considered in the UN Security Council, where Russia vetoed the European amendments, though the resolution still passed with significant support.

This vote highlights a dramatic shift in the US position. Historically, the US had staunchly supported Ukraine and aligned closely with its European allies. However, under President Trump's approach—including his direct outreach to Russia and critical comments about Ukraine—the US stance appears to be diverging from Europe's, causing tension in the transatlantic alliance.

#### Key Takeaways

- **Dual Resolutions:**



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- **Ukraine's Resolution:** Called for the withdrawal of Russian forces, de-escalation, and a path to a lasting peace. Passed with strong support (93-18, with 65 abstentions).
- **US Resolution:** Sought a quick end to the conflict and lasting peace, but stopped short of condemning Russia explicitly. It was later amended and the US abstained on it.
- **US Policy Shift:**

The US's move to abstain, along with Trump's public remarks (including accusations against Ukraine's president), marked a notable departure from its previous, unwavering support for Ukraine. This has been seen by European allies as a betrayal—akin to a sports star switching teams mid-game.
- **European Discontent:**

European countries, who had consistently supported Ukraine in previous UN votes, felt let down by the US's altered position.
- **India's Neutral Stance:**

India abstained from both votes, a pattern that aligns with its long-standing diplomatic approach of maintaining independence. India balances its ties with both Russia and the West, emphasizing "territorial integrity" and international law without fully aligning with either side.
- **Diplomatic Rethinking:**

Amid changing global dynamics, India has shifted its language from referring to the conflict as one between two parties (Russia and Ukraine) to involving "all parties concerned." This broader framing allows India to keep more diplomatic options open as it manages relationships with multiple key players.

### [How US-Europe 'break' is changing the 'world order'-Indian Express Explained](#)

International relations

#### Easy Explanation

The article discusses two controversial proposals linked to President Trump's recent policies:

##### 1. **Gaza Strip Proposal:**

Trump has suggested that Palestinians be removed from the Gaza Strip, with the area turned into an American-controlled "riviera." This idea essentially excludes the Palestinians—the people who live there—from any decision-making about their future.

##### 2. **Ukraine Policy Shift:**

The United States appears to have reversed its previous stance on the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Instead of solely supporting Ukraine, the US is now reportedly working with Russia to force a settlement, which sidelines the Ukrainians who are most affected by the war.

The text argues that by sidelining the very people affected—Palestinians and Ukrainians—America is reverting to an old imperialist mindset, reminiscent of historical colonial practices. Critics claim this approach undermines the "rules-based order" that Western powers have long promoted. Additionally, these moves could reshape global alliances, create divisions among Western allies, and even impact relationships with other major powers like China.



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Finally, the article highlights how domestic political shifts—both in the US and Europe—are now playing a bigger role in shaping foreign policy, moving away from the stable, predictable approach seen after the Cold War. In this changing environment, countries like India continue to balance their ties with multiple global powers.

### Key Takeaways

- **Radical Proposals:**
  - **For Gaza:** Trump's plan calls for removing Palestinians from the Gaza Strip and converting it into a U.S.-controlled “riviera.”
  - **For Ukraine:** The U.S. has shifted its policy by working with Russia to force a settlement in Ukraine, thereby marginalizing Ukrainian interests.
- **Exclusion of Affected Populations:**

Both proposals notably exclude the parties directly impacted by these conflicts—the Palestinians and the Ukrainians—from the decision-making process.
- **Imperialist Mindset Resurfacing:**

Critics argue that these policies reflect a return to an imperialist approach where powerful nations impose their will on less powerful ones, echoing historical practices such as colonialism.
- **Undermining the Rules-Based Order:**

The moves are seen as a threat to the international order that Western allies have supported, potentially destabilizing relationships not just in Europe but also in regions like the Indo-Pacific.
- **Domestic Politics and Global Impact:**

The changes illustrate how domestic political trends—like Trump’s disruptive policies and the rise of far-right movements in Europe—are increasingly influencing global foreign policy decisions.
- **India’s Balancing Act:**

Amid these shifts, India continues to pursue a multi-aligned foreign policy, maintaining ties with the U.S., Russia, China, and other key players, as evidenced by its cautious approach in international forums.

### [NAKSHA-Indian Express Explained](#)

Sociology

### Easy Explanation

NAKSHA (National geospatial Knowledge-based land Survey of urban Habitants) is an urban mapping project under the Digital India Land Records Modernisation Programme. Launched by the Ministry of Rural Development’s Department of Land Resources, the initiative uses modern technologies—like drones, aerial photography, and high-resolution cameras—to create accurate digital maps and land records for urban areas. The project aims to update outdated land records, reduce land disputes, and support better urban planning and tax administration.

### Key Takeaways

- **Purpose:**



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- To digitize and update urban land records.
- To improve governance, urban planning, and property tax collection.
- **Why It's Needed:**
  - Many cities in India still rely on outdated or unstructured land records.
  - Better maps and records will help resolve disputes and streamline property management.
- **How It Works:**
  - **Survey & Flight Planning:**
    - Select an area and design a drone flight plan.
  - **Data Collection & Field Verification:**
    - Conduct aerial surveys using drones and high-resolution cameras.
    - Perform ground field surveys to verify data such as property tax details, ownership, and registration.
  - **Modeling & Final Mapping:**
    - Create 2D/3D models of the surveyed areas.
    - Publish draft maps, address claims or objections, and then release final maps.
- **Pilot Details and Cost:**
  - The pilot project covers 4,142.63 square km across 152 urban local bodies in 26 states.
  - It is fully funded by the central government with an estimated cost of about Rs 194 crore.
  - Costs vary by the type of camera used (from Rs 25,000–30,000 per square km for standard cameras up to Rs 60,000 per square km for 3D cameras).
- **Expected Benefits:**
  - Comprehensive digital records of urban land.
  - Faster urban planning and improved tax collection.
  - Reduced land disputes and more transparent property records.

[Looking again at EU-Indian Express Editorial](#)

International relations

### Easy Explanation

The article discusses how European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen's visit to India is taking place at a time of major global shifts, largely due to the return of President Donald Trump. Although the visit was planned before Trump's re-election, the renewed emphasis on deepening ties with India has become even more urgent. The context for this urgency is Trump's unpredictable foreign policy—especially his moves on Ukraine, Russia, and China—that are unsettling longstanding alliances.

For India and Europe, this visit is a chance to rebalance their global strategies. Both have traditionally depended on the United States as the cornerstone of their international policies. With Trump now willing to negotiate separately with rivals like Russia (and potentially China), India and Europe see a need to strengthen their own strategic partnership. This renewed relationship can help India reduce its growing trade deficit with China and provide Europe with new economic and security opportunities outside a US-dominated framework.

### Key Takeaways



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- **Timing and Urgency:**
  - Von der Leyen's visit to India is especially significant now, coming on the heels of Trump's return to the White House and his disruptive foreign policy decisions.
- **Shifting Alliances:**
  - Trump's policies—such as his willingness to negotiate with Russia over Ukraine and his outreach to China—have unsettled traditional alliances.
  - Both Europe and India are rethinking their reliance on the US as the central pivot of their global strategies.
- **Strategic Partnership:**
  - Strengthening EU-India ties is seen as essential for both parties.
  - Europe, as the world's third-largest economy, offers advanced technology, capital, and a vast consumer market, which are critical for India's economic reforms.
- **Economic Imperatives for India:**
  - India faces a rising trade deficit with China, which is partly driven by booming Chinese exports.
  - Renewing its strategic ties with Europe is viewed as a way to counterbalance this dependency and promote domestic economic reform.
- **Changing Global Dynamics:**
  - The traditional post-Cold War order is under threat, with Trump's policies challenging established global norms and alliances.
  - Both India and Europe recognize the need to adapt to a multipolar world where power dynamics among the US, Russia, and China are in constant flux.
- **European Domestic Politics:**
  - In Europe, there is growing political momentum—illustrated by rising far-right support and calls for increased defense spending—to reduce dependence on the US and take greater responsibility for regional security, especially concerning Ukraine.
- **Mutual Benefits:**
  - For India, closer ties with Europe could help diversify its international partnerships and reduce reliance on both the US and China.
  - For Europe, a strengthened relationship with India offers a counterweight to US policies and can contribute to a more balanced global economic and security order.

### [What did the HC rule about arresting women at night?-The Hindu Text and Context](#)

Polity

#### Easy Explanation

The Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court ruled that the rule preventing the arrest of women after sunset and before sunrise is a guideline (directory) rather than an absolute rule. This means police should generally avoid making such arrests, but if they arrest a woman at night in exceptional circumstances (for example, when a serious crime occurs), the arrest is not automatically illegal. The officer must later provide a valid explanation for not following the guideline and, ideally, should have sought permission from a magistrate. The Law Commission's 135th report had recommended that women should ordinarily not be arrested during these hours unless there's an urgent need, with prior approval or a justified report.



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## Key Takeaways

- **Directory, Not Mandatory:**

The restriction on arresting women at night is a guideline, not an absolute rule. Non-compliance does not automatically invalidate an arrest.

- **Safeguards for Arrests:**

- **Time Restriction:** Arrests should not be made after sunset and before sunrise except in exceptional cases.
- **Permission Requirement:** In exceptional cases, a woman police officer must obtain prior permission from a magistrate via a written report.

- **Exceptional Circumstances Allowed:**

If a serious offense occurs at night and a magistrate is unavailable, police can arrest a woman but must later justify the deviation from the rule.

- **Law Commission Recommendations:**

The 135th report recommended that women should not ordinarily be arrested at night; if an arrest is necessary in exceptional cases, proper justification and permission should be obtained.

- **Purpose of the Provision:**

The rule aims to ensure the safety of women during vulnerable hours without hindering public safety in urgent situations.

## Should a third language be compulsory?-The Hindu Text and Context

### Sociology

#### Easy Explanation

There is an ongoing debate over whether a third language should be made compulsory in schools under the New Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The central government is tying the release of funds under the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan to the adoption of the three-language policy. However, the Tamil Nadu government opposes this move, arguing that it could lead to Hindi being forced on students in a non-Hindi speaking state.

The three-language policy was first introduced in the 1968 NEP. It originally mandated that Hindi should be taught in non-Hindi speaking states, alongside the regional language and English. Under the NEP 2020, the policy still exists but with more flexibility: States can choose which languages to teach, as long as at least two of them are Indian languages.

There are challenges too. The ASER reports show that many students struggle with basic language and numeracy skills. This raises concerns about adding another language when schools are already struggling with teaching foundational subjects. Additionally, limited resources and varying educational outcomes across states suggest that it might be more important to focus on improving mother tongue/local language and English proficiency first.

## Key Takeaways

- **Policy Background:**



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- **Three-Language Policy Origin:** Introduced in 1968, mandating the teaching of Hindi in non-Hindi speaking states along with the regional language and English.
- **NEP 2020 Update:** Retains the three-language concept but leaves the choice of languages to the States and regions.
- **Current Debate:**
  - **Union Government's Stance:** Making compliance with the three-language policy a condition for releasing funds under the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan.
  - **Tamil Nadu's Opposition:** The state sees the policy as a potential vehicle for imposing Hindi and prefers to continue with its two-language (Tamil and English) approach.
- **Challenges in Implementation:**
  - **Educational Outcomes:** ASER reports indicate that many students are not achieving basic literacy and numeracy levels.
  - **Resource Constraints:** With limited funding and teaching challenges, adding an extra language might further strain the system.
  - **Diverse Needs:** Urban areas show higher bilingual and trilingual proficiency compared to rural regions, reflecting regional differences.
- **Way Forward:**
  - **Dialogue Needed:** There is a need for constructive discussions between the Centre and Tamil Nadu to resolve the funding issues and respect regional educational autonomy.
  - **Focus on Quality:** Improving foundational skills in the mother tongue and English should be prioritized to ensure that students can handle additional language courses successfully.

**27th February 2025**

[CLIMATE OF HOSTILITY-Indian Express Editorial](#)

International relations

Easy Explanation

### 1. What is the IPCC?

- The **Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)** is a United Nations body made up of scientists from around the world. They produce climate assessment reports that guide global climate policy.

### 2. Why is the U.S. Not Participating?

- The **Trump administration** has reportedly vetoed the participation of U.S. scientists (including NASA's Chief Scientist Katherine Calvin) in the IPCC's current meeting in Hangzhou, China.
- This signals hostility toward the IPCC, with concerns that the U.S. could further pull funding or resources from the organization.

### 3. Impact on Climate Research

- Scientists from NASA, NOAA, and other U.S. agencies have contributed significantly to the IPCC's past reports. Without them, the **quality and depth** of the upcoming Seventh Assessment Report could suffer.



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- The IPCC often releases parts of its findings in stages, so timely U.S. input is critical for next global climate stocktaking events.

#### 4. **Trump Administration's History with the IPCC**

- During Trump's previous term, the U.S. also minimized its presence and funding for the IPCC. However, many American scientists continued to collaborate independently.
- The Biden administration reinstated funding and engagement, but that support is now again threatened under a new Trump presidency.

#### 5. **Looking Ahead**

- The IPCC has dealt with U.S. disengagement in the past (notably during Trump's first term) and still produced significant work on its Sixth Assessment Report.
- Other countries and institutions may need to step up their support if the U.S. remains absent, so that crucial climate research continues without major disruptions

### **Key Takeaways**

#### 1. **U.S. Withdrawal Threatens the IPCC's Work**

- America's resources—financial support, scientific expertise—have been crucial for high-quality climate assessment reports. Their absence could slow or weaken parts of the IPCC's upcoming Seventh Assessment Report.

#### 2. **Global Coordination Matters**

- The IPCC is an international effort. Even if the U.S. steps back, other countries and private institutions can still help maintain the pace and rigor of climate research.

#### 3. **Time-Sensitive Climate Assessments**

- The next **Global Climate Stocktake** is in 2028 under the Paris Agreement. The IPCC's reports feed into these reviews, meaning any U.S. blockages might hamper global climate action timelines.

#### 4. **Previous Trump-Era Experience**

- During Trump's first term, the IPCC adapted by collaborating with U.S. scientists acting in personal capacities and relying more on other nations' contributions.

#### 5. **Potential Path Forward**

- The Hangzhou meeting could lay the groundwork for how the IPCC will continue its work in the face of American hostility, using procedures and support networks designed to fill the void.

### **WHY GHARIALS ARE ENDANGERED, HOW MP HAS LED CONSERVATION EFFORTS-Indian Express Explained**

Environment

#### **Easy Explanation**

Gharials are a special type of crocodile known for their very long, narrow snouts. They mostly eat fish and are considered sacred in Indian culture, often shown as the vehicle (vahana) of the Goddess Ganga.



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Unfortunately, their population has been declining for several decades due to threats such as overhunting, fishing nets, pollution, and habitat loss (e.g., dams, sand mining, and altered river courses).

To help gharials survive, India created breeding centers and sanctuaries where these reptiles can be raised and later released into rivers. The state of Madhya Pradesh (MP) has been at the forefront of gharial conservation. Over 80% of India's gharial population now lives in MP—primarily in the National Chambal Sanctuary. Recently, the Chief Minister of MP released 10 gharials into the Chambal River to boost their numbers and support ongoing conservation efforts.

### Key Takeaways

#### 1. Unique Crocodilian:

- Gharials (*Gavialis gangeticus*) have extremely long, slender snouts with sharp teeth to catch fish, their main food source.
- Adult males have a bulbous growth (called a “ghara,” meaning “pot”) at the tip of the snout.

#### 2. Cultural and Ecological Importance:

- They are often depicted in Indian mythology as the mount of the river goddess Ganga.
- Gharials help keep rivers healthy by scavenging on dead animals (carrion).

#### 3. Why They Are Endangered:

- **Habitat Loss:** Dams, irrigation canals, and changes in river flow reduce the spaces gharials can live and nest.
- **Human Activities:** Sand mining, pollution, and fishing (especially with gillnets) harm or kill gharials.
- **Overhunting (Historically):** Their skins and eggs were once highly prized.

#### 4. Madhya Pradesh's Leading Role:

- MP holds over 80% of India's gharial population, reflecting decades of conservation work.
- The state's Chambal River Sanctuary is one of the main strongholds for gharials.

#### 5. Conservation Efforts:

- **Breeding and Release:** Centers raise gharials and then release them into suitable rivers.
- **Protected Areas:** Sanctuaries like the National Chambal Sanctuary offer a safer environment.
- **Local Community Involvement:** Conservation programs focus on educating and involving people who live near gharial habitats, discouraging harmful activities.

#### 6. Recent Development:

- In February 2024, MP's Chief Minister Mohan Yadav released 10 gharials (9 male, 1 female) into the Chambal River to strengthen the wild population.

[How Trump's 'GoldCard' US visa could work, what concerns it raises-Indian Express Explained](#)

International relations

Easy Explanation

What is the “Gold Card”?



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- It's a proposed visa program that would allow wealthy foreign investors to directly purchase a path to permanent residency (Green Card) – and eventually US citizenship – for a flat fee of \$5 million.
- Unlike the existing EB-5 program (which requires investors to put money into US businesses and create American jobs), the Gold Card might not require you to invest in any specific project. Instead, you would pay \$5 million straight to the US government.

### Why introduce it?

- Supporters say it could bring high-net-worth individuals into the United States, thus boosting real estate, luxury markets, and possibly the general economy.
- Trump's team also claims it is simpler and less prone to fraud than EB-5, which has faced accusations of misuse.

### What are the concerns?

1. **"Citizenship for sale":** Critics argue that selling a direct path to citizenship favors wealth over merit or professional skill.
2. **Money laundering & foreign influence:** A high-cost, direct-purchase model raises questions about who might buy in (e.g., oligarchs), and whether it allows questionable funds into the US.
3. **No job creation requirement:** If there's no rule to invest in businesses that create American jobs, the economic benefit might be minimal.
4. **Political hurdles:** Such a major change in immigration policy requires congressional approval; it could face strong opposition from both parties.

### What about Indians?

- Historically, very few Indians use the EB-5 route, which already has a lower required investment (around \$1 million). So it's unlikely that many Indians would opt to pay \$5 million for a Gold Card visa.

### Key Takeaways

1. **Direct Purchase of Green Card**
  - A flat fee (potentially \$5 million) could grant investors the right to live and work in the US, bypassing the need to put money into a specific US business venture.
2. **Comparison to EB-5**
  - Unlike the EB-5 program, which requires job creation, the Gold Card might not impose such conditions.
  - It promises a more straightforward but far more expensive route to US permanent residency.
3. **Potential Economic Impact**
  - Might attract very wealthy individuals who spend on real estate, luxury goods, and possibly other areas of the economy.
  - However, without a job-creation requirement, its broader economic benefits are debatable.
4. **Ethical and Legal Concerns**
  - Critics warn this could mean "selling" American citizenship.
  - Concerns about fraud, money laundering, and admitting questionable investors remain.





## 5. Political & Legislative Hurdles

- Any substantial new immigration policy must clear Congress.
- Bipartisan criticism could block or heavily modify the plan.

## 6. Limited Appeal for Most Investors

- With a steep \$5 million price tag, it might have few takers, especially considering the EB-5 program requires substantially less capital.

### [What to know about NASA's new space telescope-Indian Express Explained](#)

Science and technology

#### Easy Explanation

#### What is SPHEREx?

- **SPHEREx** stands for **Spectro-Photometer for the History of the Universe, Epoch of Reionization, and Ices Explorer**. It's a new space telescope designed to map the entire sky in both visible (optical) and infrared light.
- By capturing data in **102 infrared "colors"** (wavelengths), SPHEREx will deliver an extremely detailed, all-sky map—something that hasn't been done at this level of color resolution.

#### Goals of SPHEREx

1. **Understand Cosmic Inflation:**
  - Inflation refers to a split-second period ~14 billion years ago when the universe is believed to have expanded faster than the speed of light.
  - SPHEREx will gather 3D information on around 450 million galaxies, helping scientists test ideas about this rapid expansion and why the universe is "flat" on large scales.
2. **Colorful Map of the Cosmos:**
  - While telescopes like James Webb focus on smaller areas in exquisite detail, SPHEREx will repeatedly map the *entire* sky every six months.
  - This broad approach can reveal large-scale structures in the universe and provide a treasure trove of data on galactic evolution.
3. **Search for Life-Building Molecules:**
  - Life-forming molecules (like water, carbon, oxygen) can be frozen in the coldest regions of our galaxy.
  - SPHEREx will track these "biogenic molecules" in the Milky Way and nearby star systems, offering clues about how building blocks of life traveled through space and eventually helped form life on Earth.

#### Key Takeaways

1. **All-Sky Mapping in Infrared**
  - SPHEREx will scan the entire sky in unprecedented infrared detail, creating the most extensive map of the cosmos in over 100 infrared wavelengths.
2. **Cosmic Inflation Insights**



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- By observing the positions of millions of galaxies across vast distances and times, SPHEREx aims to clarify how the universe expanded so rapidly right after the Big Bang.

### 3. Connecting the Dots to Life's Origins

- The mission will hunt for frozen water and life-forming molecules (carbon, hydrogen, oxygen, etc.) within our galaxy.
- This helps explain how basic life ingredients might have traveled to Earth.

### 4. Large-Scale vs. Local Detail

- Unlike the James Webb Space Telescope (which looks deeply at specific targets), SPHEREx covers the *big picture*—surveying the entire sky every six months.

### 5. Potential for Breakthroughs

- SPHEREx's data will be publicly available, supporting future discoveries.
- It could improve our understanding of not just cosmic evolution but also the potential for life elsewhere in the universe.

## Delimitation & the South-Indian Express Explained

### Polity

#### Easy Explanation

##### 1. What is Delimitation?

- The **Constitution of India** mandates that after every Census, the country's Parliamentary and Assembly constituencies be redrawn—or “delimited”—so that each MP or MLA represents roughly the same number of people.
- Essentially, more populated areas should have more seats in Parliament, ensuring each vote has equal weight.

##### 2. Why Hasn't This Happened Since 1976?

- After 1976, Parliament decided to **freeze** the number of Lok Sabha and Assembly seats so that states could work on population control without the fear of losing representation.
- Even though boundaries were tweaked in 2001, **the total seats per state did not change**. This was mainly to appease southern states, which by then had controlled population growth more effectively than the north.

##### 3. North vs. South Concerns

- Population growth in **northern states** (e.g., Uttar Pradesh, Bihar) has been higher than in **southern states** (e.g., Tamil Nadu, Kerala).
- If seats are reallocated based on new population data, **northern states** would likely gain seats, while **southern states** would gain fewer or even lose seats relative to their population share.

##### 4. Political Anxiety in the South

- **Southern leaders** worry that if the freeze is lifted and delimitation is done using current population data, their region's **influence in Parliament** could drop.
- They feel penalized for successfully controlling their population growth, whereas northern states might be “rewarded” for higher population numbers.

##### 5. Statements by Government and Others



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- Union Home Minister Amit Shah has tried to reassure southern states that they will **not lose “even a single seat”**.
- However, many regional parties and leaders remain skeptical, fearing that any delimitation will reduce their share of seats and political power.

## 6. Possible Seat Scenarios

- The final seat distribution depends on the **“average population size”** per constituency that a new Delimitation Commission might decide.
- Different averages (e.g., 10 lakh, 15 lakh, or 20 lakh people per MP) produce drastically different seat totals, but in most scenarios, **northern states** stand to gain more seats than southern states.

## 7. Impact on Elections

- Some parties (like the BJP) are strong in the North; other parties (Congress, various regional parties) depend more on seats from the South.
- A new delimitation that heavily boosts northern seats could tilt electoral power even more in favor of parties with a northern base.

## Key Takeaways

### 1. Delimitation is Constitutionally Required

- The Constitution wants seat distribution to reflect population changes—hence a redrawing of constituency boundaries after each Census.

### 2. Seats Have Been Frozen Since 1976

- This was done to avoid penalizing states that effectively controlled population growth.
- As a result, southern states currently have **proportionally higher** representation than they would if seat distribution used today’s population data.

### 3. The North-South Divide

- **High population growth** in the North vs. **low population growth** in the South means that new delimitation would likely **shift more seats** to northern states.

### 4. Southern Apprehensions

- Leaders in states like Tamil Nadu and Kerala fear losing their influence in Parliament.
- They argue that it is unfair to reduce seats for states that adopted **effective family planning** and slowed population growth.

### 5. Government’s Reassurance

- The Home Minister has promised **no southern state will lose seats**—though the mechanics of how that might be achieved remain unclear.
- Past experience indicates **practical or political compromises** may occur to keep states from losing seats outright.

### 6. Political Stakes

- Major shifts in seat allocation could **change the balance of power** in Parliament, potentially favoring parties strong in northern India.
- This raises worries for national parties like the Congress (which relies heavily on southern states for seats) and for southern regional parties.





## Coal-fired power plants in India cut rice, wheat yield by up to 10%-The Hindu Text and Context

Economy

### Easy Explanation

#### 1. The Main Finding

- Researchers from Stanford University have found that **nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) emissions from coal-fired power plants** in India can reduce **rice and wheat yields by up to 10%** in some States.
- This is a major concern since rice and wheat are staple crops for India's growing population.

#### 2. How NO<sub>2</sub> Harms Crops

- NO<sub>2</sub> is **phytotoxic**—it stresses plants, disrupts cell functions, and interferes with crucial enzymes.
- It also contributes to **ozone formation** in the air. Ozone further damages crops, and particulate matter from NO<sub>2</sub> pollution **reduces sunlight** available for photosynthesis.

#### 3. Tracking the Impact

- The researchers combined **satellite data** on NO<sub>2</sub> concentrations with a measure of “plant greenness” (near-infrared reflectance or NIRv).
- By correlating NO<sub>2</sub> levels with declines in NIRv, they could **estimate how many tonnes of crops** are lost to pollution—no field surveys needed.

#### 4. Where It Happens

- States like **Chhattisgarh** see a bigger share of NO<sub>2</sub> from coal plants, thanks to numerous power stations.
- Uttar Pradesh has high NO<sub>2</sub> levels overall, but only a small fraction comes from coal power.
- Tamil Nadu has lower total NO<sub>2</sub> but a large fraction tied to coal.
- In places where coal plants lie close to fertile farmlands, the agricultural damage is higher.

#### 5. Potential Gains If Pollution Is Controlled

- Fixing emissions controls at specific power plants could significantly **boost yield** in nearby croplands—by 5-10% or even more than 10% in certain areas.
- Considering that **annual yield growth** for rice and wheat is only 1.5-1.7%, even a 5% increase is significant.

#### 6. Why This Matters

- India **depends on coal** for the majority of its electricity and is also under pressure to ensure **food security** for its large population.
- Understanding how pollution affects crop yield helps policymakers decide **where to prioritize emission-reducing measures** (e.g., installing better scrubbing equipment).

### Key Takeaways

#### 1. Coal-Fired Emissions Deplete Crop Yields



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- Nitrogen oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>) from coal power are linked to as much as a **10% yield decline** in rice and wheat, especially in areas close to power plants.

## 2. Mechanism of Damage

- NO<sub>2</sub> stresses plants directly, reduces photosynthesis, and contributes to ozone and particulate matter—both of which further damage crops.

## 3. Economic and Food Security Implications

- India could gain an additional **₹7,000 crore** (about \$840 million) per year in rice and wheat value if coal-attributable NO<sub>2</sub> pollution were reduced.
- At a time when **food demand** is soaring, even modest increases in yield can make a difference.

## 4. Regional Variations

- Some States (like **Chhattisgarh**) get a high share of NO<sub>2</sub> from coal, while in others (like **Uttar Pradesh**), much of the NO<sub>2</sub> comes from other sources.
- This means **pollution-control strategies** need to be region-specific.

## 5. Targeted Solutions

- Just **20% of monsoon-season coal-fired electricity** accounted for half the rice losses tied to coal NO<sub>2</sub>.
- Focusing on a **small subset** of highly polluting plants could yield **big gains** for farmers.

## 6. Balancing Coal & Agriculture

- While coal power underpins India's economic growth, policymakers should consider **crop losses** and **air pollution impacts** together when deciding on upgrades or expansions.
- Pollution-control technologies (like flue-gas desulphurisation) at strategic plants would help **protect crops** without compromising energy supply.

[Why are PwDs worried about DPDP rules?-The Hindu Text and Context](#)

Sociology

## Easy Explanation

### 1. What is Section 9(1)?

- Section 9(1) of the DPDP Act lumps **children** and **PwDs with legal guardians** together.
- This means if an adult with a disability has a lawful guardian, **the guardian's consent is needed** before a data fiduciary (e.g., website, app) can process the PwD's personal data.

### 2. Why Are Disability Rights Activists Upset?

- **Infantilisation:** Activists say this rule treats adult PwDs like minors, **taking away their autonomy** to make decisions about their own data.
- **Misunderstanding Guardianship:** In many cases, a legal guardian under India's disability laws is meant to provide *support* for specific decisions, not take over *all* decision-making. The DPDP approach wrongly assumes PwDs *cannot* consent on their own.

### 3. Guardianship Under Indian Laws

- **The National Trust (NT) Act, 1999:** Typically grants *full guardianship* to adults with certain disabilities (like autism, cerebral palsy, intellectual disability).



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- **Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act, 2016:** Encourages *limited guardianship*, meaning PwDs retain as much decision-making capacity as possible, with support only where absolutely necessary.
- The DPDP Act does not clearly distinguish between these two types of guardianship, creating confusion.

#### 4. Practical Concerns

- **Data Platforms:** How will they verify if a user is disabled or if the user has a legal guardian? This may force platforms to collect *more* sensitive data (about disability status) without a clear purpose.
- **Liability Issues:** If the guardian is deemed the “data principal,” they might bear *legal and financial consequences* for the PwD’s actions online. This could lead to overcontrol by guardians.
- **Everyday Online Use:** PwDs might be blocked from normal online activities (e.g., buying personal care items) if a guardian’s separate consent is required for routine transactions.

#### 5. Government’s Draft Rules

- The Ministry is trying to limit the scope by focusing on *certain* severe disabilities.
- However, disability rights groups argue the wording remains **too vague**, potentially making all adults with legal guardians subject to the same rule.

### Key Takeaways

#### 1. Autonomy vs. Guardianship

- The DPDP Act’s Section 9(1) could undermine the **personal agency** of adult PwDs who are otherwise capable of making their own decisions.

#### 2. Mismatch With Disability Laws

- India’s disability framework increasingly favors *support-based* or *limited* guardianship. The DPDP approach seems to revert to a more **restrictive model**, contradicting the spirit of the RPWD Act and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).

#### 3. Practical & Privacy Challenges

- Platforms would need to collect *additional* personal data (disability status, guardianship details). This raises **privacy** and **data minimization** concerns.

#### 4. Potential for Abuse

- If the guardian is held fully responsible, they might override the PwD’s own choices out of fear of liability, **further limiting the PwD’s independence**.

#### 5. Calls for Amendment

- Disability rights activists want Section 9(1) either **removed** or **reworded** so that only PwDs who *absolutely cannot* provide consent are covered—and in a way that **respects support-based guardianship**.





# 28th February 2025

## Mahakumbh for New India-Indian Express Editorial

Art and culture

### Easy Explanation

This text celebrates the conclusion of the Mahakumbh (a grand spiritual gathering) in the holy city of Prayagraj. It emphasizes how millions of people from all over India came together—regardless of background—to take a sacred dip in the confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna, and the mythical Saraswati rivers. The author (speaking in a style reminiscent of a prime ministerial address) views this massive event as a powerful example of India's unity, spiritual heritage, and collective energy. He connects the spiritual awakening at the Mahakumbh to the broader goal of building a "Viksit Bharat" (a developed India) and highlights:

1. **Unity and Heritage:** People from every corner of India, cutting across social and economic lines, gathered together in harmony.
2. **National Confidence:** This mass participation shows a renewed cultural pride and a sense of purpose for India's future.
3. **Collective Resolve:** Referencing historical figures (from sages to freedom fighters) who always stressed the power of collective will, the piece underscores how that same unity is being harnessed today for national development.
4. **Spiritual and Social Dimensions:** The Mahakumbh is not only a religious occasion but also an inspiration for large-scale organization, cleanliness efforts (especially of rivers), and social harmony.
5. **Thanks and Responsibility:** The author praises the administration, local people, and all workers for making the Mahakumbh a success—and also seeks forgiveness for any shortcomings. The event is portrayed as a stepping stone to continue the collective journey toward a stronger, more developed India.

### Key Takeaways

1. **Record-Breaking Gathering:** The Mahakumbh saw a participation nearly twice the population of the United States, underscoring its massive scale.
2. **Symbol of Unity:** It brought together Indians from every region and walk of life—demonstrating the strength of national integration and "Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat" (One India, Best India).
3. **Cultural Pride & Renewal:** The gatherings rejuvenate the cultural identity and spiritual energy of the nation, linking ancient traditions to a modern vision for India.
4. **Focus on Development ("Viksit Bharat"):** The event's collective energy is seen as a catalyst for national progress—encouraging everyone to harness this unity for India's development.
5. **Spirituality Meets Social Service:** Emphasis on keeping rivers clean, improving public services, and inclusive participation—showing that devotion and societal wellbeing go hand in hand.
6. **Nationwide Emotional Connection:** Even those who couldn't attend felt emotionally connected, demonstrating the deep cultural resonance of the Mahakumbh throughout the country.



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7. **Future Inspiration:** The text concludes by expressing hope that the spiritual and national consciousness awakened by the Mahakumbh will continue to guide India for generations to come.

### [GENDER JUST THIRD-TIER-Indian Express Editorial](#)

Sociology

#### Easy Explanation

This text discusses a problem in local governance where male relatives often act as proxies for women panchayat heads—women elected to lead village councils—thus undermining the spirit of women's reservation meant to reduce male dominance. A government panel has been reviewing these cases and proposed several measures to empower women leaders, such as setting up women-only committees, public swearing-in ceremonies, training programs, and support networks. While many of these suggestions aim to build capacity and encourage participation among women representatives, the panel's idea of using "exemplary punishment" for the male proxies is seen as counterproductive. The argument is that a top-down punitive approach might force the issue underground rather than promote real, systemic change. Instead, empowering women through awareness, training, and grassroots support is considered a more effective and sustainable solution.

#### Key Takeaways

1. **Male Proxies Issue:** Despite a high percentage of women representatives in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), male relatives often dominate decision-making by acting on their behalf.
2. **Empowerment Measures:** The panel recommends several supportive measures, including women-only committees, public swearing-in of women leaders, reward systems for champions of women's leadership, and the creation of leadership networks.
3. **Training and Awareness:** Emphasis is placed on building the capacity of elected women representatives through training and awareness programs, which have been shown to enhance their effective participation.
4. **Rejection of Punitive Actions:** The panel's suggestion of using exemplary punishment for male proxies is criticized because it could drive the problem underground, hindering genuine empowerment and local governance.
5. **Bottom-Up Change:** Sustainable improvement is expected to come from grassroots efforts and capacity building among women leaders rather than from top-down retributive measures.

### [In SC staying Lokpal order on HC judge,question of complaints procedure-Indian Express Explained](#)

Governance

#### Easy Explanation

This passage explains the legal controversy over whether the Lokpal—a statutory anti-corruption body—has the authority to hear a corruption complaint against a High Court judge. Initially, a Lokpal bench led by former Supreme Court judge AM Khanwilkar ruled that it could consider corruption cases against former



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judges under the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013. However, the Supreme Court intervened by staying (halting) that Lokpal order, calling it “something very, very disturbing.” The Supreme Court stressed the need to protect judicial independence and to follow the established safeguards when it comes to investigating judges.

The legal framework provides extra protection for judges, for example, by requiring that any criminal case against a judge must be sanctioned by the President after consulting the Chief Justice of India. Although the Lokpal can’t take up cases against Supreme Court judges—because the Supreme Court is established under the Constitution—High Court judges do not enjoy the same level of protection under law. Nonetheless, due to the cautious approach mandated by past rulings, the Lokpal has decided to forward the complaint to the Chief Justice of India for guidance before proceeding further. The next hearing in the matter is scheduled for March 18.

### Key Takeaways

- **Supreme Court Stay:** The Supreme Court halted a Lokpal order that aimed to take cognizance of a corruption complaint against a High Court judge.
- **Lokpal’s Initial Claim:** A Lokpal bench claimed it had the power under the Lokpal Act, 2013 to hear corruption cases against former judges.
- **Judicial Independence:** The Supreme Court emphasized the importance of protecting the independence of judges and ensuring due process, especially given the special legal safeguards for judges.
- **Legal Protections for Judges:** Existing laws, including provisions under the Indian Penal Code and the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, along with past Supreme Court rulings (like in the K Veeraswami case), offer additional layers of protection to judges.
- **Differentiation by Court Level:** While the Lokpal cannot handle cases against Supreme Court judges (due to constitutional establishment), High Court judges are considered differently, though caution is still necessary.
- **Referral to the CJI:** Before conducting any inquiry, the Lokpal has forwarded the complaint to the Chief Justice of India for guidance on how to proceed.
- **Next Steps:** The next hearing in the case is scheduled for March 18.

### [The India-EU partnership-Indian Express Explained](#)

International relations

#### Easy Explanation

This article highlights a major new phase in the relationship between India and the European Union (EU). A high-level delegation from the EU, led by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, visited New Delhi for a two-day trip—the first-ever visit by the entire College of Commissioners. This visit underscores a strengthened strategic partnership as both sides enter the third decade of their ties.

The discussions covered a broad range of topics, including trade, technology, green energy, defence, and space cooperation. Key initiatives include enhancing digital and strategic technologies, promoting clean



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energy projects (like green hydrogen), and deepening cooperation on issues such as maritime security and supply chain resilience. Trade and investment are also a major focus, with robust bilateral figures and growing economic ties evident from increasing trade volumes and significant foreign direct investment flows.

People-to-people connections are another important pillar, with growing academic and professional exchanges through programs like Erasmus and BlueCards, as well as a large Indian diaspora in the EU. Overall, the visit signals renewed commitment and diverse cooperation between India and the EU, setting the stage for future collaborations in many critical areas.

### Key Takeaways

- **Historic High-Level Visit:** The entire EU Commission, led by Ursula von der Leyen, visited India—the first such visit—marking a new era in India-EU relations.
- **Strategic Partnership Deepening:** This visit occurs as both sides enter the third decade of their Strategic Partnership, with a focus on diversifying engagements.
- **Wide-Ranging Discussions:** Key topics include trade, technology (including AI and semiconductors), green hydrogen and clean energy, sustainable urbanisation, water management, and defence and space cooperation.
- **Trade and Investment:** Bilateral trade in goods and services has grown significantly, and the EU is a major source of FDI for India.
- **Technology & Innovation:** Enhanced cooperation in high-performance computing, semiconductor research, and AI is on the agenda, aligning with global technological shifts.
- **Green Energy Initiatives:** India is an exclusive partner in EU green hydrogen initiatives, with major investments planned to develop a sustainable hydrogen ecosystem by 2030.
- **People-to-People Ties:** Strong academic and professional exchanges, supported by programs like Erasmus and BlueCards, underline vibrant cultural and educational connections.
- **Defence & Space Collaboration:** Joint efforts in maritime security, naval exercises, and space missions (such as cooperation between ISRO and ESA) reflect expanding cooperation in these critical areas.

### [Trump 2.0 and the new matrix of U.S.-India defence ties-The Hindu Editorial](#)

International relations

### Easy Explanation

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the U.S. on February 13, 2025, strengthened U.S.-India defense ties under President Donald Trump. The visit resulted in agreements on co-producing 'Javelin' anti-tank missiles and 'Stryker' combat vehicles, expanding interoperability and boosting India's domestic manufacturing. Additionally, India is purchasing six more P-8I maritime patrol aircraft to enhance naval security.

The two countries also launched the **Autonomous Systems Industry Alliance (ASIA)** to promote cooperation in unmanned aerial and autonomous systems. Talks included the possibility of collaboration on undersea defense, fifth-generation fighter jets, and space and air defense. India and the U.S. also agreed to



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review arms transfer regulations and work towards a **Reciprocal Defence Procurement (RDP) agreement**, streamlining the acquisition of defense goods and services between the two nations.

However, challenges remain. A key issue is the delay in the supply of **General Electric (GE) engines** for India's Tejas fighter jets, which is crucial for India's Air Force. The U.S. has also offered India the advanced **F-35 fighter jet**, but integrating it would be costly, complex, and come with U.S. restrictions on its use. Despite these challenges, the visit laid a solid foundation for expanding India-U.S. defense cooperation.

## Key Takeaways

### Strengthened U.S.-India Defense Relations

- Modi's U.S. visit resulted in agreements for the **co-production** of Javelin anti-tank missiles and Stryker combat vehicles, strengthening India's defense industry.
- India will acquire **six more P-8I maritime patrol aircraft** to boost naval security.
- A **new 10-year U.S.-India Defense Partnership Framework** will enhance collaboration in space, air defense, and anti-tank missiles.

### Technology and Defense Cooperation

- The launch of the **Autonomous Systems Industry Alliance (ASIA)** to promote cooperation in unmanned and autonomous defense systems.
- A review of **arms transfer regulations** and the initiation of a **Reciprocal Defence Procurement (RDP) agreement** to align defense acquisitions.
- Further discussions on **undersea defense, advanced fighter jets, and space collaboration**.

### Challenges and Concerns

- **Delays in GE engine supply for Tejas fighter jets**, impacting the Indian Air Force's (IAF) operational capabilities.
- The **F-35 fighter jet offer** presents challenges due to high infrastructure and maintenance costs, restrictions on usage, and integration with India's existing fleet.
- India still faces **fighter aircraft shortages**, with aging fleets and a stalled Medium Multi-Role Combat Aircraft (MMRCA) project.

### Way Forward

- U.S.-India defense ties have gained momentum but require **quick implementation** of key agreements.
- India must balance **technology transfer demands** with strategic acquisitions to enhance its air power without excessive reliance on external suppliers.

## [The SEC and Hague Service Convention-The Hindu Text and Context](#)

International relations

### Easy Explanation



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The **Hague Service Convention** is an international treaty that ensures legal documents are properly served across borders in civil and commercial matters. The **U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC)** has used this treaty to request the Indian government's help in serving **summons on Gautam Adani and Sagar Adani** in a securities and wire fraud case. The SEC has approached **India's Ministry of Law and Justice**, the designated authority for such requests, under **Article 5(a)** of the Convention.

However, **India has strict reservations** under the Hague Convention and does not allow alternative service methods like direct mail or diplomatic channels. This means the summons can only be served through India's legal system, potentially causing delays. The **entire process can take six to eight months**.

If India refuses to cooperate, a **default judgment** could be issued under **Article 15**, meaning the U.S. court could rule against the Adanis without their response. A past U.S. case (**Duong v. DDG BIM Services LLC, 2023**) confirmed that if India's central authority does not act, an American court can still proceed with a ruling.

## Key Takeaways

### Hague Service Convention & Its Purpose

- A treaty signed by **84 countries**, including **India and the U.S.**, to regulate the **service of legal documents across borders**.
- Ensures defendants receive **proper legal notice** when sued in a foreign country.
- Each country has a **central authority** to process requests and serve documents.

### SEC's Summons on the Adanis

- The **U.S. SEC** has used the **Hague Convention** to serve legal notices on **Gautam Adani and Sagar Adani** via India's Ministry of Law and Justice.
- The SEC is also exploring **alternative service methods** under **U.S. legal rules**.
- The **Trump administration** paused the **Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA)** for 180 days, but the SEC's case appears to continue.

### India's Reservations & Restrictions

- **India does not allow alternative service methods** (e.g., mail, diplomatic channels, or direct communication).
- Service requests **must go through the Ministry of Law and Justice** and must be in English or have an English translation.
- **India can reject a request under Article 13** if it believes the case threatens **national security or sovereignty**.

### Timeline & Default Judgments

- **Serving process in India takes 6 to 8 months**.
- If India **fails to act**, U.S. courts can issue a **default judgment** after six months.
- **Duong v. DDG BIM Services LLC (2023)** confirmed that **if India's central authority does not respond**, a U.S. court may rule without waiting further.



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## Implications for the Adanis

- If India cooperates, the Adanis must **respond legally** to the U.S. case.
  - If India delays or refuses, a **default ruling** could be issued, potentially impacting their global financial and business standing.
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