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AFFAIRS BOOSTER FOR LAW EXAMS

LawEx

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ISSUE - 32



**LEADERS OF 7 NATIONS
ATTENDED**

PM'S SWEARING-IN



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About Magazine

“LawEx” is a carefully curated set of Current Events designed specifically for CLAT aspirants. To take you one step closer to realizing your dream, “LawEx” provides a fortnightly overview of the most significant current events related to politics, economics, science and technology, & sports with a wide range of infographics to ensure a smoother learning experience and enhanced retention of information.

Editor's Note

Leaders of seven neighbouring countries attended the swearing-in of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Cabinet at the Rashtrapati Bhavan forecourt in Delhi on 9 June 2024. India observed the 124th death anniversary of its freedom fighter and tribal leader, Birsa Munda. The Nagi and Nakti Bird Sanctuaries have been recognised as wetlands of international importance under the Ramsar Convention on the occasion of World Environment Day on 5 June. The G7 Summit was held in Borgo Egnazia (Fasano) in Apulia, Italy on June 13-15, 2024. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) recently transferred 100 metric tonnes of its gold from the United Kingdom to domestic vaults.

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VAISHNAV BHATT

Our Top Achiever

AIR - 113th

CLAT 2024

Q. Give us a brief intro about yourself, Vaishnav.

Ans. Hello, I'm Vaishnav and I secured AIR 113 in CLAT 2024. I completed my 10th standard in Delhi and have moved to Bangalore this year.

Q. When did you think about doing law?

Ans. I've had some very unpleasant experiences in life when I was staying in Delhi where my family and I had to suffer emotionally and financially and a major part of it was due to insufficient knowledge of the law and our rights. In this process I had to interact with some lawyers, and visit the court as well. These experiences made me want to pursue law as a profession as I found it interesting and also felt that having this knowledge would keep me safe and I would be able to help others as well who face similar situations due to insufficient knowledge.

Q. When did you seriously start preparing for CLAT?

Ans. I started my preparation in March 2023.

Q. What is the role of LawEx in your preparation?

Ans. LawEx helped me a lot with my preparation for CLAT. Their current affairs magazine and Maths YouTube videos are excellent and have been of great help. I also found their GK topic tests to be very useful.

Q. Do you think LawEx Lectures with sufficient reading and mock practice enough for CLAT?

Ans. I feel LawEx should increase the number of mock tests that they offer. Apart from this I think that they provide sufficient study material.

Q. What did you do for your subject-wise strategy?

Ans. My weak point was GK, so I gave it a bit more attention compared to the other subjects. For this I read The Hindu newspaper everyday for 1.5 hrs and focused on the editorial as that improved my vocabulary and helped improve my English as well. I allocated 4-5 hours for GK everyday. I gave 2 hours for legal reasoning. During this time I had not yet started giving mock tests. I watched LawEx's maths YouTube videos to improve my maths for around 30 minutes. A bulk of my preparation was focused on these 3 subjects. Apart from this I attempted around 60 mock tests, 20 of which were from LawEx and the rest I had to source from other test series.

Q. What was your highest and lowest score in mock tests?

Ans. My lowest score was 72 and my highest score was 96.25. On average my score was around 90 marks out of 120.

Q. How did you keep your confidence up when scoring low in mocks?

Ans. My performance in mocks was more or less pretty consistent throughout my preparation. So I did not face this issue.

Q. How to maintain mock scores?

Ans. In my opinion, analysing the mocks after attempting them is very important as it makes you understand what kind of mistakes you have made and helps you to improve upon them in the next mock. This will also make you understand your own weak points and which subject needs improvement. This will help you maintain and improve your score.

Q. How much GK is sufficient and how to revise it?

Ans. No amount of GK can be considered sufficient in my opinion. So I would suggest to find 2-3 sources which are of good quality like The Hindu newspaper and LawEx magazine which covers most of the topics which you need to know and for static GK you can purchase any book like A P Bharadwaj's Static GK book. I revised for GK by doing the topic tests multiple times.

Q. How many Mocks are sufficient for CLAT Preparation?

Ans. According to me at least 50 mock tests are required so that your speed along with accuracy improves and it doesn't make you feel anxious anymore as a calm mind will help you concentrate better and score more. Clat is a reading based exam and it can be quite draining especially in the last 30-35 minutes so practicing mocks is important here.

Q. What is your advice to CLAT Aspirants?

Ans. I would advise CLAT aspirants to give themselves at least one year for preparation and attempt 1-2 mock tests every week so that it doesn't drain you out. I made this mistake too by attempting around 60 mocks in 2 months. It is not feasible. CLAT is highly competitive and requires consistency and patience. As my English was at a decent level to begin with, I was somehow able to manage the stress. Also don't forget to take short breaks and have good sleep. Some books which I purchased for CLAT are A P Bharadwaj's Legal reasoning and A P Bharadwaj's static GK. Also practice 15-20 mocks on OMR printouts as well and try finishing your mocks in 115 minutes as this is the time you'll get in your actual examination. Best wishes to all of you.

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QUICK BOOSTERS



LEADERS OF 7 NATIONS ATTENDED PM'S SWEARING-IN CEREMONY

WHY IN NEWS?

- Leaders of seven neighbouring countries attended the swearing-in of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Cabinet at the Rashtrapati Bhavan forecourt in Delhi on 9 June 2024.
- Leaders of seven neighbouring countries were invited with India's commitment to the 'Neighbourhood First Policy' and the 'Security and Growth for All in the Region' (SAGAR) vision.

Key Points

- The swearing-in ceremony was attended by Bhutan Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay, Nepal Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal, Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Sri Lanka President Ranil Wickremesinghe, Mauritius Prime Minister Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, Seychelles Vice-President Ahmed Afif, and Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu.
- Asia's first loco pilot, Surekha Yadav, also attended the oath-taking ceremony of Narendra Modi.
 - She is the first woman loco pilot of the semi-high speed Vande Bharat Express plying between Solapur and CSMT in Mumbai.
 - Surekha Yadav, who is piloting the Vande Bharat train from Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus-Solapur, is among ten loco pilots invited for the ceremony.

1. Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina

- India and Bangladesh have deep historical ties rooted in India's role in Bangladesh's liberation.
- Today, both countries share a robust trade relationship, which amounted to \$12,906 million in the 2023-24 financial year, with India exporting machinery and textiles, while Bangladesh exports garments and fish.
- The country has consistently been among the top five to ten export destinations for India.
- Culturally, too, Bangladesh and India share close bonds with frequent cultural exchanges and educational collaborations taking place.
 - Though Bangladesh has the rare distinction of being invited to all three swearing-in ceremonies, this is the first time Hasina is representing her country.

2. Sri Lanka, President Ranil Wickremesinghe

- Ties between the people of India and Sri Lanka can be traced back to ancient times.
- In 2023-24, their bilateral trade was valued at \$5,542 million, with significant Indian exports of petroleum and automobiles.
- Both India and Sri Lanka share deep religious and cultural ties, especially between the minority Sri Lankan Tamils and the Tamils of India.
- Future discussions between the two countries are expected to focus on enhancing maritime security cooperation, settling maritime disputes, and strengthening economic cooperation.

3. Nepal Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal alias 'Prachanda'

- India and Nepal share an open-border relationship, reflecting their deep historical and cultural ties.
- In 2023-24, bilateral trade amounted to \$7,871 million, dominated by Indian exports of petroleum products and machinery.
- The two countries also share deep cultural and religious ties, with a thriving tourism industry (especially religious tourism) between the two countries.

4. Maldives President Mohammad Muizzu

- Over the years, India and the Maldives have maintained close ties. Most notably, India helped prevent a coup in Maldives in 1988.
- The Indian Armed Forces continued to have a modest presence in the archipelago until President Muizzu came in on an "India Out" platform.
- In 2023-24, trade between the two nations reached \$979 million, primarily involving marine products and construction materials.
- Apart from improving strained ties, upcoming discussions will likely be centred around issues such as climate change and sustainable development.

5. Seychelles Vice President Ahmed Afif

- India and Seychelles share a strategic relationship, particularly in maritime security and environmental cooperation.

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- Located north of Madagascar, Seychelles is among the most strategically important archipelagos in the Indian Ocean.
- Trade between the two countries was valued at \$85 million in 2023-24, with a focus on fisheries and tourism. Both nations have, in the past, engaged in joint heritage conservation projects.

6. Bhutan King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck

- India and Bhutan are, what one can call, all-weather friends with significant economic and cultural exchanges.
- In 2023-24, bilateral trade was \$1.3 billion, with India being a major partner in Bhutan's hydroelectric power sector.
- Cultural ties are reinforced through educational exchanges and collaborative efforts to preserve Bhutanese heritage.

7. Mauritius Prime Minister Pravind Kumar Jugnauth

- India and Mauritius enjoy close relations, underpinned by strong cultural and economic ties.
- Bilateral trade in 2023-24 was valued at \$ 852 million, with key exports from Mauritius including textiles and sugar.
- Culturally, the countries are connected by a significant Indian diaspora in Mauritius, which is celebrated through regular cultural events and exchanges.

'Neighbourhood First' Policy

- Conceptualised in 2008, the 'Neighbourhood First' policy of India is a core component of India's foreign policy.
- This 'Neighbourhood First' policy guides India's approach towards the management of its relations with countries in its immediate neighbourhood — Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.
- Many geopolitical experts also note that the 'Neighbourhood First' approach is India's attempt to counter China's growing influence in the region.

'SAGAR' Vision

- The SAGAR vision was launched by PM Modi in 2015 during his visit to the Indian Ocean island states of Seychelles, Mauritius, and Sri Lanka.
- The vision aims to strengthen India's economic and security ties with its maritime neighbours while enhancing their maritime security capabilities.

Swearing-in Events of 2014 and 2019

- **2014** - The leaders of the regional grouping SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) countries attended Modi's first swearing ceremony in 2014 when he took the reins as the prime minister after a massive electoral victory for BJP.
- **2019** - Leaders of the BIMSTEC countries - Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Thailand - attended Modi's swearing-in ceremony, in 2019 when he became Prime Minister for the second consecutive term.
 - Kyrgyz president and then chair of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Sooronbay Jeenbekov, and Mauritius PM Pravind Kumar Jugnauth were also present at the event.

PM Modi's Oath Ceremony Guest List



Ranil Wickremesinghe
President of Sri Lanka



Dr Mohamed Muizzu
President of Maldives



Ahmed Affif
Vice-President of Seychelles



Sheikh Hasina
Prime Minister of Bangladesh



Pravind Kumar Jugnauth
Prime Minister of Mauritius



Tshering Tobgay
Prime Minister of Bhutan



Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda'
Prime Minister of Nepal





2024 KAVLI PRIZE

WHY IN NEWS?

- Recently, eight scientists were awarded with 2024 Kavli Prize (not to be confused with the Kavli Medal) for their contributions to astrophysics, neuroscience, and nanoscience.
- All eight scientists awarded the Prize this year are professors at leading American universities.

About Kavli Prize

- The Kavli Prize is awarded biennially in honour of Norwegian-American businessman and philanthropist Fred Kavli (1927-2013).
- The Kavli Prizes are awarded in three areas: astrophysics, nanoscience and neuroscience — the largest, the smallest, and the most complex.
- The inaugural prize was announced in 2008, and awarded to seven scientists.
- Till date, 73 scientists from 19 countries have been honoured with the biennial award.
 - Ten of them have gone on to win the Nobel Prize.
- Along with the US-based Kavli Foundation, the prize is given in partnership with the Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters, and the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research.

- The Kavli Prize was designed to be like the Nobel in the fields of astrophysics, neuroscience, and nanoscience. But it is more far-reaching in its outlook.
- As per the will of Alfred Nobel, the Nobel Prize is only awarded for achievements made “during the preceding year”. But the Kavli Prize does not operate under such a restriction.

2024 Winners

Astrophysics

- The prize for astrophysics has been awarded to David Charbonneau of Harvard University, and Sara Seager, of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.
- The duo have been recognised for discoveries of exoplanets, and the characterisation of their atmosphere.
- They pioneered methods for the detection of atomic species in planetary atmospheres and the measurement of their thermal infrared emission, thus setting the stage for finding the molecular fingerprints of atmospheres around both giant and rocky planets.
- Their contributions have been key to the enormous progress seen in the last 20 years in the exploration of myriad exoplanets.

Nanoscience

- Robert Langer of MIT, Armand Paul Alivisatos of the University of Chicago, and Chad Mirkin of Northwestern University were given the prize for nanoscience.
- Robert Langer was recognised for his breakthrough idea of nano-engineering a material for the controlled release of therapeutic bio-molecules, which could help the development of controlled drug delivery systems to treat diseases like aggressive brain cancer, prostate cancer and schizophrenia.
- Paul Alivisatos devised semiconductor crystals or “quantum dots” which could be used as multi-colour fluorescent probes in bio-imaging. Today these are used for diagnostic imaging of patients, and helping research in fundamental medicine and biology.
- Chad Mirkin introduced the concept of spherical nucleic acid (SNA), a new class of nucleic acids that are densely functionalised and oriented spherically around a nanoparticle core. SNAs have wide-ranging use in areas like intracellular detection, gene regulation and immunotherapy.
- Their discoveries contributed foundationally to the development of therapeutics, vaccines, bioimaging and diagnostics.

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Neuroscience

- The prize in neuroscience has been awarded to Nancy Kanwisher of MIT, Winrich Freiwald of Rockefeller University, and Doris Tsao of the University of California at Berkeley.
- The trio have been awarded for their collective effort over decades to map the linkage between facial recognition and the brain.
- While Nancy Kinwisher identified the exact brain's centre for face processing, Doris Tsao and Winrich Freiwald took this knowledge forward using functional imaging and recording from individual brain cells to map out the neural architecture of the human brain.
- Their discoveries have provided basic principles of neural organization and made the starting point for further research on how the processing of visual information is integrated with other cognitive functions.

<p>THE  KAVLI PRIZE 2024 NANOSCIENCE</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;">    </div> <p>Robert S. Langer Armand Paul Alivisatos Chad A. Mirkin</p>	<p>THE  KAVLI PRIZE 2024 NEUROSCIENCE</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;">    </div> <p>Nancy Kanwisher Winrich Freiwald Doris Tsao</p> <p><i>For the discovery of a highly localized and specialized system for representation of faces in human and non-human primate neocortex.</i></p>
<p>THE  KAVLI PRIZE 2024 ASTROPHYSICS</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;">   </div> <p>David Charbonneau Sara Seager</p>	

THE  KAVLI PRIZE

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RENAMING JOSHIMATH AND KOSIYAKUTOLI

WHY IN NEWS?

- The Centre approved the Uttarakhand government's proposal for renaming the Joshimath tehsil in Chamoli district to Jyotirmath, and the Kosiyakutoli tehsil in Nainital district to Pargana Shri Kainchi Dham tehsil on June 12.

About Jyotirmath

- Jyotirmath (also known as Jyotir Peeth) is one of the four cardinal mathas (monasteries) that 8th-century philosopher Adi Shankaracharya is believed to have established across India to promote the Advaita Vedanta philosophy.
- The Jyotirmath was established for the preservation and dissemination of spiritual knowledge and practices.
- It is believed that when Adi Shankaracharya or Adiguru came here, he performed penance under a tree known as the Amar Kalpavriksha.
- The name "Jyotirmath" comes from the divine light of knowledge he is said to have attained, with 'jyoti' meaning divine light.

- The Shankaracharyas head the four Hindu mathas (monasteries) — in Dwarka (Gujarat), Joshimath (Uttarakhand), Puri (Odisha), and Sringeri (Karnataka) — that are believed to have been founded by the eighth-century religious scholar and philosopher Adi Shankara.

- Jyotirmath was the hill town's ancient name.
- Over time, the local population began referring to the area as "Joshimath". This change was likely gradual and organic, influenced by regional languages, local dialects and the ease of pronunciation.

- Joshimath serves as the gateway to Badrinath Dham, one of the four pilgrimage sites in Uttarakhand. The others are Kedarnath, Yamunotri and Gangotri.

About Kosiyakutolia

- In the name "Kosiyakutoli", "Kosi" refers to the river of the same name which flows through the Nainital district and is important for the Kumaon region of Uttarakhand.
- The term "kutoli" is derived from the local language, referring to a village or settlement.
- Renaming it to Pargana Shri Kainchi Dham aligns its identity with Neem Karoli Baba's Kainchi Dham Ashram, which is a major site here that attracts devotees from across the world.
- Kosiyakutoli came to be known for its association with Neem Karoli Baba and the Kainchi Dham Ashram he founded in 1962.
- Also known as Neeb Karori Baba, he was a renowned spiritual guru with followers in India and abroad.

- Among his Western disciples were well-known figures, including Apple co-founder Steve Jobs, former Harvard University professor Ram Dass (earlier named Richard Alpert) and kirtan singer Krishna Das, who helped spread his teachings globally.
- Although he passed away in 1973, he is revered to date for his teachings on bhakti yoga and devotion to God.
- Numerous anecdotes and stories of Neem Karoli Baba performing "miracles", where he is supposed to have materialised objects and healed the sick, contributed to the legend around him.
- Thousands of devotees flock to the Kainchi Dham Ashram every year, especially on June 15 — the anniversary of the Ashram's founding.





Cultural significance of Uttarakhand's Joshimath and Kosiyakutoli, now set to be renamed



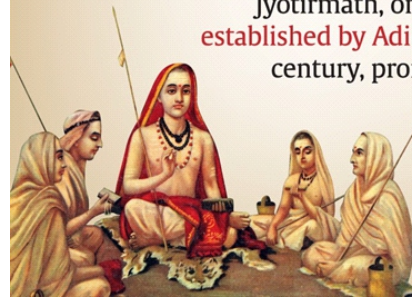
What recent name changes have been approved in Uttarakhand?

Centre has approved renaming **Joshimath tehsil** in Chamoli district to **Jyotirmath**, and **Kosiyakutoli tehsil** in Nainital district to **Pargana Shri Kainchi Dham tehsil**.



What is the significance of Jyotirmath?

Jyotirmath, one of the 4 monasteries established by **Adi Shankaracharya** in 8th century, promotes **Advaita Vedanta philosophy**. The name symbolizes **divine light** of knowledge, as 'jyoti' means divine light.



How did Jyotirmath become Joshimath?

The name Jyotirmath gradually evolved to Joshimath through **local dialects** and **ease of pronunciation** before British colonial rule. Joshimath was **used in government records**, while Jyotirmath was retained in formal or religious contexts.

Why is the renaming to Jyotirmath significant?

Renaming to Jyotirmath honors the town's **historical and religious importance**, potentially boosting its status as a spiritual center and enhancing religious tourism.

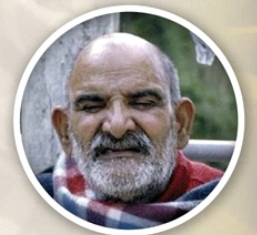


What is the cultural significance of Kosiyakutoli?

Kosiyakutoli is known for **Neem Karoli Baba's Kainchi Dham Ashram**, attracting devotees worldwide. The name change to **Pargana Shri Kainchi Dham** aligns with this spiritual landmark.

Why is Neem Karoli Baba significant?

Neem Karoli Baba, a renowned Hindu guru, founded the Kainchi Dham Ashram in 1962. His teachings on **bhakti yoga** and his famous **Western disciples**, like **Steve Jobs** and **Ram Dass**, have contributed to his **global following**.



Visit above to read the full explainer

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EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ELECTIONS

WHY IN NEWS?

- The 2024 European Parliament election took place from 6 to 9 June.

Results

- Results of the June 6-9 European Parliament elections, in which about 51% of 370 million-plus electors in 27 European Union (EU) countries voted, showed gains for rightwing and far-right parties at the cost of mainly Left and liberal parties.
- The centre-right group European People's Party (EPP) was projected to win the most seats, 186, in the 720-member House that meets in Strasbourg, France — 10 more than in 2019, when too, the EPP was the largest group.
- The rightwing Identity and Democracy (ID) group, which includes the French opposition leader Marine Le Pen's far-right National Rally (NR), was projected to win 58 seats, a gain of 9 seats.
- In response, French President Emmanuel Macron called a snap election to Parliament, saying he could not ignore the outcome of the European election in which his pro-Europe Renaissance party performed badly.
- The Eurosceptic European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) group, which is dominated by Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni's Brothers of Italy party, was projected to win 73 seats, a gain of 4.

EU's Institutions

- The EU's institutional set-up is unique and its decision-making system is constantly evolving.
- The 7 European institutions, 7 EU bodies and over 30 decentralised agencies are spread across the EU. They work together to address the common interests of the EU and European people.
- There are 4 main decision-making institutions which lead the EU's administration. These institutions collectively provide the EU with policy direction and play different roles in the law-making process:
 1. the European Parliament (Brussels/Strasbourg/Luxembourg)
 2. the European Council (Brussels)
 3. the Council of the European Union (Brussels/Luxembourg)
 4. the European Commission (Brussels/Luxembourg/Representations across the EU)
- Their work is complemented by other institutions and bodies, which include:
 1. the Court of Justice of the European Union (Luxembourg)
 2. the European Central Bank (Frankfurt)
 3. the European Court of Auditors (Luxembourg)
- The European Commission is the EU's executive branch, responsible for proposing and implementing EU law and the day-to-day running of the EU.
- The European Parliament, representing the interests of EU citizens.
- The Council, representing the interests of the countries, shape Commission proposals and, if they agree on them, adopt them.

What is the European Parliament?

- The European Parliament is the world's only directly elected transnational assembly.
- Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) are directly elected by citizens of the 27 member states. Therefore, it provides a certain democratic legitimacy to all EU activities.

- A total of 720 MEPs will be elected in June 2024, 15 more compared to the previous elections.
- As a general rule, the number of MEPs is decided before each election. The total cannot exceed 750 plus the president.

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- The 720 seats of the Parliament are allocated on the principle of 'degressive proportionality', meaning smaller states elect more MEPs than their populations would proportionally warrant.
- MEPs are chosen by proportional representation, ensuring the number of elected MEPs is proportional to the votes they receive.

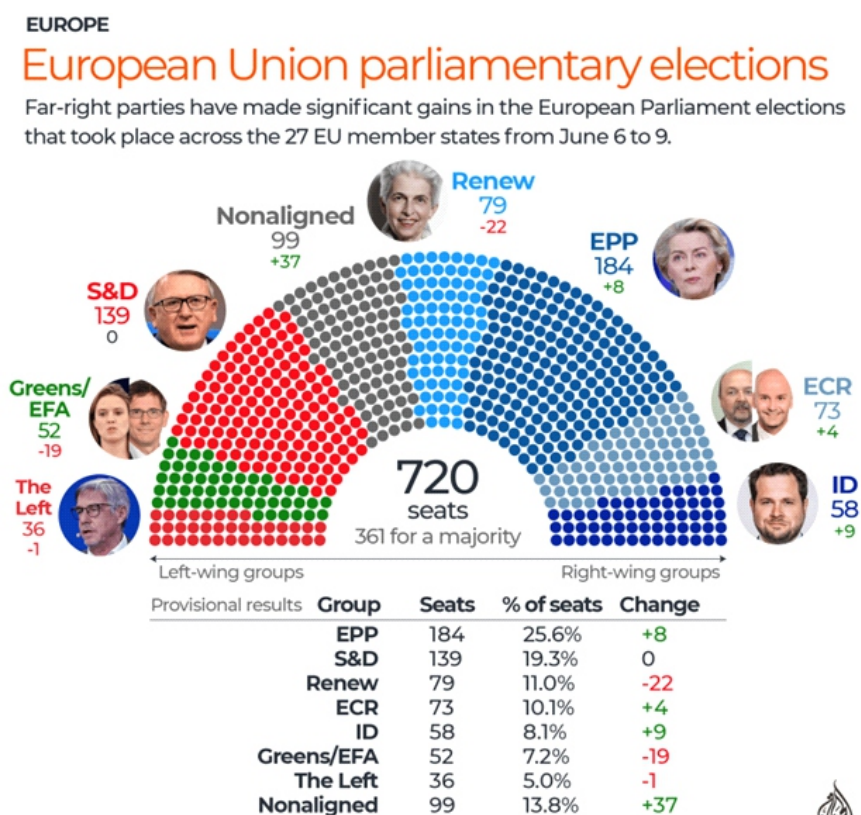
Functions of the European Parliament

- The Parliament has three major functions-
 - i. First, it adopts and amends EU legislation along with the Council of the EU.
 - ii. Second, it supervises the functioning of all other EU institutions and bodies, particularly the European Council (EC). It approves or rejects appointments to the EC.
 - iii. Third, the Parliament shares authority over the EU budget with the Council, which allows it to influence EU spending.
- The Parliament also ratifies international agreements, including those on trade and investment.

The new Parliament will shape the EU's direction for the next five years on issues such as climate change, migration, the Green Deal aimed at making Europe climate-neutral by 2050, digitisation, support for Ukraine, and policies toward Russia, China, the Middle East, and the Indo-Pacific.

Political Groups in the European Parliament

- Voters in the European Parliament elections choose from their national political parties.
- The winning candidates then become part of Europe-wide political groups in the European Parliament.
- Almost all major parties in the 27 EU countries are affiliated with one or other of these European groups, based on commonalities in ideology.
- A minimum of 23 MEPs from at least one-fourth of EU Member States can form a new group in the European Parliament.
- Currently, there are seven groups in the Parliament: European People's Party (EPP); Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D); Renew Europe; Greens/ European Free Alliance (Greens/ EFA); European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR); Identity and Democracy (ID), and the Left Group (GUE/ NGL).



Source: results.elections.europa.eu | June 10, 2024



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CENTRAL COUNCIL OF MINISTERS OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT

WHY IN NEWS?

- President Droupadi Murmu administered oaths to the Central Council of Ministers (COM) of the new NDA (National Democratic Alliance) government on June 9
- Led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the COM is larger in strength compared to the previous term, featuring 30 cabinet ministers, five Ministers of State (Independent Charge) and 36 Ministers of State.

What is the Central Council of Ministers?

- The Central Council of Ministers is led by the Prime Minister and plays a vital role in government policy-making.
- Given the parliamentary system of government in India, it is effectively the real executive authority.
 - While the President of India is the head of the Executive, they must act on the aid and advice of the COM as mandated by the Indian Constitution.

- According to Article 74, "There shall be a Council of Ministers with the Prime Minister at the head to aid and advise the President who shall, in the exercise of his functions, act in accordance with such advice..."
- Article 75 further states that the President appoints the Prime Minister. Based on the PM's recommendation, the President also appoints other ministers.
 - The article mandates that the size of this council should not exceed 15% of the strength of the Lok Sabha, or the House of the people.
- Article 88 empowers the ministers to speak or otherwise participate in proceedings in both the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, as well as any joint session of both houses or any Parliamentary committee they may be a part of. However, it does not guarantee them the right to vote.

Role of PM in COM

- The Prime Minister is the head of the Central Council of Ministers in an executive capacity.
- The position he holds is often described as "first among equals", wherein the PM has a unique role and is considered the primary leader of the COM, but is nevertheless equal to his ministers.

- Article 75 states: "The Council of Ministers shall be collectively responsible to the House of the People."
- Additionally, the PM is responsible for decision-making on all important policy issues and other portfolios not allocated to any other minister.

- The Prime Minister additionally serves as head of the Cabinet Secretariat, the government body which supervises the day-to-day administration of the government and the conduct of business between ministries.
- Additionally, he heads the NITI Aayog and the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet.

Who are the Cabinet Ministers?

- The cabinet ministers are ranked as the senior-most in the council, second only to the Prime Minister.
- They oversee the strategic and important ministries of the Central government – related to Home Affairs, Finance, Defence, etc. – with the authority to organise and attend meetings and make important policy decisions.

- In the new COM, Amit Shah has been re-appointed Home Minister, tasked with overseeing the maintenance of the country's internal security, including the police force.
- Also retaining their posts from the outgoing cabinet are Nitin Gadkari as Minister of Road Transport and Highways, Nirmala Sitharaman as Finance Minister, and Rajnath Singh as Defence Minister.

Who are the Ministers of State (Independent Charge)?

- Ministers of state are junior members of the COM.
- A Minister of State (Independent Charge) is empowered to administer their respective ministry without oversight from cabinet ministers or other members of the Union government.

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- In the outgoing council, Rao Inderjit Singh served as Minister of State (Independent Charge), overseeing both the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation and the Ministry of Planning. Dr. Jitendra Singh served as Minister of State (Independent Charge) of the Ministry of Science and Technology. Arjun Ram Meghwal served in the same capacity, overseeing the Ministry of Law and Justice.

Who are the Ministers of State?

- As opposed to a Minister of State (Independent Charge), a Minister of State does not enjoy the foremost administrative duties over a ministry, but assists a cabinet minister with the same, and is responsible for specific functions as delegated to them by their superior.
- Ministries with crucial mandates such as the Home Ministry, the Ministry of External Affairs, the Health Ministry and the Education Ministry may have two or three ministers of state working with the cabinet minister.

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UNION COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

CABINET MINISTERS

	
1. Raj Nath Singh Minister of Defence	2. Amit Shah Minister of Home Affairs; and Minister of Cooperation
	
3. Nitin Jairam Gadhari Minister of Road Transport and Highways	4. Jagat Prakash Nadda Minister of Health and Family Welfare; and Minister of Chemicals and Fertilizers

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UNION COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

CABINET MINISTERS

	
5. Shivraj Singh Chouhan Minister of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare; and Minister of Rural Development	6. Nirmala Sitharaman Minister of Finance; and Minister of Corporate Affairs
	
7. Dr. Subrahmanyam Jaishankar Minister of External Affairs	8. Manohar Lal Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs; and Minister of Power

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UNION COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

CABINET MINISTERS

	
9. H. D. Kumaraswamy Minister of Heavy Industries; and Minister of Steel	10. Piyush Goyal Minister of Commerce and Industry
	
11. Dharmendra Pradhan Minister of Education	12. Jitan Ram Manjhi Minister of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises

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UNION COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

CABINET MINISTERS

	
13. Rajiv Ranjan Singh alias Lalan Singh Minister of Panchayati Raj; and Minister of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying	14. Sarbananda Sonowal Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways
	
15. Dr. Virendra Kumar Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment	16. Kinjarapu Rammohan Naidu Minister of Civil Aviation

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BIRSA MUNDA'S 124TH DEATH ANNIVERSARY

WHY IN NEWS?

- India observed the 124th death anniversary of its freedom fighter and tribal leader, Birsa Munda.

About Birsa Munda

- Birsa Munda was born on November 15, 1875, in a village named Ulihatu of Khunti district.
- He belonged to the Munda tribe of the Chotanagapur plateau region of present-day Jharkhand.
- He completed his primary education at Salga under the guidance of his teacher Jaipal Nag.
 - Birsa converted to Christianity on Nag's recommendation to join the German Mission School but opted out of the school in a few years.
- Munda spent most of his time between 1886 and 1890 in Chaibasa, close to the centre of the Sardari agitation.
 - Aimed against British rule, it was peaceful in its nature led by the Oraon and Munda tribes.
- This inspired him to join the anti-missionary and anti-colonial cause. By the time he left Chaibasa in 1890, Birsa was strongly entrenched in the movement against the British oppression of the tribal communities.
- Munda soon emerged as a tribal leader who brought people together to fight for these issues.
- Leading the faith of 'Birsait', he became a God-like figure who came to be referred to as 'Bhagwan' (God) and 'Dharti ka Abba' (father of the earth) by his followers.

DID YOU KNOW?

- In the year 2021, the Indian government declared November 15, the birth anniversary of Birsa Munda, as 'Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas' (Tribal Pride Day).
- This day corresponds with the formation of the state of Jharkhand, also recognized as Jharkhand Foundation Day.
- On November 15, 2000, the Chotanagpur region was bifurcated from the southern half of Bihar, formally forming the state of Jharkhand (land of forests) as the 28th state in the Indian Union.
- On the occasion of Birsa's birth anniversary in 2023, the Prime Minister launched a Rs 24,000-crore initiative 'PM Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PM-JANMAN)'.
 - It aims to ensure the efficient delivery of welfare schemes to the last mile of India, with a particular focus on empowering Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs).

The Ulgulan Movement

- Birsa Munda launched the Ulgulan movement in 1899, using weapons and guerrilla warfare to drive out foreigners.
 - However, the British were soon able to halt the movement through the superior strength of their forces.
 - On March 3, 1900, Munda was arrested by the British police while he was sleeping along with his tribal guerilla army at the Jamkopai forest in Chakradharpur.
- It is believed he died in Ranchi Jail due to an illness on June 9, 1900, at the young age of 25.
- Though he lived a short life and the movement died out soon after him, Birsa Munda's mobilisation of the tribal community to protect their land rights was remarkable, being one of the earliest such attempts.
- The movement also contributed to the government's repeal of the begar system and led to the Tenancy Act (1903) which recognised the "khuntkhatti" system.
 - The "khuntkhatti" system was based on the principle of customary rights, without the involvement of landlords.
- The Chotanagpur Tenancy Act (1908) later banned the passage of tribal land to non-tribal folks.

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#AmritMahotsav

Bhagwan Birsa Munda

15 November 1875 - 9 June 1900

Remembering the **freedom fighter** on his death anniversary.

He launched his **movement** against the **British** in **1895** played a **crucial role** in **liberation** of his **community** from the **atrocities** of the **British**.





SPECIAL CATEGORY STATUS FOR ANDHRA PRADESH AND BIHAR

WHY IN NEWS?

- Impressive performances by Chandrababu Naidu's Telugu Desam Party (TDP) and Nitish Kumar's Janata Dal-United (JD(U) in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections have renewed interest in the leaders' demands for special category status (SCS) for their States Andhra Pradesh and Bihar.

What is Special Category Status?

- Special Category Status is a classification granted to some States by the Centre to assist development, based on geographical and socio-economic disadvantages.
- The scheme was introduced in 1969 on the recommendation of the Fifth Finance Commission.
- Five factors that are considered before granting SCS to a State:
 - i. Hilly and difficult terrain
 - ii. Low population density and/or a sizeable share of tribal population
 - iii. Strategic location along international borders
 - iv. Economic and infrastructural backwardness
 - v. Non-viable nature of State finances
- Currently, 11 States in India — Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, Tripura, and Uttarakhand — have SCS.
- SCS States receive Centre-State funding from centrally sponsored schemes in the ratio of 90:10, which is more favourable than general category States. They also receive other benefits like tax concessions etc.
 - In other words, in SCS states, the Centre funds central schemes up to 90%, compared to 70% in non-SCS states.
- The system was scrapped on the recommendation of the 14th Finance Commission, which suggested that the resource gap of the states should be filled by increasing the devolution of tax to 42% from the existing 32%.

Why is Bihar demanding Special Category Status?

- Bihar's per capita net state domestic product for 2022-23 stood at ₹31,280, which was among the lowest in the country.
- Bihar was also India's poorest State according to the National Family Health Survey 5, with 33.76% of the State's population being multidimensionally poor.
- After the Bihar Cabinet resolution was passed in 2023, Chief Minister Kumar said in a letter, a proposal has been passed to request the Central government to give special category status to Bihar.
- Approximately ₹2.50 lakh crore would be needed to implement the schemes prepared by the State government in the interest of the people.

Why is Andhra Pradesh demanding Special Category Status?

- Andhra Pradesh demands SCS based on loss of revenue after the 2014 bifurcation of the State which led to the formation of Telangana under the A.P. Reorganisation Act on February 20, 2014.
- Shortly after the reorganisation, in a debate in the Rajya Sabha on February 20, 2014, then-Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said that "SCS would be extended to the State of Andhra Pradesh for a period of five years".
 - But after Prime Minister Narendra Modi took charge, the SCS was put on the back burner.
- As per presentations made by the AP government to NITI Aayog, the 14th Finance Commission estimated that the post-devolution revenue deficit for AP for the five-year period 2015-20 would be Rs 22,113 crore, but in reality, this figure stood at Rs 66,362 crore.
 - The debt of the residuary state, which was Rs 97,000 crore at the time of bifurcation, reached Rs 2,58,928 crore by 2018-19, and is more than Rs 3.5 lakh crore now.
- Andhra Pradesh argues that the undivided state was bifurcated in an unjust and inequitable manner — the successor state inherited nearly 59% of the population, debt, and liabilities of the original state, but only 47% of its revenues.

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Centre's Response

- Andhra Pradesh does not qualify for the SCS, firstly as per norms and secondly due to the dissolution of the Planning Commission in August 2014.
 - The 14th Finance Commission had equated SCS with the general category status and had annulled SCS for new States.
 - However, the Centre offered Andhra Pradesh a special package (SP).
- Although Bihar meets most of the criteria for the grant of SCS, it does not fulfil the requirement of hilly terrain and geographically difficult areas, which is considered to be the primary reason for difficulty in infrastructural development.
 - In 2013, the Raghuram Rajan Committee set up by the Centre, placed Bihar in the “least developed category” and suggested a new methodology based on a 'multi -dimensional index' for devolving funds instead of a SCS, which can be revisited to address the State's socio-economic backwardness.

A LONG-STANDING DEMAND

WHAT IS SPECIAL CATEGORY STATUS? Status given to some states that are historically disadvantaged compared to others

CRITERIA: Hilly terrain, low population density, strategic location (along borders with neighbouring countries), economic and infrastructure backwardness and non-viable nature of state finances

What are the benefits?

- Significant concession in excise & customs duties, income tax and corporate tax
- 30% of planned expenditure (central budget) goes to 'special category' states
- Centre bears 90% of the state expenditure (given as grant) while the remaining 10% is given as loan to the state
- More grants from the Centre helps in building state infrastructure and social sector projects

Why AP wants the status?

It lost revenue after Hyderabad, which accounts for over 60% of the state revenue, became the capital of Telangana in 2014

Why has the Centre rejected it?

- Special category status became irrelevant after the increased devolution of funds from the Centre from 30% to 42%, according to the recommendations of the 14th Finance Commission
- The special status is not part of the AP Reorganisation Act

How many states are under the special category?

The 11 states are Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, Tripura, J&K, HP and Uttarakhand





IS IT TIME FOR PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION?

WHY IN NEWS?

- The results of the Lok Sabha elections were declared on 4 June 2024.
 - The ruling National Democratic Alliance (NDA) has won 293 seats with a 43.3% vote share while the Opposition bloc INDIA (including Trinamool Congress) has secured 234 seats with a 41.6% vote share.
 - Other regional parties and independents polled around 15% but ended up with only 16 seats in total.
- There is a growing consensus among a broad cross-section of citizens and political parties in India that the current First Past the Post (FPTP) electoral system must be replaced with a Proportional Representation (PR) electoral system as one viable alternative.

What is Proportional Representation?

- The Proportional Representation (PR) system ensures representation of all parties based on their vote share.
- The most commonly used PR system is the 'party list PR' where voters vote for the party (and not individual candidates) and then the parties get seats in proportion to their vote share.
 - There is usually a minimum threshold of 3-5% vote share for a party to be eligible for a seat.
- India is a federal country and this principle if implemented should ideally be carried out at each State/Union Territory (UT) level.
- For example, the scenario as it would have played out after the 2024 election results based on applying the PR system at each State/UT level is summarised as-
 - The ruling NDA has won 293 seats with a 43.3% vote share. While, under the PR system, the NDA would have secured 243 seats.
 - The Opposition bloc INDIA (including Trinamool Congress) has secured 234 seats with a 41.6% vote share. While, under the PR system, the INDIA bloc would have secured only 225 seats.
 - Other regional parties and independents polled around 15% but ended up with only 16 seats in total. While under the PR system, they would have secured 75 seats.
- The main criticism against the PR system is that it could potentially result in instability as no party/coalition may obtain a majority to form the government in our parliamentary democracy.
- Further, it may result in the proliferation of political parties based on regional, caste, religious and linguistic considerations that may promote casteist or communal voting patterns.
 - However, this criticism is not well founded since the present FPTP system has also not inhibited the

What is the FPTP System?

- We follow the First Past the Post System (FPTP) in our elections to the Lok Sabha and Legislative Assemblies.
- Under this system, the candidate who polls more than any other in a constituency is declared elected.
- This is the system that is followed for elections in democracies like the U.S., the U.K. and Canada.
- The primary advantage of the FPTP system is that it is simple and the most feasible method in a large country like India.
- Secondly, FPTP provides greater stability to the executive in our parliamentary democracy because the ruling party/coalition can enjoy a majority in the Lok Sabha/Legislative Assembly without obtaining a majority of the votes (more than 50%) across constituencies.
- The issue with FPTP is that it may result in over or under-representation of political parties when compared to their vote share.
 - For example, in the first three elections after independence, the Congress party won close to 75% of seats in the then Lok Sabha with a 45-47% vote share.
 - BJP won 282 seats (around 52%) with a 31% vote share and 303 seats (around 55%) with a 37.3% vote share in 2014 and 2019, respectively.





Mixed Member Proportional Representation (MMPR)

- In order to maintain a balance between stability and proportionate representation, the system of Mixed Member Proportional Representation (MMPR) can be considered.
- Under this system, there is one candidate who is elected through the FPTP system from each territorial constituency.
- There are also additional seats that are filled based on various parties' percentage of votes.

International Practices

- Presidential democracies like Brazil and Argentina have the party list PR system. So do parliamentary democracies like South Africa, the Netherlands, Belgium and Spain.
- In Germany, which follows the MMPR system, out of the 598 seats in the Bundestag (their equivalent of our Lok Sabha), 299 seats (50%) are filled from constituencies under the FPTP system. The voters also provide their preference for a party in the ballots.
 - The balance 299 seats (50%) are filled by apportioning them amongst parties, that secure at least 5% votes, based on their percentage of votes.
- Similarly, in New Zealand, out of the total 120 seats in the House of Representatives, 72 seats (60%) are filled through the FPTP system from territorial constituencies.
 - The balance 48 seats (40%) are allotted to various parties, that secure at least 5% votes, based on their vote share.
- This system is likely to provide the required stability in a parliamentary democracy like India while also ensuring representation for all parties based on their vote share.

An alternative seat-sharing mechanism

A Proportional Representation (PR) system ensures representation of all parties based on their vote share. The most commonly used PR system is the 'party list PR' where voters vote for the party, and the parties get seats in proportion to their vote share

Table 1: The results of the 2014 and 2019 general elections

Political party (predominant State)	2014		2019	
	% of votes	No. of seats	% of votes	No. of seats
Bharatiya Janata Party (All India)	31%	282	37.3%	303
Indian National Congress (All India)	19.3%	44	19.5%	52
Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) (Uttar Pradesh)	4.1%	0	3.6%	10
Samajwadi Party (Uttar Pradesh)	3.4%	5	2.6%	5
Trinamool Congress (West Bengal)	3.8%	34	4.1%	22
All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam [AIADMK] (Tamil Nadu)	3.3%	37	1.4%	1
Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam [DMK] (Tamil Nadu)	1.7%	0	2.3%	24
Telugu Desam Party (Andhra Pradesh)	2.6%	16	2%	3
YSR Congress Party (Andhra Pradesh)	2.6%	9	2.5%	22
Shiv Sena (Maharashtra)	1.9%	18	2.1%	18
Biju Janata Dal (BJD) (Odisha)	1.7%	20	1.7%	12
All other parties/independents	24.6%	78	20.9%	71
Total	100%	543	100%	543



Election fervour: Supporters of the Samajwadi party celebrate after the counting of votes for the Lok Sabha elections, in Lucknow on June 4. GETTY IMAGES

Table 2: If the PR system is applied for the 2024 election

Political formation	% of votes	Actual number of seats	Seats as per PR
National Democratic Alliance (NDA)	43.3%	293*	243
INDIA bloc	41.6%	234	225
Others/independents	15.1%	16	75
Total	100%	543	543

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NAGI AND NAKTI BIRD SANCTUARIES OF BIHAR

WHY IN NEWS?

- The Nagi and Nakti Bird Sanctuaries have been recognised as wetlands of international importance under the Ramsar Convention on the occasion of World Environment Day on 5 June.

About Nakti Bird Sanctuary

- Nakti bird sanctuary was developed primarily for irrigation through the construction of the Nakti dam.
- In 1984, the wetland was designated as a bird sanctuary locally and internationally as an Important Bird and Biodiversity Area (IBA) by BirdLife International, highlighting its importance as a wintering habitat for several migratory species, with over 20,000 birds congregating during winter months.
- This includes one of the largest congregations of red-crested pochard (*Netta rufina*) in the Indo-Gangetic plain.
- According to the Asiatic Waterbird Census 2023, the Nakti Bird Sanctuary reported 7,844 birds, the highest in the survey, followed by the Nagi Bird Sanctuary with 6,938 birds.

What is the Ramsar Convention?

- A Ramsar site is a wetland site designated to be of international importance under the Ramsar Convention, also known as The Convention on Wetlands, an international environmental treaty signed on 2 February 1971 in Ramsar, Iran, under the auspices of UNESCO.
 - The wetlands are land areas covered by water, either temporarily/ seasonally or permanently. Such areas play a key role in the hydrological cycle and flood control, water supply and providing food, fibre and raw materials.
- It provides a framework for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources across its 172 member countries including India.

- Montreux Record is a register of wetland sites of International Importance where changes in ecological character have occurred, are occurring, or are likely to occur as a result of technological developments, pollution or other human interference.
- It is maintained as part of the Ramsar List.

About Nagi Bird Sanctuary

- Nagi bird sanctuary was, on the other hand, created following the damming of the Nagi River, which enabled the gradual formation of water bodies with clear water and aquatic vegetation.
- Overall, the wetland and its fringes provide habitat for over 75 bird species, 33 fish, and 12 aquatic plants.
- Notably, the site hosts one of the largest congregations of bar-headed geese (*Anser indicus*) in the Indo-Gangetic plain.

The Kanwar Lake in Bihar's Begusarai district was designated as the state's first Ramsar Site in August 2020.

Ramsar Convention and India

- In India, it came into force on 1st February 1982, under which wetlands of international importance are declared as Ramsar sites.
- India launched the National Wetland Conservation Programme (NWCP) in 1985 to tackle threats to vulnerable wetland ecosystems and enhance their conservation.
- New additions of two wetlands (Nagi and Nakti Bird Sanctuaries) made India joint third with China in terms of having the number of such 'Ramsar Sites'.
- The inclusion of these two bird sanctuaries in the Ramsar Convention has taken the total number of Ramsar sites in India to 82.
- Tamil Nadu has the maximum number of Ramsar Sites (16 sites) followed by Uttar Pradesh (10 sites).
- Currently, the highest number of such sites is in the UK (175) followed by Mexico (144).

World
Wetlands Day
2 February 2024



Wetlands and Human Wellbeing

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DID YOU KNOW?

- World Wetlands Day is celebrated every year on the 2 February.
- The theme for World Wetlands Day 2024 is "Wetlands and Human Wellbeing."
- On June 5 each year, World Environment Day (WED) is celebrated. The United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) founded the WED in 1972.
- The theme of World Environment Day 2024 is "Land Restoration, Desertification, and Drought Resilience."



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G7 SUMMIT 2024

WHY IN NEWS?

- The G7 Summit was held in Borgo Egnazia (Fasano) in Apulia, Italy on June 13-15, 2024.
- It brought together the Leaders of the seven member States, as well as the President of the European Council and the President of the European Commission representing the European Union.
- This summit marked the 50th anniversary of the group.

Key Highlights

- At the 2024 G7 Summit, during the PGI Leader Forum G7 Leaders affirmed their commitment to accelerating sustainable infrastructure investment through the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGI), the G7's flagship infrastructure and investment initiative.
- PGI was launched by the US and G7 allies in the 2022 G7 Summit in Germany and aims to mobilise USD 600 billion by 2027 to deliver infrastructure projects to developing and middle-income countries.
- The G7 nations have committed to promoting concrete infrastructure initiatives such as the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), the Lobito Corridor, the Luzon Corridor, the Middle Corridor, the EU Global Gateway, the Great Green Wall Initiative, and the Mattei Plan for Africa.

- IMEC was signed at the G20 Summit in New Delhi, in September 2023 to create a comprehensive transportation network, comprising rail, road, and sea routes, connecting India, the Middle East, and Europe.
 - Lobito Corridor extends from the port city of Lobito on the Atlantic coast of Angola through the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and into Zambia.
 - Luzon Corridor is a corridor located on the island of Luzon in the Philippines. Luzon is the largest and most populous island in the Philippines.
 - Middle Corridor: It is also referred to as the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route (TITR), a vital logistics and transportation network connecting Europe and Asia.
 - This route serves as an alternative to the traditional Northern and Southern corridors, enhancing trade and economic cooperation between the regions it traverses.
 - The Great Green Wall Initiative aimed at combating desertification and land degradation in the Sahel region of Africa.
- The G7 leaders commit to step up efforts to enhance interoperability amongst their AI governance approaches to promote greater certainty, transparency and accountability.
 - The G7 group decided to launch a mechanism to aid Ukraine, effectively offering it \$50 billion by the end of 2024.
 - The Extraordinary Revenue Acceleration Loans for Ukraine (ERA) involves granting loans to Kyiv financed by G7 countries.



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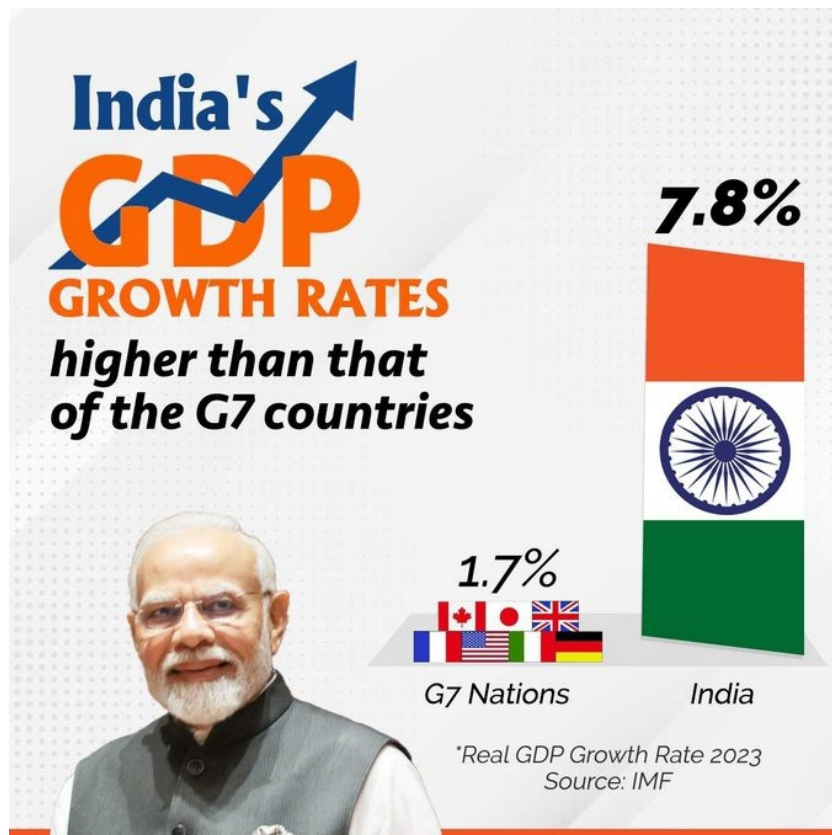


What is G7?

- The G7 is an informal forum of leading industrialised nations, which include Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States.
- Representatives of the European Union are always present at the annual meeting of the heads of state and government of the G7.
- The Group was established as a platform for economic and financial cooperation in response to the 1973 energy crisis.
- The first Summit of Heads of State and Government was held in 1975 in Rambouillet, France.
- It included France, the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Germany, Japan, and Italy.
- In 1976, with the admission of Canada, the G7 took its current configuration.
- Since 1977, representatives of the European Economic Community, now the European Union, also participate in the work of the Group. The EU does not hold the rotating presidency of the G7.
- The G7 expanded into the G8 between 1997 and 2013, with the inclusion of Russia.
- However, Russia's participation was suspended in 2014 following the illegal annexation of Crimea.
- Italy holds the presidency of the G7 in 2024.

G7 and India

- India is not a member of the G7. However, 2024 is the 11th time that India has been invited to the G7 summit and PM Modi's fifth consecutive participation at the G7 Summit.
- India's increasing economic heft puts it at the centre of major global issues while its robust democracy, which has been underlined by the recent elections, makes it an important partner for the West.
 - India is set to become the fourth largest economy in the world soon, overtaking Japan, which will make India's economy bigger than all the G7 countries except the US and Germany.
- When the West is trying to contain China economically as well as geopolitically, India's importance grows because it is seen as a counter to China.
 - India stands to gain majorly from G7 countries trying to shift their economic ties away from China to friendly countries.



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GLOBAL GENDER GAP REPORT 2024

WHY IN NEWS?

- Recently, the World Economic Forum released the 18th edition of its annual Global Gender Gap Report for 2024 benchmarks gender parity across 146 economies.

Key Findings

- The world has closed 68.5% of the gender gap, but at the current pace, it will take another 134 years — equivalent to five generations — to achieve full gender parity.
 - Since last year, the gender gap has closed by 0.1 percentage points.
- The 2024 Global Gender Gap Index shows that while no country has achieved full gender parity.
- Iceland (93.5%) is again ranked 1st and has been leading the index for 15 consecutive years.
 - It also continues to be the only economy to have closed over 90% of its gender gap.
- European economies occupy seven spots out of the global top 10.
 - In addition to Iceland, these include Finland (2nd, 87.5%), Norway (3rd, 87.5%), Sweden (5th, 81.6%), Germany (7th, 81%), Ireland (9th, 80.2%) and Spain (10th, 79.7%).
- The remaining three spots are occupied by economies from Eastern Asia and the Pacific (New Zealand, 4th, 83.5%), Latin America and the Caribbean (Nicaragua, 6th, 81.1%), and Sub-Saharan Africa (Namibia, 8th, 80.5%).
- Globally, Sudan was ranked last on the index of 146 countries, while Pakistan slipped three places to 145th.
- Europe leads with 75% of its gender gap closed, followed by Northern America (74.8%) and Latin America & Caribbean (74.2%).
 - The Middle East and North Africa region ranks last at 61.7% of its gender gap closed.
 - Southern Asia region ranks 7th out of 8 regions with a gender parity score of only 63.7%.
- Women's workforce representation lags behind men's across nearly every industry and economy at 42% overall and only 31.7% in senior leadership roles.
- Women remain underrepresented in STEM at 28.2% of that workforce versus 47.3% in non-STEM roles.
- Gender gaps exist in skills like AI, big data and cybersecurity which will be crucial for the future of work.

India's Performance

- The 2024 edition of the Global Gender Gap Index placed India at 129 out of the 146 countries it surveyed. This puts India at the 18th position from the bottom.
- Within South Asia, India ranked fifth after Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Bhutan. Pakistan ranked last in the region.
- India figured among the economies with the lowest levels of economic parity, alongside Bangladesh, Sudan, Iran, Pakistan, and Morocco.
 - All of them registered less than 30% gender parity in estimated earned income.
- India showed the best gender parity in terms of enrolment in secondary education.
- India scored well on political empowerment of women at 65th rank globally.
- In the Political Empowerment subindex, India scored within the top 10 on the head-of-state indicator.
 - However, women's representation at the federal level, in Ministerial positions (6.9%), and in Parliament (17.2%) remains low.
- With a population of more than 140 crore, India has closed 64.1% of its gender gap in 2024.
- The decline of two places from 127th last year, mainly happened due to small declines in 'Educational Attainment' and 'Political Empowerment,' parameters, while 'Economic Participation' and 'Opportunity' scores slightly improved.

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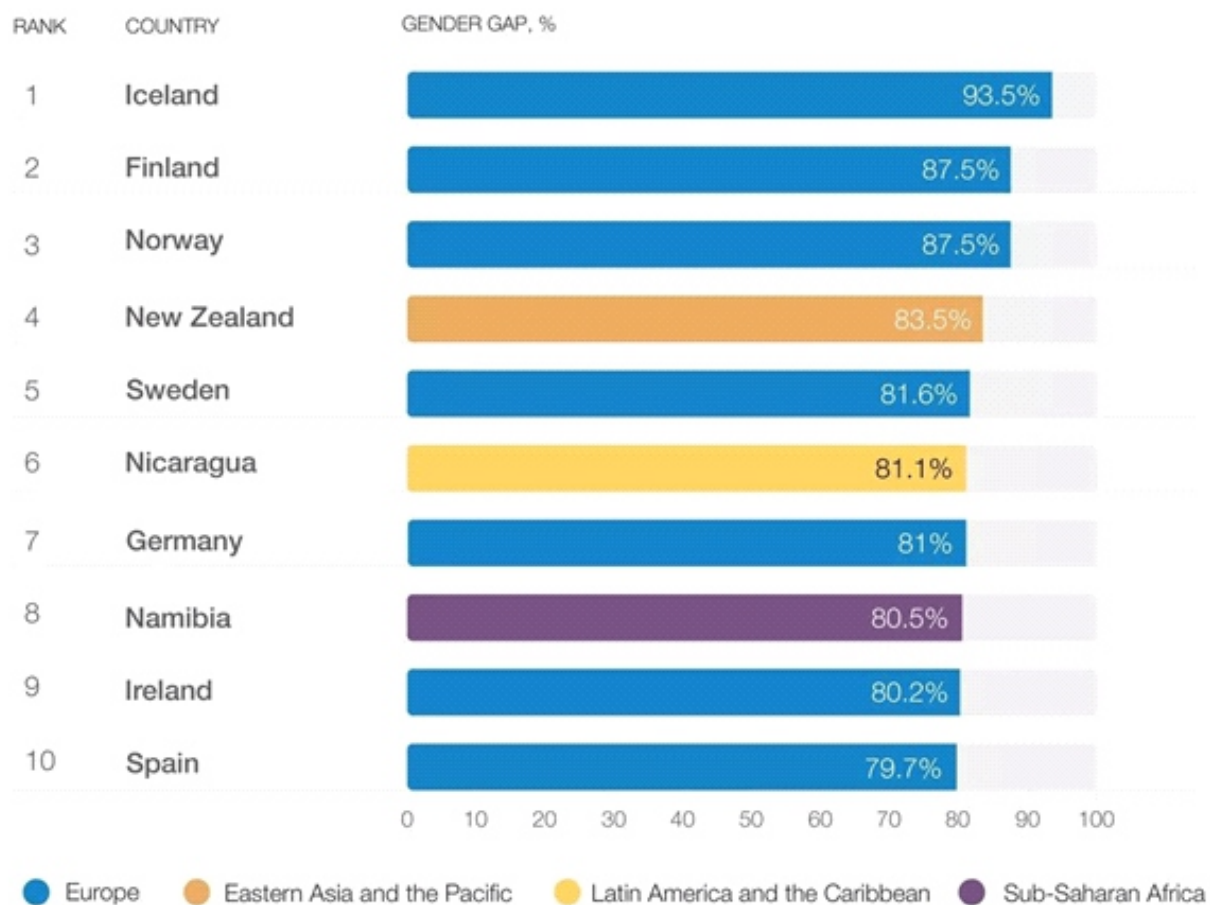
About the Global Gender Gap Index

- The Global Gender Gap Index was first introduced by the World Economic Forum in 2006 to benchmark progress towards gender parity across four dimensions: economic opportunities, education, health and political leadership.
- On each of the four sub-indices as well as on the overall index the GGG index provides scores between 0 and 1, where 1 shows full gender parity and 0 is complete imparity.

Global Gender Gap Report 2024



The Global Gender Gap Index 2024 Rankings



Source: World Economic Forum, Global Gender Gap Index 2024

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THE POWERS OF THE SPEAKER

WHY IN NEWS?

- As the 18th Lok Sabha prepares to meet, the alliance partners of the ruling party are said to be jockeying for the post of Speaker.

Constitutional Mandate

- The Constitution of India provides for the offices of the Speaker and Deputy Speaker who, according to Article 93, are to be elected "as soon as may be" after the commencement of the House.
- The Speaker is elected by a simple majority in the House.

- In the new Lok Sabha, the Speaker of the House is decided by a simple majority.
- Until her selection, the pro-tem Speaker is chosen to administer some important duties. 'Pro-tem' essentially means 'for the time being' or 'temporarily'.
- President Droupadi Murmu has appointed Bhartruhari Mahtab, a seven-term MP from Cuttack, as the pro-tem Speaker of the 18th Lok Sabha.
- The Constitution does not mention the post. However, the official 'Handbook on the Working of Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs' speaks about the 'Appointment and Swearing in of Speaker pro tem'.
- Administering oaths to the new MPs is the pro-tem Speaker's primary duty.
- After a pro tem Speaker administers the oath to new members, the Speaker is chosen to be the Presiding Officer of the House.

- The term ends with the dissolution of the House unless the Speaker resigns or is removed from office before that.
- A motion of no-confidence can be moved against the Speaker with notice of 14 days as per Article 94 of the Constitution.
- Separately, the Speaker, like any other member of the House, can face disqualification.
- There are no specific qualifications for becoming a Speaker, which means any member is entitled to be considered. However, the post of Speaker is distinct from other members of the House.
- From the placement of the Speaker's chair in the House to his having a casting vote, from effectively being in charge of the functioning of the House to having crucial constitutional functions in dealing with the disqualification of members — the Speaker is evidently perched as the Presiding Officer of Lok Sabha.
- The salary of the Speaker is drawn from the Consolidated Fund of India unlike for other MPs, which flow from a statute voted on by the House itself.

Key Powers of the Speaker

- **Conducting the House** - The conduct of government business is decided by the Speaker in consultation with the Leader of the House.
 - Prior permission of the Speaker is required for members to ask a question, or to discuss any matter
 - There are Rules and Procedure for the functioning of the House, but the Speaker has vast powers in ensuring these Rules are followed, and in choosing procedures.
 - This makes the impartiality of the Speaker a crucial check and balance for the Opposition to have its say in the House.
- **Questions & Records** - The Speaker decides the admissibility of a question raised by a member, as well as how the proceedings of the House are published.
 - The Speaker has the power to expunge, in full or in part, remarks that she may consider to be unparliamentary.
- **No-Confidence Motion** - One of the most important times when a Speaker's impartiality impacts the Opposition is when a motion of no-confidence is moved against the government.
 - In 2018, when the YSRCP and TDP gave notices for a motion of no-confidence, then Speaker Sumitra Mahajan adjourned the House several times before admitting the motion and putting it to vote.
- **Casting Vote** - Although it is rare that a Speaker is required to give her casting vote, it is a crucial function.
 - According to Article 100 of the Constitution, which talks about voting in the Houses, the Chairman of

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Rajya Sabha or Speaker of Lok Sabha, or any person acting as such, “shall not vote in the first instance, but shall have an exercise a casting vote in the case of any equality of votes”.

- Conventionally, the Speaker votes in favour of the government.
- **Constitution of Committees** - The Committees of the House are constituted by the speaker and function under the speaker's overall direction.
 - The Chairmen of all Parliamentary Committees are nominated by the Speaker.
 - Committees like the Business Advisory Committee, the General Purposes Committee and the Rules Committee, work directly under his Chairmanship.
- **Disqualification of Members** - For the Opposition, the realities of the power of the Speaker under the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution are perhaps more significant than how the House is conducted.

- The Tenth Schedule or the anti-defection law, introduced to the Constitution through the Fifty-Second (Amendment) Act, 1985, gives the Speaker of the House the power to disqualify legislators who 'defect' from a party.
- In the landmark case *Kihoto Hollohan versus Zachillhu* in 1992, the Supreme Court upheld the power vested in the Speaker and said that only the final order of the Speaker would be subject to judicial review.
- Defections can alter numbers in the House and cause a government to fall.
- If the Speaker acts in a timely manner and disqualifies such members, then the new government may not have a majority. However, a delay in deciding the disqualification petitions can vitiate the Tenth Schedule.

- In 2023, the Supreme Court in **Subhash Desai v Principal Secretary, Governor of Maharashtra Case**, directed the Maharashtra Assembly Speaker, to set a timeline for deciding pleas for the disqualification of MLAs.
 - SC directed the Maharashtra Assembly Speaker Rahul Narwekar to initiate disqualification proceedings against MLAs of the Uddhav Thackeray and Eknath Shinde factions of the Shiv Sena at the earliest. At that time, the petitions were pending for over a year and a half, allowing the Uddhav-led government to collapse.
- In **Keisham Meghachandra Singh v. The Hon'ble Speaker Manipur (2020)**, the apex Court directed the Speakers of Assemblies and Lok Sabha to decide such disqualification pleas within three months except in extraordinary circumstances.
 - Notably, it also recommended revoking the Speakers' disqualification powers and instead vesting the authority in an independent tribunal headed by former judges.
- The Supreme Court in **Shrimanth Balasaheb Patil v. Hon'ble Speaker Karnataka (2019)** sharply observed, “The constitutional responsibility endowed upon him [the Speaker] has to be scrupulously followed. His political affiliations cannot come in the way of adjudication. If the speaker is not able to disassociate from his political party and behaves contrary to the spirit of neutrality and independence, such person does not deserve to be reposed with public trust and confidence.”

SPEAKERS OF LOK SABHA

Name	Tenure	Party	Ruling Coalition
Rabi Ray	Dec 1989 – July 1991	Janata Dal	National Front
Shivraj Patil	July 1991 – May 1996	Cong	Cong
PA Sangma	May 1996 – Mar 1998	Cong	United Front
GMC Balayogi*	Mar 1998 – Oct 1999 Oct 1999 – Mar 2002	TDP	NDA
Manohar Joshi	May 2002 – June 2004	Shiv Sena	NDA
Somnath Chatterjee	June 2004 – June 2009	CPI (M)	UPA
Meira Kumar	June 2009 – June 2014	Cong	UPA
Sumitra Mahajan	June 2014 – June 2019	BJP	NDA
Om Birla	June 2019 – June 2024	BJP	NDA

*Died in office

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INDO-PACIFIC ECONOMIC FRAMEWORK FOR PROSPERITY

WHY IN NEWS?

- India attended the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF) Ministerial meeting held in Singapore on 6 June 2024.

Key Highlights

- IPEF members signed 3 agreements focused on the Clean Economy, Fair Economy, and the overarching IPEF Agreement.
- India actively participated in the signing proceedings and the ministerial deliberations. However, India did not formally sign these agreements as the domestic approval processes are still underway.
- These agreements will enter into force after at least five IPEF partners complete their internal legal procedures for ratification, acceptance or approval.

IPEF Clean Economy Agreement

- Agreement on Clean Economy intends to accelerate the efforts of IPEF partners towards energy security and transition, climate resilience and adaptation, and GHG emissions mitigation.
- This agreement will facilitate investments, concessional financing, joint collaborative projects, workforce development and Technical Assistance and Capacity Building for industries, in particular MSMEs, to further integrate Indian companies in the value chains, particularly in the Indo-Pacific region.
- These cooperative activities will be undertaken through joint collaborative actions such as Cooperative Work Programmes and the IPEF Catalytic Capital Fund.

Cooperative Work Programme (CWP)

- The IPEF partners welcomed the continued efforts to build and sustain longer-term cooperation among various groupings of interested partners on a range of climate solutions through the CWP mechanism, in furtherance of the overarching goals of the IPEF Clean Economy Agreement.
- A new CWP led by India on "e-waste urban mining" will facilitate a more sustainable e-waste management system for IPEF partners.

IPEF Catalytic Capital Fund

- The Fund was launched to support quality clean economy infrastructure projects in IPEF emerging and upper-middle-income economies.
- The Fund's founding supporters such as Australia, Japan, Korea, and the US have provided USD 33 million as an initial grant funding to catalyse USD 3.3 billion in private investment.

IPEF Fair Economy Agreement

- It aims to create a more transparent and predictable business environment, promote fair competition, efforts to improve tax transparency, development and application of technological innovations and enhance efforts against corruption.
- India highlighted a training programme in Digital Forensics & System-Driven Risk Analysis under Pillar IV Technical Assistance and Capacity Building catalogue that will be offered by India to other IPEF partners.

The IPEF Upskilling Initiative

- The IPEF Upskilling Initiative was launched in September 2022 to support sustainable and inclusive economic growth and development by providing primarily women and girls in IPEF emerging and middle-income partner countries with access to digital skills training.
- Under the initiative, 14 participating U.S. companies and the Asia Foundation provided 10.9 million upskilling opportunities in IPEF partners, primarily for women and girls, in the last 2 years of which India received 4 million of these opportunities.

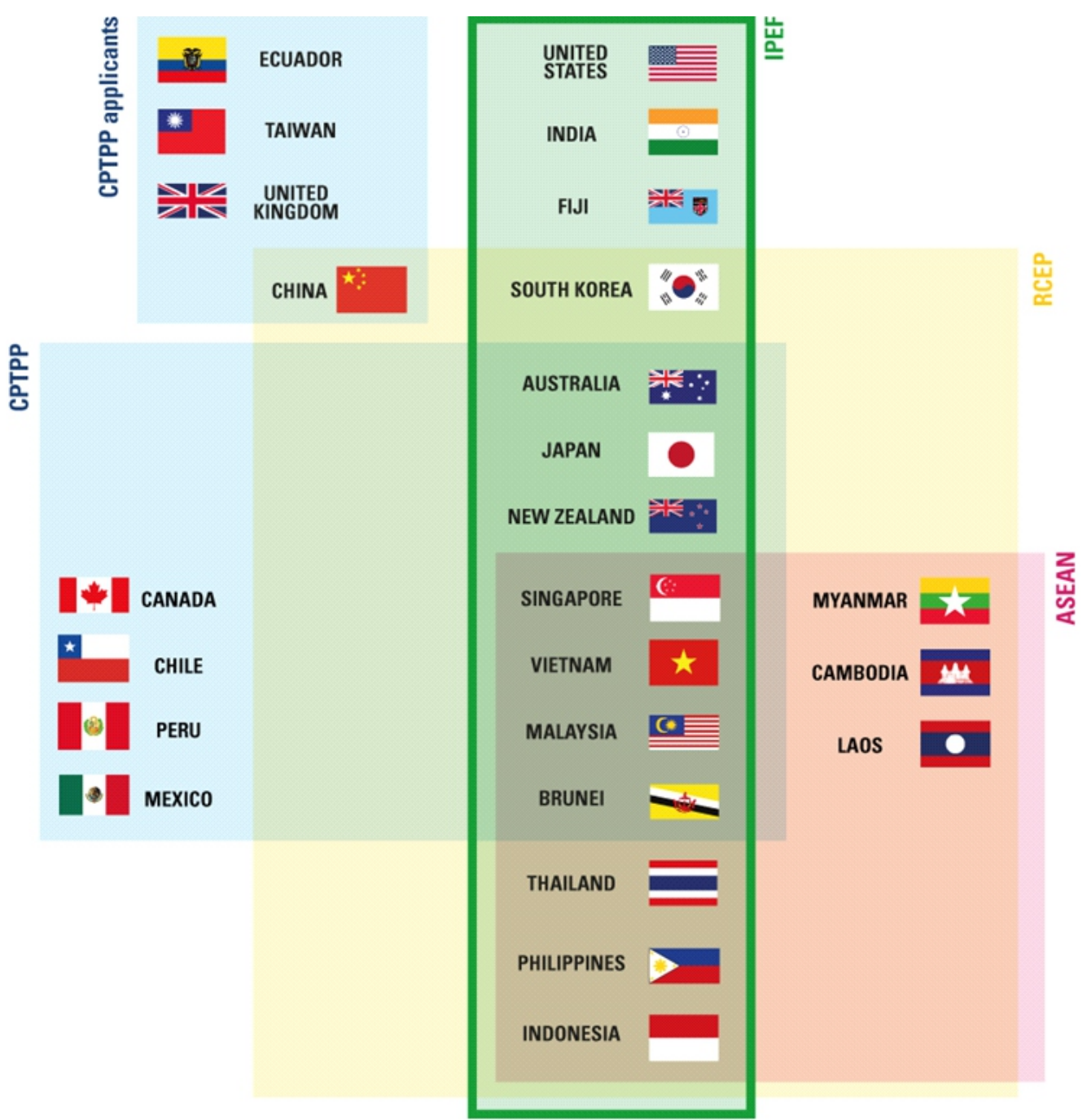
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About IPEF

- IPEF was launched on 23 May 2022 in Tokyo, Japan, comprising 14 countries – Australia, Brunei, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam and the USA.
- The IPEF seeks to strengthen economic engagement and cooperation among partner countries with the goal of advancing growth, economic stability and prosperity in the region.
- The framework is structured around four pillars relating to Trade (Pillar I); Supply Chain Resilience (Pillar II); Clean Economy (Pillar III); and Fair Economy (Pillar IV).
- India had joined Pillars II to IV of IPEF while it has maintained an observer status in Pillar I.



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RBI MOVED GOLD FROM THE UK TO INDIA

WHY IN NEWS?

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) recently transferred 100 metric tonnes of its gold from the United Kingdom to domestic vaults.
- This notable transfer is one of India's largest gold movements since 1991 when part of the gold reserves was pledged to address a foreign exchange crisis.

Key Points

- The transfer is significant because it signals a shift in the RBI's strategy for managing its gold reserves.
- There was significant speculation among market participants that recent geopolitical events, particularly the US's derecognition of Russia's foreign exchange reserves, may have influenced the decision to bring the gold back to India.
 - This raised concerns that countries might prefer to hold their gold domestically to avoid similar risks.

How much Gold does the RBI hold?

- As of March 2024, the RBI's total gold reserves are 822.10 metric tonnes, with a substantial portion stored abroad.
- In FY24, the RBI added 27.47 tonnes of gold to its reserves, raising the total from 794.63 tonnes the previous year.
- This move aligns with a broader strategy to diversify foreign exchange reserves and hedge against inflation and currency volatility.
- Economists suggest that this aggressive buying is partly due to declining confidence in dollar assets among central banks globally.
- The recent transfer has increased the locally stored quantity to over 408 metric tonnes, resulting in an almost even split between local and foreign holdings.
- According to the central bank's annual report for FY24, over 308 metric tonnes of gold in India, and another 100.28 tonnes are held locally as an asset of the banking department.
- Of the total gold reserves, 413.79 metric tonnes are held abroad.
- At present, the gold held locally is stored at high-security vaults and facilities in Mumbai and Nagpur.

- During the 1990-91 foreign exchange crisis, India pledged part of its gold reserves to the Bank of England to secure a \$405 million loan.
- Although the loan was repaid by November 1991, the RBI chose to keep the gold in the UK for logistical reasons.
- Gold stored abroad can be easily used for trading, entering into swaps, and earning returns. The RBI also buys gold from international markets, and storing it overseas facilitates these transactions.

What can the RBI do with the gold?

- In consultation with the government, the RBI can use the gold in the domestic market to manage gold prices, especially given the high domestic demand for investment products like gold exchange-traded funds.
- This approach ensures the gold remains within the country and supports the development of a local bullion market without promoting wasteful consumption.
- The RBI buys gold as a hedge against inflation and currency volatility and to diversify its foreign exchange reserves.
- According to the World Gold Council, RBI is among the top five central banks that are buying gold.
- In 2009, India bought 200 tonnes of gold from the International Monetary Fund, after which it has been buying the precious commodity from the secondary market as part of its foreign exchange asset diversification efforts.





QS WORLD UNIVERSITY RANKING 2025

WHY IN NEWS?

- Quacquarelli Symonds released QS World Rankings 2025 on June 4, 2024.

Global Rankings

- Globally, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) retained the 'best institute in the world' position for the 13th time this year.
- MIT is followed by UK's Imperial College London which has improved its ranks from sixth to second this time.
- The third rank is jointly achieved by Harvard University which climbed one rank, and University of Oxford which was at the third rank last year too.
- The University of Cambridge, however, has fallen from the second rank last year to fifth this time.
- Stanford University, too, fell from fifth in the 2024 rankings to sixth in the 2025 QS ranking.
- ETH Zurich – Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, National University of Singapore (NUS), and UCL have retained their seventh, eighth and ninth spots respectively.
 - Additionally, ETH Zurich has been named Continental Europe's top institution for seventeen consecutive years.
 - The National University of Singapore (NUS) moved up three positions from last year's 11th rank, to become the first Asian university to break into the top 10 club.
- Interestingly, the California Institute of Technology (Caltech) has climbed from 15th last year to 10th spot this time.

India's Performance

- In the 2025 edition of the rankings, with 46 universities, the Indian Higher Education system is the seventh most represented globally and the third in Asia, trailing only Japan (49 universities) and China (71 universities).
 - A total of 61 per cent of Indian universities have risen in rank this time, while 24 per cent have maintained their positions.
- The Indian Institute of Technology Bombay (IIT-B) has climbed from 149 in 2024 to 118 in the 2025 rankings.
- IIT Bombay is followed by IIT Delhi (150) and the Indian Institute of Science –IISc, Bengaluru (211) with the two institutes ranked second and third in India, respectively.
- The Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur -IIT-KGP (222) has achieved the fourth spot.
- IIT KGP is followed by IIT Madras (227) and IIT Kanpur (263) as fifth and sixth position, respectively.
- The University of Delhi (328) has improved its rank from ninth last year to seventh this time.
- The Indian Institute of Technology Roorkee –IITR (335), Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati –IITG (344) and Anna University (383) have achieved the 8th, 9th and 10th ranks, respectively.
- This year, Symbiosis International (Deemed University) is a new entry in the top 20 (16th) as it found a place in the 641-650 rank of the 2025 QS Ranking.

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Top 10 universities in the world ST

NUS has retained its top 10 spot in the QS World University Rankings, while NTU has re-entered the top 20.



2025 rank	2024 rank	University	Location
1	1	Massachusetts Institute of Technology	US
2	6	Imperial College London	Britain
3	3	University of Oxford	Britain
4	4	Harvard University	US
5	2	University of Cambridge	Britain
6	5	Stanford University	US
7	7	ETH Zurich	Switzerland
8	8	National University of Singapore	Singapore
9	9	University College London	Britain
10	15	California Institute of Technology	US

Source: QS WORLD UNIVERSITY RANKINGS 2025

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QUICK FACTS

**CONTEMPORARY EVENTS OF
SIGNIFICANCE FROM INDIA
AND THE WORLD**



1. Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 1 June 2024 concluded his 45-hour meditation at the **Vivekananda Rock Memorial in Tamil Nadu's Kannyakumari** and paid floral tributes to Tamil saint poet Thiruvalluvar. The Prime Minister was on a spiritual sojourn from May 30 evening to June 1 evening, for nearly 45 hours. This is the Southernmost tip of India. Further, this is the place where India's Eastern and Western coastlines meet. It is also the meeting point of the Indian Ocean, Bay of Bengal and Arabian Sea.
2. The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has developed Computational Fluid Dynamics (CFD) software named **Parallel RANS Solver for Aerospace Vehicle Aero-thermo-dynamic Analysis (PraVaHa)**. This software was developed in ISRO's Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC). It can simulate external and internal flows on launch vehicles, and winged and non-winged re-entry vehicles.
3. The **Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)** and the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) have jointly developed a "**Unified India Organic**" logo to replace the India Organic and Jaivik Bharat logos.
4. **Centre for Development of Telematics (C-DOT)**, the premier Telecom R&D centre of the Government of India, was awarded **UN's WSIS 2024 "Champion" Award** for the project "Mobile-Enabled Disaster Resilience through Cell Broadcast Emergency Alerting" category. The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS)+20 Forum 2024 was conducted by the International Telecom Union (ITU).
5. The number of **high net-worth individuals (HNWI)** in India increased by 12.2% in 2023 vs 2022, bringing the total number of HNWI population to 3.589 million, as per The Capgemini Research Institute's World Wealth Report 2024. Among the best performers in the APAC region were India and Australia, which recorded HNWI wealth growth of 12.4% and 7.9%, and HNWI population growth of 12.2% and 7.8%, respectively.
6. Recently, **Coromandel International** (an agriculture solutions provider) opened a **nano-fertiliser plant at its Kakinada complex in Andhra Pradesh**. The nano fertilisers (such as Nano DAP and Nano urea) ensure optimal nutrient delivery and absorption by the plants, potentially replacing conventional fertilisers and increasing crop yield.
7. **India** is the **world's second-largest** source of nitrous oxide (N₂O), a greenhouse gas that heats up the atmosphere far more than carbon dioxide. Nearly 11% of such global man-made emissions in 2020 were from India, topped only by **China** at 16%. The major source of these emissions comes from fertiliser usage, according to a global assessment of N₂O emissions published in the journal Earth System Science Data recently.
8. The **World Bank** on June 11 predicted that India is set to remain the fastest-growing major economy globally, though its growth rate is expected to slow. The June '**Global Economic Prospects**' report maintained the GDP growth forecast for India at 6.6 per cent for FY25.
9. The **Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE)** organised '**Global Wind Day**' on **15 June 2024** with the theme of "Pawan Urja: Powering the Future of India". India has a cumulative installed wind power capacity of 46.4 GW by May 2024 (4th largest in the world) after China, the US and Germany. Gujarat, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu are leading wind-energy-producing states in India.
10. Solar Industries, based in Nagpur, has delivered the first batch of indigenously developed **Nagastra-1 Loitering Munitions to the Indian Army**. The Nagastra-1 is a UAV-based loitering munition designed to act as an aerial ambush system. Its primary function is to hover above targets and execute precision strikes with GPS-enabled accuracy, achieving a remarkable precision of 2 meters.
11. **Lieutenant General Upendra Dwivedi** has been appointed the **new Chief of Army Staff** and will take over his appointment on June 30. He would be succeeding Gen Manoj Pande, who is set to retire on June 30. Lt. Gen Dwivedi strongly supports the infusion of new technology into operations and has extensive experience in operations on both the China and Pakistan borders.
12. **Indian Institute of Technology Madras** and **NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL)** researchers are studying **multi-drug resistant pathogens** on the International Space Station (ISS), which could have key applications on Earth as well for the health of astronauts.
13. **Visakhapatnam Port Authority (VPA)** authorities recently informed that the port secured **20th position** with an index point of 62.29, and **19th position in the Container Port Performance Index**, in the global rankings 2023. The port climbed to 19th position from the 122nd place in 2022, they added.





14. The **Indian Army** launched '**Vidyut Rakshak**' - an Internet of Things-enabled integrated generator monitoring, protection and control system. The Internet of Things (IoT) is a network of interrelated devices that connect and exchange data with other IoT devices and the cloud. The Indian Army is observing **2024 as the 'Year of Technology Absorption'**.
15. **Sub Lieutenant Anamika B. Rajeev** became the **Indian Navy's first woman helicopter pilot**. In another feat, **Lt Jamyang Tsewang**, the **first commissioned naval officer from Ladakh**, also successfully graduated as a qualified helicopter pilot. In 2018, flying officer Avani Chaturvedi of the Indian Air Force scripted history by becoming the first Indian woman to fly a fighter aircraft solo. She flew a MiG-21 Bison in her first solo flight.
16. **India's foreign exchange reserves** reached a **record \$651.5 billion as of May 31, 2024**, bolstered by robust services exports and strong remittances. RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das highlighted the resilience of India's external sector. The rise in global capability centers and consistent foreign portfolio investments have also strengthened the economy's external financing position.
17. **ISRO**, on the occasion of World Environment Day, provided details about its collaborative endeavour with the **French national space agency CNES** for the upcoming **Thermal Infrared Imaging Satellite for High-resolution Natural Resource Assessment (TRISHNA) mission**. TRISHNA is engineered to deliver high spatial and high temporal resolution monitoring of earth's surface temperature, emissivity, and biophysical and radiation variables for surface energy budgeting at regional to global scale.
18. The **Supreme Court** has reconstituted its **Gender Sensitisation and Internal Complaints Committee**, chaired by top court judge **Hima Kohli**, with members including Justice B V Nagarathna, Sukhda Pritam, Meenakshi Arora, and others.



Sub Lieutenant (SLt) Anamika B Rajeev has made history by becoming the Indian Navy's first woman naval helicopter pilot.



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QUICK FACTS

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS



1. The **KAZA 2024 Heads of State Summit** was concluded in the Zambian resort town of Livingstone with leaders of the five-member countries agreed to argue their case for lifting the ban on ivory trade at the 20th meeting of the Conference of Parties (CoP20) of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) due next year in Geneva, Switzerland. KAZA-TFCA spans across five southern African nations namely, Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia, and Zimbabwe along the Okavango and Zambezi river basins.
2. **World Environment Day** is celebrated on **5 June** every year. Led by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and held annually since 1973, it has grown to be the largest global platform for environmental outreach. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia hosted World Environment Day 2024 with a focus on land restoration, desertification and drought resilience. The theme for 2024 is "**Land Restoration, Desertification and Drought Resilience.**" Year 2024 also marks the 30th anniversary of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).
3. **India** has become chair of the regional grouping **Colombo Process** for the first time since its inception in **2003**. The Colombo Process is a regional consultative forum comprising 12 member states of Asia. The 12 member states include Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Vietnam.
4. Recently, an **International Symposium on "Safe Food for a Better Life"**, jointly organised by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (**FAO**) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (**IAEA**) emphasised the importance of nuclear technologies for measuring, managing and controlling food safety.
5. **The Netherlands** has emerged as **India's third largest export destination** after the US and UAE during 2023-24, even as the country's merchandise shipments dipped by over 3 per cent, according to the commerce ministry data. The Netherlands has taken over major destinations such as the UK, Hong Kong, Bangladesh and Germany.
6. **Australia** will allow non-citizens to join its armed forces as the sparsely populated nation struggles to meet recruitment targets. Citizens from Britain, Canada, New Zealand and the United States are being favoured. Australia has a coastline that would stretch one-and-a-bit times around the Earth, but a population of just 26 million. The Australian Defence Forces can today count on about 90,000 personnel, including reservists, according to the Australian Strategic Policy Institute.
7. The **Kenyan government** has declared war on a bird species of Indian origin, announcing an action plan to eliminate a million of them by the end of **2024**. This decision stems from the birds' significant negative impact on local ecosystems and their nuisance to the public, particularly in the Kenyan coastal region.
8. **Pakistan, Somalia, Denmark, Greece and Panama** were recently elected as non-permanent members of the UN Security Council for a two-year term beginning in 2025. The five members were elected by a secret ballot in the UN General Assembly for a 2-year term starting on January 1, 2025, until December 31, 2026. The new members will replace outgoing countries such as Mozambique, Japan, Ecuador, Malta, and Switzerland.
9. The **United Nations** announced that **2025** will be designated the '**International Year of Quantum Science and Technology**'. The proclamation is the result of a resolution led by Mexico in May 2023, which was adopted by almost 60 countries. Also, the year 2025 marks a century since German physicist Werner Heisenberg published a paper laying the foundation of modern quantum mechanics. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for physics in 1932 for the creation of quantum mechanics.
10. **South Korea, India, the United States, Japan, and the European Union (EU)** have come together to launch a **Biopharmaceutical Alliance** to put joint efforts into building a resilient supply chain in the biopharmaceutical sector. The inaugural meeting took place in San Diego, California during the Bio International Convention 2024. The alliance was launched in response to the drug supply shortages experienced during the Covid-19 pandemic.
11. Recently, **BRICS foreign ministers** held their first meeting since the BRICS was expanded to add Egypt, Iran, UAE, Saudi Arabia and Ethiopia in 2023. They have joined the BRICS with effect from 1st January 2024.
12. The **European Commission (EC)** has removed **Tanzania** from the list of countries eligible for its 18 million Euro conservation grant to be launched in East Africa as part of its **NaturAfrica initiative**. The Tanzanian Government has been

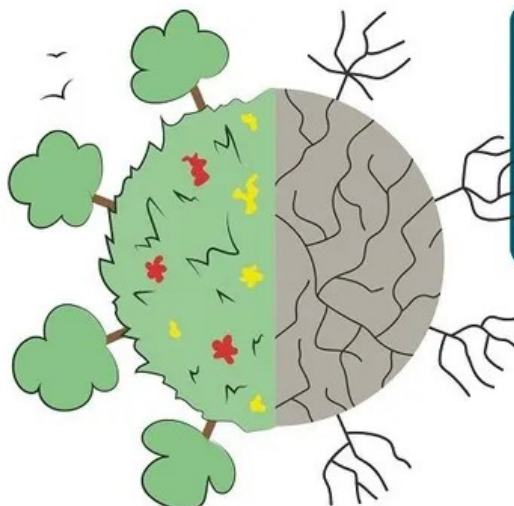




- systematically targeting Maasai communities, using conservation and tourism development as a pretext to evict people from their lands. The semi-nomadic pastoralist group has been targeted by the government in order to remove them from their traditional lands in and around Loliondo in the iconic Ngorongoro Conservation Area, a UNESCO World Heritage site in the northern part of the country.
13. **NPCI International Payments Limited (NIPL)** and the Central Reserve Bank of Peru (**BCRP**) have announced a partnership to enable the deployment of a UPI-like real-time payments system in **Peru**. This collaboration marks a significant milestone, making Peru the first country in South America to adopt the globally renowned Unified Payment Interface (UPI) technology—a symbol of India's pioneering excellence in digital payments.
 14. A 59-year-old **Russian cosmonaut - Oleg Kononenko** has become the **first person to spend 1,000 days in space**. Oleg Kononenko achieved the milestone by having five journeys to the International Space Station dating back to 2008. His current trip to the ISS began September 15, 2023, when he launched alongside NASA astronaut Loral O'Hara and compatriot Nikolai Chub. Kononenko first took the cumulative space-time record in February 2024, when he surpassed the total of 878 days, 11 hours, 29 minutes, and 48 seconds set by fellow Russian Gennady Padalka in 2015. If Kononenko's mission ends as scheduled on September 23, 2024, he will have spent a total of 1,110 days in orbit.
 15. **Slovenia recognized a Palestinian state** on June 4 after its parliament voted overwhelmingly in favour of the move, following in the recent steps of three other European countries - Ireland, Spain and Norway. Previously, only seven members of the 27-nation European Union officially recognized a Palestinian state. Five of them are former East bloc countries that announced recognition in 1988, as did Cyprus, before joining the EU. Sweden's recognition came in 2014.
 16. **The Maldives** has banned the entry of visitors with Israeli passports amid growing public anger over its ongoing war in Gaza. President Dr Mohamed Muizzu also announced a national fundraising campaign in support of Palestinians and to conduct a nationwide rally -- "Maldivians in Solidarity with Palestine".
 17. **Claudia Sheinbaum** has been elected as **Mexico's first female president** in the country's 200-year history. Ms Sheinbaum will replace her mentor, outgoing President Andrés Manuel López Obrador, on 1 October.

Theme 2024

Land restoration, desertification & drought resilience



A global call to highlight that a toxic cocktail of pollution, climate chaos, and biodiversity decimation is turning healthy lands into deserts and thriving ecosystems into dead zones worldwide.

World Environment Day
JUNE 5

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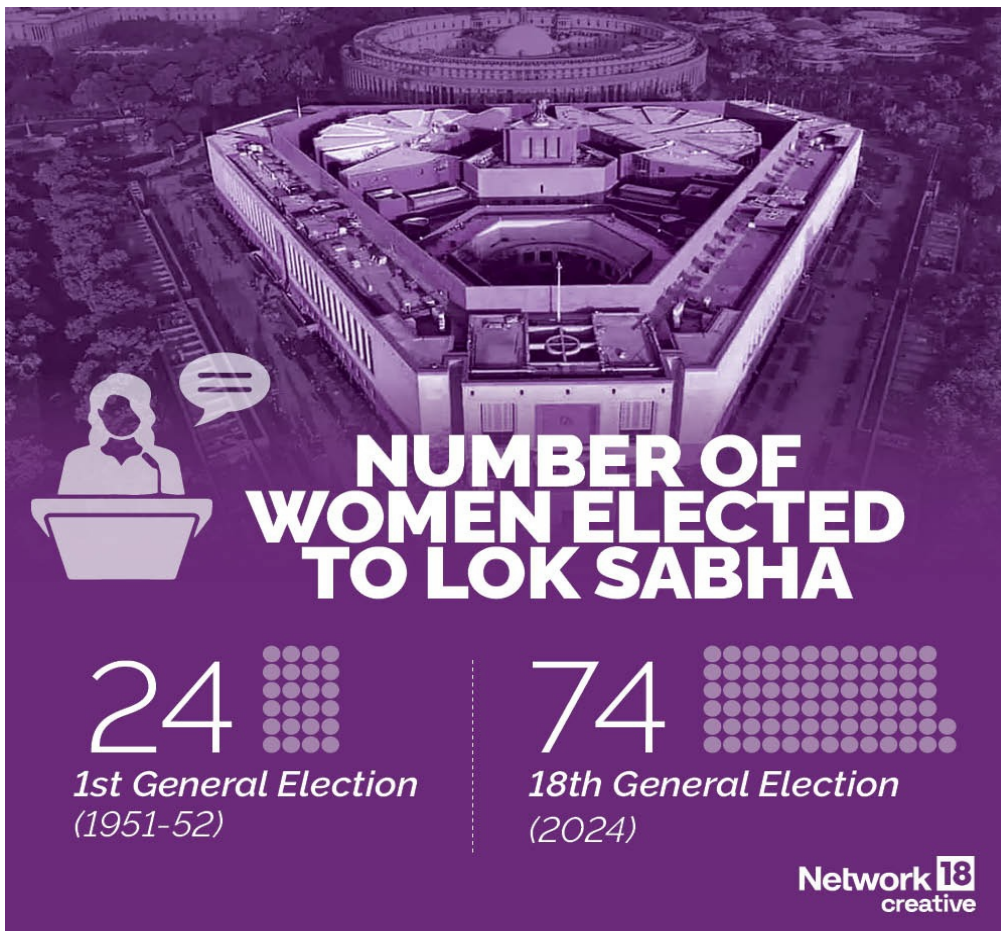


QUICK FACTS

**ARTS & CULTURE AND HISTORICAL
EVENTS OF CONTINUING SIGNIFICANCE**



1. **Ajrakh**, the widely known craft of resist-dyeing from **Kutch**, got a Geographical Indication (GI) tag, a mark of authenticity that provides legal protection to arts from specific geographical regions. While this is cause for celebration, another lesser-known craft — bela block printing — from the same region, continues to languish in obscurity.
2. **Priyanka Jarkiholi** from Chikkodi became the **youngest tribal woman to enter Parliament** from an unreserved seat in Karnataka since Independence. Priyanka Jarkiholi will also be among the youngest persons to ever go to Parliament. She is aged 27 years, 1 month, 18 days old as of June 4. The minimum age for contesting Parliament polls is 25 years. **Sagar Khandre**, another victorious Congress nominee from **Bidar**, is even younger. He is aged 26 years, 5 months, 24 days.
3. **Poet and playwright Siddhalinga Pattanashetti** has been chosen for the prestigious **Gudleppa Hallikeri Award for 2024** by the Gudleppa Hallikeri Memorial Foundation, Hosaritti (Haveri District). Prof. Pattanashetti will be the 19th recipient of the award.
4. The **World Health Organization (WHO)** has conferred the **National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS)**, Bengaluru, the country's premier mental health institution, with the **Nelson Mandela Award for Health Promotion for 2024**. The Nelson Mandela Award for Health Promotion, established by WHO in 2019, recognises individuals, institutions and/or governmental or non-governmental organisations that have demonstrated remarkable contributions to health promotion.
5. **Jaya Jayahe Telangana** has been declared as the **State song**. The song, in two versions — the short one spanning two-and-a-half minutes and the full version of 13.3 minutes — has been approved as the State song. Jaya Jayahe Telangana, the song written two decades ago inspired the struggle for separate statehood and it has been approved as the State song without any changes. **Penned by Andesri**, the music for the song has been composed by Oscar award winner **M.M. Keeravani**.



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TEST ZONE



PASSAGE - 1

Leaders of seven neighbouring countries attended the swearing-in of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Cabinet at the Rashtrapati Bhavan forecourt in Delhi on Sunday. After the ceremony, all seven leaders attended the ceremonial banquet hosted by President Droupadi Murmu, and met with Mr. Modi together on Sunday evening.

"I am grateful to all the foreign dignitaries who joined the swearing in ceremony. India will always work closely with our valued partners in pursuit of human progress," PM Modi wrote on social media platform 'X' after the ceremony. A press release by the Ministry of External Affairs said that during his discussion with the seven leaders, Mr. Modi had called for "deeper people-to-people ties and connectivity in the region", and added that India would continue to amplify the "voice of the Global South in the international arena".

Braving sub-40 degrees evening temperatures, the leaders were seated side by side in the front row of the Forecourt for the entire ceremony that went on for more than two and a half hours. This is the first visit to India by Mr. Muizzu and Ms. Hasina after they were elected in November 2023 and January 2024 respectively. The inclusion of Mr. Muizzu, who met with Mr. Modi in December last year, was significant as ties between Delhi and Male have been strained over Mr. Muizzu's insistence on the withdrawal of Indian troops stationed in the southern atolls to maintain aircraft for the past decade. The final batch of troops were withdrawn in May this year, and Mr. Muizzu's acceptance of the invitation indicates a reset in ties.

[Extracted, with edits and revisions, from: "Seven leaders from India's neighbourhood watch swearing-in event together", by Suhasini Haidar, The Hindu]

Q.1 What new area in the Parliament House premises houses statues of 15 freedom fighters and icons of Indian history?

- A** Sengol
- B** Prerna Sthal
- C** Shilp Deerga
- D** Prarthana Sthal

Q.2 Which Article of the Indian constitution provides that there shall be a Council of Ministers headed by the Prime Minister to aid and advise the President?

- A** 72
- B** 67
- C** 74
- D** 49

Q.3 Asia's first loco pilot, _____, also attended the oath-taking ceremony of Narendra Modi.

- A** Aishwarya S Menon
- B** Anamika B. Rajeev
- C** Gurkirat Rajput
- D** Surekha Yadav

Q.4 The leaders of the regional grouping _____ attended Modi's first swearing ceremony in 2014.

- A** SAARC
- B** BIMSTEC
- C** ASEAN
- D** African Union

Q.5 Which of the following leaders did not attend PM Modi's third swearing ceremony in 2024?

- A** Ranil Wickremesinghe
- B** Sheikh Hasina
- C** Sher Bahadur Deuba
- D** Mohammad Muizzu

Q.1 (B) Q.2 (C) Q.3 (D) Q.4 (A) Q.5 (C)

Answers

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PASSAGE - 2

Two of Bihar's wetlands have been added to the global list of wetlands of international importance under the Ramsar Convention, taking the total number of highly recognised waterlogged ecosystems in the country to [1], a top official said. Both sites were declared as Wetlands of International importance on the occasion of World Environment Day on June 5.

The Nakti Bird Sanctuary was developed primarily for irrigation through the construction of Nakti Dam. Since the dam's construction, the wetland and its surrounding area have provided habitat for over 150 species of birds, mammals, fish, aquatic plants, reptiles and amphibians. They include globally threatened species, including the endangered Indian elephant (*Elephas maximus indicus*) and a vulnerable native catfish (*Wallago attu*).

The Nagi Bird Sanctuary was created following the damming of the Nagi River, which enabled the gradual formation of water bodies with clear water and aquatic vegetation.

Due to its importance for migratory bird species, the Site was recognized locally as a Bird Sanctuary in 1984, and internationally as an Important Bird and Biodiversity Area (IBA) by BirdLife International," the statement said. Overall, the wetland and its fringes provide habitat for over 75 bird species, 33 fish, and 12 aquatic plants. Notably, the site hosts one of the largest congregations of bar-headed geese (*Anser indicus*) on the Indo-Gangetic plain, it added.

[Extracted, with edits and revisions, from: "Two bird sanctuaries of Bihar added to Ramsar list", The Indian Express]

Q.1 Which number has been replaced with '[1]' in the passage above?

- | | |
|-------------|-------------|
| A 83 | C 81 |
| B 82 | D 80 |

Q.2 What is the theme of the 2024 World Environment Day?

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| A #OnlyOneEarth | C Land Restoration, Desertification and Drought Resilience |
| B #BeatPlasticPollution | D Ecosystem Restoration |

Q.3 With the inclusion of the Nakti and Nagi Bird Sanctuaries to the Ramsar list, Bihar has now _____ Ramsar Sites.

- | | |
|----------------|---------------|
| A Two | C Four |
| B Three | D Five |

Q.4 Additions of two wetlands (Nagi and Nakti Bird Sanctuaries) made India joint third with _____ in terms of having the number of such 'Ramsar Sites'.

- | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------|
| A Brazil | C Mexico |
| B United Kingdom | D China |

Q.5 World Wetlands Day is celebrated every year on –

- | | |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| A 2 February | C 5 February |
| B 2 March | D 5 March |

Q.1 (A) Q.2 (C) Q.3 (B) Q.4 (D) Q.5 (A)

Answers

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PASSAGE - 3

Of the 30 Union ministers in the newly formed Indian cabinet, only two are women. Overall, the number of ministers in the central council has reduced from 10 in the previous government to seven. This disparity is unfortunate but not surprising, considering that the country has one of the largest gender gaps in the world, according to the Global Gender Gap Report 2024.

In the 18th installment of the analysis, India ranked the third-lowest among the South Asian economies, faring worse than Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bhutan. The low representation of women in the current cabinet is despite the fact that the country had the best rank (65) in the 'Political Empowerment' parameter. In the other categories of the assessment, the gender gap was among the largest in India. The country's ranks among 146 economies in the other three categories were Economic Participation and Opportunity 142, Health and Survival 142 and Educational Attainment 112.

In 2012, India's economic parity peaked at 46 per cent. Although the country has moved towards closing the gender gap in this category in the last four editions, it will need a 6.2 percentage point improvement from the latest score to reach the high of 2012, according to the authors. "Achieving that objective will be possible through bridging gender gaps in estimated earned income (28.6 per cent); legislative, senior officials, and management roles (14.4 per cent); labour-force participation rate (45.9 per cent); and professional and technical workers (49.4 per cent)," they added.

[Extracted, with edits and revisions, from: "Gender Gap Report 2024: India fares worse than Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan; scores low in political parity indices", by Preetha Banerjee, DownToEarth]

Q.1 What is India's ranking in the Global Gender Gap Report 2024?

- | | |
|--------------|--------------|
| A 127 | C 129 |
| B 135 | D 137 |

Q.2 _____ released the 18th edition of the Global Gender Gap Report for 2024.

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| A United Nations Economic and Social Council | C International Monetary Fund |
| B World Bank | D World Economic Forum |

Q.3 Which country secured the first rank in the Global Gender Gap Report for 2024?

- | | |
|------------------|-----------------|
| A Finland | C Norway |
| B Iceland | D Sweden |

Q.4 Globally, _____ was ranked last on the index of 146 countries, while Pakistan slipped three places to 145th.

- | | |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| A Sudan | C Syria |
| B Afghanistan | D North Korea |

Q.5 India has elected _____ women MPs to Lok Sabha this year, four fewer than in 2019 and 52 more than in India's first elections in 1952.

- | | |
|-------------|-------------|
| A 70 | C 74 |
| B 82 | D 80 |

Q.1 (C) Q.2 (D) Q.3 (B) Q.4 (A) Q.5 (C)

Answers

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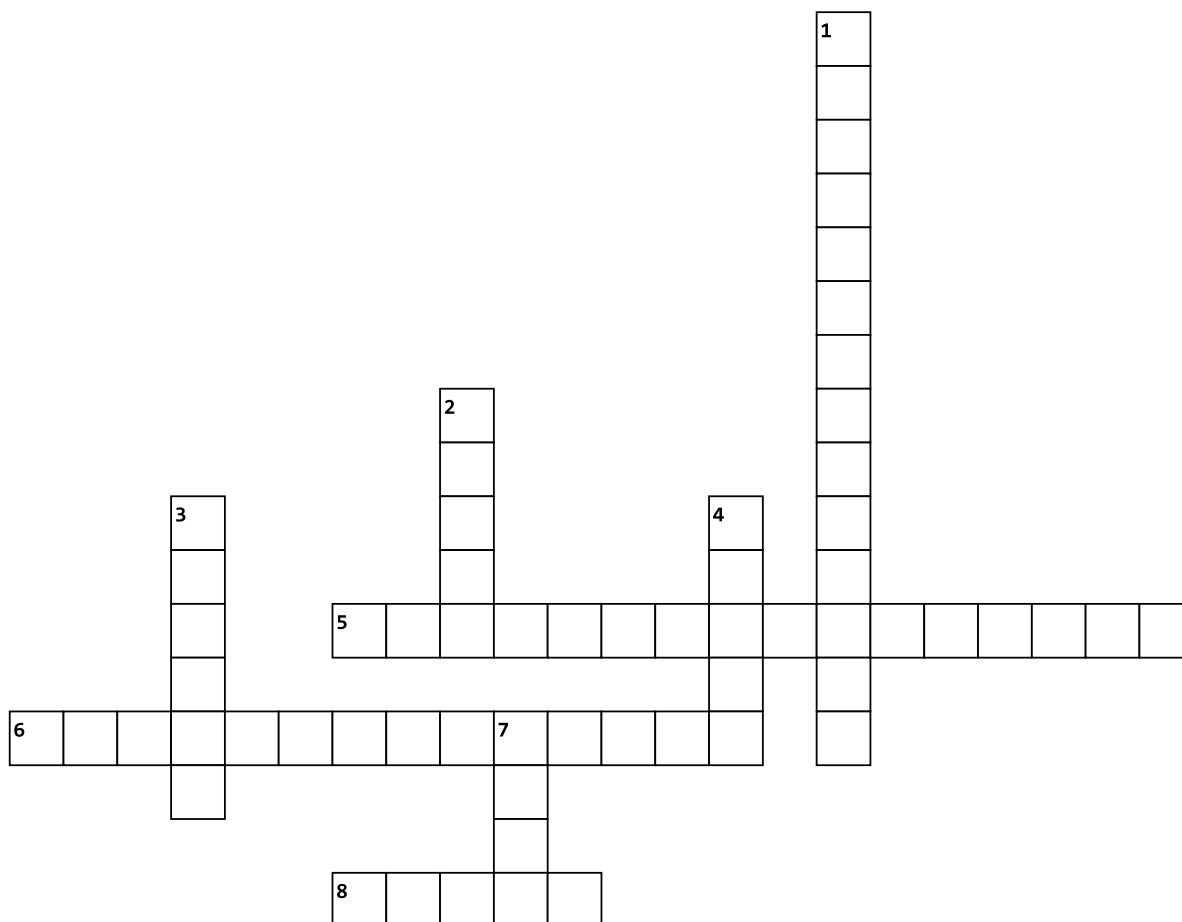
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CROSSWORD CORNER



CROSSWORD - 1



Across

5. Mexico's first female president
6. Appointed the new Chief of Army Staff
8. Winner of UN's WSIS 2024 "Champion" Award

Down

1. Indian Navy's first woman helicopter pilot
2. World's second-largest source of nitrous oxide
3. Global Wind Day
4. Developed a "Unified India Organic" logo
7. Developed Computational Fluid Dynamics software named PraVaHa

Answers

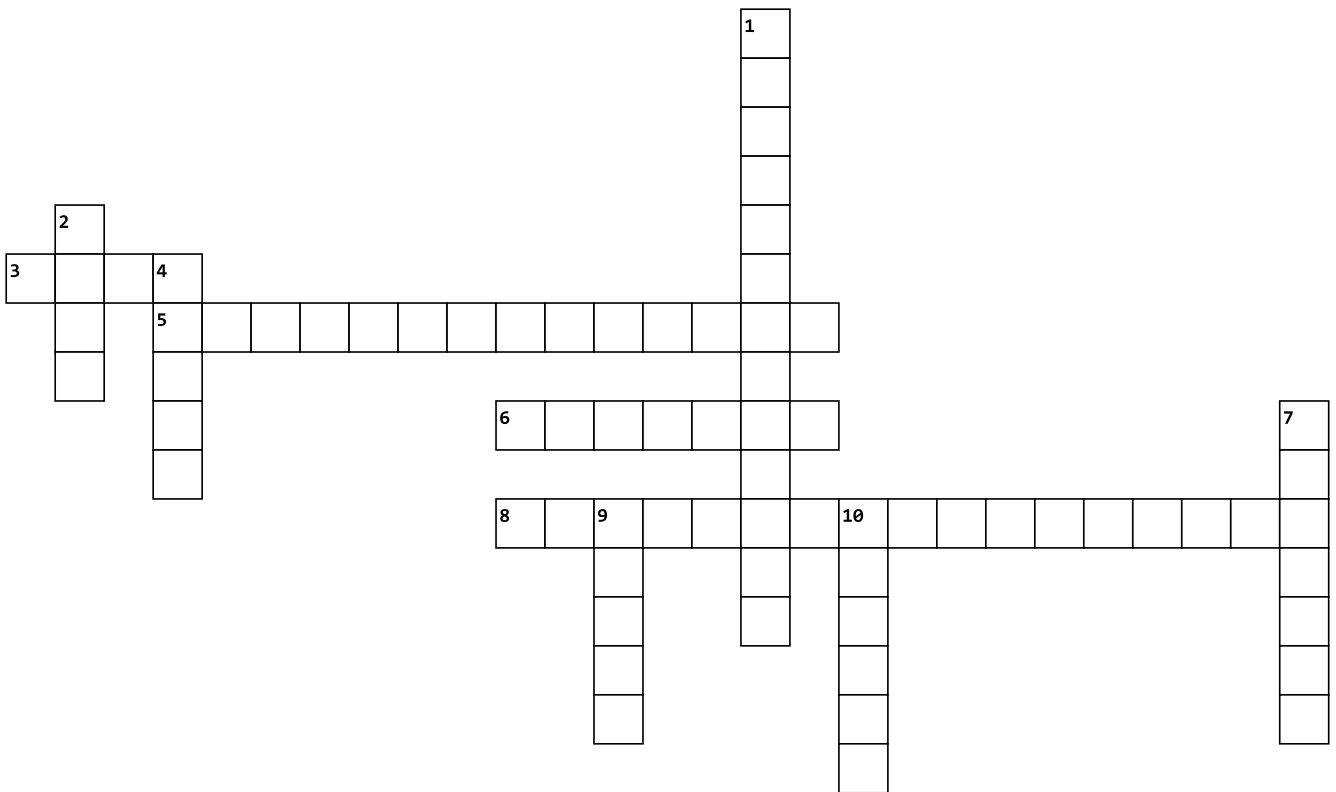
8	C-DOT	4	FSSAI
7	ISRO	3	15June
6	UpendraDwivedi	2	India
5	ClaudiaSheinbaum	1	AnamikaBrajeev

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CROSSWORD - 2



Across

3. International Year of Quantum Science and Technology
5. First commissioned naval officer from Ladakh
6. Winner of Nelson Mandela Award for Health Promotion for 2024
8. Youngest tribal woman to enter Parliament

Down

1. Became the first person to spend 1,000 days in space
2. 'Year of Technology Absorption' observing by the Indian Army
4. World Environment Day
7. Joint mission of ISRO and French national space agency CNES
9. Became chair of the Colombo Process in 2024
10. Craft of resist-dyeing from Kutch

Answers

10	Ajrakh	5	JamyangTsewang
9	India	4	Slune
8	Priyankajarkiholi	3	2025
7	TRISHNA	2	2024
6	NIMHANS	1	OlegKononenko

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