

AS ITS CHANGING

Typical Viewpoint 2025



IMPULSE

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04.10.2025

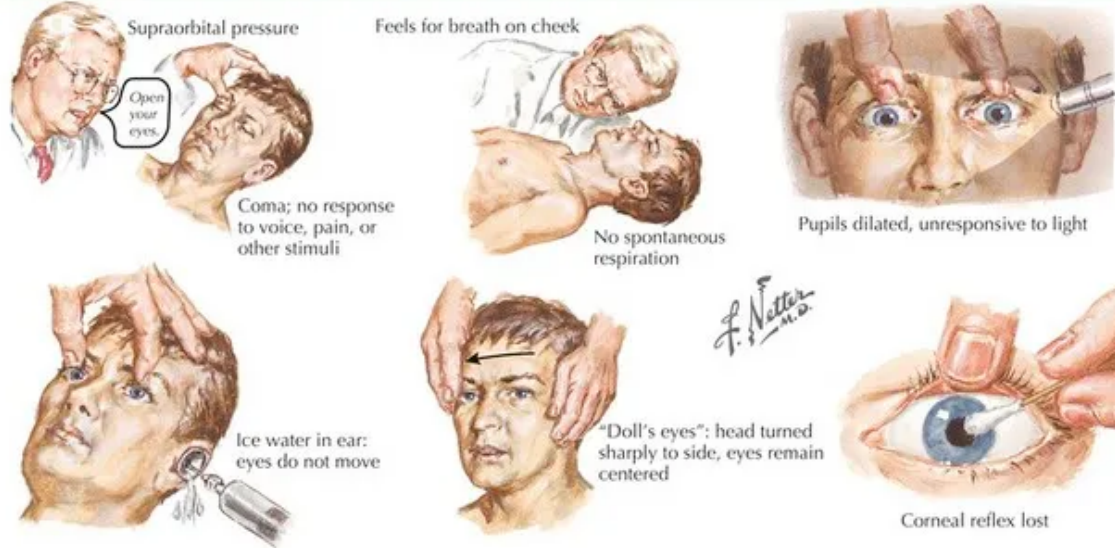
AIIMS study: 6 in 10 top Indian doctors not trained to certify brain death, hurting organ donation

While nearly three-fourth (74.5%) of the doctors surveyed worked at teaching hospitals, **only 10 per cent said they regularly trained their residents in brain death certification.**

- A survey of 177 of the country's top **neurosurgeons, neurologists and critical care specialists** shows that *over half (59.2 per cent) were not trained in medical colleges to certify brain death* — a **knowledge gap** that impacts organ donations, according to a study published recently by doctors at the All India Institute of Medical Science (AIIMS), Delhi.
- While nearly three-fourth (74.5%) of the doctors surveyed worked at teaching hospitals, only 10 per cent said they regularly trained their residents in brain death certification.
 - *More than 1/3rd* of the doctors said their institutions **did not have a fixed curriculum** for the certification or even a **suitable checklist.**

Brain death	Clinical death
Brain death is a medico-legal term to describe the <u>cessation of all brain activity due to lack of oxygen to the brain cells — even if the heart continues beating under ventilator support.</u>	In contrast, clinical (or <u>circulatory</u>) death occurs when <u>both breathing and blood circulation permanently cease.</u>

Brain death



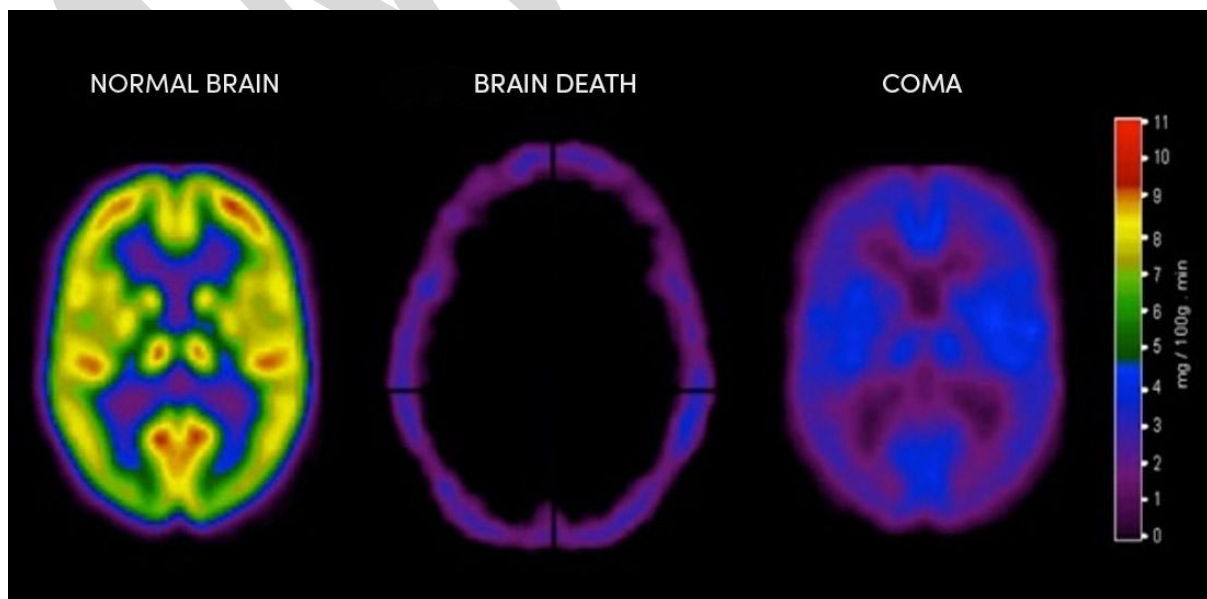
What is brain death and brain dead

➤ Brain death:

- A patient who is in a coma or persistent vegetative state typically has some brain stem function (which controls breathing) and possibly other brain function.

➤ Brain dead:

- When a person is brain dead, no part of the brain is functioning any longer



COMA VS BRAIN DEATH

COMA



The patient can make it out alive.

Patient is suffering from depressed consciousness while their eyes are closed.

Patient is able to breathe and have motor responses.

In certain circumstances, if the brainstem has been damaged, the patient will be given a ventilator to help with breathing.

BRAIN DEATH



The patient is declared dead with no chances of making it out alive.

Both the brain and brain stem endure irreversible loss of brain functions.

Reflexes may be noticeable around the spinal cord area after the patient has been declared dead.

Ventilators are used to help the patient breathe in order for their heart to beat.

MYTH

It is a popular belief among people that brain death and coma means the same thing.

FACT

A person in a coma doesn't respond to stimuli but is partially active. A person who is brain dead has zero brain activity.

➤ In many **transplant protocols**,

✓ **brain death is declared first**

so that organs can still be perfused and maintained until removal.

✓ But **timely certification is critical:**

**once circulation stops,
organs begin deteriorating.**

✓ Depending on the organ,
viability may range from 4 - 12 hours — for instance,

heart and lungs can be harvested	in 4 - 6 hours,
liver	in 8 - 12 hours
kidney	In 24 -36 hours

✓ Under the

Transplantation of Human Organs and Tissues Act, 1994,

**declaration of brain death is mandatory
for organ donation.**

✂ India has become a high-volume organ transplant centre over the years but almost **80% of the donations still depend on family consent.**

✓ According to the study, **only 18% of donations in 2024 were from deceased donors.**

Reasons behind :

- **certification process to be streamlined**
- **doctors to be better equipped with the knowledge and legalities involved.**

✂ “It’s not for a lack of donors. Every year, nearly 2 lakh people have brain deaths — 1.5 lakh die due to traumatic brain injuries and another 50,000 die due to brain stroke. Yet there are **only around 1,100 patients who donate their organs every year.**”

✂ The survey, → → “suggests that there is a **significant knowledge gap** among physicians as well, especially when it comes to **legal considerations**”.

- ❑ One person can donate up to **8 organs.**
- ❑ Transplantation has increased over the previous year, but the rate remains **less than one per million population.**

Parameters : Declare Brain Death:

- While there is **no standardised protocol** that doctors follow to certify a brain death, the parameters they check include:

no eye opening on painful stimulus,
no pupillary response to light,
no movement of limbs,
lack of ability to breathe on their own.

- If unsure, **ancillary tests**

such as CT scans to check blood flow in the brain are performed.
--

Doctors also **need to rule out any other reversible cause for coma,**

such as intoxication, drugs, other metabolic or endocrine disorders.

➤ The **final declaration** comes after

a **4-member board** carries out

2
assessments

with a **gap of 6-12 hours.**

- 1) in-charge of the hospital,
- 2) a doctor nominated by the hospital and approved by the state authority,
- 3) **a neurologist or neurosurgeon,** and
- 4) the treating physician

Non-availability of Neuro

anaesthetist
intensivist
surgeon
physician

Boosting donation

Despite India performing among the highest number of organ transplants in the world, the national organ donation rate has hovered under one per million population for years, compared with more than 30 per million in countries such as Spain.

Experts point out that **better awareness, stronger hospital systems and streamlined brain death certification** are critical to bridging this gap.

The study highlighted several policy gaps

- A third of the doctors said their **hospital did not have a checklist for brain death declaration**. This is important to ensure that none of the tests needed for the declaration are missed and everything is documented.
 - The **lack of comprehensive national guidelines on brain death certification** makes it difficult for doctors to take a call.
-

Topic : GS (Mains) + Essay

'I love Muhammad' row: UP government's crackdown erodes 'vishwas'

It undermines its own campaign to showcase state's 'vikas'

- ❑ It began with a light board installed in front of a lane in Kanpur, "I love Muhammad" written on it, ahead of the annual Barawafat procession to mark Prophet Muhammad's birth anniversary.
 - ✓ A police FIR blamed one community for deliberately introducing a new practice — "jaan boojh kar nayi parampara ki shuruat" — which would ostensibly endanger communal amity, and relocated the banner.
 - ✓ But that was not the end of the matter. Over nearly a month since then, protests against the police action spread across several of Uttar Pradesh's districts, roiling **Bareilly in particular**, and spilled into other states, including **Uttarakhand, Gujarat, Karnataka, Telangana, Maharashtra**.
 - ✓ They were met, more often than not, with official heavy-handedness, with FIRs slapped indiscriminately, a spate of arrests, and demolition of properties. This disquieting pattern is now ebbing mercifully.

- ❑ **Violence and arson are unacceptable** and those who participate in the **lumpenism of the mob must be proceeded against lawfully.**
- At the same time, hard questions need to be asked of those who criminalised the putting up of an innocuous banner. Indeed, it wasn't even all that new, similar banners had been put up in the Kanpur neighbourhood earlier too — in cloth, if not as a well-lit display board. And what is wrong, anyway, with a “nayi parampara” that does not disturb the peace?
 - ✓ More fundamentally, the question is: In a country where the **Constitution guarantees and protects the right of every citizen to profess and propagate a religion of her choice**, why does the police FIR read like an indictment of the religious practice of one community, and a punishment for its public visibility?
 - ✓ The **political leadership also has much to answer for**. In times when there is a simmering sense of siege in the beleaguered minority community, it is the work of politics, especially one that proclaims “*Sabka saath.... sabka vishwas*”, to observe restraint and apply the healing touch. **UP Chief Minister's hardline – “denting-painting” must be done to trouble-makers, he said, and a lesson taught to subdue future generations — is divisive.** It does not behove his office.

Way forward : Govt's duty

- Especially now that his refrain is the economic development of UP. The state government has been making moves to attract private investment, and address long-standing infrastructure deficits.
 - The flaring of tensions over the “I love Muhammad” banners, the excessive use of the state's strong arm and the political bid to stoke minority insecurities, undermine that effort. They point to a state in which peace is fragile and the vulnerable are ill at ease.
 - ❑ The Yogi Adityanath government must heed its mandate and its constitutional duty and take steps to correct this.
-

As central bank **eases lending regime**, it must be mindful of risks

Each of these steps is designed to push for greater use of the Indian rupee in international transactions, and pave the way for its greater acceptance, while protecting the economy from sudden exchange rate movements.

- ❑ On Wednesday, the Reserve Bank of India unveiled several policy measures that

will have far-reaching implications for the financial markets,		
	both equity and debt,	
help boost the flow of credit and	push forward the internationalisation of the Indian rupee.	

- This pivot of the central bank away from the conservatism that has so far defined its approach towards a **more liberal framework** comes at a time of significant changes in the geopolitical and economic environment and global trading systems.

- ❑ The measures announced to increase credit operate at multiple levels.

One.

the RBI is allowing banks to **“finance acquisitions”** by Indian corporates, an activity they have been prohibited from.

Two.

it is also easing the flow of funds to large borrowers by **proposing to scrap its 2016 framework** that had placed restrictions on lending.

- These moves could possibly **accelerate M&A (merger and acquisitions)** in the economy while boosting **credit growth to the**

industry, which has been sluggish, averaging just 6.5 per cent since January this year — M&A deals were estimated at \$120 billion in 2023-24 as per a report by economists at the SBI.

– *But there is the risk of “reckless borrowing” by corporates*, as a report in this paper points out.

❑ Alongside, the central bank has proposed to **increase banks' lending limit against shares to Rs 1 crore and for IPO financing to Rs 25 lakh**.

- This will boost the flow of funds into equity markets. Investors welcomed these announcements with shares of banks such as HDFC, ICICI and Kotak rising on the day.

❑ The central bank has also announced measures to **increase the usage of the rupee in international transactions**.

- It will *permit banks to lend rupees to non-residents in neighbouring countries like Bhutan, Nepal and Sri Lanka for cross-border trade*.

❑ This is a *significant step in the endeavour to*

internationalise Indian currency,
and
not rely on the USD, for the purposes of trade.

But for the rupee to be widely used, and
to emerge as an acceptable medium of exchange,
there needs to be confidence in its stability.

- Alongside, the central bank has also permitted the **balances in Special Rupee Vostro Accounts** —
– **these accounts have facilitated India-Russia oil trade** –

– to be invested in corporate bonds and commercial papers.

✂ This will increase the avenues available for deploying the funds.

□ It will also establish reference rates for currencies of major trading partners such as the UAE, making transactions more efficient.

✂ Each of these steps is designed to push for greater use of the Indian rupee in international transactions, and pave the way for its greater acceptance, while protecting the economy from sudden exchange rate movements.

✂ As the RBI pushes forward, it must proceed carefully, be mindful of the associated risks.

World Cup ball: Motion sensor chip, gyroscope



Named Trionda, meaning three waves, the ball's red, green and blue design pays homage to the three host countries of the 2026 World Cup. *Fifa*

"We gave a heartbeat to the ball" - Adidas

Sensor Chip

- ✓ 500Hz **motion sensor** chip in it.
- ✓ it has a chip with an **accelerometer** and a **gyroscope** in it.

The last FIFA World Cup ball, Al Rihla for **Qatar 2022**, also had a chip in it.

Sensor chip and the purpose to be served

- ❑ The sensors make the game fairer.
 - Every tiny touch or deflection on the outer surface of the ball gets recorded.
 - So if a player gets a handball and the view of the referees and VAR is blocked by other players in a crowded penalty box, the sensor will let them know that there was a touch.
- ❑ The ball also has a **four-panel construction with fluid geometry** that replicates the waves referenced in the ball's name.
- ❑ **Red (Canada)**, **Green (Mexico)** and **Blue (USA)** colour scheme that pays homage to the three host countries.
 - a maple leaf for Canada,
 - an eagle for Mexico and
 - a star for the United States,
 - while gold embellishments pay tribute to the FIFA World Cup Trophy,

06.10.2025

TOURIST SPOT MIRIK WORST HIT, THOUSANDS STRANDED

At least 20 dead, scores missing as Darjeeling hills hit by rain, landslides

HOW MUCH IT RAINED ON SATURDAY
300 mm in 12 hours, according to Met

WHY SIKKIM HAS BEEN CUT OFF
NH 10 completely blocked by landslides

HOW MANY TRAINS WERE CANCELLED
At least 8, including Mahananda Express

Roads, bridges washed away: Hills in disarray

What is the DVC?

A statutory body set up in 1948, the DVC manages the larger Damodar Valley Project that was the first multipurpose river valley development project in India. The corporation oversees several dams and hydroelectric and thermal power plants in the Damodar river region that is spread across West Bengal and Jharkhand. The DVC is led by a seven-member board that includes the chairman, four DVC members, and one representative each from governments of the Centre, West Bengal and Jharkhand.

My Note

Under the Ministry of Power, GoI

Reservoirs & Barrages

- DVC has a network of **four dams** -

Tilaiya and Maithon	Panchet	Konar
on River Barakar ,	on River Damodar	on River Konar .

- Besides, **Durgapur barrage** and the canal networks were **handed over to Government of West Bengal** in **1964** and remained as a part of the total system of water management. Also, **Bokaro barrage** is used to **provide cooling water to BTPS**.

The importance of **Sir Creek**: Why India & Pakistan have failed to solve **border dispute**

Sir Creek

a disputed boundary between the **Rann of Kutch and Sindh**

In News

- ✓ Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on October 2 warned Pakistan that **"any misadventure in the Sir Creek sector will invite a decisive response"**.
- ✓ Singh also pointed to the "recent expansion" of Pakistan's military infrastructure in the areas adjacent to Sir Creek.

Why Sir Creek matters

Sir Creek,		originally Ban Ganga , is a fluctuating 96-km tidal estuary	along the India-Pakistan border.
West Sindh, Pakistan	East Rann of Kutch, Gujarat		

- The **marshy area** around Sir Creek

teems with venomous **Russel's vipers and scorpions**;

every monsoon, the creek floods its banks,
enveloping surrounding salt flats.

As such, the region is **sparsely populated and difficult to police.**

- Yet it has long been at the centre of **an unresolved border dispute** between India and Pakistan. This is because it is strategically and economically important for both countries.

- **STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE:** Sir Creek is crucial to Pakistan's defence of Karachi, Sindh's capital and Pakistan's economic hub and largest city.

Post Operation Sindoor,	
Pakistan	India too
has built bunkers, radars, and forward bases in the disputed area, capable of launching drone attacks and infantry operations.	has maintained a strong military presence to deter any Pakistani misadventure.

- **Indian concerns**, however, aren't merely limited to the Pakistan military.
 - Sir Creek **could be used as a launchpad for terror attacks on Indian soil.**
 - During the November 2008 Mumbai terror attacks, Pakistani terrorists had come to Mumbai by boat.
- **ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE:** Beyond strategic concerns, it is perhaps the economic importance of Sir Creek that has precluded the resolution of the decades-long border dispute.
 - The region is said to hold untapped **oil and gas reserves** which are potentially vital to both countries' interests.
 - For New Delhi, which has long sought to diversify its oil imports, and which is currently searching for newer sources of cheaper oil beyond Russia, this is particularly important.
 - The creek also supports **vital fishing grounds**, crucial for the livelihoods of local fishermen in both Gujarat and Sindh.
 - The absence of a clear boundary results in frequent arrests of fishermen who inadvertently cross into the other country's waters, disrupting livelihoods and ruining lives.

The definition of international boundary at Sir Creek has a direct impact on the delimitation of both country's Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) in the Arabian Sea. **EEZs extending upto 200 nautical miles (370.4 km) beyond a nation's territorial waters, within which it has jurisdiction over both living and non-living resources.**

The boundary dispute

Pakistan	while India
claims the entirety of Sir Creek,	sets the boundary along the middle of the navigable channel

➤ 'Thalweg' principle @ Navigability question

- ✓ This disagreement stems from a larger disagreement on **whether the creek falls under the 'Thalweg' principle of boundary demarcation**, which provides for making the mid-channel of a given watercourse a boundary.

India	Pakistan
argues that <u>while fluctuating, the creek falls under the Thalweg principle because it remains navigable and is frequented by fishermen.</u>	rejects this argument, claiming instead <u>that the creek is not navigable, meaning the principle does not apply.</u>

➤ Pre-Independence

The dispute actually traces its origins to the early **20th century**, when an argument ensued between the rulers of Kutch and Sindh over ownership of a pile of firewood lying on the banks of a creek situated between the two principalities.

➤ Post - Independence

it came to the fore after the **India-Pakistan War of 1965**, following which Pakistan claimed jurisdiction of over half of the Rann of Kutch.

While this dispute was **settled by a tribunal in 1968**

— **India was granted 90% of the Rann** and Pakistani claims were largely rejected

— Sir Creek was not included in this resolution.

The tribunal had noted, “the question concerning the Sir Creek part of the boundary is left out of consideration.”

The dispute has festered since.

Discussions but no resolution

India and Pakistan have thus far held several rounds of bilateral discussions on the dispute.

1989

During the first round of talks held in Islamabad on 2 June 1989, the two sides managed to **discuss the fundamental aspects of the dispute**, but without any concrete results.

1990 and 1991

Total five round of talks, but without any concrete result.

1998

After six years, India and Pakistan **agreed to form a separate working group** on the issue. The talks of the Sir Creek working group were held in 1998 in New Delhi, wherein

India	Pakistan
Stand :- NO to ARBITRATION	Pakistan sought to take the dispute to an international tribunal.
India objected to Pakistan's bid to internationalise the dispute, reiterating that all differences, after the Simla Accord, had to be resolved bilaterally.	

2012

The Ministry of External Affairs had stated in 2019 that the last “**formal talks**” (on Sir Creek) were held in June 2012 and the two sides inter alia discussed

the land boundary in the Sir Creek area	and	delimitation of the International Maritime Boundary between India and Pakistan”.
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2015

“In December 2015, it was agreed to start a **Comprehensive Bilateral Dialogue**. This included the Sir Creek issue.

- ✓ **However, the terror attack on the Airbase in Pathankot in January 2016 and Pakistan's continued support to cross-border terrorism against India have prevented holding of any structured bilateral dialogue,”** then External Affairs Minister V K Singh had said in his reply to an unstarred question in the Lok Sabha.

07.10.2025

BJP TO CONG, LEFT TO AAP, CHORUS OF OUTRAGE

Citing 'sanatan dharma', lawyer hurls shoe at CJI; angered every Indian: PM

71-year-old lawyer suspended by Bar Council of India



'... just ignore it. I am not distracted by all this'

B R GAVAI
CHIEF JUSTICE OF INDIA



'No place for such acts... it is utterly condemnable'

NARENDRA MODI
PRIME MINISTER



'Assault on the Constitution... deep sense of anguish'

SONIA GANDHI
CPP CHAIRPERSON

**First Buddhist
CJI**

Brief :

- ✓ The police let him go later in the day after the CJI instructed the court's registrar general not to press charges.
- ✓ Sources said the CJI directed the SC Registry not to take any action against the lawyer and to release him.
- ✓ Subsequently, the police were asked to hand over Kishore's shoes and documents and, sources said, he was allowed to leave three hours after the incident.

CJI's excerpt :

- "I only heard the sound. Maybe it fell on some table or somewhere... I only heard him say 'Maine Gavai saab ke taraf pheka tha (I had thrown it at CJI Gavai)'. Perhaps what he threw landed somewhere else and he was trying to explain."

- “I told the lawyer who was arguing, you just ignore it. I am not distracted by all this. You also don’t be distracted and proceed further with the case.”

Post-release interview excerpt of the lawyer:

- ✓ “I was hurt. A PIL was filed in the Chief Justice’s court on September 16. Justice Gavai made fun of it by saying ‘**Go pray to the idol to restore its head**’.”
- ✓ “...I was hurt...I was not inebriated, this was my reaction to his action...I am not fearful. I don’t regret what happened.”
- ✓ Kishore told the police that he was “instructed by divine powers to act”.

Related Case :

- On September 16, presiding over a two-judge bench, CJI Gavai had made some remarks while dismissing a plea seeking the reconstruction of a dilapidated seven-feet-tall Lord Vishnu idol at the Javari temple in the Khajuraho complex.
- “This purely publicity interest litigation... **Go and ask the deity himself to do something. If you are saying that you are a strong devotee of Lord Vishnu, then you pray and do some meditation,**” the CJI had told the petitioner.
- Two days later, the CJI clarified that he **“respects all religions”** and that his comments were made in the context of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) holding jurisdiction over the temple’s upkeep. **“I believe in all the religions, I respect all the (religions),”** the CJI said.

Social media and Media’s distortions:

- ✂ The role of certain sections of the media in exacerbating this incident through irresponsible, sensationalised reporting and deliberate distortion of judicial remarks”

Deaths in MP due to spurious cough syrups point to grave regulatory deficits

India's pharmaceutical industry has positioned itself as the 'pharmacy of the world'. Its regulatory mechanisms fail to do justice to this billing.

- The deaths of at least 14 children in Madhya Pradesh's Chhindwara district and in Rajasthan, between August and the first week of October, after consuming a contaminated cough syrup, mark yet another preventable tragedy in India's troubled pharmaceutical landscape.

- The **Coldrif syrup**, later found to contain **48.6% diethylene glycol (DEG)** — **a toxic industrial solvent** — was prescribed to children suffering from common cold and cough.

The WHO pegs its globally acceptable standard at **0.10 per cent.**

- Madhya Pradesh has since banned the syrup and arrested a doctor, but this is not an isolated incident.
- From **Cameroon** in **2023** to the **2022 Gambia** and **Uzbekistan** incidents that killed nearly 150 children due to similar contamination, to earlier deaths in **J&K in 2020**, the pattern speaks of systemic regulatory collapse.
- *In the post-Covid years*, India's pharmaceutical industry has positioned itself as the "**pharmacy of the world**" — it supplies

40% of generics used in the **US** and

more than **90%** of medicines in several **African nations**.

- Its regulatory mechanisms, however, fail to do justice to this billing — the deficits are particularly glaring when it comes to monitoring small-scale units that constitute a major part of the sector.
 - Data from India's Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation show that 36 per cent of inspected drug-manufacturing units were shut down for serious violations in 2023-24 alone.
 - The deaths in MP indicate that several others may have fallen outside the radar.
 - Pharma units are required to maintain a database on manufacturing practices and inspection results to alert regulators and doctors about the history of a brand.
 - However, state regulators often lack resources and autonomy, and drug inspectors are regularly tasked with administrative work.
 - Scrutiny of drugs for safety and efficacy — even monitoring for known adulterants such as DEG — has suffered as a result.
 - In MP, officials admitted to being in the dark for weeks — even as more children fell sick — highlighting the absence of timely **pharmacovigilance**.
- ✎ As was evident in the **Gambia and Uzbekistan scandals**, outrage is rarely followed by accountability. Even after global condemnation, Indian firms implicated in the offences have faced minimal legal consequences. The MP deaths are another warning for the industry and regulators — they have much to do to rebuild public trust.
-

Could US and Russia extend last nuclear weapons treaty?

Backdrop:

- ❑ New START Treaty expires on Feb. 2026
- ❑ Russia's Prz offers to voluntarily maintain limits for a year on deployed strategic nuclear weapons
- ❑ US's Prz Trump welcomes the idea.

Strategic Arms Reduction Treaties (START),	are a series of bilateral arms control treaties between the United States and the Soviet Union/Russia.
The original <u>START I</u> Signed : 1991 into force : 1994 Expired : 2009	Objective the reduction of strategic nuclear weapons.
<u>New START Treaty</u> signed : 2010 (Obama - Medvedev) into force : 2011 Expiring : 2026 Was extended in 2021 for five years i.e. Feb, 2026 (Biden - Putin)	Objective To further reduce and limit strategic offensive arms between the US and Russia limits the number of strategic nuclear warheads, <u>deployed ICBMs, SLBMs, and heavy bombers for both countries.</u>

What would it mean for nuclear arms control and what are the main issues ahead?

WHAT IS A "STRATEGIC" WEAPON?

- Strategic weapons are
 - usually long-range and designed to influence the outcome of a war rather than merely a battle,
 - by destroying centres of power, command and control facilities or nationally critical infrastructure.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

- Russia and the U.S. together have about **87% of the global inventory of nuclear weapons** - enough to destroy the world many times over.

Russia has 5,459 nuclear warheads (1949)	while the United States has 5,177 . (1945)
--	---

Country	Number
China (1964)	600
India (1974)	180
Pakistan (1998)	170
France (1960)	290
UK (1952)	225

- Their arms control treaties were born out of fear of nuclear war after the **1962 Cuban Missile Crisis**.
 - Greater transparency about the opponent's arsenal was intended to reduce the scope for misunderstanding and slow the arms race.
- Now,
 - with all major nuclear powers seeking to modernise arsenals, and
 - Russia and the West at strategic loggerheads for over a decade,
 - not least over Moscow's war in Ukraine,
 - the treaties have almost all crumbled away.
- Each side blames the other.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Putin said it was unclear what would happen in the future if a one-year extension was signed. He said further voluntary limits would depend on U.S. actions.

NUCLEAR TESTING

- Russia has repeatedly raised concerns in public about a possible resumption of nuclear testing. During Trump's first term as president, from 2017-2021, his administration discussed whether or not to conduct the first U.S. nuclear test since 1992, the Washington Post reported in 2020.
 - Putin said on October 2 that Russia would carry out a nuclear test if another nuclear power did so, saying it had seen signs that an unnamed country was making such preparations: "We see it, we know it and, if it happens, we will do the same."
-

08.10.2025

Topic : GS (Mains) + Essay

Attack on CJI Gavai, assault on tolerance

Chorus of condemnation of the attack on the Chief Justice of India is welcome. It will ring louder if it's also read as a criticism of intolerance

The attack on the Chief Justice of India by a lawyer who allegedly hurled a shoe at him inside the Supreme Court Monday morning marked a new low. That the head of the institution of the judiciary should be targeted, apparently for remarks he made while refusing to entertain a public interest litigation seeking judicial intervention for the reconstruction of an idol of Lord Vishnu in a Khajuraho temple – comments that were misinterpreted by a troll army citing “hurt Hindu sentiments”, and that the CJI clarified subsequently — signals a breakdown of democratic civility. At the same time, the reaction to Monday’s attempted attack has also been uncommon, and welcome. In these polarised times, it has seen a

rare coming together of leaders across political-ideological faultlines, to express their condemnation, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi taking the lead. The PM has said that the attack had “angered every Indian” and that there is “no place for such reprehensible acts in our society”. PM Modi’s words, and those of others belonging to the ruling establishment as well as the Opposition, underline that Monday’s incident was more than an attack on one individual – it was an act of disrespect towards the institution of the judiciary, the Constitution it upholds, and the rule of law.

Implicit, and also explicit in the outrage that is being expressed, giving it an undeniable edge, is the fact that the Chief Justice is also a Dalit. While CJI Gavai has not sought to draw attention to himself, kept his dignity and composure, and even signalled business as usual, political parties and leaders are rightly mindful and protective of the powerful symbolism of his presence at the apex of the judicial system. After all, the journey of an individual from India’s most marginalised to the judiciary’s top, the overcoming of incredible odds and the tracing of a long arc, are democracy’s precious achievements. But having said that, there is something more to this incident that must be acknowledged, and hopefully built on, going ahead. Quite simply, Monday’s attack must be looked at, and condemned, from both ends. It is unacceptable that a CJI, in this case a Dalit CJI, should be targeted. It is indefensible that this is done by claiming the CJI insulted Hinduism.

These are times when “Hindu/Hinduism under siege” has become a convenient justification for a range of transgressions by individuals and the mob, leading to shrinking spaces for expression and a coarsening of the public sphere. All too often, what makes the situation worse is that the powers-that-be turn a blind eye to this aggressive performance of victimhood, which curtails the rights of a range of vulnerable others. While the political project of Hindutva has notched its several successes by constantly widening its ambit, and coopting movements and strands that lay outside it, this has not been a seamless movement. There are collisions and contradictions, and often there is a tendency to label and demonise those who oppose, and attack any signs of perceived disagreement. The PM’s timely, strong — and much-needed — condemnation of the attack on the CJI becomes all the more powerful if it is read, also, as criticism of this growing intolerance.

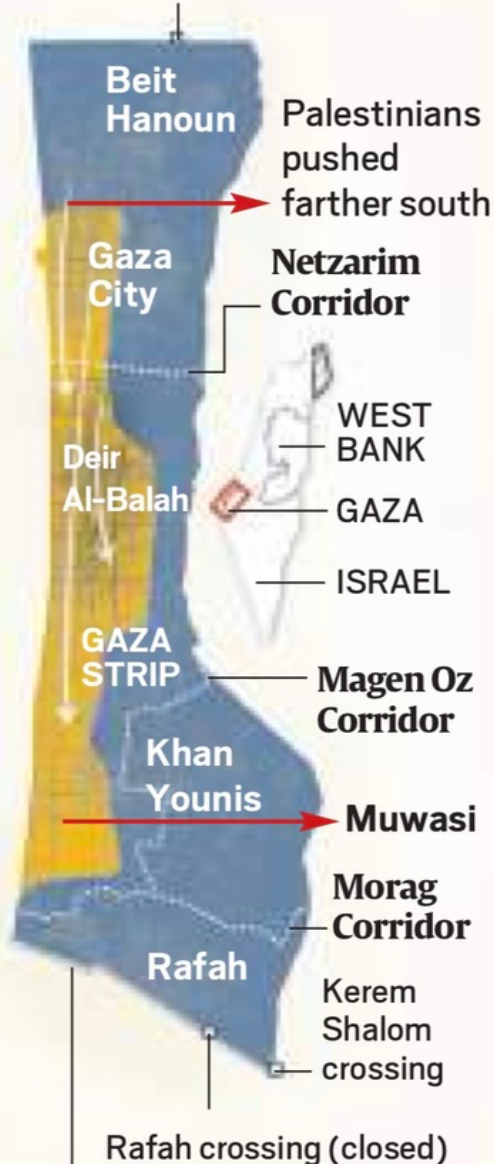
09.10.2025

ISRAEL OCCUPIES MOST OF GAZA STRIP

■ Not under Israeli control

■ Israeli controlled

Erez crossing (closed)



Philadelphi Corridor

75% Land in Gaza occupied by Israel

Approximately 2 million Palestinians are now living in 36 square miles of land

92% Housing units damaged or destroyed

An estimated 1.5 million people are in need of emergency shelter items

78% Buildings damaged or destroyed

77% of Gaza's total road network has been damaged, destroyed or blocked as of July 2025

99% Agriculture land not accessible

At least 30% of people in Gaza go days without eating food

Map data as of Sept. 16, 2025 Source: Israeli government; UNOSAT; Gaza Civil Defense

10.10.2025

Topic : GS (Mains)

TWO YEARS OF WAR: U.S. PRESIDENT MAY ATTEND SIGNING CEREMONY IN EGYPT

Israel & Hamas agree to Phase 1 of Trump's Gaza peace plan: Ceasefire; freeing hostages, prisoners

What comes next?

If completed, Phase-1 of Trump's plan would be followed by talks over details of later phases

NETANYAHU WILL GET the approval of his Security Cabinet and Parliament to sign off on the deal.

WITHIN 24 HOURS, Israeli forces will withdraw to lines that leave them in control of about 53% of Gaza.

AFTER 24 HOURS, a full ceasefire in Gaza will go into effect.

HAMAS WILL THEN have 72 hours to return all the living hostages. Trump says this should be Monday or Tuesday.

250 Palestinian prisoners serving life sentences in Israeli jails and 1,700 detainees from Gaza will be released by Israeli government, a spokesperson said.

28 deceased hostages' bodies will be returned afterwards, although it is not clear how long that could take.

15 Gazans' bodies will be handed over in return for the remains of each Israeli hostage.



600

Number of daily aid lorries to Gaza that Trump's plan also specifies

President Donald Trump at the Cabinet meeting at the White House, Thursday. AP



In Gaza, first steps to peace

For now, Trump's plan appears viable due to pressures on both sides in Gaza. But it will be a long and arduous haul

- Extraordinary scenes of celebration played out in Gaza and Tel Aviv on October 9 – dancing, clapping, fireworks, celebratory gunfire, tears of joy. After 734 days of war, sparked by Hamas's October 7, 2023 terror attack on Israel and followed by an Israeli retaliation that unleashed death and destruction on a scale that drew widespread global condemnation, there is a long-awaited flicker of hope.
 - Both sides announced Thursday that they had agreed on the first phase of a ceasefire deal. The office of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, however, clarified that the agreement would take effect only after cabinet approval.
 - The exchange of a number of Israeli hostages and Palestinian prisoners is to take place within 72 hours of the deal's implementation.
 - The agreement was announced on social media by US President **Donald Trump**, whose 20-point plan, backed by Arab states, compelled Israel and Hamas to re-enter indirect talks in Egypt this week.
 - He has indicated that he may travel to Egypt to oversee what could be the greatest diplomatic achievement so far of the US President's second term.

- Trump's plan appears viable for now due to pressures on both sides.

Israel	Palestine
Israel faces growing international isolation for its war that has killed at least <u>66,000 Palestinian people and catalysed a famine in parts of the Gaza Strip.</u>	Hamas, meanwhile, has been unable to inflict damage on Israeli forces in Gaza and <u>has been pressed by Qatar, Egypt and Turkey to make concessions.</u>
Netanyahu, a master of political self-preservation, has been on the receiving end of mounting domestic anger <u>over his failure to bring back the remaining hostages.</u>	
He likely believes he can withstand a backlash even if his far-right allies threaten to quit his government over the agreement.	

Both sides, therefore, may think they gain more from the deal than from continuing hostilities.

➤ For all the optimism and hope, however, **there are reasons to proceed with caution.**

- ✓ The current stage is reminiscent of the January ceasefire, which collapsed within weeks after Netanyahu unilaterally abandoned the agreement and renewed Israel's offensive.
 - For any ceasefire to hold, Trump will need to lay down the line for his Israeli counterpart, who has displayed his penchant for disruption, most recently in Qatar.
- ✓ Then there are the known unknowns: It remains unclear
 - how much territory Israeli forces will relinquish,
 - whether Hamas will truly disarm, and
 - what governance in Gaza will look like after the war.
- ✓ Most importantly, peace cannot — and should not — be pursued without prioritising the rights of the Palestinian people.

✎ **India**, too, must play its part in ensuring that the current path leads to eventual self-determination and statehood for Palestine, because that remains the safest bet for the region's long-term security.

11.10.2025

EXPLAINED
E **Shifting geopolitics**

Since Taliban captured Kabul in 2021, the global situation has changed. Taliban's ally, Pakistan, has turned into an adversary; Iran has been weakened; Russia is fighting its own war; the US is behaving differently under Trump 2.0; and China is making inroads by exchanging ambassadors with Taliban. This explains India's move to upgrade the level of official engagement with Taliban — or it will lose out on years of investment in Afghanistan, which is significant to its security calculations.

Topic : GS (Mains)

Engaging with Taliban:

A necessity

It is an acknowledgement that, in a competitive neighbourhood, maintaining ties with Kabul is a geostrategic necessity

Changing dynamics with India

- Ever since the **Taliban seized Kabul in August 2021**, India has engaged with it gradually and incrementally.
 - A big breakthrough came in **January 2025**, when **Foreign Secretary** Vikram Misri met **Afghanistan's Foreign Minister**, Amir Khan Muttaqi, in **Dubai**.
 - Now on his **first official visit to India**, Muttaqi on Friday met **External Affairs Minister** S Jaishankar, who **announced that India will upgrade ties and reopen its embassy in Kabul**.
 - This follows their positive conversation in May, days after the India-Pakistan ceasefire following the **Pahalgam terror attack**, which was **unequivocally condemned** by the Taliban.
- The series of engagements confirms that **New Delhi recognises the ground reality that the Taliban is the only force**, for now, that appears capable of controlling all of Afghanistan.
- It is also an acknowledgement that, in a highly competitive neighbourhood, maintaining ties with the Taliban is a geostrategic necessity.

Changing dynamics with Pakistan

- Relations between the Taliban and Pakistan have deteriorated sharply in the recent past.

- Islamabad has accused the Taliban of sheltering the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan and has carried out airstrikes inside Afghan territory targeting alleged hideouts.
 - As recently as Thursday, the Taliban blamed Pakistan for explosions in Kabul and Paktika province.
- Meanwhile, Pakistan's **mass expulsion of Afghan nationals** has further strained ties.

Way forward for New Delhi

- In this fraught context, India's position was evident in Jaishankar's remarks to Muttaqi on Friday, where he stressed that
 - India and Afghanistan have a **“common commitment towards growth and prosperity”**, which are “endangered by the shared threat of cross-border terrorism” and that **there must be “coordinated efforts” to “combat terrorism in all its forms and manifestations”**.
- New Delhi should use its growing ties with the Taliban to help prevent Afghanistan from turning into a launchpad for anti-India terror groups.

Fast reading points

- *Bagram Airbase issue :*
 - Beyond food, healthcare, disaster relief, and infrastructure projects, **India** has shown support for the Taliban on the global stage recently by joining **Pakistan, China, and Russia** in opposing US President Donald Trump's bid to take over Bagram airbase in Afghanistan.
- *Two Foreign Ministers' meet:*
 - The Jaishankar-Muttaqi meeting makes it clear that the Taliban wants India to engage more with Afghanistan, citing **“long civilisational and people-to-people ties for centuries.”**

▪ Human Rights issue and Taliban :

➤ To be sure, this growing entente coexists with a disquieting reality:

○ The Taliban remains an autocratic regime with **scant regard for human rights, particularly those of women.**

○ As recently, the **UN Human Rights Council** agreed to establish an “ongoing, independent investigative mechanism” to probe abuses in Afghanistan.

□ This is also why, despite greater engagement, India still refrains from formally recognising the Taliban government. To not talk, however, carries its own risks.

▪ China – the regional security question :

➤ Beijing has **already signed major investment and security agreements with the Taliban**, and India cannot afford to let Afghanistan, a country of immense regional importance, drift entirely into China’s orbit.

✎ New Delhi must therefore maintain a cautious engagement with Kabul, balancing pragmatic interests with its commitment to the well-being of Afghanistan’s people.

13.10.2025

Decks cleared for **Maitri II**, India set to chart new frontiers in Antarctica's icy wilderness

Once built and readied by January 2029, Maitri II will become **India's fourth research base** on the frozen continent.

In News:

- India's next chapter in the **world's southernmost continent**, Antarctica, is all set to unfold.
- The **Finance Ministry** has **granted approval** for Maitri II (was first proposed in late 2023) — the country's newest research station proposed to come up in **eastern Antarctica** - has a financial outlay of about Rs 2,000 crore, for over 7 years."

National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR)	under the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES)
Goa	
is the nodal agency	
responsible for operating and organising missions to Antarctica and the Arctic.	

1) India's first research base in Antarctica, Dakshin Gangotri (1983), operated for a few years.	Abandoned in 1990 after being submerged by ice and snow
2) Currently, Maitri , operational since 1989, and	
3) Bharati , operational since 2012,	

support India's scientific community in gathering data exclusive to the wilderness of Antarctica.

Terrain mapping and environmental studies have been underway in the background

- Tentatively, the **sea voyage between South Africa and Antarctica** lasts anywhere **between one to three weeks**, *depending on the route*.

- If weather permits, ships can reach

Maitri in a week	but	the journey to Bharati takes longer.
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- Summer and **winter** expeditions see participation by India's meteorologists, atmospheric scientists, geologists, glaciologists, botanists, zoologists and seismologists.

India has been conducting research in Antarctica	since the early 1980s.
About 98% of the continent	is covered by thick ice sheets
	75% of the earth's freshwater reserves.
As the world's 5 th -largest continent, Antarctica offers unique wildlife and extreme weather — cold, dry, and windy — making it one of the most sought-after research destinations for unexplored terrains.	

➤ Maitri

- ✓ Maitri, which has been hosting researchers since **1989**, is located along the **Schirmacher Oasis** — a 20 km-long ice-free landmass in East Antarctica surrounded by ice sheets and **shelves**.
- ✓ An inland station located about 100 km from the shore and at an elevation of around 50 metres above sea level, Maitri comprises
 - **the main building,**
 - **a fuel farm,**
 - **a fuel station,**

- a lake water pump house,
- a summer camp, and
- several smaller containerised modules.

✓ The main building offers

- regulated power supply,
- automated heating,
- incinerator toilets,
- cold storage,
- as well as living, dining, lounge, and laboratory spaces.

- Maitri can accommodate between 25 and 40 scientists, depending on mission requirements and season.
- It was originally built with a design life of 10 years.

✓ “Maitri has become an old facility and there were **some flaws** that emerged in its **waste management**.

- But we plan to retain it as India’s summer camp”.

➤ Maitri II

✓ Maitri II will be larger than Maitri I, with plans to design it as a green research base.

- The proposal includes

using renewable energy sources —	
solar power for summer expeditions and	
wind energy to harness the strong Antarctic winds —	to run the station’s operations.

- The new base will also feature

upgraded infrastructure and living conditions,
including improved toilets.

- Automated instruments

plan to deploy automated instruments onboard Maitri II.	
These instruments will keep recording data and relay it to mainland India,	even if the station remains unmanned for some period

Challenges :

- 1) extreme weather conditions and the fragility of the region → construction is complex → possible only during the summer months in the southern hemisphere between October and March.
- 2) Cargo transportation challenges to reach to the site

↓
Cape Town, SA → Indian Barrier → 120 km to Maitri → Maitri II

14.10.2025

NOBEL PRIZE 2025

Brief History

The Nobel Prize is an international award administered by the Nobel Foundation in Stockholm, Sweden, and based on the fortune of Alfred Nobel, Swedish inventor (most famous discovery **Dynamite**), entrepreneur and businessman → his will stated that his fortune was to be used to reward **“those who, during the preceding year, shall have conferred the greatest benefit to humankind.”** → Nobel’s prize would reward outstanding efforts in the fields that he was most involved in during his lifetime: physics, chemistry, physiology or medicine, literature and peace.

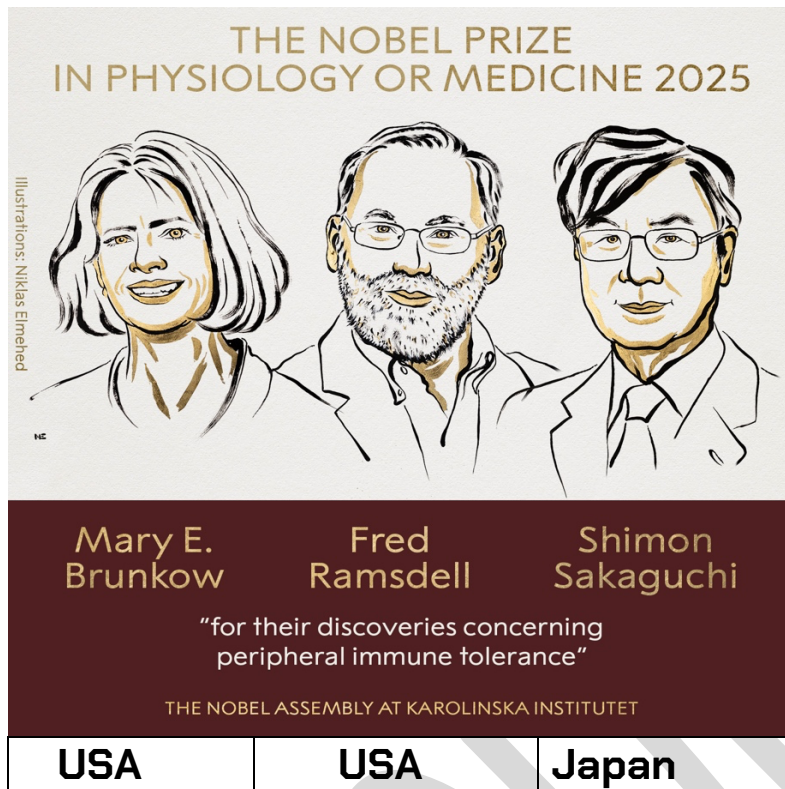
Category	Since Announced: October every year Presented: December	Awarded by
Physics	1901 Nobel Foundation, Stockholm, Sweden	The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences
Chemistry		The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences
Physiology or Medicine		The Nobel Assembly at Karolinska Institutet
Literature		The Swedish Academy
Peace		The Norwegian Nobel Committee
Sveriges Riksbank Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel	1969 Its addition was an exception, to celebrate the tercentenary of Sweden’s central bank.	The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences

NOBEL PRIZE WINNER FROM INDIA

(INCLUDES PEOPLE OF INDIAN ORIGIN)



Physiology or Medicine



Awarded for :

- Deciphering the intricacies of the immune system, in particular, the mechanism that prevents it from attacking the body's own cells while fighting foreign pathogens trying to enter the body.
- Most of this work had been done in the 1980s and 1990s, and
 - the discoveries are already having an impact on the treatment of auto-immune diseases, cancer and organ transplants.

Immune system – T-cells – Auto-immune disease

- The immune system protects the body against diseases by neutralising disease-causing pathogens like bacteria and viruses.
- Key to this process is the ability of the immune system — in particular, a special kind of white blood cells, called T-cells — to distinguish between the cells of the pathogen and the host body.

- When this does not happen properly, it leads to auto-immune diseases, in which the T-cells start damaging the body's own cells.

For own curiosity

Medicine Nobel laureates' work is key to understanding immune system

It has important implications
in the treatment of auto-immune diseases.

The Nobel week kicked off with the medicine/physiology prize going jointly to three scientists. Mary Brunkow, Fred Ramsdell and Shimon Sakaguchi have been honoured for their work on deciphering the intricacies of the immune system, in particular, the mechanism that prevents it from attacking the body's own cells while fighting foreign pathogens trying to enter the body. Most of this work had been done in the 1980s and 1990s, and the discoveries are already having an impact on the treatment of auto-immune diseases, cancer and organ transplants.

The immune system protects the body against diseases by neutralising disease-causing pathogens like bacteria and viruses. Key to this process is the ability of the immune system — in particular, a special kind of white blood cells, called T-cells — to distinguish between the cells of the pathogen and the host body. When this does not happen properly, it leads to auto-immune diseases, in which the T-cells start damaging the body's own cells. Why this does not happen in a healthy body is what the Nobel Prize winners were able to figure out. T-cells are trained to be selective in their approach but this training is not perfect. Sakaguchi identified a special group of T-cells, called regulatory T-cells, or Tregs, that suppresses the activity of other T-cells if they had a propensity to attack the body's own tissues. Brunkow and Ramsdell later discovered the gene that enables some T-cells to function as Tregs. Together, they complete the picture of the immune system.

Their discovery has important implications in the treatment of auto-immune diseases. Organ transplants get complicated because the immune system identifies them as foreign, and begins to attack them. Scientists hope that regulation of Tregs

activity could smoothen this process. In cancer, sometimes the reverse process happens. The cancerous cells attract too many Tregs, so that the normal T-cells, which should ideally have been killing the cancerous cells, become ineffective.

Physics



Note :

Check the 2 nd para of the below passage if can afford else skip it....."Quantum" is a complex thing to understand. Most to most 1 question is going to be asked **that too if anyhow**..so the luxury of time on the yardstick of utility to be evaluated by self in dealing these sort of topics or contents all through the syllabus.

Physics Nobel: Small is big

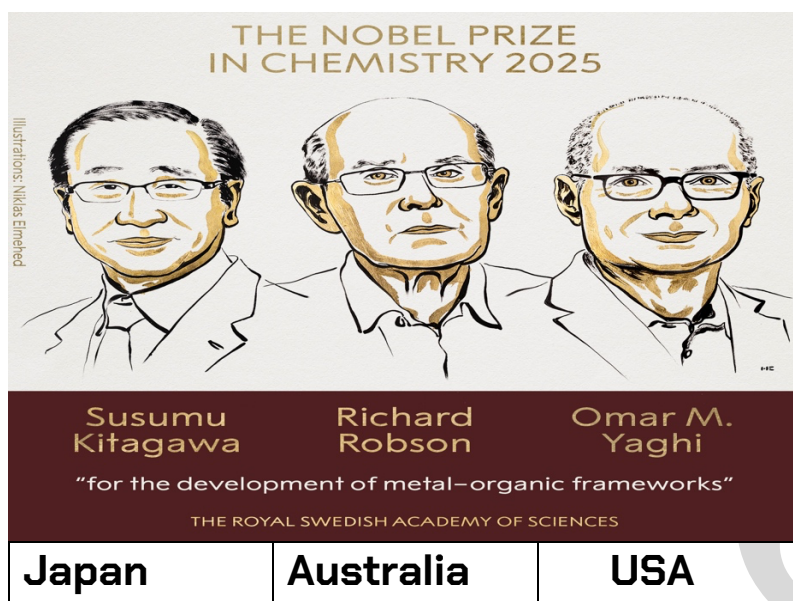
Physics Nobel honours scientists who helped unravel mysteries of the quantum world, making it the foundation of several technologies of today.

Then the great American physicist, Richard Feynman, made his famous remark, “nobody understands quantum mechanics”, he was only stating the limits of human intuition in understanding the ways of sub-atomic particles. Quantum mechanics forces humans to jettison the quest for familiarity when dealing with the universe at its smallest, most fundamental scale. However, over the years, the insights of quantum systems have informed the working of some of the most transformative technologies. This year’s Nobel Prize winners in Physics are among the scientists who have chipped away at the indeterminacy of sub-atomic particles. Over the last four decades, John Clarke, a British physicist based at the University of California at Berkeley, Michel Devoret, a French scientist who has worked at Yale University, and John Martinis, of the University of California Santa Barbara, have led a “series of experiments to demonstrate that the bizarre properties of the quantum world can be made concrete in a system big enough to be held in the hand”.

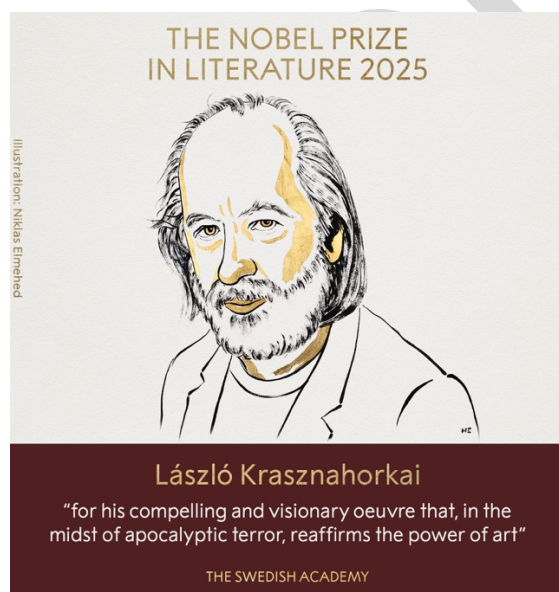
The studies revolutionised the understanding of **quantum tunnelling** — **the ability of particles, such as electrons, to move or tunnel through barriers.** This is somewhat akin to throwing a ball onto a wall and finding it across the other side of the structure, which remains unscathed. Before the trio began their experiments, the ability of single particles to tunnel was known. Clarke, Martinis and Devoret demonstrated that the phenomenon could take place at a far greater scale; they demonstrated the tunnelling effect in a simple electrical circuit incorporating superconductors, which allows current to flow without resistance.

The discovery paved the way for experiments that tested precise quantum physics on a silicon chip, and laid the ground for next-generation digital technology. As the Nobel Committee noted, their experiments “revealed quantum physics in action”.

Chemistry



Literature



Hungarian novelist and screenwriter

For own curiosity

From Nobel Prize laureate László Krasznahorkai, **lessons in endurance**

The award is endorsement of literature as **resistance and a reminder that great art is not always easy or immediate**

Reading László Krasznahorkai can be a daunting exercise. The Hungarian writer's characters drift through landscapes of entropy and ruin — provincial towns, collapsing empires, haunted minds. His prose unfurls across long, labyrinthine sentences that spiral through darkness and grace, that demands that readers look harder, stay longer, feel more. But for those who follow his winding syntax to the end, the reward is a haunting clarity, of the faint, stubborn lights of hope that lie beyond the abyss. It is this architecture of apocalypse and his almost monastic faith in language's capacity to reckon with chaos, "his compelling and visionary oeuvre that, in the midst of apocalyptic terror, reaffirms the power of art", that the Nobel Prize in Literature 2025 honoured.

Born in the provincial town of Gyula, Krasznahorkai's novels reflect Europe's shifting tectonics. In *Sátántangó* (1985), adapted into a seven-hour film by Béla Tarr, a collapsing Hungarian village becomes a stage for cyclical delusion. In *The Melancholy of Resistance* (1989), the arrival of a ghostly circus revives a provincial town's simmering anxieties. In *War and War* (1999), a lonely archivist travels to New York in a manic bid to publish a mysterious manuscript that may or may not hold the key to transcending time. In these narratives that unravel more than they resolve, Krasznahorkai, 71, confronts the most elemental of human fears — annihilation, irrelevance, absurdity — and the unschooled insubordination of hope.

In a world steeped in conflicts and climate crises and a pervasive culture of superficiality, the award to Krasznahorkai comes as a recognition of literature as resistance. It is a reminder that great art is not always immediate, or easy. It demands attention, engagement, even surrender. Sometimes, it lacks the polished graces of the mainstream, the marketable ease of the easily comprehensible.

Sometimes, as Krasznahorkai shows, it is a long sentence that leads readers into hearts of darkness, not to be lost, but to witness — and to learn how to endure.

Peace



Venezuela

Must read : Very good content for GS (Mains) and Essay

Nobel to Maria Corina Machado shows democracy is a work in progress

The honouring of Machado's tireless efforts to restore democracy in her country is an endorsement of the fact that the work of peace is not just conducted at the high diplomatic table; it happens in the trenches of the everyday struggle for justice

Fight of Maria Machado

- Over 20 years ago, when Maria Corina Machado first confronted Venezuela's deep institutional rot, she knew the choice was clear: It would be ballots over bullets. As she challenged the authoritarian regimes of Hugo Chavez and his successor Nicolas Maduro, demanding free and fair elections and campaigning against their repressive measures,
 - ✓ she was tried for treason,
 - ✓ stripped of her seat in the National Assembly,
 - ✓ repeatedly threatened with physical violence,
 - ✓ barred from election and forced to go into hiding.
- **That she has never stopped speaking up and reaching out to her beleaguered fellow citizens is a measure of her great personal courage.** For the Nobel Committee, which has honoured her long fight with the Peace Prize for 2025, **it is also an exemplar of what it takes to keep the flame of democracy alive.**

Democracy

- At a time of deepening authoritarianism around the world, this year's Peace Prize acknowledges that the work of democracy is never done, that it must be defended as much against tyranny as against cynicism and indifference.
- Democracy, as the Nobel Committee has said, "depends on people who refuse to stay silent, who dare to step forward despite grave risk and who remind us that freedom must never be taken for granted".
- The refusal to be mute in the face of despotism and cruelty often comes at great personal cost — imprisonment, exile, violence and even death — but this is what makes the fight so precious.

Peace

- Peace, of course, is not just the absence of war. Peace can exist only where there is freedom, where people have the right to choose and where they have a voice and hand in shaping their nation's future.

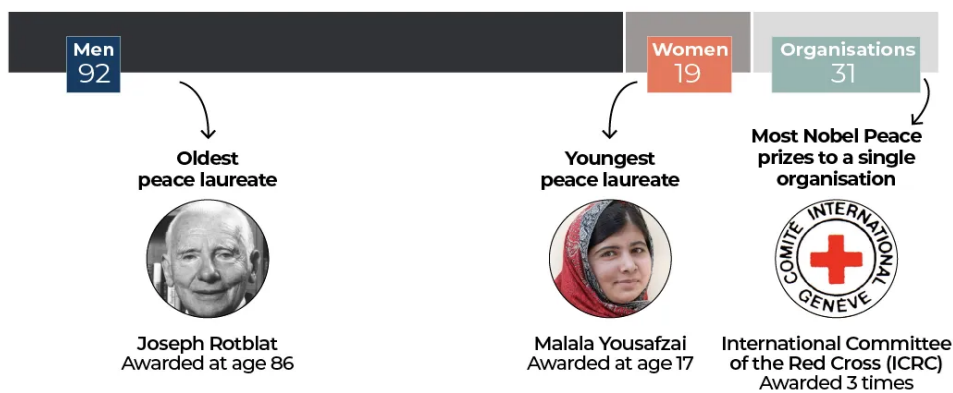
Conclusion

The honouring of Machado's tireless efforts to restore democracy in her country is an endorsement of the fact that the work of peace is not just conducted at the high diplomatic table; it happens in the trenches of the everyday struggle for justice and in the labour of all those who resist tyranny at every level.

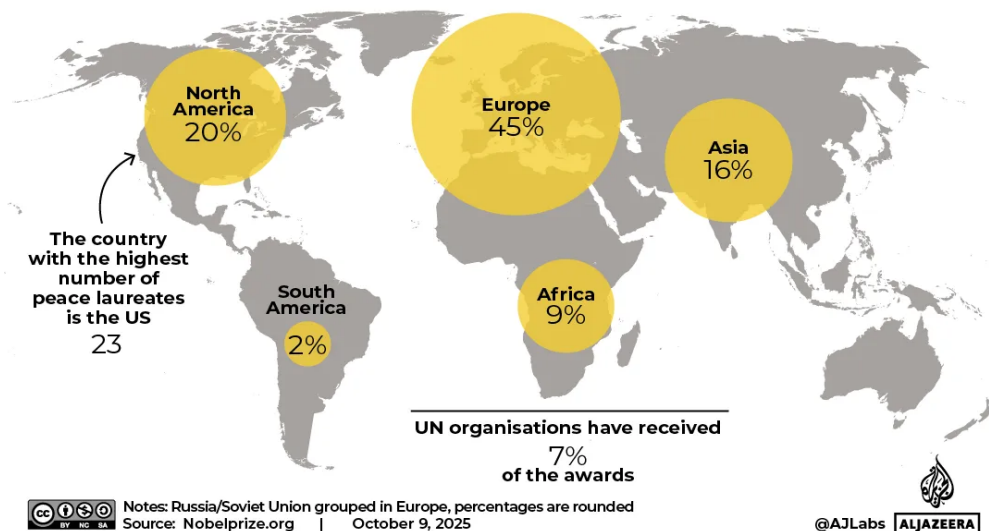
NOBEL PRIZE

Who has received the Nobel Peace Prize?

The Nobel Peace Prize has been awarded 105 times to 142 laureates. The prize is awarded to individuals or organisations that have made exceptional efforts to promote peace, resolve conflicts, and advance human rights.



Nobel Peace Prize laureates by continent



Economic Sciences



For own curiosity

Lesson from Economics Nobel: Innovation needs shepherds

In different ways, the three laureates show the importance of managing the turbulence that usually follows far-reaching changes in technology. Aghion has been a critic of protectionism, and Mokyr's work has emphasised the importance of society being open to new ideas.

Does innovation ipso facto spur economic growth, and does that, in turn, raise living standards? It's often tempting to answer in the affirmative. History, however, shows that the links between the three are not straightforward. At a moment when the world is on the cusp of a tech revolution that could upend conventional notions of labour and creativity, raising optimism and creating

disruption, the Nobel Committee has honoured three economists who have shone a light on why innovations enhance human well-being. Together, the work of Joel Mokyr at Northwestern University in the US, Philippe Aghion at the London School of Economics and Peter Howitt of Brown University explains why the world began growing at an unprecedented pace over the last two centuries, how societies sustained growth, and what happens when innovation is stifled.

Mokyr, an economic historian, was awarded half of the prize “for having identified the prerequisites for sustained growth through technological progress”. Innovation has been a longstanding feature of human societies, but it became a driver of economic growth only after the Industrial Revolution. As his work shows, technology becomes a harbinger of social prosperity only when there are scientific explanations for how things work. How to sustain that creative impulse? Aghion and Howitt use a mathematical model to explain what they call “creative destruction” — when a new and better product enters the market, companies selling older products lose out. The innovation represents something new and is thus creative. However, it also outcompetes an existing product, and is destructive.

The three laureates show the importance of managing the turbulence that usually follows far-reaching technological changes. Aghion has been a critic of protectionism, and Mokyr emphasised the importance of society being open to new ideas. Their work carries another message — progress is not guaranteed and requires nurturing innovative mechanisms.

Topic : GS (Mains)

Trump, disruptor-in-chief, becomes the unlikely peacemaker in Gaza

It is immensely heartening that the guns have fallen silent, the hostages have returned home, and the spotlight is on Palestine. Will Hamas disarm and Israel withdraw?

After two years of unrelenting bloodshed, it is difficult to overstate the significance in West Asia of the events of October 13. In line with the ceasefire signed between Israel and Hamas less than a week ago, Hamas freed all 20 remaining Israeli hostages (with the planned release of 28 dead hostages, only four bodies having been reportedly returned so far). Israeli ministers, in turn, approved a list of over 1,700 Palestinian prisoners for release, some of whom were taken by bus to Gaza and the West Bank shortly after the hostages were freed. This exchange marks an enormously welcome breakthrough — the closest the region has come to a conclusion of the brutal war that has killed at least 66,000 Palestinians and 2,000 Israelis and sparked a famine in parts of the Gaza Strip. At the centre of it all is US President Donald Trump, who flew to Israel and was given a standing ovation in the country's parliament. The polarising President and disruptor-in-chief is now the unlikely peacemaker in one of the world's most intractable conflicts. His claim of a lasting peace may be premature but if it happens, it will be a remarkable achievement.

In his speech to the Knesset, lasting over an hour, Trump said that the ceasefire signified not only the end of the war but also of the “age of terror and death”. Even as Israeli officials who spoke before him, including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, lavished praise on Trump, the US President lauded Israel, directed Netanyahu to “be nice”, suggested to Israel's President that Netanyahu be pardoned, presumably for his pending corruption cases, hinted at a potential deal with Iran. Amid the jubilation at the Knesset, Trump made only passing references to Gaza, saying that the Palestinian people deserved a better life with dignity, stability and economic development — there was no mention of a two-state solution or Palestinian self-determination, even as the latter is included in his 20-point

peace plan. His claim that Israel has “no more to achieve on the battlefield” and his shifting the burden to “build their people up” onto the Palestinians signal the difficult challenges that still lie ahead. For now, however, the ceasefire that Trump has forced upon Netanyahu offers long-awaited relief to Gaza.

That is where the Gaza Peace Summit, co-chaired by Trump in Egypt immediately after his Knesset visit, will be critical. The next phase of the peace plan depends on the deliberations initiated at Sharm el-Sheikh: Gaza’s governance and reconstruction, the withdrawal of Israeli troops, the future of Hamas, and most importantly, the path towards Palestinian self-determination and statehood. It is immensely heartening that the guns have fallen silent, the hostages have returned home, and the spotlight is on Palestine. Will Hamas disarm and Israel withdraw? If Hamas digs its heels in, that will affect the future of the “stabilisation force,” and give Israel the reason it needs to stay there. A long-term and workable solution to ring in the new requires both sides to discard the old, to ensure that the current ceasefire is not a pause before the next wave of hostilities but the giant first step to peace.

What’s left to be discussed



GAZA GOVERNANCE: Trump plan stipulates that postwar Gaza be governed by a technocratic Palestinian committee, not Hamas. Hamas says it is open to the idea.

HAMAS DISARMAMENT: Under Trump’s plan, Hamas would have to lay down its weapons. Its members would seek amnesty or leave Gaza for exile abroad. Hamas officials have expressed serious reservations about this.



INTERNATIONAL SECURITY MISSION: The US framework calls for an “international stabilisation force” to handle security in postwar Gaza. That’s not in the current agreement. But even the prospect raises huge questions: which countries would send troops, how they would do their jobs and whether they would be effective.

FULL ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL: The current agreement leaves Israeli forces deployed through the Gaza Strip. It is unclear when, or under what conditions, Israel would finally agree to withdraw forces from Gaza.



Sharm el-Sheikh: Venue of many international meetings, now hosting Trump-led 'Summit for Peace'

The 'Summit for Peace' in Sharm el-Sheikh will be attended by leaders from around the world

Backdrop

World leaders are gathering at Sharm el-Sheikh, **Egypt** to discuss **plans for ending the two-year long conflict in Gaza**, deemed by scholars and UN experts to be a “genocide” perpetrated by Israel, and usher in lasting peace in the region.

Brief history of Sharm el-Sheikh

- A town near the southern tip of the Sinai peninsula overlooking the Straits of Tiran, at the mouth of the Gulf of Aqaba.
- Originally a sleepy fishing village
- Today is a bustling resort town.... in recent years as one of the region's most happening tourist destinations with a thriving hospitality industry
- large part of it, is spurred by its strategic location
- Israel's only direct access to the Red Sea lies through the Straits of Tiran
- Hosted many major international conferences

The Red Sea connects the **Mediterranean Sea to the north** via the Suez Canal, and the **Indian Ocean to the south** via the Bab el-Mandeb strait and the Gulf of Aden. It acts as a critical waterway linking Europe, Asia, and East Africa.



Sharm el-Sheikh @ History between Israel – Egypt

➤ **Till 1956 with Egypt**

By the mid-20th century, Sharm el-Sheikh had emerged as a major port and naval base for the Egyptian Navy.

➤ **Conquered by @ 1956**

It was conquered by Israel during the **Suez Crisis of 1956**,

– overseen by a UN peacekeeping force from 1957 to 1967,

Re-conquered by @ 1967

reconquered by Israel in 1967 during the Six Day War, and held by the Zionist state until 1982.

➤ **1982 – handed back to Egypt**

Since being handed back to the Egyptians, Sharm el-Sheikh has grown as a thriving tourist town.

- In 1982, Egypt's then-president Hosni Mubarak had designated Sharm El Sheikh as "**The City of Peace**", and invited national and global investment which transformed the city into a regional hospitality hub.
- By 2000, there were almost 100 resorts in the city, a hundred-fold increase from the sole resort that stood in 1982.

Hosting of international conference

A few important examples:

- 1) Israel-Palestine Peace talks, 1999
- 2) Emergency Summit, 2000
- 3) Sharm el-Sheikh Summit, 2005
- 4) World Economic Forum on the Middle East & North Africa, 2006, 2008 and 2014
- 5) First EU-Arab League Summit 2019
- 6) COP27, 2022



15.10.2025

Topic : GS (Mains)

At Sharm el-Sheikh, leaders made a promise to Gaza. They must keep it

If Hamas refuses to disarm, relinquish control of Gaza, it would hand Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu the justification he needs to resume military action

- The October 13 hostage-prisoner swap between Israel and Hamas, momentous for bringing an end to the long-running hostilities, marks only the first step on a long road to stability and security in West Asia. That is why, immediately after his address to Israel's Knesset, US President Donald Trump, at the forefront of the renewed push for peace, flew to Egypt to co-chair an international summit in Sharm el-Sheikh. The breadth of the global commitment to peace was evident in the presence of more than 20 world leaders, including the heads of state/government of France, Britain, Italy, Canada and Germany. The joint statement issued at the conclusion of the summit, signed by Egypt, Qatar, Turkey and the US, welcomed the progress achieved in Gaza and pledged "to work collectively to implement and sustain this legacy". Although any reference to Palestinian statehood was conspicuously missing, it affirmed that a lasting peace would be one in which "both Palestinians and Israelis" have their "fundamental human rights protected, security guaranteed and dignity upheld". Washington's choice of words, which places Palestinians and Israelis on an equal footing, is a long-awaited recognition of Palestinian identity and dignity.
- The joint statement envisions West Asia as a region "where all can pursue their aspirations in peace, security, and economic prosperity, regardless of race, faith, or ethnicity". Coming from the Trump administration, this marks a dramatic reversal from earlier this year, when the US President floated plans to permanently relocate Gazans to

other countries, and made controversial remarks about “taking over” Gaza to make it the “Riviera of the Middle East”. One of the most striking moments at Sharm el-Sheikh was the warm exchange between Trump and Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas, who only weeks earlier had been denied a US visa, which prevented him from attending the UNGA session during which multiple countries recognised Palestinian statehood. These developments must ultimately lead to the Palestinian people having a seat at the table.

- There is a lot yet to be done. Although the first phase of the ceasefire agreement has been implemented, there is no clarity on when or where Phase 2 negotiations — aimed at the reconstruction of Gaza and lasting security for the region — will begin, despite Trump’s exuberant declaration at the summit that “Phase 2 has started”. The most pressing issue, which could undo much of the recent progress, remains Hamas and its weapons. If Hamas refuses to disarm, relinquish control of Gaza, and make way for a reformed PA as outlined in Trump’s 20-point plan, it would hand Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu the justification he needs to resume military action (remember how he discarded the January ceasefire in March). Israel, for its part, will have to exercise diplomatic flexibility and resist the temptation to respond to the inevitable roadblocks with renewed aggression. And Trump, who has thus far demonstrated the political will to end the conflict, must not take his eyes off the larger goal articulated in the joint statement: “A future of enduring peace.” It is a rare opportunity, it must not be lost.
-

17.10.2025

India's burden of lifestyle diseases is growing. We need a multi-pronged approach

Building synergies between projects targeted at the environment, the National Clean Air Programme, for instance, and those aimed at improving people's health and well-being is an imperative that cannot be postponed

- In 2017, the National Health Policy emphasised the need to **focus on**

non-communicable diseases (NCDs) like

heart ailments,

diabetes and

respiratory afflictions.

- The policy was a response to an epidemiological transition that had commenced around the second decade of this century.
- The report of the latest **Global Burden of Disease** study,

released earlier this week, shows that the shift has become more pronounced in the eight years since the policy came into operation.

It makes a strong case for a healthcare strategy that recognises

- **the adverse effects of environmental pollution,**
- **unhealthy diets and**
- **sedentary lifestyles.**

Another key takeaway of the report is that though Indians are living longer, chronic diseases diminish the quality of life of senior citizens.

➤ WHO data, for instance, shows that

these diseases are **responsible for** **close to 65% of deaths in India** and about **1/4th (25%)** of those who **succumb to NCDs are below the age of 70** —

this figure is roughly

12% for the US
and
17% for China.

□ In other words,

**cardiovascular diseases,
diabetes, and
lung ailments**

are cutting the lives of
a large section of Indians short,
hurting their families, society,
and the economy.

□ The problem is also that
some of these diseases are not well understood.

□ The Global Burden of Disease study
draws attention to one such ailment,

COPD is incurable, but not untreatable, and
early diagnosis can make a big difference.

COPD (Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease) —

it constitutes **more than 75% of the country's burden of respiratory diseases.**

In a large number of patients, however, the disease evades diagnosis because doctors do not follow protocols and most often target the symptoms – cough, cold and fever.

- ✎ In recent years, the government has bolstered community health centres (CHCs) and primary health centres (PHCs) in rural areas. The Global Burden of Disease study underscores the next-level challenge for the National Health Policy — to strengthen the diagnostic acumen of doctors at CHCs and PHCs.
 - The country needs an approach that combines medical research with understanding from nutritional and ecological sciences. Ensuring that people make healthy choices will require building awareness — on food habits, physical activities, the environment — from a young age through schools, families, and communities. Building synergies between projects targeted at the environment, the National Clean Air Programme, for instance, and those aimed at improving people's health and well-being is an imperative that cannot be postponed.
-

Heroic Cape Verde and hopeless India: Why there is no correlation between population and success in football

India's inability to feature even in an expanded, 24-team Asian Cup — despite a far bigger population, more players, better grounds and a lucrative league — points to a hopeless situation and an alarming slide in football.

- Cape Verde, **an archipelago of 10 islands in the Atlantic Ocean,** became the **second-smallest nation (after Iceland in 2018)** to qualify for the FIFA World Cup on Monday (October 13).

- Less than 24 hours later, India crashed to an embarrassing defeat to world number 158 Singapore in Goa, thus failing to make the cut for the 2027 Asian Cup.

- In their own ways, both results were astonishing and evoked contrasting emotions.

- ✎ The heartwarming story of Cape Verde — 815 times smaller than India in terms of land area and with a population that is less than two per cent of New Delhi— from the fringes of African football to the cream of the world game is exactly the kind that makes the World Cup the single-most compelling event in sports.

The population angle

It is tempting to look at the two outcomes through the population prism. However, there might not be a direct correlation between population and success.

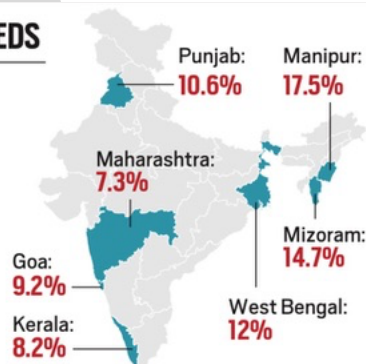
For, the tiny African nation tapped into its diaspora population; with **players residing in Portugal, France and the Netherlands** forming more than half of the squad.

And while India may be a country of nearly 1.5 billion, **almost half of its professional footballers who have managed to get playing time in the country's top division league come from just three states** with a combined population of less than 60 lakh.

INDIA'S FOOTBALL HOTBEDS

80% of pro football minutes over the last 11 seasons of Indian football's top division came from **7 states** who together boast only **13.7%** of the country's population.

Source: Richard Hood, 'Our Talent Clusters: Indian football's hotbeds and how to develop them', 2025



80% Pro Minutes comes from 7.4% of our population



18.10.2025

Google's \$15 billion AI investment in Andhra Pradesh: A boost, a beginning

These efforts need to be supplemented by a similar focus on boosting research and development and skilling the labour force

The last few years have seen a dramatic surge in AI investments, driven by global tech majors such as **Microsoft, Alphabet, Meta, Nvidia** and **OpenAI**. As developing AI models and then making them available for use at a global level requires huge capital, the scale of the investments being made has reached impressive proportions. In 2024, global corporate investment in AI touched \$252.3 billion as per the AI index report from Stanford University. As per McKinsey, the data centres needed to handle AI processing are expected to

require \$5.2 trillion in capex by 2030, the bulk of which is likely to be directed towards technology developers to produce chips and computing hardware. While some have expressed concerns over this AI boom — the IMF has, for instance, warned that “the risk is also that lofty profit expectations will ultimately be unmet” — others are more optimistic with tech majors stepping up their investments.

Earlier this week, Google announced that it will invest \$15 billion over the next five years (2026-2030) to set up an AI data centre in **Andhra Pradesh. Situated in Visakhapatnam, it will be Google's largest outside the US**, and will include a “purpose-built data centre campus capable of gigawatt-scale compute capacity”. Earlier this year, during its second quarter earnings season, the company had raised its capex forecast for the year to \$85 billion to meet the growing demand as adoption rates for both firms and companies surge. This is a big boost to India’s plans to be a major player in this space. India’s data centre industry had crossed the 1 GW mark in 2024 as per a report by JLL. Estimated to account for 52 per cent of the country’s capacity, **Mumbai leads the market, followed by Chennai and Delhi.**

The world over governments are announcing ambitious plans and pledging huge resources in the AI space. The Indian government has also taken several steps to help build the larger ecosystem in the country.

- Ten semiconductor manufacturing projects, including high-volume fabs and OSATs (outsourced semiconductor assembly and test), have been approved.
- Alongside, 23 chip-design projects have been sanctioned by the government and 12 startups have been chosen to build indigenous large language models and small language models.

✍ Thus, across the spectrum,

from the physical infrastructure (data centres) and the semiconductor projects (chips)
--

to developing large language models, India is making progress.
--

✍ These efforts need to be supplemented by a similar focus on boosting research and development and skilling the labour force.

20.10.2025

29 PALESTINIANS KILLED IN GAZA; ISRAEL SAYS ITS FORCES WERE ATTACKED

Gaza ceasefire close to collapse as Israeli forces launch wave of strikes

Elephant census: DNA-based census is a step forward in wildlife monitoring

Clarity must lead to course correction in conservation.

▪ **Conducted by :**

- **Wildlife Institute of India (WII)**
- under the aegis of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC)

There are **3 species** of elephants that occur in the world.

Africa has 2 of them and **Asia has 1.**

Asian Elephant (*Elephas maximus*) is the largest terrestrial mammal of India which requires large forested habitats to manage and maintain the viable populations.

Thus, without doubt, conservation of elephants clearly rests on securing large forested habitats.

▪ **Project Elephant:**

- The government program, **launched in 1992**
 - ✓ as a **Centrally Sponsored Scheme** of the Ministry of Environment, Forests & Climate Change,
 - ✓ that provides the overall framework and policy context for elephant conservation and monitoring, has **completed 30 years in 2022** (Gaj Utsav, 2023).
- The Project Elephant (PE) was launched with **following objectives:**
 - **To protect elephants, their habitat & corridors**
 - **To address issues of man-animal conflict**
 - **Welfare of captive elephants**
- Financial and Technical support are being provided to major elephant bearing States in the country.
 - Presently, the Project Elephant is being implemented in **22 States/UTs**, viz. Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Tripura, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Rajasthan, Andaman & Nicobar, Bihar, Punjab, Gujarat and Haryana (where an elephant rescue centre has been set up supported by Project Elephant).
- From the fiscal year **2023-24**, Project Elephant has been merged with Project Tiger and is now called **Project Tiger & Elephant.**
- **Wildlife Institute of India (WII):** The **autonomous body** responsible for conducting the study and applying the new scientific methodology.

Synchronous All India Elephant Estimation (SAIEE) 2021-25

- The **SAIEE 2021–25** was notable for being **India's first-ever DNA-based elephant census**, which established a new scientific baseline for monitoring the country's elephant population.

- India's latest elephant population estimate, the **Synchronous All India Elephant Estimation (SAIEE) 2021-25**, released last week, paints a sobering picture.

Fresh
Baseline

- It places the country's wild Asian elephant numbers at 22,446,

a **notable drop from** the 27,312 reported in **2017**.

4866
17.8%

- The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has clarified that the new figure marks a methodological reset — a "**fresh baseline**" rather than a figure directly comparable with previous counts.

Western Ghats

N-E India

- ✓ The **Western Ghats** and the **Northeast India**

remain key elephant strongholds,

with **Karnataka, Assam** and **Kerala** home to some of the densest populations.

Karnataka
Assam
Kerala

Steepest
Declines

North east
Central India
Eastern Ghats

- ✓ But the methodological shift notwithstanding, **the drop in estimated elephant population stands at 17.8%**, with the steepest declines recorded in the Northeast, in central India and in the Eastern Ghats regions.

Jharkhand 68%

Odisha 54%

- ✓ **Jharkhand** and **Odisha** have seen

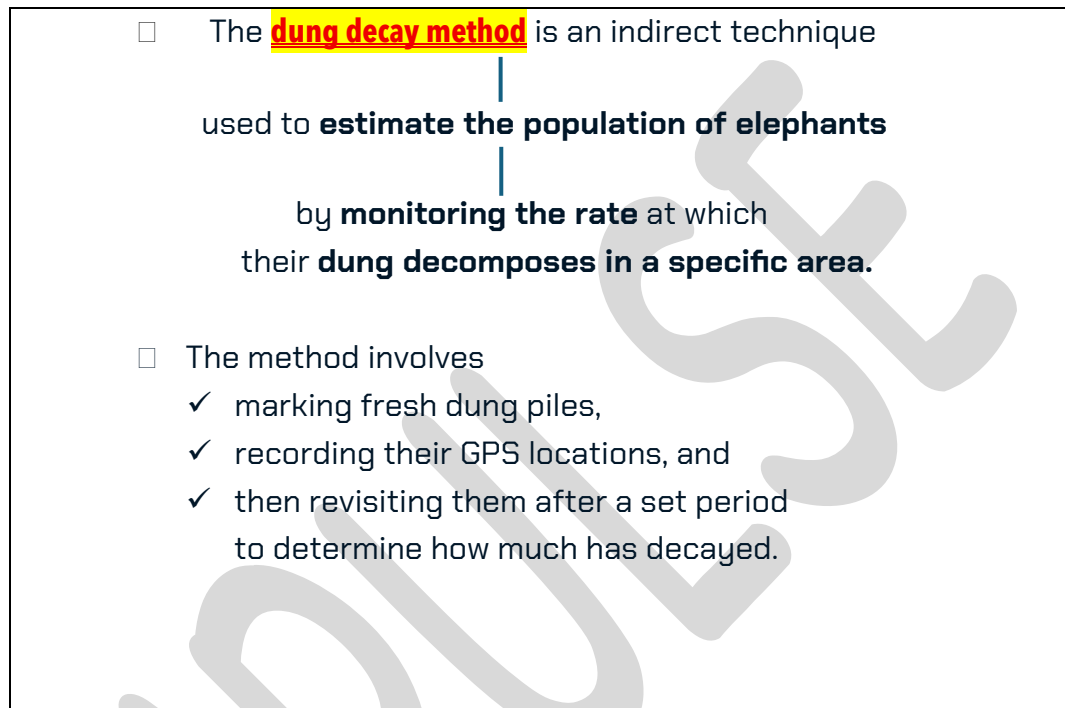
a **68%** and **54%** decline

respectively vis-a-vis the 2017 estimate.

- ✓ This renews concerns over long-standing threats to elephant habitats and movement corridors.

- Despite the troubling numbers, however, the report marks a scientific step forward. The **shift to genetic mark-recapture methods**, modelled on the robust tiger census framework, is a welcome correction in India's wildlife monitoring.

- Instead of relying on direct counts, waterhole observations or dung-decay rates alone, the new method incorporates spatially structured **sampling grids and genetic analysis** of dung samples, enabling researchers to identify individual elephants with far greater precision. This marks an important evolution in wildlife monitoring.



- While tigers can be individually identified through their stripes, elephants pose a more complex challenge.
- DNA analysis helps overcome this, lending both scientific robustness to the process and room for more accurate long-term tracking of population trends and habitat use, vital for a species that roams vast and varied landscapes.
- This is also what makes the uncomfortable pattern thrown up by the census of particular concern: **Pachyderms** are increasingly being imperilled by the human appetite for infrastructure, combined with an institutional indifference to its ecological costs. The Asian elephant, listed as "endangered" on the IUCN Red List, faces mounting threats from accelerating habitat fragmentation and changes in land-use patterns.

- **India is home to over 60% of the world's Asian elephants**, making its conservation policies globally consequential.

Threats

➤ But **pressure on forest land from**

mining, power projects, railways, highways and agriculture

continues to **chip away** at the animal's traditional habitat and migratory routes.

- As herds are forced into unfamiliar terrain, **conflicts with humans escalate**, increasingly with fatal consequences.

Remedy to threats

Conservation must urgently integrate elephant movement and safety with the blueprint of development. This includes

securing corridors,

enforcing ecological safeguards in project clearances, and

strengthening human-animal conflict mitigation measures at the grassroots.

- ✎ The clarity offered by the census must form the basis of meaningful course correction.

Man-animal conflict

Ministry of forest and environment had announced DNA profiling of elephants with a view to conserve them on the occasion of 30 years of Project Elephant

IN 2017, THE
NUMBER OF
ELEPHANTS WAS
RECORDED AT

29,964

DNA profiling is expected to help identify elephant corridors and reduce human-elephant conflict and smuggling of elephants



There are around **1,000** elephants near temples and institutions in several states, including Assam and Kerala

The census report has been sent to the Central government and is expected to be released soon by Union Ministry of Forest & Environment.

GENTLE GIANTS DOWN

AI Image

25%

drop in elephant population since 2017

500

elephants electrocuted between 2017-2025

100

elephants killed in train collisions

50

poached across India during same period

150

elephant corridors officially recognised

77

railway stretches flagged as high-risk



705

structures proposed for mitigation (underpasses, ramps, bridges)

12,000

elephants in Western Ghats — India's largest herd zone

2,921

elephants lost in Kerala — highest decline

70%

of unnatural deaths linked to electrocution

3,452km of railway stretches surveyed in 14 states



We don't have landscape-level planning. Projects are split to escape scrutiny. These are structural failures hurting elephant survival — **Qamar Qureshi, WILDLIFE INSTITUTE OF INDIA**

INDIA'S WILD ELEPHANT

POPULATION FALLS 18% IN FIRST DNA-BASED CENSUS

ELEPHANT POPULATION		HIGHLIGHT
2017	2021-25	~18% DROP; NEW RIGOROUS METHOD
27,312	27,446	
METHOD		
		» VISUAL & DUNG COUNTS » DNA + MARK-RECAPTURE » STATISTICALLY ROBUST, TIGER-STYLE
TOP REGION		TOP STATE
 	» WESTERN GHATS 11,934 » LARGEST STRONGHOLD	 » KARNATAKA 6,013 » KEY POPULATION HUB
MAJOR THREATS		CONSERVATION CALL
» HABITAT LOSS, HUMAN CONFLICT, INFRASTRUCTURE » DRIVES UNNATURAL DEATHS		» PROTECT CORRIDORS & HABITATS » SCIENCE-DRIVEN ACTION NEEDED

ELEPHANT SPECIES

THERE ARE 3 DIFFERENT SPECIES OF ELEPHANTS:

LARGEST LAND MAMMALS

WHAT ARE ELEPHANTS?

Elephants are the largest living land mammals on earth – they belong to the family Elephantidae.

They are easily recognised by their long trunks (elongated upper lip and nose), pillar-shaped legs, and huge head, with wide, flat ears.

Elephants are grayish to brown in colour, and their body hair is sparse and coarse.

There are 3 different species of elephants

They are four-legged, herbivorous and extremely adaptable.

- They are found most often in savannas, grasslands, and forests but occupy a wide range of habitats, including deserts, swamps, and highlands in tropical and subtropical regions in both Africa and Asia.
- Only one hundred years ago, there were 10 million African elephants inhabiting the African continent. By 2016, however, their numbers were reduced to only about 450,000.

AFRICAN SAVANNAH ELEPHANT

Loxodonta africana

- The African Savanna elephant weighs up to 7,000 kg and stands 3.5 to 4 metres at the shoulder.
- Adult bulls have wide rounded heads compared to narrow pointed heads of female elephants.
- They have long curved tusks.

AFRICAN FOREST ELEPHANT

Loxodonta cyclotis

- Forest elephants live in rainforests, and were recognized as a separate species in 2021. They are slightly smaller than Savanna elephants and rarely larger than 5,000 kg.
- They have slender, downward-pointing tusks and rounder ears.

ASIAN ELEPHANT

Elephas maximus

- The Asian elephant includes three subspecies: the Indian, or mainland (E. maximus indicus), the Sumatran (E. maximus sumatranus), and the Sri Lankan (E. maximus maximus).
- They weigh about 4,000 kg and have a shoulder height of up to 3 metres.

Project Tiger launched in 1973.



TIGER

Subspecies of Tiger

- * The continental (*Panthera tigris tigris*)
- * The Sunda (*Panthera tigris sondaica*)

Habitat

Tropical rainforests, evergreen forests, temperate forests, mangrove swamps, grasslands, and savannas

Countries Where Tiger Population Is Found

- Found only in 13 Tiger Range countries- India, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Russia, China, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam
- As per the latest report by IUCN, tiger has gone extinct in Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam

Protection Status

- IUCN Red List: Endangered
- CITES: Appendix I
- WPA 1972: Schedule I

Threats

- Habitat loss
- Poaching and illegal trade
- Human-Wildlife conflict

Conservation Efforts

- International Big Cats Alliance (IBCA): For conservation of seven big cats namely Tiger, Lion, Leopard, Snow Leopard, Cheetah, Jaguar and Puma (launched by India)
- Tx2 campaign: Launched by WWF; stands for 'Tiger times 2' signaling the goal to double the tiger population by 2022.
- National Tiger Conservation authority (NTCA): Constituted under the WPA, 1972
- Project Tiger: Launched in 1973
- Tiger Census: Every 4 years

Tigers In India

- India has the largest population
- As of 2022, India has 3167 tigers
- Largest population has been found in Central Indian Highlands & Eastern Ghats Landscape
- Tiger Reserves: India now has 53 tiger reserves Ranipur in UP is the latest
- • Nagarjun Sagar (Andhra Pradesh) is the largest while Orang (Assam) is the smallest (Core area)

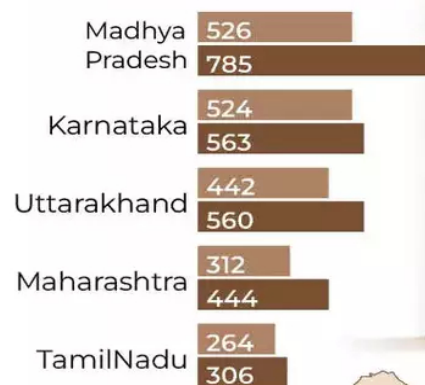
The Tiger Count

Tiger numbers in India:



States with highest tiger numbers

■ 2018 ■ 2022



Reserves with highest tiger population

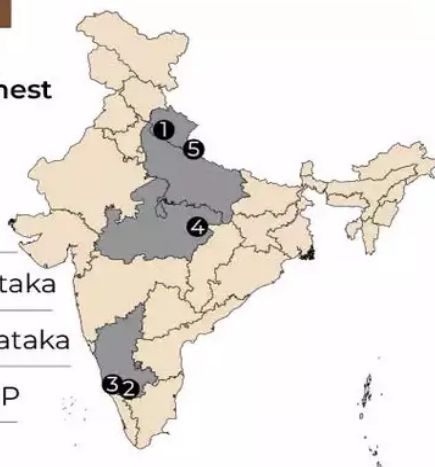
❶ Jim Corbett, Uttarakhand

❷ Bandipur, Karnataka

❸ Nagarhole, Karnataka

❹ Bandhavgarh, MP

❺ Dudhwa, UP



23.10.2025

Supreme Court order on trans rights highlights government failures

The fact that courts have had to step in repeatedly to ensure that the rights of a vulnerable section of the citizenry are not violated, reflects poorly on the executive

- Over 10 years after the landmark **NALSA judgment** — it recognised a “third gender”, affirmed trans persons’ **fundamental rights** and the **right to self-determination of gender identity** — and five years after the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Rules, 2020 came into effect, trans persons in India continue to face discrimination.

In 2020, the **Parliament** legally **recognized ‘transgender’ as an official gender** in India.

- On October 17, the Supreme Court pulled up the Centre and state governments for “brutishly” reducing the **Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019** and its corresponding rules to “dead letters” and exhibiting “a grossly apathetic attitude towards the transgender community”.
- Jane Kaushik, a transgender woman, **petitioned the Court after allegedly facing discrimination and the forceful termination of her employment at two private schools in Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat in the span of a year.**
 - The SC bench hearing the matter **constituted an advisory committee** to assess the implementation of the Trans Act and recommend a “viable equal opportunity policy... to be introduced by the Union and state governments” within three months of the draft’s submission.
 - For establishments lacking their own policies, the Centre’s policy will be enforceable.

- The creation of a panel to operationalise protections guaranteed in law is a welcome step. But it speaks of a larger failure — the **lack of political will to ensure that transgender citizens can live a life of dignity and equality as guaranteed by the Constitution and affirmed by the SC.**
- The NALSA judgment and the Trans Rules mandate protections **against discrimination in employment, medical care and education** for transgender persons.
 - Yet, implementation has been abysmal. For example, the Rules require governments to build **separate washrooms and wards in hospitals.** Over three years past the deadline, however, this remains a pipe dream.
 - The Rules also mandated the **constitution of transgender welfare boards,** which only 19 states and Union Territories had done as of 2024; fewer still are reportedly functional.
 - Across states, transgender persons have **had to move high courts and the SC after being denied access to medical care, employment opportunities, and documents such as passports and graduation certificates due to bureaucratic apathy and/or insensitivity.**
- ✎ The fact that courts have had to step in repeatedly to ensure that the rights of a vulnerable section of the citizenry are not violated, reflects poorly on the executive. It is up to the state now to ensure the implementation of the Rules and the committee's policy recommendations.

NALSA JUDGEMENT

NATIONAL LEGAL SERVICES AUTHORITY (NALSA) V. UNION OF INDIA

2014 NALSA judgment recognized transgender rights, established third gender identity, and ensured legal safeguards.

- **BACKGROUND:** Continuous discrimination led NALSA to file PIL for transgender recognition and address social exclusion.

- **KEY ISSUES:** Legal recognition, fundamental rights, self-identification, and socio-economic welfare of transgender individuals.

- **Petitioners' Arguments:** Violation of Articles 14, 19, 21; demanded gender equality, self-identification, and freedom from discrimination.
- **Respondents' Arguments:** Acknowledged transgender rights but emphasized implementation challenges; suggested forming an expert committee.
- **Findings of Supreme Court:** Declared transgender individuals as third gender; ensured rights to self-identification, privacy, and equality.
- **Directives of Judgment:** Legal recognition, affirmative action, healthcare access, public facilities, and awareness campaigns mandated.
- **Impact of Judgment:** Legal recognition, policy reforms, increased awareness, and judicial precedent for marginalized communities.
- **Challenges Ahead:** Discrimination, violence, stigma, and weak state-level policy implementation remain unresolved issues.

The court held that all transgender persons are entitled to fundamental rights under Article 14 (Equality), Article 15 (Non Discrimination), Article 16 (Equal Opportunity in Public Employment), Article 19(1)(a) (Right to Free Speech) and Article 21 (Right to Life) of the Indian Constitution.

The court held that all transgender persons are entitled to fundamental rights under

- **Article 14** (Equality),
- **Article 15** (Non-Discrimination),
- **Article 16** (Equal Opportunity in Public Employment),
- **Article 19(1)(a)** (Right to Free Speech) and
- **Article 21** (Right to Life)

Pros and cons

SALIENT FEATURES	COMMUNITY'S RESPONSE
• Definitions do not differentiate between transgenders, transsexuals, intersex persons and genderqueer	• Community differentiates between transgender, transsexual and intersex persons and dismisses the 'one-solution fits all' idea
• Prohibition against discrimination in education, employment, healthcare, public facilities etc. Also prevents forced labour	• Lack of enforceability dilutes provision. Lived experiences riddled with discrimination
• Certificate of identity can be obtained at the DM's office and a revised certificate is to be obtained if sex is changed	• Shuns provision as impinging on their right to self-determination. Fear it'll lead to bureaucratic discrimination
• Government welfare measures and provisions of healthcare, including HIV surveillance centres, and sex reassignment surgeries	• Step forward but medical community lacks knowledge of transgender bodies
• Transgender persons may only change their first name	• Prefer to take Guru's name since many have severed ties with their birth family
• Setting up of a National Council for Transgender persons (NCT), including various Ministers and five transgender persons	• Desire greater representation in decision making that affects them directly

My Curiosity : My Knowledge

When the SMALL GUY WINS

In UP, poor Diwali bonus leads to a unique workers' protest that made a point.

All too often, in this age of disconnection and scattered focus, employee dissatisfaction is expressed in symbolic gestures — individual acts of defiance that amount to “lying down” on the job (*tang ping* as practised by China’s youth, for example) or doing the bare minimum (as seen in the post-pandemic wave of “quiet quitting”). Creating ripples that quietly and quickly dissipate, there is little about these actions that inspires change or provokes a reaction. Before the great, well-oiled machinery of capital and industry, they are the most minor of irritants, abstractions that are easy to brush aside or roll over.

Which is what makes the protest launched last Saturday by workers at a toll plaza on the Agra- Lucknow highway remarkable. Unhappy over the paltry Diwali bonus they received, 21 staffers raised the barriers and walked off the job, thus allowing over 5,000 vehicles to breeze through without paying the hefty toll: An

elegant execution of the **hit-em-where-it-hurts school of attack** usually reserved for the boxing or wrestling ring. As an act of protest against an employer trying to economise at the expense of workers, it doesn't get more impactful than this. Not surprisingly, the company operating the toll booth agreed that very night to hike the striking staffers' pay.

Beyond being a Diwali miracle of sorts, the episode is an affirmation of why the underdog story continues to matter. It's easy enough to throw up one's hands, allow the big and small indignities of the everyday to erode the will to fight and replace what could be a rallying cry with a sigh of defeat. The protest in that one toll plaza in Uttar Pradesh comes, then, as a reminder that the small guy, too, can win — **all it takes is collective will and knowing where to hit.**

24.10.2025

Scale of **dynastic politics**, across political parties, is a warning and a symptom

Over half of India's population is under 30. How many of them can look up to a leadership that can empathise with their struggles and aspirations? For political parties, this is an important question to ask themselves and work on reforms for their own long-term future.

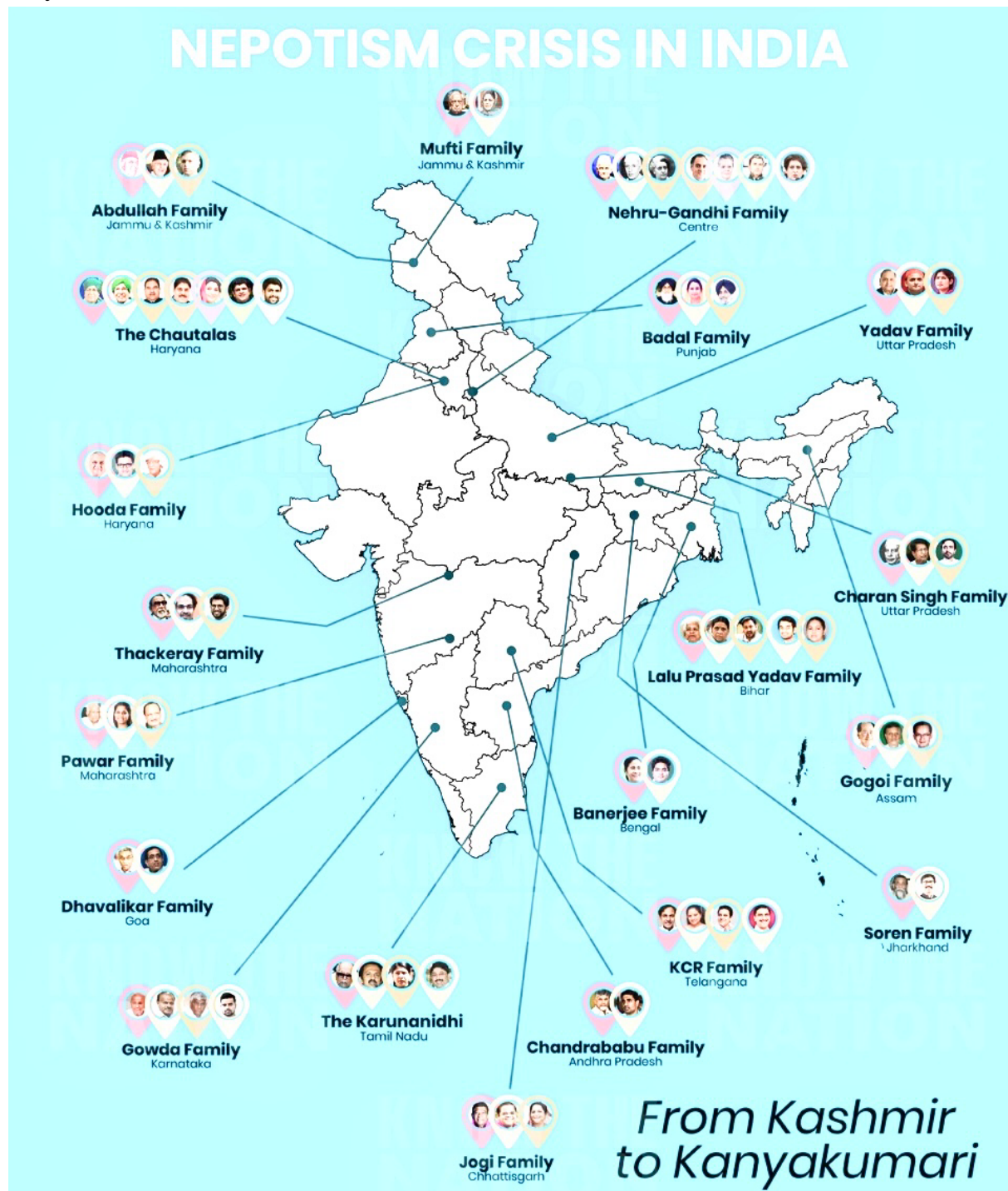
In a democracy as large and vibrant as India, there are several ways to categorise and analyse political parties: Through ideology, modes of organisation, as well as area and scope of influence. However, as an investigation in this newspaper has shown, dynastic leaders are common to nearly all major parties in the country. About 149 families — in a country of 1.45 billion — have more than one dynast-legislator. Congress, even in its diminished state, has 857 legislators and 33.2 per cent of them are dynasts. The BJP has almost thrice the number of legislators —

2,078 MPs, MLAs and MLCs — but its share of dynasts is 18.6 per cent, just above half that of Congress. Most major regional parties — from the SP and RJD to the JD(U), DMK and TDP — are dominated by families in both party and government. The Left parties are exceptions. The most obvious danger of this epidemic of political fiefdoms is the diminishing opportunities for new talent and the narrowing of representation to a few lineages. The sheer scale of the problem, however, demands a more nuanced analysis.

With all its ups and downs, Indian democracy has deepened representation since Independence — both within and outside electoral politics. Since the first generation of leaders who gained credibility because of participation in the anti-colonial struggle, the polity has expanded — as a result of protests, elections, splits and new entrants — to give political voice to marginalised groups. Today, almost every major political party must take into account these voices and their aspirations, in one form or another — from Dalits and religious minorities to Adivasis, OBCs and women. This churn makes painting every party with the same brush a fraught exercise. The question, then, is not merely about how many “dynasts” are in a party but also the internal structures that enable mobility, and where on the social ladder its leaders are. In the case of parties emerging from social justice movements, for example, the failure is arguably as much structural as of leadership: While the first generation of leaders emerged from a culture of protest, they did not build organisations that allowed for the creation of a broader, more empowered leadership pool. The Left and the BJP are ideological and cadre-based, where such structures have been built in. The Left has withered away except in Kerala and the BJP has ensured more of a level playing field than others, although it should also pay heed to early warning signs: As its power footprint grows, more families are getting a slice of the pie. For Congress, India’s oldest party, family leadership is the most ossified, its label of “dynastic politics” well-earned.

Over half of India’s population is under 30. How many of them can look up to a leadership that can empathise with their struggles and aspirations? How many leaders can they look up to who have worked their way in? For political parties, this is an important question to ask themselves. Dynastic politics is a symptom. Few would object to the son or daughter of a politician getting a ticket if they came up through the ranks, paid their dues, from the panchayat or municipal level to Parliament. Political parties need to open their doors and at the same time set

a higher bar for relatives. In fact, a family association should be seen as a liability rather than the asset it now is. This will ensure political competition and the continued confidence of the electorate, and their long-term future. Without such reform, parties will fail to attract talent and may well wither away — to make way for those that do.



27.10.2025

Creating discord between religious communities with ‘unsaid words’? Allahabad HC decision is anti-free speech

The Allahabad HC verdict frames a vague unlawful zone that people must steer clear of. It goes against Shreya Singhal case’s strictures. The HC must course correct

Can a person be charged for trying to create discord between religious communities with “unsaid words”? In a deeply troubling decision, the Allahabad High Court recently said that a WhatsApp text can indeed give a “subtle message” to stoke interfaith strife, even without explicitly mentioning religion. It refused to quash an FIR and directed the accused, Afaq Ahmad, to face trial. **The decision could have a chilling effect on free speech.**

Ahmad had moved the HC after the Uttar Pradesh police had registered a case against him under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita’s Section 352 — it criminalises intentional insults that provoke a breach of public peace. The police had sought to incriminate Ahmad on the basis of a WhatsApp text to two people. On October 23, this newspaper reported that in the message, Ahmad had alleged his brother had been “framed in a false case by putting political pressure on the police”. He had lamented that “a call has been made for a total boycott of my family’s livelihood”. The message contained repeated assertions of his faith in the judiciary. Ahmad’s lawyers also argued that their client only intended to convey resentment about his brother’s arrest. The HC, however, said that the Whatsapp text, “definitely conveys an underlying and subtle message that his brother has been targeted in a false case, because of his belonging to a particular religious community.” It went on to say, “even if one were to think that no religious feelings of a class of citizens or community have been outraged... it is certainly a message, which, by its unsaid words, is likely to create or promote feelings of enmity, hatred and ill-will between religious communities... members of a particular community, in the first instance, could

think that they are being targeted by members of another religious community by abusing the process of law”.

Criminal laws, especially those that deal with the fundamental Right to Freedom of Speech and Expression, require a clinical interpretation. In looking for unsaid words and subtle messaging, the HC seems to have gone against the Supreme Court’s landmark 2015 ruling in **Shreya Singhal v Union of India**. The apex court had said that “a penal law is void for vagueness if it fails to define the criminal offence with sufficient definiteness”. It had underlined that “ordinary people should be able to understand what conduct is prohibited and what is permitted”. The Allahabad HC verdict, in contrast, frames a vague unlawful zone that people must steer clear of. It goes against Shreya Singhal’s strictures against the “arbitrary and discriminatory enforcement of the law”. The HC must course correct.

30.10.2025



PRESIDENT’S RAFALE SORTIE

President Droupadi Murmu before her sortie on a Rafale jet at the IAF station in Ambala on Wednesday. She became the first Indian President to fly in two IAF fighters — her previous sortie was in a Sukhoi 30 MKI in April 2023. Kamleshwar Singh

REPORT, [PAGE 6](#)

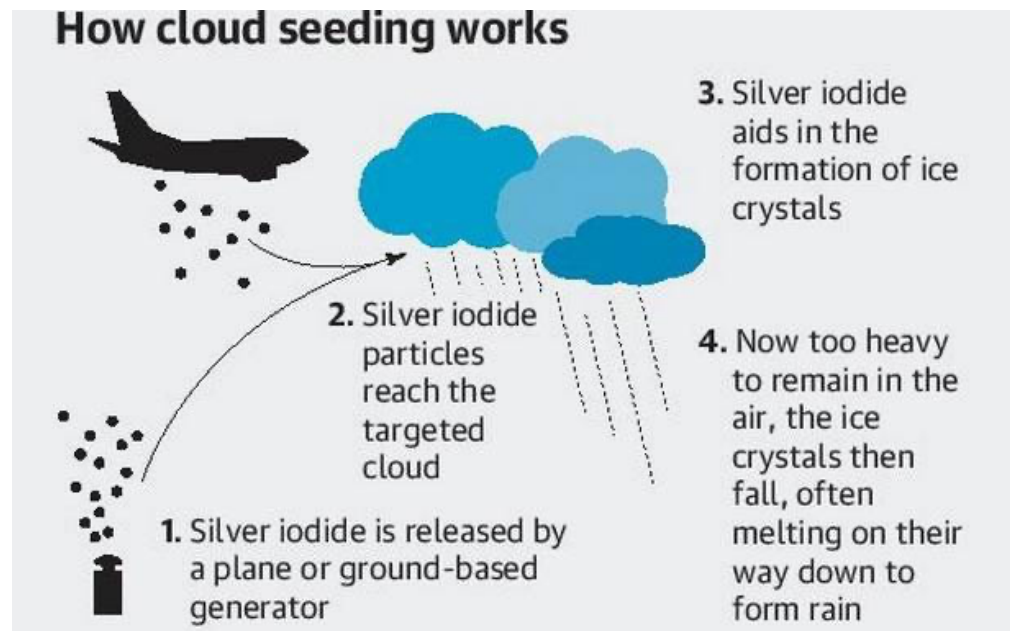
Cloud seeding in Delhi: A damp squib

Even if it had succeeded, the project would have made only a minor dent in Delhi's bad air. City needs more durable solutions

A week after the Diwali festivities, a thick haze continues to hang over the national capital, and the city's residents have had little respite from unhealthy air. The Delhi government's attempt to reduce pollution by inducing artificial rains came to nought on Tuesday. **A small aircraft sprinkled silver iodide and salt particles on clouds in parts of Delhi's sky, but 0.3 mm of rain over Noida and Greater Noida was all that came from the effort.** *It was apparent that the clouds did not have enough water to pour down over the capital. The Delhi government's desperation is understandable. The capital's pollution challenge is complex and deeply entrenched — it requires a multi-pronged effort. In the past, cloud seeding has been used as a **drought management tool**. But the jury is out on the technique's efficacy in **cleaning toxic air**. *Scientists had warned that the moisture content of the late autumn clouds would be insufficient to wash away the particulate matter in Delhi's air.* The argument that any relief would, at best, be temporary also did not cut much ice with the Delhi government.*

Unlike even a decade ago, there is a wealth of research and publicly available analytical tools that pinpoint the causes of Delhi's bad air. There might be variations at different locations in the capital, but the major sources of pollution are now well identified. Their relative contributions, as well as their day-night, monthly, or seasonal variations, are also fairly well understood. Data, however, is only an enabler; it must be backed by robust policy. Unfortunately, policymakers have scarcely done better than resorting to quick fixes in the season after Diwali. Poor air quality in Delhi is, however, much more than just a winter problem. Good rainfall, like that experienced by the city this year, does provide respite at times. But Delhi needs its policymakers to be much more proactive, throughout the year, rather than depending on the elements or trying to nudge clouds to produce rain. The Commission for Air Quality Management is mandated to engage with the issue throughout the year. But its approach, too, is piecemeal. Even some of the easy-to-implement municipal solutions, such as sprinkling water to remove dust, have been clouded in controversy.

Even if the cloud-seeding initiative had succeeded, its effects would have been confined to a few areas in the capital. There is very little by way of a broader airshred approach that involves neighbouring states — Haryana, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh. After Tuesday’s failure, the government has reportedly put the artificial rain project on hold. It would do well to invest in durable science-backed solutions.



OPENING UP THE CLOUDS

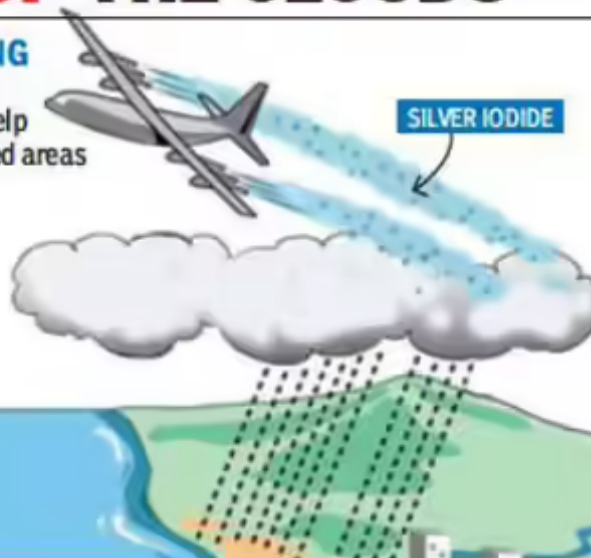
WHAT IS CLOUD SEEDING

Cloud seeding is a weather-modification technology to help create rain in drought-affected areas

HOW IT WORKS

Scientists use aircraft or rockets to inject silver iodide or another substance into the atmosphere to mimic ice nuclei

The amount of rain or snow a cloud can produce depends on a balance between the number of ice nuclei inside it and the amount of water available to grow around those nuclei



SILVER IODIDE

HELPING HAND

Clouds often lack naturally occurring ice nuclei, so injecting them with silver iodide particles (which are very similar in structure to ice) increases the number of nuclei

HOW IT HAPPENS | This makes the clouds more efficient at generating ice crystals that either fall as snowflakes or melt to produce raindrops, depending on temperatures in and beneath the cloud. Cloud seeding is also used to disperse fog banks near some airports

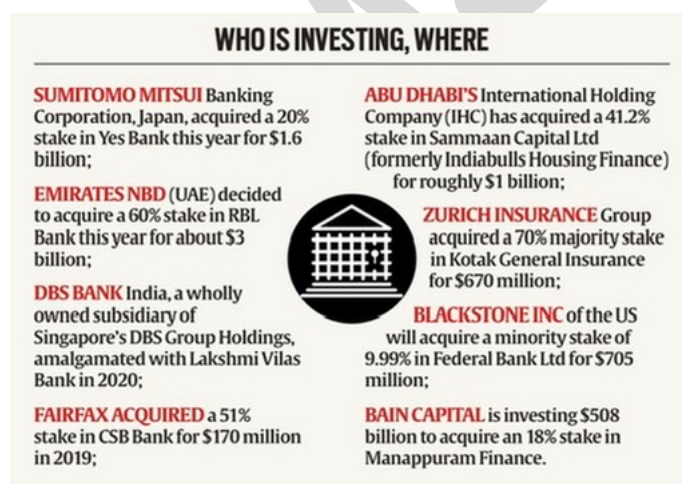
FOREIGN CAPITAL & INDIAN BANKS

The banking sector was once considered as over-regulated and fragmented, but now it's emerging as one of the world's fastest-growing and most interesting destinations for long-term investment in financial services. While this reflects confidence in India, there are also risks

Banks
Insurers
NBFCs

Backdrop

- It was once a tightly protected sector,
 - dominated by Indian promoters and conservative regulation.
- The sector is now witnessing a wave of global money flow.
- The latest in the series is with Blackstone announcing the acquisition of a 9.99 % stake in Kerala-based Federal Bank.



- According to McKinsey & Company,
- the **banking industry is the largest sector in India by net income**,
 - generating \$46 billion in 2024,
 - with a **31% YoY growth**.

- **Higher profitability** is observed compared with the global average, with
 - ✓ **ample liquidity,**
 - ✓ **strong capital levels and**
 - ✓ **reduced credit risk.**

➤ India's revenue growth is expected to be healthy in both retail and wholesale banking as financial penetration deepens. "Despite strong performance, the banking sector is valued lower among industries, indicating market scepticism about long-term value creation."

Why foreign giants are diving in

Expanding sector

- India's financial services sector is expanding faster than major global economies
 - with **credit demand robust from**

small businesses, retail consumers and housing.
- On the other hand, the formal banking system is matching the country's economic growth. "Key factors that contribute to Indian banks' resilience include low exposure to tariff-hit sectors, deleveraging by companies and a focus on secured retail lending." S&P Global Ratings said.
- India presents a vast, untapped and rapidly expanding financial market with

over 400 million underbanked population,

a vast informal credit system and

a robust digital infrastructure enabling growth.

- Consumption is now expected to pick up following the GST rationalisation and reduction while credit offtake continues to grow.

RBI and Govt - accommodative policy stance

- Capital easing and off-shore borrowing

India's economy is **estimated to grow at 6.8%**, as per RBI estimates.

“With several capital-easing measures taking effect in 2027, and	the proposed materially easier offshore borrowing norms
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can further support total private sector credit growth over the next two years,” Goldman Sachs said in a report.

- Gradual relaxing restrictions on foreign ownership in insurance and private banks

Insurance	Private Banks
Insurance companies can now go up to 100 % foreign ownership , and	private banks up to 74% levels with approval from the respective regulators.

Foreign portfolio investors (**FPIs**) **hold 48.39% stake in HDFC Bank**, the **second largest bank** in the country.

On the other hand, there are *no promoters* in many private sector banks like *Federal Bank* and *South Indian Bank*.

□ Message herewith

- the financial sector welcomes capital, provided control and compliance stay under Indian regulation and it remains largely insulated from global shocks.
- This measured liberalisation offers an ideal entry point for global banks and insurers facing stagnant growth in developed markets like Europe and the US.

Past crashes

- Also, the past decade has seen significant stress in India's banking and NBFC sectors — from the collapse of IL&FS and DHFL to Yes Bank's rescue and a series of bad-loan cleanups.

Lesson and rectification

- the **clean-up** in the financial sector initiated by the RBI and
- resolutions under the **insolvency and bankruptcy code** making headway.
- ✂ Many mid-sized private banks and NBFCs have been showing reasonable growth of late, making them potential takeover targets.

Considering points for the investors

For global investors, this is an ideal scenario.

- India's macroeconomic fundamentals remain strong,

- many entities are available at attractive valuation and acquiring them provides global players with immediate access to customers, licenses and branch networks.
- In Asia, India is the only large economy offering

scale,
political stability,
vast consumer base and
credible regulatory oversight.

- For overseas investors, India provides both geographic diversification and future profit potential in one package.
- There's no wonder

sovereign wealth funds,
pension funds,
private equity funds and
multinational banks

are tempted to deploy capital in
high-growth economies like
India.

- These things would take decades to build from scratch in a normal course. This is what has led to acquisitions by foreign players in the last two or three years.
- With **China's financial system tightening and geopolitical risks** like *border conflicts and tariff tensions rising*, India has emerged as the natural alternative for global capital.

What's at stake

Higher stakes would undermine the regulatory policy

- ✓ While this inflow of foreign ownership reflects confidence in India, there are also risks involving trade and border conflicts.
- ✓ When a foreign institution takes a majority stake in an Indian bank or insurer, control over strategic decisions gradually is likely to shift

offshore. Even if regulation remains Indian, what the new owners bring in, especially in crisis situations, may not always align with domestic policy goals and regulations.

- ✎ This means Indian regulators like the RBI will have to put checks and balances to keep the system stable and liquid.

Augmenting vulnerability to global shocks

- ✓ No doubt, foreign ownership can also make India's financial system vulnerable to global shocks.
 - If **global interest rates rise or liquidity dries up or trade tensions increase**, these foreign entities might take decisions which are not favourable to Indian entities and regulators, putting strain on domestic credit flows.
 - The **fall of Lehman Brothers** triggered the global financial crisis in **2008-09** with tremors reaching India though the country was largely insulated.

Tight regulation on domestic Private Banks and NBFCs, a hindrance to cheaper global funding

- ✓ Further, domestic private banks and NBFCs already operate under tight capital and compliance norms and foreign-owned entities often have access to cheaper global funding and sophisticated risk management systems. This scenario could distort the playing field.

Would be remedy

The RBI and the SEBI have so far been cautious, demanding fit-and-proper clearances, ownership disclosures and compliance with domestic capital adequacy norms. But as deals become larger and more complex, India will need a clearer framework on how much foreign control is adequate, though the RBI's word is now final in banking and financial sector acquisitions and mergers.

Conclusion

- It's a long-term strategic bet on the world's most promising emerging financial powerhouse.
- The test for India will be to ensure that this inflow strengthens its financial independence and stability.

Indian market's unparalleled advantages :

- 1) vast population scale,
- 2) extensive digital penetration,
- 3) rising consumption and
- 4) relative political stability

31.10.2025

ASEAN Summit : Trump's Asia visit

Organisation	Members
ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) 47th ASEAN Summit and Related Summits Kuala Lumpur concluded October 28 Estd: 1967, Bangkok, Thailand Initial Members : 1) Indonesia 2) Malaysia 3) Philippines 4) Singapore 5) Thailand The ASEAN Summit is held twice annually The First ASEAN Summit was held in Bali, Indonesia - 1976.	1) Brunei, 2) Cambodia, 3) Indonesia, 4) Laos, 5) Malaysia, 6) Myanmar, 7) the Philippines, 8) Singapore, 9) Thailand, 10) Vietnam, and 11) East Timor or Timor Leste. (recently added)

How is ASEAN significant for India?

Firstly, when the foundation for ASEAN was laid in 1967 with five countries, it was **basically a political organisation to combat the rise of communism**. But after that, it has grown into a crucial economic entity and an important security player. Intra-trade in ASEAN, at between 25 and 30%, is second only to the European Union. In that respect, it is a very successful regional economic organisation.

Secondly, it is **geopolitically significant for India**. The region it is located in frequently sees turbulence because of China's territorial claims in the South China Sea and the East China Sea.

Thirdly, then there is the fact that the centre of gravity of the **global economy is shifting from the trans-atlantic towards the Indo-Pacific**, and this is right where ASEAN is situated. About 40-50% of India's trade is conducted through that region.

Fourthly, **all the countries in this grouping are rapidly growing economies**, making it a very dynamic market.

Fifth, ASEAN has **emerged as a significant player on the global stage** because all the countries tend to speak with one voice.

Sixth, the region is **important for us for connectivity**.

- The **India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway** aims to connect Moreh in **Manipur** through Myanmar to Mae Sot in **Thailand**.
- There is the multi-modal **Kaladan project**, which aims to connect India's Northeast to the sea via the Sittwe port in Myanmar.
- There is also an agreement on **sustainable tourism** between India and ASEAN.
- And of course, India has **deep historical and civilisational linkages** with these countries.
- For decades, we could not build upon them because of the Cold War, but as part of the **Look East policy of 1992**, upgraded to **Act East in 2014**, this is now **a crucial area of focus**.

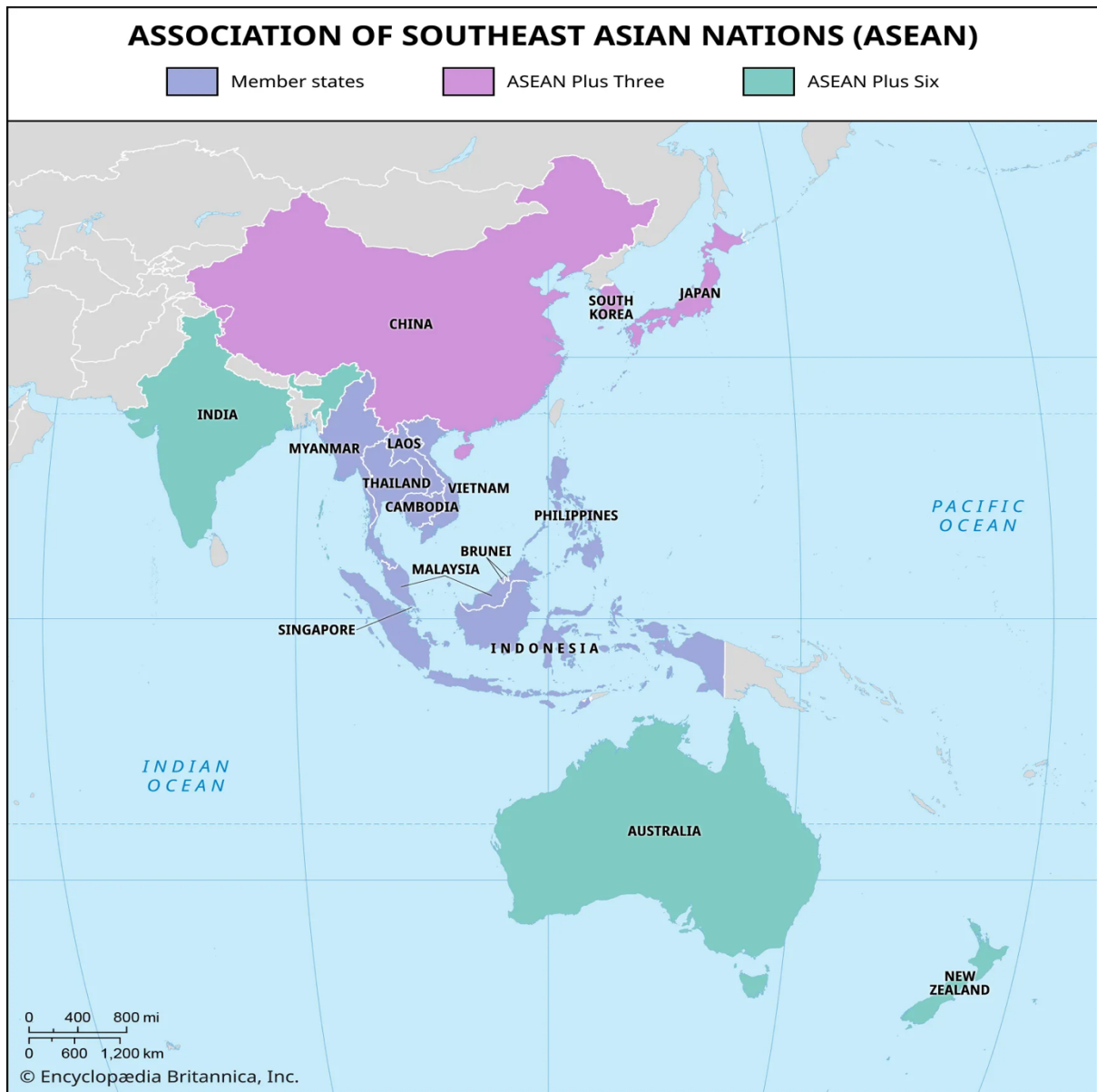
Challenges Associated:

The group does have internal challenges.

- ASEAN has been **unable to act** in any meaningful way on the **democratic backsliding in the member state Myanmar**.
- Also, it has **failed to counter China's claims in the South China Sea**.

Challenges Associated @ India specific:

- **Trade Imbalance:** ASEAN accounts for 11% of India's trade, yet imports far outweigh exports, reflecting limited value addition.
- **Slow Progress in AITIGA Review:** Protectionist tendencies and procedural delays hinder deeper integration.
- **China Factor:** ASEAN's economic dependence on China complicates India's strategic outreach in the Indo-Pacific.
- **Connectivity Bottlenecks:** Delays in the IMT Highway and Kaladan project limit India's logistical advantage.
- **Divergent Priorities:** ASEAN's principle of neutrality and India's strategic tilt toward Quad sometimes lead to hesitation in collective alignment.



Trump's visit to Asia: Pacts with Southeast Asian nations show US's need to counter China's control over critical-mineral supply chains

Should there be a détente in the trade war, India will need to swiftly recalibrate its China strategy. Regardless of what happens between Trump and Xi, New Delhi needs to mend fences with Washington

- After months of tariff threats and trade disputes, countries across **Southeast - Asia** are seeking to stabilise economic ties with the United States, a major export market for the region.
- For **Vietnam, the Philippines, Thailand, and Cambodia** — the countries affected by 19-20% tariffs imposed by the Donald Trump administration earlier this year — **the US is among the top export destinations.**
- **South-east Asia is also a crucial market for American products.** The US is also looking to secure greater access to global supply chains, particularly for critical minerals.

✂ US President Donald Trump is in Asia this week on **his first visit to the region since 2017**, with stops in **Malaysia, Japan, and South Korea**. A possible meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping is also on the cards, though Beijing has yet to confirm this.

Trump and ASEAN

- Trump's first stop was **Kuala Lumpur**, where he **attended the ASEAN** (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) **summit**. US imports from ASEAN reached \$352.1 billion in 2024, up from around \$140 billion in 2017.
- On Sunday, Trump signed **trade and critical minerals agreements** with **Malaysia, Cambodia, Thailand, and Vietnam**, though without any reduction in existing tariffs. These deals, however, eliminate several tariff and non-tariff barriers on US exports to the region.
- Has been presided over the signing of a peace deal between Thailand and Cambodia,

✂ Meanwhile, **China** announced on Tuesday an **upgrade** to its free trade agreement (FTA) **with ASEAN** (their bilateral trade totalled \$771 billion last year).

Trump and Japan

- Trump travelled to Japan, where he signed an agreement with the country's **newly elected first woman Prime Minister**, Sanae Takaichi, that focused on "securing the supply of critical minerals and rare earths through mining and processing".
- This follows China's recent tightening of export controls on rare earths, which has given Beijing significant leverage in global supply chains.

Objective to be achieved through the agreements (Malaysia, Japan)	are part of Washington's strategy to diversify its sources of critical minerals.
Summary understanding	

De-escalation of China-US trade war: A thaw, an opening

De-escalation of China-US trade war reduces some uncertainty in world economy. Much still hinges on how Trump's tariffs play out

Backdrop

- Since April 2, when US President Donald Trump announced his policy of reciprocal tariffs and sought to upend the global trading architecture, the world economy has been in a state of uncertainty.
 - While in the months thereafter, the US negotiated deals with several countries that appear to be loaded in favour of Washington, pacts with other countries, including India, are still in the works.
 - China pushed back strongly against Trump's tariffs, raising fears of a long, drawn-out trade war. Beijing's curbs on rare earths

exports underlined its pivotal position in the global economy and its leverage in trade negotiations.

- But, in the past few weeks, Trump has sought to downplay the points of contention with both China and India.
- While a meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi is yet to take place, on Thursday, the US President met his Chinese counterpart, Xi Jinping, on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in South Korea. The meeting marks a clear de-escalation in the trade war between the two countries.

Summit outcome with Xi Jinping in South Korea

- As per reports, the Trump administration has **agreed to lower the tariffs on China.**
 - In exchange, China is said to have **paused controls on exports of rare earths for a year,**
 - along with agreeing to restart purchasing US soyabean and take action on the illicit fentanyl trade.
- The two leaders reportedly **sidestepped several contentious issues, such as Taiwan.**
- The **Russia-Ukraine war was discussed.**
 - But the issue of China's purchases of Russian oil was reportedly not broached — that's odd, considering that the purchase of Russian energy by India has been a major sticking point in India-US relations.
- Trump is now slated to **visit China in April next year** — this signals his intent to continue the process of stabilising relations.

State of US Economy and challenges ahead

Powering on :

- Since Trump unleashed the tariff war, there has been much concern over the US economy. Yet, even as the Yale budget lab estimates that the **average effective tariff rate has moved up to 18 per cent — the highest since 1934** — the US economy seems to be powering on.

Slowing down

- Some are, however, arguing that this growth is being **largely driven by AI-related investments**, while the other parts of the economy are struggling.
 - As per researchers at Moody's Analytics, **a large number of states in the US are either in recession or treading water.**
 - The labour market data reflect this.
 - As per JP Morgan Chase, **real income growth** has slowed to **near-decadal lows.**
 - In its October meeting, the US Federal Reserve also acknowledged this, saying that “job gains have slowed this year, and the unemployment rate has edged up”. The Fed opted for cutting interest rates by 25 basis points, noting that “uncertainty about the economic outlook remains elevated”. But Fed Chair Jerome Powell also warned that another rate cut in December was “not a foregone conclusion”.
- ✎ The resolution of some of this uncertainty over the growth outlook, jobs, inflation and interest rates depends on how Trump's tariffs play out.



IT WAS AN AMAZING MEETING... HE IS A GREAT LEADER...
OUTSTANDING GROUP OF DECISIONS WERE MADE... ON SCALE
OF 0-10... THE MEETING WAS AT 12'
DONALD TRUMP, U.S. PRESIDENT

'CHINA'S DEVELOPMENT AND REJUVENATION ARE NOT
INCOMPATIBLE WITH PRESIDENT TRUMP'S GOAL OF MAKING
AMERICA GREAT AGAIN
XI JINPING, CHINA PRESIDENT



Trump, Xi agree on ceasefire in trade war: China eases curbs on rare earth exports

Trump's order on US nuclear testing: What we know

President says America should test “**on equal basis**” with Russia and China, though neither is confirmed to have conducted recent explosive trials



Donald J. Trump
@realDonaldTrump

The United States has more Nuclear Weapons than any other country. This was accomplished, including a complete update and renovation of existing weapons, during my First Term in office. Because of the tremendous destructive power, I HATED to do it, but had no choice! Russia is second, and China is a distant third, but will be even within 5 years. Because of other countries testing programs, I have instructed the Department of War to start testing our Nuclear Weapons on an equal basis. That process will begin immediately. Thank you for your attention to this matter! PRESIDENT DONALD J. TRUMP

6.13k ReTruths 25.6k Likes

Oct 30, 2025, 2:04 PM

❑ President Donald Trump has ignited a firestorm of controversy and confusion with his announcement that the United States will begin nuclear weapons testing.

❑ It's **unclear whether**

he was referring to **testing weapons systems** -- which the United States already does --

or **actually conducting nuclear explosions**, which only US arch-foe North Korea has carried out in the 21st century.

What Trump said

- ✓ Trump said in a social media post that he had instructed the Defense Department "to start testing our Nuclear Weapons on an equal basis" with Russia and China.
- ✓ However, neither of those countries are confirmed to have carried out recent explosive testing, and it is the **Department of Energy that is responsible for the US nuclear stockpile.**
- ✓ The president subsequently told journalists on Air Force One that "they seem to all be doing nuclear testing," and that "we halted it many years ago but with others doing testing I think it is appropriate we do also."
- ✓ He offered no details on the nature of the testing he had ordered.

History : the Nuclear Age

USA

1945

- The United States opened the nuclear era in July 1945 with the **test of a 20-kiloton atomic bomb** at Alamogordo, New Mexico, in July 1945, and
- then **dropped atomic bombs** on the Japanese cities of **Hiroshima and Nagasaki** in **August 1945** to force Japan to surrender in World War Two.

USSR

1949

- The Soviet Union shocked the West by detonating its first nuclear bomb just **four years later, in August 1949.**

CTBT → 1996
Adopted by **UNGA**
Not yet entered into force

Test : pre-CTBT

- In the five decades between 1945 and the **1996 Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT),**

Over 2,000 nuclear tests	
USA	1,032
Soviet Union	715
Britain	45
France	210
China	45
India	1

Test : post-CTBT

Since the CTBT, 10 nuclear tests have taken place.

- **India** conducted two in **1998**,
- **Pakistan** also two in **1998**, and
- **North Korea** conducted **tests** in 2006, 2009, 2013, 2016 (twice) and 2017, according to the United Nations.

-
- ☐ The **United States** last tested in **1992**, 20-kiloton **underground** detonation at the **Nevada** Nuclear Security Site.
 - ☐ **China** and **France** in **1996** and
 - ☐ the **Soviet Union** in **1990**.

Russia, which inherited most of the Soviet nuclear arsenal, has never done so.

Russia held **nuclear drills last week** and has tested a **nuclear-powered cruise missile** and a **nuclear-powered torpedo** but has not tested a nuclear warhead.

WHY WAS NUCLEAR TESTING ENDED?

- Concern mounted about the impact of the tests - above ground, underground and underwater - on **human health and the environment.**

- ✓ The impact of the

West's testing in the Pacific
and of
Soviet testing in *Kazakhstan* and the *Arctic*

was significant on both the environment and the people.

- ✓ Activists say millions of people in both the Pacific and Kazakhstan had their lands contaminated by nuclear testing - and have faced health issues for decades.
- By limiting the Cold War bonanza of nuclear testing, advocates said, tensions between Moscow and Washington could be reduced.

The CTBT bans nuclear explosions by everyone, everywhere.	
It was signed by Russia in 1996 and	ratified in 2000.
The United States signed the treaty in 1996	but has <u>not</u> ratified it.

In **2023**, President Vladimir Putin formally **revoked**
Russia's ratification of the CTBT

USA had already agreed not to conduct tests in the **atmosphere, outer space and underwater** as part of the

Partial Test Ban Treaty, which it has been a party to since 1963.

WHY WOULD YOU TEST AGAIN?

- To gather information - or to send a signal.
- Tests provide evidence of what any new nuclear weapon will do - and whether older weapons still work.
- Apart from providing technical data, such a test would be seen in Russia and China as a deliberate assertion of U.S. strategic power.

N.B:

- Ø Putin has repeatedly warned that if the United States resumed nuclear testing, Russia would too.
- Ø Putin says a global nuclear arms race is already underway.

Global nuclear warhead stockpiles **peaked in 1986** at over **70,000 warheads**, most in the Soviet Union and the United States,

but have since been **reduced to about 12,000**, most still in Russia and the United States.

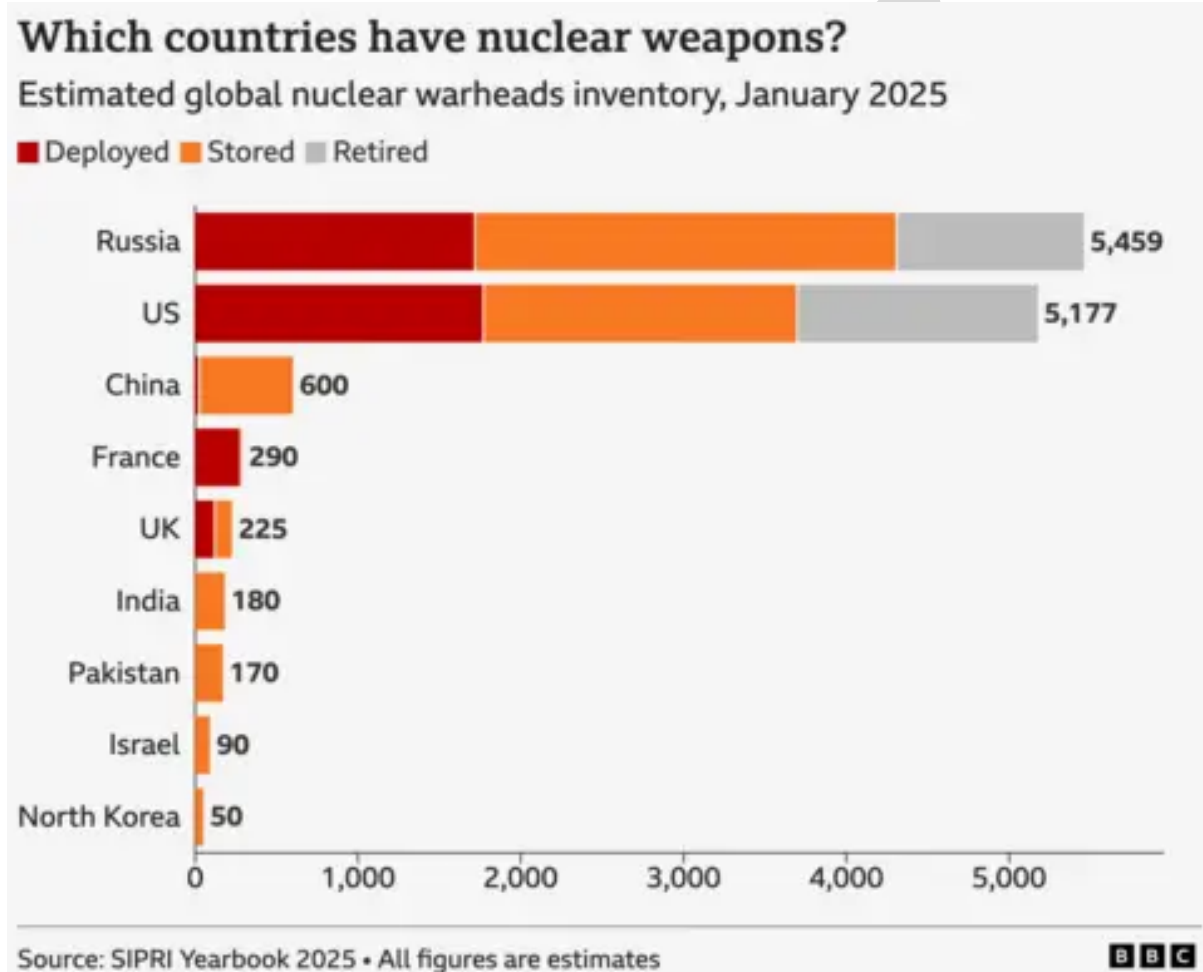
N.B:

- Ø Russia, the United States and China are all undertaking major modernisations of their nuclear arsenals.

Current US testing

- In the absence of explosive testing, the United States ensures its arsenal's reliability through the so-called **Stockpile Stewardship Program**, which includes "a wide range of scientific activities, from modelling and simulation to subcritical nuclear experiments," according to the US National Nuclear Security Administration.
 - "This program allows us to **assess and certify the stockpile** with extraordinary confidence," it says.

- Washington also periodically tests its nuclear delivery systems such as intercontinental ballistic missiles.
 - The US military launched an unarmed Minuteman III missile earlier this year, with the Space Force saying at the time that the United States had carried out more than 300 similar tests overall.



Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons **(NPT)**

Objective

- prevent the spread of nuclear weapons,
- to promote cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and
- to further the goal of nuclear disarmament and general and complete disarmament.

Quick facts:

191 state parties

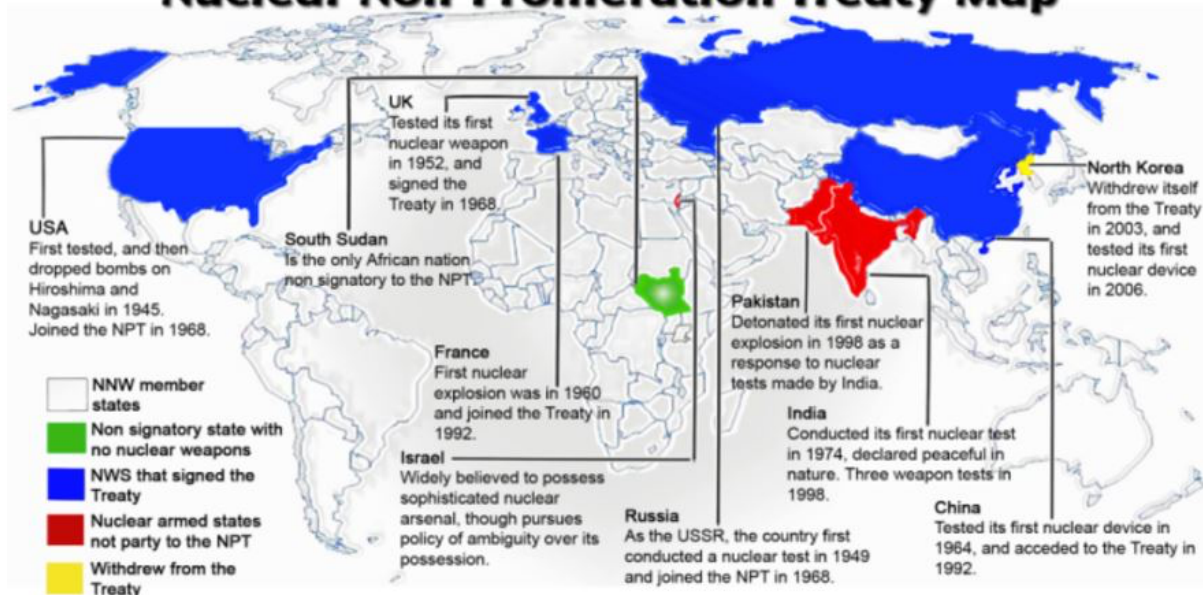
Non-NPT

- 1) India
- 2) Israel
- 3) Pakistan
- 4) South Sudan
- 5) North Korea (withdraw 2003)

India
founding
member of
IAEA (1957)

- ✓ The NPT was opened for signature in 1968
- ✓ Entered into force **1970**
- ✓ In 1995, the Treaty was extended indefinitely.
- ✓ With **191 States parties**, it is the most widely adhered to treaty in the field of nuclear non-proliferation, peaceful uses of nuclear energy and nuclear disarmament.
- ✓ Under the NPT, **non-nuclear-weapon States** parties have committed themselves not to manufacture or otherwise acquire nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices
- ✓ while **nuclear-weapon States** parties have **committed not to in any way assist, encourage or induce any non-nuclear-weapon State party to manufacture or otherwise acquire nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.**
- ✓ Nuclear-weapon States parties under the Treaty are defined as those that **manufactured and exploded a nuclear weapon or other nuclear explosive device before 1 January 1967.**
- ✓ There are **five nuclear-weapon States** parties to the Treaty.
- ✓ While the **IAEA** is not a party to the NPT, it is entrusted with key verification responsibilities under the Treaty.

Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Map



World map showing nuclear weapons states (Image by British American Security Information Council)

KEY TREATIES FOR NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT, ARMS CONTROL AND NON-PROLIFERATION

1963	1970	1996
Partial Test Ban Treaty (PTBT):	Treaty on Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT):	Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT):
Prohibits testing of Nuclear weapons which can cause radioactive fallout outside the State's territory	Only binding treaty for nuclear disarmament of Nuclear weapon states.	International treaty that bans all nuclear explosions in all environments. (Not yet entered into force)

CTBT, NPT

India is NOT a signatory

PTBT

India is a signatory

India and Nuclear Weapons



Nuclear Testing

Conducted nuclear explosion and testing in 1974 and 1998.



Nuclear Doctrine

Outlines its eight-point nuclear doctrine in 2003 emphasising on **no-first-use posture**.



Nuclear Cooperation
India-USA Civil Nuclear Cooperation Initiative in 2005.

Agreement for Cooperation in the Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy between India and Japan in 2015.

PM POSHAN

History

Mid Day Meal (now PM POSHAN Scheme) in schools has had a long history in India.

❑ In **1925**, a **Mid Day Meal Programme** was introduced for disadvantaged children in **Madras Municipal Corporation**.

❑ By the mid **1980s** **3 States** viz.

- 1) Gujarat,
- 2) Kerala and
- 3) Tamil Nadu and
- 4) the UT of Pondicherry

had universalized a cooked Mid Day Meal Programme with their own resources for children studying at the primary stage

❑ By **1990-91** the number of States implementing the mid day meal programme with their own resources on a universal or a large scale had increased to **12 states**.

About the PM POSHAN

1. The CCEA cleared the **PM POSHAN (POshan SHakti Nirman) Scheme** for providing one **hot cooked meal in Government and Government-aided schools** from 2021-22 to 2025-26, earlier known as 'National Programme for Mid-Day Meal in Schools' popularly known as Mid-Day Meal Scheme.
2. This is a **Centrally-Sponsored Scheme** which covers **all school children studying in Classes I-VIII in Government, Government-Aided Schools.**
3. The scheme covers about 11.80 crore children studying in 11.20 lakh schools across the country. During 2020-21, Government of India invested more than ₹ 24,400 crore in the scheme, including cost of about ₹ 11,500 crore on food grains.
4. The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA), chaired by the Hon'ble Prime Minister has approved the continuation of the national

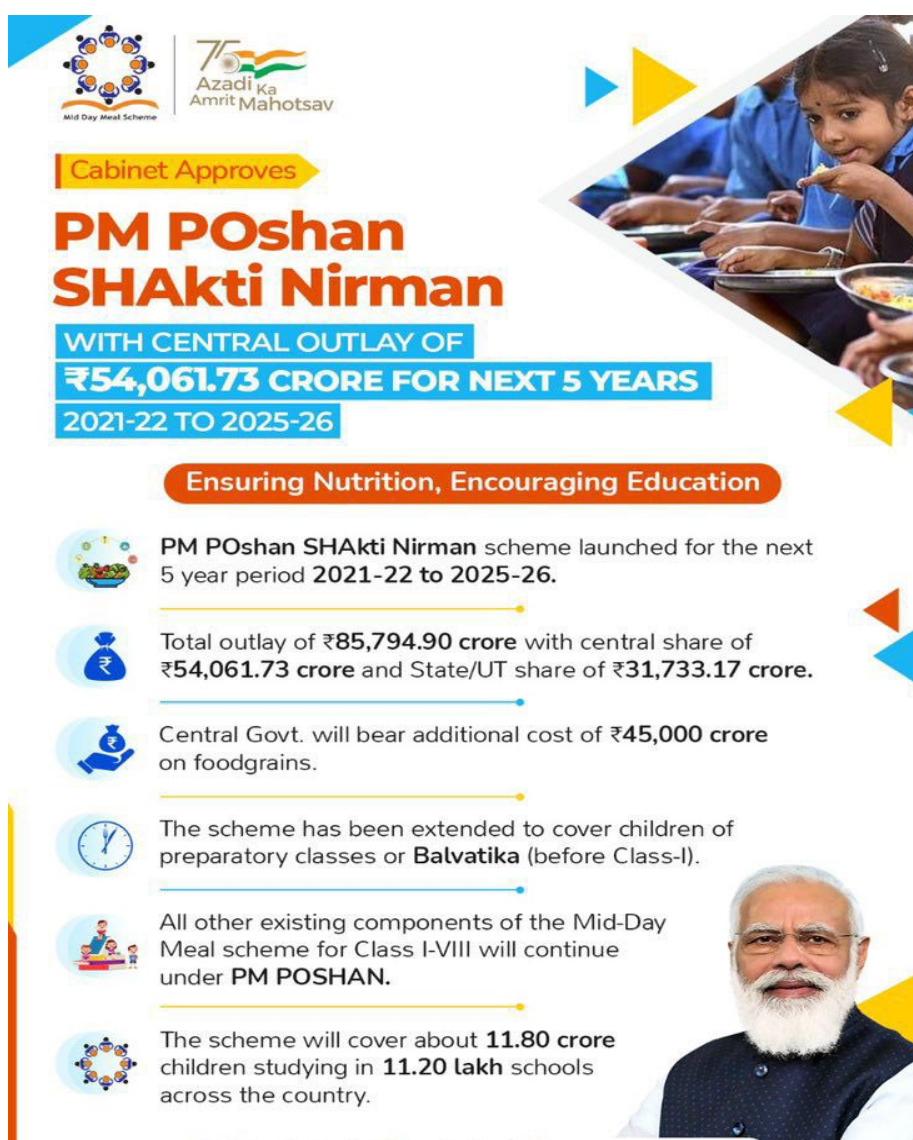
scheme of PM POSHAN in Schools for the five-year period 2021-22 to 2025-26 with the financial outlay of ₹ 54061.73 crores from the Central Government and ₹ 31733.17 crore from State Governments & UT administrations. Central Government will also bear additional cost of about ₹ 45000 crore on food grains. Therefore, the total scheme budget will amount to ₹ 130794.90 crore.

Highlights of the decision that would improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the scheme are as below:

- ❑ The scheme is **proposed to be extended to students studying in pre-primary or Balvatikas** in Government and Government-aided primary schools *in addition* to all the 11.80 crore *children from elementary classes*.
- ❑ The concept of **Tithi Bhojan** will be encouraged extensively.
 - Tithi Bhojan is a **community participation programme in which people provide special food to children on special occasions/festivals**.
 - School Nutrition Gardens in schools to give children first-hand experience with nature and gardening.
 - The harvest of these gardens is used in the scheme providing additional micro nutrients.
 - School Nutrition Gardens have already been developed in more than 3 lakh schools.
- ❑ **Social Audit of the scheme is made mandatory in all the districts.**
- ❑ **Special provision** is made for providing **supplementary nutrition items** to children *in aspirational districts and districts with high prevalence of Anemia*.
- ❑ Cooking competitions will be encouraged at all levels right from village level to national level to promote ethnic cuisine and innovative menus based on locally available ingredients and vegetables.
- ❑ Vocal for Local for Atmanirbhar Bharat: *Involvement of Farmers Producer Organizations (FPO) and Women Self Help Groups in implementation of the scheme will be encouraged*. Use of

locally grown traditional food items for a fillip to local economic growth will be encouraged.

- ❑ **Field visits for progress monitoring and inspections** will be facilitated for students of eminent Universities / Institutions and also trainee teachers of Regional Institutes of Educations (RIE) and District Institutes of Education and Training (DIET).



The infographic is titled 'Cabinet Approves PM Poshan SHakti Nirman' and highlights a central outlay of ₹54,061.73 crore for the period 2021-22 to 2025-26. It features a large image of a child eating from a plate. The infographic is divided into sections with icons and text, and includes a portrait of Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the bottom right.

Mid Day Meal Scheme | **75 Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav**

Cabinet Approves

PM Poshan SHakti Nirman

WITH CENTRAL OUTLAY OF ₹54,061.73 CRORE FOR NEXT 5 YEARS 2021-22 TO 2025-26

Ensuring Nutrition, Encouraging Education

-  **PM Poshan SHakti Nirman** scheme launched for the next 5 year period 2021-22 to 2025-26.
-  Total outlay of **₹85,794.90 crore** with central share of **₹54,061.73 crore** and State/UT share of **₹31,733.17 crore**.
-  Central Govt. will bear additional cost of **₹45,000 crore** on foodgrains.
-  The scheme has been extended to cover children of preparatory classes or **Balvatika** (before Class-I).
-  All other existing components of the Mid-Day Meal scheme for Class I-VIII will continue under **PM POSHAN**.
-  The scheme will cover about **11.80 crore** children studying in **11.20 lakh** schools across the country.

