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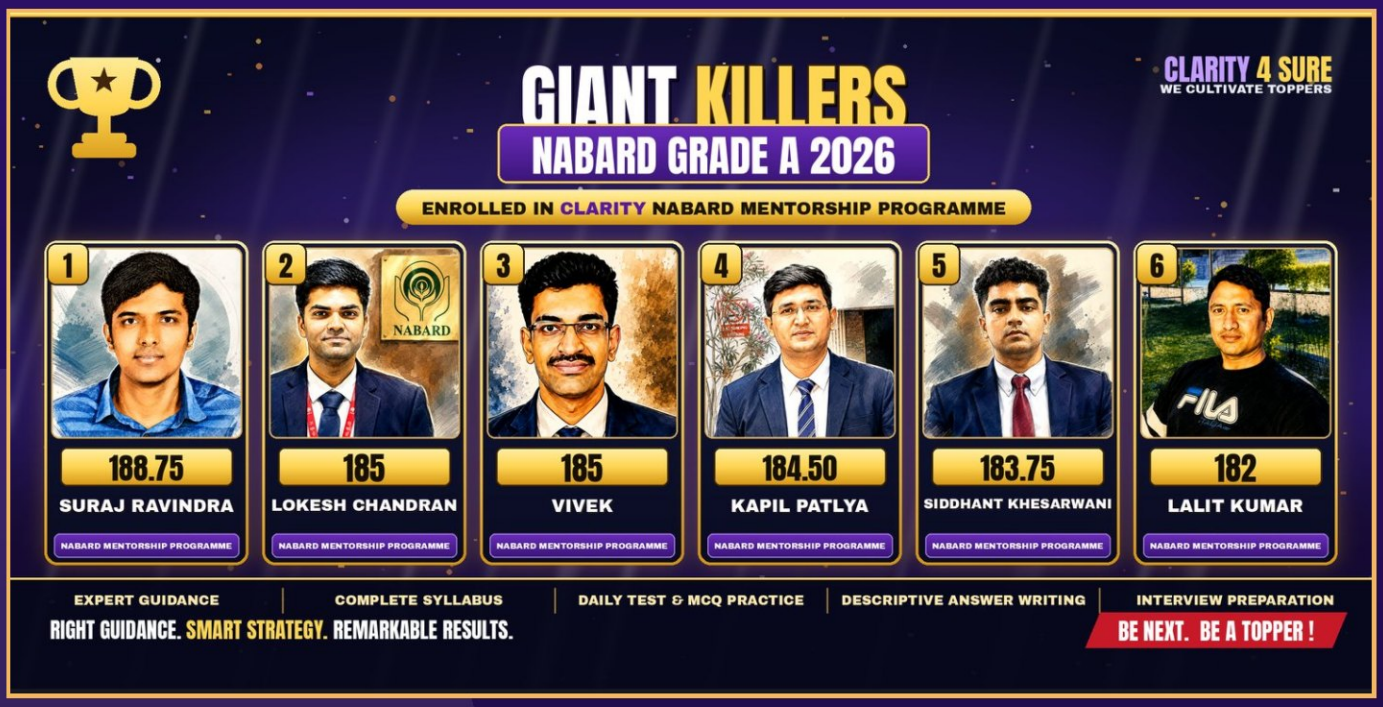
June 2026

Every daily post of the month, in full · 18 days · 471 items

For NABARD Grade A · RBI Grade B · SEBI Grade A · IRDAI · SIDBI

Big themes · Facts To Remember 355 · Banking and Finance 45 · General 40

Most mentioned · Practice MCQs · NOT · Answer Key · RBI · Exam Relevance



6 OF THE TOP 10

Six of the ten highest scorers in NABARD Grade A 2026 came from this classroom — 32 final selections in one batch. The same mentors compile this book every day.

Contents

Every daily post of June 2026 in full, day by day — 18 days, 471 items. Every line is linked; so is every bookmark in your PDF reader.

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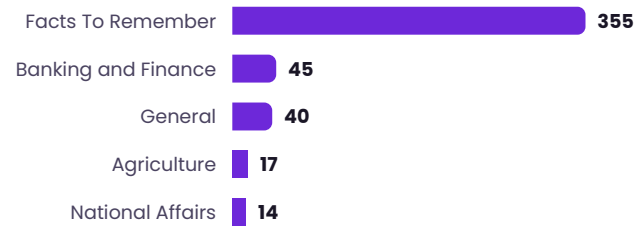
THE MONTH IN NUMBERS

June 2026 at a glance

18 daily compilations, 471 items across 5 topics — Facts To Remember weighed the most. Read the charts first: they tell you where this month's questions will come from.

18	471	5	165
daily compilations	items covered	topics	data tables

Items by topic



Items per day

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
1 24	2 9	3 9	4 14	5 23	6 20	7 10
8 10	9 21	10 21	11 25	12 12	13 12	14 13
15 13	16 29	17	18 20	19 20	20 20	21 20
22 12	23 12	24	25 21	26 14	27 14	28 17
29 17	30 23					

Darker = a heavier day. Two-day posts are split across their days.

Where the items sat



Other exams 471 (100%)

Most mentioned this month

How many items each name appeared in. Know these cold.

Practice MCQs 113 · NOT 99 · Answer Key 95 · RBI 53 · Exam Relevance 47 · Reserve Bank 46 · New Delhi 45 · SEBI 22 · GDP 15 · Indian Institute 14 · Artificial Intelligence 14 · Madhya Pradesh 14 · Prime Minister Narendra Modi 14 · Tamil Nadu 13 · UPI 12 · Q&A 11

FIGURES THE PAPER LOVES

June 2026 by the numbers

The month's biggest figures with the line they came from. Say each one with its scheme or report before you turn the page.

₹1 lakh

This is the standard insurance limit under the DICGC Act, 1961, raised from ₹1 lakh to ₹5 lakh in 2020.

RBI Imposes Restrictions on Mogaveera Co-operative Bank for 6 Months · 16 June 2026

₹500 crore

What: A Central Sector Scheme set up in 2014–15 with a corpus of ₹500 crore (subsequently augmented) to regulate pric…

Union Home Minister Amit Shah Launches NAFED's Digital Auction Portal "NAFEX.in" · 25 June 2026

₹6,865 crore

Central Scheme: "Formation and Promotion of 10,000 FPOs" (launched 29 February 2020, ₹6,865 crore outlay).

APEDA Facilitates First Commercial Export of GI-Tagged Rewa Sundarja Mango · 28 & 29 June 2026

₹41.80 lakh

The penalty of ₹41.80 lakh has been imposed under the Banking Regulation Act, 1949.

RBI Imposes ₹41.80 Lakh Penalty on Canara Bank for KYC and Account Classification Lapses · 9 & 10 June 2026

10 per cent

JPMorgan GBI-EM Global Diversified Index: India included June 2024 onwards, phased over 10 months to reach 10 per cen…

Bloomberg Global Aggregate Bond Index · 11 June 2026

24.3 per cent

FI-Index (2025): 67 (up 24.3 per cent since 2021).

BCRC Seeks Grandfathering as RBI's BC Recertification Rule Nears · 20 & 21 June 2026

9.5 per cent

India's real GDP growth for 2026-27 has been projected at 9.5 per cent in the RBI's report.

RBI Annual Report 2025-26 · 4 June 2026

21 per cent

India's weight in the MSCI Global Standard Index has fallen from about 21 per cent in September 2024 to about 12.3 pe…

India Slips to 7th in Global Market Cap Rankings · 7 & 8 June 2026

2.5 per cent

The World Bank has cut its 2026 global growth projection to 2.5 per cent from 2.9 per cent in 2025.

India to Grow at 6.6 Per Cent in FY27, World Bank Raises Forecast · 12 & 13 June 2026

₹5 lakh

DICGC: For bank deposit insurance (up to ₹5 lakh per depositor per bank).

RBI's Responsible Business Conduct Second Amendment Directions, 2026 · 14 & 15 June 2026

READ IT THE WAY TOPPERS DO

How to use this book

One day a sitting. Read the day, then close the book and say the **Five to remember** out loud before you look. That single habit is the difference between reading current affairs and scoring from them.

1
Read the day
Every item, source and table. Underline the bold facts: they are the exam.

2
Say the five
Close the book. Recite the day's *Five to remember*. Only then check.

3
Take the quiz
Each day ends with its ten-question quiz. Note every wrong answer.

4
Come back
Tick the tracker. Recall the day again on day 3 and day 7, then use the revision sheet.

Your revision tracker

Tick as you go. Day 3 and day 7 recalls are what move a fact from short-term to exam-day memory.

DAY	READ	RECALL +3	RECALL +7	QUIZ	NOTES
1 June 2026 · 24 items	☐	☐	☐	☐	
2 & 3 June 2026 · 17 items	☐	☐	☐	☐	
4 June 2026 · 14 items	☐	☐	☐	☐	
5 June 2026 · 23 items	☐	☐	☐	☐	
6 June 2026 · 20 items	☐	☐	☐	☐	
7 & 8 June 2026 · 19 items	☐	☐	☐	☐	
9 & 10 June 2026 · 42 items	☐	☐	☐	☐	
11 June 2026 · 25 items	☐	☐	☐	☐	
12 & 13 June 2026 · 24 items	☐	☐	☐	☐	
14 & 15 June 2026 · 25 items	☐	☐	☐	☐	
16 June 2026 · 29 items	☐	☐	☐	☐	
18 & 19 June 2026 · 40 items	☐	☐	☐	☐	
20 & 21 June 2026 · 40 items	☐	☐	☐	☐	
22 & 23 June 2026 · 24 items	☐	☐	☐	☐	
25 June 2026 · 21 items	☐	☐	☐	☐	
26 & 27 June 2026 · 28 items	☐	☐	☐	☐	
28 & 29 June 2026 · 33 items	☐	☐	☐	☐	
30 June 2026 · 23 items	☐	☐	☐	☐	

DAY 1 OF 18

1 June 2026

Monday · 24 items · 2 topics

General **4** · Banking and Finance **2** · Facts To Remember **18**

Context

The **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare** has released the **sixth round of the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-6)**, conducted in **2023-24** with the **International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS), Mumbai** as the **nodal agency**. The survey covered nearly **6.79 lakh households across 715 districts** and now provides **district-level evidence** on **population, health, nutrition, and family welfare** indicators. Two major shifts stand out. First, **obesity and diabetes have risen sharply** across India in just five years: **obesity in women aged 15-49** has gone up from **24 per cent in NFHS-5 to 30.7 per cent in NFHS-6**, while **obesity in men in the same age group** has risen from **22.9 per cent to 27.3 per cent**.

Key Highlights

- **Survey**: **National Family Health Survey (NFHS-6)**.
- **Reference period**: **2023-24**.
- **Released by**: **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**.
- **Nodal agency**: **International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS), Mumbai**.

Major Findings

- Institutional deliveries increased from **88.6% to 90.6%**, strengthening safe childbirth coverage across India.
- Antenatal Care (ANC) registration reached **95.9%**, while first-trimester checkups improved to **76.2%** and four ANC visits rose to **65.2%**.
- India's **Total Fertility Rate (TFR)** remained stable at **2.0**, staying below the replacement level of 2.1.
- Child stunting declined significantly from **35.5% to 29.3%**, while severe wasting reduced from **7.7% to 5.2%**.
- Full immunization coverage among children aged 12–23 months increased from **83.8% to 87.1%**.
- Rotavirus vaccine coverage more than doubled from **36.4% to 85.4%**, reflecting improved immunization outreach.
- Over **95.6% of childhood vaccinations** were delivered through public healthcare facilities, indicating strong trust in government health systems.
- Household health insurance coverage rose sharply from **41% to 60.2%**, supported by schemes like Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana.
- Internet usage among women increased from **33.3% to 64.3%**, narrowing the female digital divide.
- Caesarean section deliveries rose sharply from **21.5% to 27.2%**, raising concerns over increasing surgical births.

Key Challenges Identified

- Around **40.5% of children aged 6–8 months** still do not receive adequate solid or semi-solid complementary food.
- Nearly **12.9% of children** remain partially vaccinated or unvaccinated despite high overall immunization coverage.
- Rising lifestyle diseases and non-communicable diseases (NCDs) are emerging as major public health concerns.

- India continues to face a dual burden of undernutrition alongside rising adult overweight and obesity levels.
- Only **37.8% of pregnant women** consumed iron-folic acid supplements for the recommended 180 days, indicating gaps in maternal nutrition compliance.

Background Concepts

What is the National Family Health Survey (NFHS), and How is It Conducted?

The **National Family Health Survey (NFHS)** is a **large-scale, nationally representative, household-level sample survey** that provides reliable data on **population, health, nutrition, and family welfare** in India. It is **conducted by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**, with the **International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS), Mumbai**, as the **nodal agency**. Field work is carried out by a network of **field agencies, with technical support from international partners** like **ICF (USA) for DHS-style surveys** and **WHO**. The NFHS provides **state-, district-, and national-level estimates** on **fertility, family planning, infant and child mortality, immunisation, nutrition, anaemia, women's empowerment, gender-based violence, HIV/AIDS, and non-communicable disease risk factors**. The first NFHS (NFHS-1) was conducted in **1992-93**, and the rounds have grown progressively larger: **NFHS-5 (2019-21)** and now **NFHS-6 (2023-24)** with **6.79 lakh households across 715 districts**. NFHS data is used for **planning Ayushman Bharat, ICDS, POSHAN Abhiyaan, RBSK, Anaemia Mukt Bharat, NP-NCD, and many other welfare programmes**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-6), consider the following statements:

1. NFHS-6 was conducted in 2023-24 by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
2. The International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS), Mumbai, served as the nodal agency.
3. The survey covered around 6.79 lakh households across 715 districts.
4. NFHS-6 provides district-level estimates on population, health, nutrition, and family welfare.

How many of the above statements are correct? (a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) All four (e) None

Q2. Consider the following statements about the key findings of NFHS-6:

1. Obesity in women aged 15-49 has risen from 24 per cent in NFHS-5 to 30.7 per cent in NFHS-6.
2. Obesity in men aged 15-49 has risen from 22.9 per cent to 27.3 per cent.
3. Diabetes prevalence (on medication) has risen in both men and women between NFHS-5 and NFHS-6.
4. Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu are emerging as hotspots for overweight and obese adults.

Which of the above are correct? (a) 1, 2 and 3 only (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

Q3. With reference to Caesarean (C-section) births in India, as per NFHS-6, consider the following statements:

1. The national share of births by C-section has risen from 21.5 per cent in NFHS-5 to 27.2 per cent in NFHS-6.
2. Private hospitals reported a C-section rate of 54.1 per cent compared to 16.9 per cent in public hospitals.
3. Urban areas reported a C-section rate of about 40.5 per cent compared to about 22.8 per cent in rural areas.
4. Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu reported some of the highest state-level C-section rates.

Which of the above are correct? (a) 1, 2 and 3 only (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

Q4. Consider the following statements about obesity and Type 2 diabetes:

1. The World Health Organization considers excess body weight as one of the strongest risk factors for Type 2 diabetes.
2. Excess abdominal fat is linked to insulin resistance, which can lead to Type 2 diabetes.
3. Body Mass Index (BMI) of 25 or above is classified as overweight under standard WHO criteria.
4. Maternal obesity and diabetes are associated with higher rates of Caesarean delivery.

Which of the above are correct? (a) 1, 2 and 3 only (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

Answer Key

1. (d), All four statements are correct.
2. (e), All four statements are correct.
3. (e), All four statements are correct.
4. (e), All four statements are correct.

2. India's First SkyCast System at IGI Airport, New Delhi

Source: TOI

Context

Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh has inaugurated **India's first "SkyCast" System** at the **Indira Gandhi International (IGI) Airport, New Delhi**. **SkyCast** is a **next-generation, integrated atmospheric remote sensing system** designed for **aviation weather monitoring**. It brings together **multiple real-time measurements** of **fog, aerosols, turbulence, moisture, and visibility** into a **single, comprehensive aviation weather intelligence framework**. The system has been **developed under Mission Mausam**, a flagship initiative of the **Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES)** aimed at making India **weather-ready and climate-smart** through **upgraded observation networks, modelling, and forecasting**.

Aim:

(a) Usher India into **fog-free, weather-smart aviation**.
(b) Reduce **flight delays, cancellations, and diversions** caused by adverse weather.
(c) Maximise **safety during take-off and landing**, the most weather-sensitive phases of flight.

Multi-sensor integration:

Instrument	What it does
Radar Wind Profiler	Measures **wind speed, direction, and vertical motion** in the lower atmosphere
SODAR (Sound Detection and Ranging)	Uses **sound waves** to study **wind, turbulence, and boundary-layer behaviour**
Microwave Radiometer	Measures **temperature and humidity profiles** vertically through the atmosphere
Ground-based Fog Aerosol Spectrometer (GFAS)	Studies **fog droplet sizes** and **aerosol-fog interactions**
CL61 Lidar-based Ceilometer	Uses **laser pulses** to map the **vertical structure and density of fog and clouds**

About the News

What is SkyCast?

SkyCast is **India's first integrated aviation weather intelligence system**, designed to provide **real-time atmospheric data on fog, aerosols, turbulence, moisture, and visibility**, helping airports and pilots

make **safer take-off and landing decisions**.

Where has it been launched and by whom?

Launched at **Indira Gandhi International (IGI) Airport, New Delhi**, by **Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh**, under **Mission Mausam** of the **Ministry of Earth Sciences**.

What instruments does it use?

(a) **Radar Wind Profiler**. (b) **SODAR (Sound Detection and Ranging)**. (c) **Microwave Radiometer**. (d) **Ground-based Fog Aerosol Spectrometer (GFAS)**. (e) **CL61 Lidar-based Ceilometer**.

Up to what altitude does it monitor the atmosphere?

Up to about **3 kilometres**, mapping the **boundary layer, wind, turbulence, temperature, and humidity** in real time.

Why is GFAS especially important for Delhi?

Because Delhi's winter fog is **mixed with high levels of pollution and aerosols**. The **Ground-based Fog Aerosol Spectrometer** can track **droplet sizes and aerosol-fog interactions**, which helps in **understanding and forecasting the unique pollution-fog mix** that affects flights.

What is the nowcasting window?

SkyCast provides **precise nowcasts and real-time alerts within a 3-hour window**, which is the **most critical period** for aviation flight planning.

Background Concepts (Q&A)

What is "Mission Mausam", and What Does it Aim to Do?

Mission Mausam is a **flagship initiative of the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES)** approved in **September 2024**, to make India **weather-ready and climate-smart** by **upgrading its weather observation, modelling, and forecasting capabilities**. The mission aims to build a **world-class observation network** of **radars, wind profilers, balloons, ocean buoys, and satellites**, deploy **advanced numerical weather prediction models**, and develop **AI and Machine Learning-based forecasting tools** to deliver **hyperlocal, sector-specific weather forecasts** for **agriculture, aviation, disaster management, urban planning, water resources, and public health**. The mission also focuses on **specific weather phenomena** like **fog, thunderstorms, heatwaves, cold waves, and extreme rainfall**, which cause **major disruption and damage** in India. Its **implementing agencies** include the **India Meteorological Department (IMD)**, the **Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM, Pune)**, the **National Centre for Medium Range Weather Forecasting (NCMRWF)**, and other MoES institutions. **SkyCast** is one of the **first major operational deliverables** under Mission Mausam, focused on **aviation weather**.

What is the "Atmospheric Boundary Layer", and Why Does It Matter for Aviation and Pollution?

The **Atmospheric Boundary Layer (ABL)**, also called the **Planetary Boundary Layer**, is the **lowest part of the Earth's atmosphere**, typically extending from the **surface up to about 1-3 kilometres**, depending on **time of day, weather, and location**. Above the ABL lies the **free atmosphere**, where conditions are **less influenced** by **surface friction, heating, and moisture**. The ABL is **critical** for several reasons:

(a) It is the layer where most **weather phenomena affecting daily life** happen, including **fog, low clouds, wind shear, turbulence, and pollution mixing**.

(b) **Aircraft take-off and landing** happen entirely within this layer, making **boundary-layer dynamics** central to **aviation safety**.

(c) **Pollutants** like **PM2.5, PM10, NO2, and SO2** mix and disperse within the ABL. In winter, the **ABL becomes shallow** (cold ground compresses it), **trapping pollution near the surface**, which is why **Delhi's winter pollution is so severe**.

(d) **Fog formation** depends on **temperature and humidity profiles** within the ABL.

SkyCast's **3-km vertical monitoring** is specifically designed to **map the boundary layer in detail**, which is why its data is useful for **both aviation safety and urban pollution management**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to India's first SkyCast System, consider the following statements:

1. SkyCast has been inaugurated at the Indira Gandhi International (IGI) Airport, New Delhi.
2. The system has been developed under Mission Mausam, an initiative of the Ministry of Earth Sciences.
3. It is designed to provide aviation weather intelligence by integrating multiple atmospheric remote-sensing instruments.
4. The system continuously monitors atmospheric conditions up to an altitude of about 3 kilometres.

How many of the above statements are correct? (a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) All four (e) None

Q2. Consider the following statements about the instruments integrated into the SkyCast System:

1. The Radar Wind Profiler measures wind speed, direction, and vertical motion in the lower atmosphere.
2. SODAR uses sound waves to study wind, turbulence, and boundary-layer behaviour.
3. The Microwave Radiometer measures temperature and humidity profiles through the atmosphere.
4. The CL61 Lidar-based Ceilometer is used to track the vertical structure and density of fog.

Which of the above are correct? (a) 1, 2 and 3 only (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

Q3. With reference to Mission Mausam, consider the following statements:

1. Mission Mausam was approved by the Government of India in September 2024.
2. It is implemented under the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES).
3. The mission focuses on upgrading weather observation, modelling, and forecasting capabilities to make India weather-ready and climate-smart.
4. Implementing agencies include the India Meteorological Department, IITM (Pune), and NCMRWF.

Which of the above are correct? (a) 1, 2 and 3 only (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

Q4. Consider the following statements about the Atmospheric Boundary Layer (ABL):

1. The Atmospheric Boundary Layer is the lowest part of the Earth's atmosphere, typically extending from the surface up to about 1-3 kilometres.
2. Most weather phenomena affecting daily life, including fog, turbulence, and low clouds, occur within the ABL.
3. The ABL becomes shallow in winter, trapping pollutants near the surface and contributing to severe urban air pollution.
4. Aircraft take-off and landing happen entirely within the Atmospheric Boundary Layer.

Which of the above are correct? (a) 1, 2 and 3 only (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

Answer Key

1. (d), All four statements are correct.
2. (e), All four statements are correct.
3. (e), All four statements are correct.
4. (e), All four statements are correct.

3. Sakura Science Programme 2026

Context

The **Department of School Education and Literacy (DoSEL)**, under the **Ministry of Education**, has flagged off a contingent of **56 Indian school students** to **Japan** under the **Sakura Science Programme 2026**. The programme, originally launched as the **Japan-Asia Youth Exchange Program in Science**, is an **international youth exchange initiative** funded and implemented by the **Japan Science and Technology Agency (JST)**, a leading public agency under Japan's **Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT)**. It invites **bright young minds** from across the world to Japan for **short-term visits** that combine **hands-on experience of Japan's cutting-edge science and technology** with **immersion in Japanese culture, history, and society**.

Key Highlights

- **Programme**: **Sakura Science Programme 2026**.
- **Original name**: **Japan-Asia Youth Exchange Program in Science**.
- **Implemented by**: **Japan Science and Technology Agency (JST)**.
- **Indian nodal agency**: **Department of School Education and Literacy (DoSEL)**, Ministry of Education.
- **Participating Countries:** Japan, India, Ghana, Nigeria, and South Africa

Aim of the programme:

(a) **Broaden the intellectual horizons** of young learners.
(b) Foster a **spirit of scientific exploration**.
(c) **Strengthen bilateral ties** through **youth and education diplomacy**.
(d) Expose students to **Japan's advanced science and technology ecosystem**.
(e) Offer immersion in **Japanese culture and heritage**.

About the News

What is the Sakura Science Programme?

A **Japan-funded international youth exchange initiative** under which **students from selected countries** visit Japan for a **week-long experiential learning programme** combining **advanced science exposure** with **cultural immersion**.

Who runs it and who participated this year?

It is run by the **Japan Science and Technology Agency (JST)**. The **May 2026 batch** has students from **India, Ghana, Nigeria, and South Africa**. India sent **56 students** through the **Department of School Education and Literacy (DoSEL)**, Ministry of Education.

Background Concepts (Q&A)

What is the National Means-cum-Merit Scholarship (NMMS) Scheme?

The **National Means-cum-Merit Scholarship (NMMS) Scheme** is a **Government of India centrally sponsored scholarship scheme** launched in **2008**, run by the **Department of School Education and Literacy (DoSEL)**, Ministry of Education. Its purpose is to **identify meritorious students from economically weaker sections** and **support them to continue education beyond Class 8**, especially up to **Class 12**, reducing **dropout rates** during the **secondary stage of school**. Eligible students are those whose **parental income is below ₹3.5 lakh per year** (the income ceiling has been revised over time), and who clear a **two-tier selection examination** comprising a **Mental Ability Test (MAT)** and a **Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT)**, conducted by **State Education Departments**. Successful candidates receive a **scholarship of ₹12,000 per annum** (revised from the earlier ₹6,000) for **classes 9 to 12**, paid directly into their bank accounts under the **Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) Mission Mode**. The scheme is implemented at the school level, and the **selection through NMMS** is now also used as a **benchmark of merit** for programmes like **Sakura Science**, ensuring that **opportunities go to bright children from disadvantaged**

backgrounds.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the Sakura Science Programme 2026, consider the following statements:

1. The programme is funded and implemented by the Japan Science and Technology Agency (JST).
2. The Indian contingent of 56 students was flagged off by the Department of School Education and Literacy under the Ministry of Education.
3. The 2026 batch includes participants from India, Ghana, Nigeria, and South Africa.
4. Indian participants are selected from meritorious government school students who have qualified the National Means-cum-Merit Scholarship (NMMS) examination.

How many of the above statements are correct? (a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) All four (e) None

Q2. Consider the following statements about the Sakura Science Programme:

1. The programme was originally launched as the Japan-Asia Youth Exchange Program in Science.
2. India has been included in the programme since 2016.
3. Since India's inclusion, a total of 674 Indian students and 96 supervisors have visited Japan under this framework.
4. The programme exclusively focuses on scientific exchange and has no cultural exchange component.

Which of the above are correct? (a) 1, 2 and 3 only (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

Q3. With reference to the National Means-cum-Merit Scholarship (NMMS) Scheme, consider the following statements:

1. NMMS is a centrally sponsored scheme implemented by the Department of School Education and Literacy under the Ministry of Education.
2. The scheme aims to support meritorious students from economically weaker sections to continue education beyond Class 8.
3. Selection is based on a two-tier examination, including a Mental Ability Test (MAT) and a Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT).
4. The scholarship amount is disbursed via Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) into the students' bank accounts.

Which of the above are correct? (a) 1, 2 and 3 only (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

Q4. Consider the following statements about India-Japan cooperation in science, technology, and education:

1. The Japan Science and Technology Agency (JST) operates under Japan's Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT).
2. India and Japan have a Special Strategic and Global Partnership.
3. India and Japan are also partners in the Quad along with the United States and Australia.
4. The Mumbai-Ahmedabad High-Speed Rail project uses Japanese Shinkansen technology.

Which of the above are correct? (a) 1, 2 and 3 only (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

Answer Key

1. (d), All four statements are correct.
2. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct. Statement 4 is wrong; the Sakura Science Programme **explicitly includes a cultural exchange component**, with **immersive experiences** to help students appreciate

Japan's history and social fabric, alongside scientific learning.

3. (e), All four statements are correct.
4. (e), All four statements are correct.

4. Union Minister Launches Logistics Port Performance Index (LPPI) and Four Digital Maritime Reforms

Source: PIB

Context

The **Union Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways** has launched the **Logistics Port Performance Index (LPPI) for FY 2024-25**, along with **four major digital governance platforms**, during the **37th Foundation Day of the Jawaharlal Nehru Port Authority (JNPA)**, India's busiest container port. The reforms together mark a **structural shift** in India's maritime administration, from **paper-based, fragmented workflows** to an **integrated, AI-ready, and cloud-governed digital framework**. The reforms have been developed mainly by the **Directorate General of Shipping (DGS)** under the **Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways**, and are linked to the **PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan** and the **Sagar Aankalan framework** for port performance benchmarking

Key Highlights

- **Occasion**: **37th Foundation Day** of **Jawaharlal Nehru Port Authority (JNPA)**.
- **Launched by**: **Union Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways**.
- **Developer**: **Directorate General of Shipping (DGS)**, Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways.

Five reforms launched:

#	Initiative	What it does
1	**Logistics Port Performance Index (LPPI)**	Benchmarks Indian ports across three cargo segments
2	**24x7 e-Navik Grievance Redressal Module**	Global grievance channel for Indian seafarers
3	**e-Samudra Ship Registration Module**	Digitises ship registration under the Indian flag
4	**Medical Practitioner Module**	Verified database of doctors certifying maritime crew fitness
5	**Unified Ship Recycling Portal (Credit Note Module)**	Links **eco-compliant ship recycling** to **new shipbuilding incentives**

About the News (Q&A)

What was launched, and where?

The **Logistics Port Performance Index (LPPI) for FY 2024-25** and **four major digital governance platforms** were launched at the **37th Foundation Day of the Jawaharlal Nehru Port Authority (JNPA)**.

What is the Logistics Port Performance Index?

A **port-benchmarking index** built under the **Sagar Aankalan framework** and aligned with **PM Gati Shakti**, that **ranks Indian ports** across **Dry Bulk, Liquid Bulk, and Container Cargo** using metrics like **vessel turnaround time, berth idle time, pre-berthing waiting time, and ship berth day output**, balancing **absolute performance** with **year-on-year improvement**.

What is the e-Navik Grievance Redressal Module?

A **24x7 global welfare interface** for **Indian seafarers**, allowing them to **raise grievances** from anywhere in the world through **the e-Navik portal, WhatsApp, dedicated emails, and international toll-free helplines**.

What does the e-Samudra Module do?

It **digitises and streamlines ship registration** under the **Indian flag**, helping **shipowners avoid**

administrative delays and bringing India closer to **the ease of registration** offered by **open-registry maritime nations**.

What is the Medical Practitioner Module?

A **central digital database** for **registering and verifying medical professionals** who issue **fitness certificates** to **maritime crews**, designed to **stop fraudulent health certifications**.

What does the Unified Ship Recycling Portal offer?

Under the **₹70,000 crore Maritime Development Package**, shipowners who **recycle aging vessels** at **Hong Kong Convention-compliant Indian yards** automatically get a **digital credit note worth 40 per cent of the ship's scrap value**, which can be redeemed against **new shipbuilding projects in India**.

Background Concepts (Q&A)

What is the Directorate General of Shipping (DGS), and What is Its Role?

The **Directorate General of Shipping (DGS)** is the **principal maritime administration agency** of the **Government of India**, headquartered in **Mumbai**, and functions under the **Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways**. Set up under the **Merchant Shipping Act, 1958**, DGS is responsible for: (a) **regulating merchant shipping** in India; (b) **ship registration** under the Indian flag; (c) **safety of life at sea (SOLAS) implementation**; (d) **seafarer recruitment, training, certification, and welfare**; (e) **enforcement of international maritime conventions** (MARPOL, SOLAS, MLC 2006, Hong Kong Convention) in India; (f) **port state and flag state control inspections**; and (g) **administration of laws like the Recycling of Ships Act, 2019**. DGS is the **regulator and developer** of most of India's maritime workforce, and it is the **nodal agency** for the **four new digital modules** launched alongside the LPPI.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the recent maritime digital reforms launched in India, consider the following statements:

1. The reforms were launched on the 37th Foundation Day of the Jawaharlal Nehru Port Authority (JNPA).
2. They include the Logistics Port Performance Index (LPPI) and four digital governance platforms developed by the Directorate General of Shipping.
3. The Logistics Port Performance Index has been developed under the Sagar Aankalan framework and aligned with the PM Gati Shakti Master Plan.
4. The LPPI benchmarks ports across three cargo verticals: Dry Bulk, Liquid Bulk, and Container Cargo.

How many of the above statements are correct? (a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) All four (e) None

Q2. Consider the following statements about the new digital modules launched alongside the LPPI:

1. The 24x7 e-Navik Grievance Redressal Module is a global welfare interface for Indian seafarers.
2. The e-Samudra Ship Registration Module digitises the process of registering commercial vessels under the Indian flag.
3. The Medical Practitioner Module manages a verified database of doctors authorised to issue fitness certificates to maritime crews.
4. The Unified Ship Recycling Portal allows shipowners who recycle vessels at Hong Kong Convention-compliant Indian yards to receive a credit note worth 40 per cent of the ship's scrap value.

Which of the above are correct? (a) 1, 2 and 3 only (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

Q3. With reference to the Hong Kong International Convention for Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships, consider the following statements:

1. The convention was adopted under the International Maritime Organization (IMO).

2. It covers the entire life cycle of a ship, from design and construction to recycling.
3. Each ship covered by the convention is required to have an Inventory of Hazardous Materials (IHM).
4. India has aligned its Recycling of Ships Act, 2019, with the Hong Kong Convention.

Which of the above are correct? (a) 1, 2 and 3 only (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

Q4. Consider the following statements about the Directorate General of Shipping (DGS):

1. DGS is the principal maritime administration agency of the Government of India, headquartered in Mumbai.
2. It functions under the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways.
3. DGS handles ship registration, seafarer welfare, and enforcement of international maritime conventions in India.
4. The Directorate General of Shipping is a private commercial body that operates Indian shipping companies.

Which of the above are correct? (a) 1, 2 and 3 only (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

Answer Key

1. (d), All four statements are correct.
2. (e), All four statements are correct.
3. (e), All four statements are correct.
4. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct. Statement 4 is wrong; the **DGS is a government regulatory body**, NOT a private commercial entity. It does **not operate shipping companies**; it **regulates the merchant shipping sector**.

5. New Frog Species "Amolops Kamal" Discovered

Context

A team of **six scientists from the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI)** has recorded a **new-to-science cascade-dwelling frog species** from the **hill-stream habitats near Singrep village** in **Kiphire district of Nagaland**, which borders **Myanmar**. The species was discovered during a **field survey in August 2024**, and has been **formally named** in the latest issue of the journal **Records of the Zoological Survey of India**.

Key Highlights

- **New species: Amolops kamal** (common name: **Nagaland Cascade Frog**).
- **Recorded by: Zoological Survey of India (ZSI)**, six-scientist team.
- **Location: Hill-stream habitats near Singrep village**, **Kiphire district, Nagaland**, bordering **Myanmar**.
- **Year of field discovery: August 2024**.
- **Published in: Records of the Zoological Survey of India**.
- **Named after: Kamal Choudhury**, former teacher at **B. Barooah College, Guwahati**.

About the News

What has been discovered?

A **new-to-science cascade-dwelling frog species** named **Amolops kamal**, with the common name **Nagaland Cascade Frog**, has been recorded in the **hill streams near Singrep village in Kiphire district, Nagaland**.

Who discovered it and how?

A team of **six ZSI scientists** led the field expedition in **August 2024** and confirmed the new species using

integrative taxonomy, which combines **physical (morphological) features** with **molecular DNA-based phylogenetic analysis**.

Why is the name "Amolops kamal" significant?

The species is named after **Kamal Choudhury**, the **former teacher of the lead author** of the study at **B. Barooah College, Guwahati**, in tribute to his role in shaping the researcher's scientific journey.

What does the discovery mean scientifically?

It shows that **Amolops indoburmanensis**, previously thought to be a **single widespread species**, may in fact be a **complex of several genetically distinct species**. This is an example of a **cryptic species complex**, where multiple species look almost identical but are genetically different.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the newly described frog species Amolops kamal, consider the following statements:

1. The species was recorded in the hill-stream habitats of Kiphire district, Nagaland.
2. It was discovered by a team of six scientists from the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI).
3. Its common name is the Nagaland Cascade Frog.
4. It belongs to the Amolops indoburmanensis species complex.

How many of the above statements are correct? (a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) All four (e) None

Q2. Consider the following statements about the genus Amolops:

1. The genus Amolops includes Asian cascade-dwelling frogs typically found in hill-stream habitats.
2. There are currently 90 recognised species of Amolops globally.
3. India has around 20 species of Amolops, classified mainly under three groups: Amolops marmoratus, Amolops monticola, and Amolops viridimaculatus.
4. The Amolops marmoratus group is the most diverse, with eight species in India.

Which of the above are correct? (a) 1, 2 and 3 only (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

Q3. With reference to the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI), consider the following statements:

1. ZSI was established in 1916 and is headquartered in Kolkata.
2. It functions under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.
3. ZSI is responsible for surveying India's fauna, maintaining national zoological collections, and describing new species.
4. ZSI is the regulator of stock markets and securities in India.

Which of the above are correct? (a) 1, 2 and 3 only (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

Q4. Consider the following statements about cryptic species and integrative taxonomy:

1. Cryptic species look nearly identical to the human eye but are genetically distinct.
2. Cryptic species are often discovered through molecular phylogenetic analysis.
3. Recognising cryptic species can lead to better-targeted conservation policies.
4. Cryptic species are extremely rare in amphibians and rarely affect biodiversity estimates.

Which of the above are correct? (a) 1, 2 and 3 only (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

Answer Key

1. (d), All four statements are correct.
2. (e), All four statements are correct.
3. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct. Statement 4 is wrong; the **regulator of stock markets and securities in India is SEBI**, NOT the ZSI. ZSI is a **biodiversity and animal taxonomy research institute**, not a financial regulator.
4. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct. Statement 4 is wrong; **cryptic species are quite common in amphibians**, and recognising them is **significantly raising biodiversity estimates** in many parts of the world, including **Northeast India**.

Banking and Finance

1. RBI Issues Master Direction on Expected Credit Loss (ECL) Provisioning

Context

The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has issued a **Master Direction on Expected Credit Loss (ECL) provisioning** on **27 April**, ending **about three decades of rule-based provisioning** in Indian banking. Until now, **banks set aside provisions after a loan went bad**, in **fixed proportions** that depended on **how long the loan remained unpaid**. Under the new approach, **banks must provision before they incur a loss**, by **forecasting future losses** based on **loan health**, **economic stress scenarios**, and **recovery assumptions**.

Key Highlights:

- **Regulation**: **Master Direction on Expected Credit Loss (ECL) Provisioning**.
- **Issued by**: **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)**.
- **Implementation deadline**: **April 2027**.
- **What it replaces**: Three decades of **rule-based, after-the-fact loan-loss provisioning**.

Old vs New approach at a glance:

Feature	Earlier Rule-Based	New ECL Framework
Trigger for provisioning	Loan turns bad and stays unpaid for a certain period	**Forward-looking** estimate, before actual loss
Basis for amount	**Fixed proportions** set by RBI norms	**Forecasts** of future losses
Inputs considered	Mainly **days overdue**	**Loan health, stress scenarios, recovery assumptions**
Frequency of judgment	Periodic and mechanical	**Continuous and analytical**
Earnings volatility	Lower, but provisioning often delayed	Higher, but **more honest in real time**

Three-stage ECL classification:

Stage	What it means	Provisioning
Stage I	Loans with **low credit risk**	**Minimal provisioning** (12-month expected loss)
Stage II	Loans showing **significant increase in credit risk (SICR)**	**Higher lifetime expected loss provision**
Stage III	Loans that have **already become impaired** (credit-impaired)	**Lifetime expected loss provision** based on **actual impairment**

About the News

What has the RBI announced?

A **new Master Direction on Expected Credit Loss (ECL) provisioning**, which **replaces three decades of rule-based provisioning** with a **forward-looking, model-based approach**, effective from **April 2027**.

How is the new approach different?

(a) Earlier, banks **provisioned after** a loan turned bad, based on **how long it stayed unpaid**. (b) Now, banks must **predict losses in advance**, using **economic scenarios, loan health, and recovery assumptions**. (c) The system shifts from **reactive** to **forward-looking and analytical**.

What is SICR, and why is it crucial?

Significant Increase in Credit Risk (SICR) is the **trigger** that moves a loan from **Stage I (low risk)** to **Stage II (higher risk)** in the ECL framework. Once a loan crosses SICR, banks must hold **lifetime expected loss provisions**, which are usually much higher than Stage I provisions. A **30-days-overdue rule** is one common SICR trigger, but the authors warn that this may not work for all Indian loan types.

Background Concepts (Q&A)

What is Expected Credit Loss (ECL), and How is It Different from the Old "Incurred Loss" Approach?

Expected Credit Loss (ECL) is a **forward-looking accounting model** for setting aside provisions for possible **future credit losses on loans and other financial assets**. It is based on the global accounting standard **IFRS 9 (Financial Instruments)**, and its Indian counterpart **Ind AS 109**. Under ECL, banks must **estimate possible future losses** on **all loans**, even those that are **still performing**, based on **probability of default, loss given default, and exposure at default**, combined with **forward-looking economic scenarios**.

In contrast, the **older "Incurred Loss" approach** required banks to **wait for a loss event to actually happen**, such as **a default or sustained overdue period**, before recognising the loss in their books. The big criticism of the Incurred Loss approach, especially after the **2008 global financial crisis**, was that banks **acknowledged losses too late**, when problems had already become **too large to manage smoothly**. ECL fixes this by requiring banks to **anticipate losses based on credit conditions**, building up provisions **gradually and proactively**. India's adoption of ECL aligns its banks more closely with **global best practices**, supports **better financial stability**, and reduces the chance of **sudden, large NPA shocks**.

What is the "Three-Stage Classification" Under ECL, and What is SICR?

Under the ECL framework, **loans are placed into one of three "stages"** based on their **credit risk**, and **provisions are calculated differently** for each stage:

(a) **Stage I**, the **performing stage**, includes loans with **low credit risk** that are paying normally. Banks must hold a **12-month expected credit loss** provision (losses that could occur in the next 12 months).

(b) **Stage II**, the **underperforming stage**, includes loans that have shown a **Significant Increase in Credit Risk (SICR)** since their **origination**, even if they are not yet impaired. Banks must hold a **lifetime expected loss** provision, which is **much higher** than Stage I.

(c) **Stage III**, the **non-performing or credit-impaired stage**, includes loans where **actual default or impairment has occurred**. Banks must also hold a **lifetime expected loss** provision, but the calculation is based on the **actual impairment**.

Significant Increase in Credit Risk (SICR) is the **trigger** that moves a loan from **Stage I to Stage II**. SICR can be measured through several indicators: (i) **30-days-overdue rule** as a common benchmark; (ii) **deterioration in credit rating** since origination; (iii) **economic stress indicators** in the borrower's sector or region; and (iv) **qualitative factors** like restructuring or watch-list status. Because **provisioning rises sharply** the moment a loan crosses SICR, the **calibration of the SICR threshold** is one of the **most important governance and risk decisions** a bank's board will make under the new ECL regime.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the RBI's new Master Direction on Expected Credit Loss (ECL) Provisioning, consider the following statements:

1. The Master Direction was issued by the RBI on 27 April and replaces three decades of rule-based provisioning.
2. Under the new framework, banks must provision before they actually incur a loss, based on forecasts of future losses.
3. The implementation deadline for Indian banks is April 2027.
4. The new framework continues the practice of provisioning only after a loan has gone bad and remained unpaid for a fixed period.

How many of the above statements are correct? (a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) All four (e) None

Q2. Consider the following statements about Expected Credit Loss (ECL) vs Incurred Loss approach:

1. Under the Incurred Loss approach, banks recognised losses only after a default or impairment event had occurred.
2. The Expected Credit Loss approach is based on global accounting standard IFRS 9 and its Indian counterpart Ind AS 109.
3. ECL requires banks to estimate possible future losses on loans based on probability of default, loss given default, and exposure at default.
4. The adoption of ECL was driven partly by lessons from the 2008 global financial crisis.

Which of the above are correct? (a) 1, 2 and 3 only (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

Q3. With reference to the three-stage classification under the ECL framework, consider the following statements:

1. Stage I loans carry low credit risk and require a 12-month expected loss provision.
2. Stage II loans are those that have shown a Significant Increase in Credit Risk (SICR) since origination and require lifetime expected loss provisions.
3. Stage III loans are those that have become credit-impaired or non-performing.
4. Stage I loans require higher provisions than Stage III loans.

Which of the above are correct? (a) 1, 2 and 3 only (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

Q4. Consider the following statements about implementation challenges of the new ECL framework in India:

1. ECL models typically require at least five years of loan-level data across a full credit cycle to be reliable.
2. The 2018-20 NBFC stress period and the pandemic-era loan restructuring wave are important data points for Indian banks.
3. A World Bank survey of IFRS 9 supervisors found that data quality was the single biggest implementation failure across jurisdictions.
4. Indian banks have already widely built expertise in loss-given-default and lifetime loss value estimation through their use of the Advanced Internal Ratings-Based approach for capital estimation.

Which of the above are correct? (a) 1, 2 and 3 only (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct. Statement 4 is wrong; the **new framework moves AWAY from provisioning only after a loan has gone bad**, and instead requires **forward-looking provisioning based on forecasts**.
2. (e), All four statements are correct.
3. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct. Statement 4 is wrong; **Stage I requires LOWER provisions** (only **12-month expected loss**), while **Stage III requires lifetime expected loss provisions based on actual impairment**, which are generally **much higher** than Stage I provisions.
4. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct. Statement 4 is wrong; according to the article, **Indian banks largely did NOT adopt the Advanced Internal Ratings-Based approach for capital estimation**, and **expertise in loss-given-default, lifetime loss value, and macro-projection-based estimation exists only in pockets**, not widely.

Exam Relevance

Exam	Relevance
UPSC Prelims	GS Paper III on Indian Economy (RBI, Banking, NPAs, IFRS 9, Ind AS 109)
BPSC and State PCS	Banking, Economy, Current Affairs
Banking (RBI Gr B, SBI PO, IBPS, NABARD)	Very high importance, banking regulation, accounting, provisioning
SEBI Grade A	Disclosure norms, accounting standards
IRDAI	Insurance sector also moving towards Ind AS 109

2. RBI Explores Universal "Kill Switch" and "Switch On/Switch Off" Facility

Context

The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)**, in its **Annual Report**, has announced that it is **exploring the implementation of a universal "Kill Switch" mechanism**, along with a **"Switch On/Switch Off" facility**, across **all digital payment channels** in India. The **Kill Switch** is being designed as an **emergency security protocol** that allows a user to **immediately freeze all financial operations and fund transfers** from their **bank account or digital wallet**, the moment they realise they are caught in a **scam**, especially **real-time frauds** like the **fake "digital arrest" video calls** that have become increasingly common.

What each facility does:

Facility	Function
Kill Switch	**Instantly freezes all financial operations and fund transfers** from a user's account or wallet
Switch On/Switch Off	Lets users **selectively enable or disable specific transaction channels** (UPI, IMPS, international cards, etc.)

How activation works:

Channel	Use Case
Mobile banking app	Single-tap **emergency button** built into native banking apps
Designated SMS code	Quick activation when app access is compromised
Toll-free portal / call centre	Alternative channel for non-tech users
Internet banking portal	Activation from any computer with credentials
IVR (Interactive Voice Response)	Voice-based emergency activation

Payment systems to be covered:

Payment Mode	Coverage
Debit and credit cards	Already covered through existing card controls
Unified Payments Interface (UPI)	To be brought under the new framework
Immediate Payment Service (IMPS)	Covered
National Electronic Funds Transfer (NEFT)	Covered
Internet banking	Covered
Digital wallets	Covered

About the News

What is the RBI exploring?

A **universal Kill Switch** and a **Switch On/Switch Off** facility across **all digital payment channels** in India, to give users **emergency control** over their accounts during **cyber frauds**.

How will the Kill Switch work in practice?

A user who suspects fraud can **activate the Kill Switch** through their **mobile banking app, SMS code, toll-free portal, IVR, or internet banking**. Once triggered, the bank **instantly blocks all outward fund movements** from the user's account.

What payments will it cover?

Unified Payments Interface (UPI), IMPS, NEFT, internet banking, debit and credit cards, and digital wallets. Unlike current card-only blocking, this is a **universal switch** across the entire **electronic payment spectrum**.

What is "Granular Channel Toggling"?

The **Switch On/Switch Off** feature lets users **disable specific transaction modules** while keeping others working. For example, a user can **turn off international transactions** but keep **domestic ATM withdrawals active**. This adds **everyday safety** to **regular usage**, not just emergencies.

Background Concepts (Q&A)

What are "Mule Accounts", and Why are They Central to Cyber Financial Fraud?

Mule accounts are **bank accounts used by criminals to receive, hold, and move fraudulently obtained money**, often **without the original account holder fully understanding their role**. In a typical cyber fraud, **the victim is tricked** into transferring money to a mule account, after which the funds are **rapidly moved through a chain of further mule accounts**, often into **wallets, gaming credits, or cryptocurrency**, to make the **money trail very hard to trace**. Mule accounts are **created in two main ways**: (a) **knowingly**, when a person sells or rents out their bank account to fraudsters for a small fee (a serious offence in itself); or (b) **unknowingly**, when fraudsters open accounts using **fake or stolen identity documents** and **forged KYC details**. Tackling mule accounts is one of the **biggest priorities** for the **RBI, banks, the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) under the Ministry of Home Affairs**, and **financial intelligence agencies**. Tools like the **Kill Switch** help by **stopping the original transfer** before money even reaches the mule chain.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the RBI's proposed Kill Switch facility, consider the following statements:

1. The Kill Switch will allow users to instantly freeze all financial operations and fund transfers from their account.
2. The facility will be available across UPI, IMPS, NEFT, internet banking, and digital wallets, not just debit and credit cards.

3. Activation will be possible through the mobile banking app, SMS code, IVR, internet banking, and toll-free portal.
4. The Switch On/Switch Off feature will allow users to selectively disable or enable specific transaction channels.

How many of the above statements are correct? (a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) All four (e) None

Q2. Consider the following statements about the rationale behind the Kill Switch and Switch On/Switch Off mechanism:

1. Real-time cyber frauds like fake "digital arrest" video calls have increased in India.
2. Once siphoned, fraudulent funds are usually layered quickly through mule accounts, making recovery difficult.
3. Existing fraud-reporting and chargeback channels are mostly post-fraud, which causes delays in stopping money movement.
4. The Kill Switch facility is intended only for high-net-worth individuals and not for general retail users.

Which of the above are correct? (a) 1, 2 and 3 only (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

Q3. With reference to mule accounts and cyber financial fraud, consider the following statements:

1. Mule accounts are bank accounts used by criminals to receive and move fraudulently obtained money.
2. Mule accounts may be created knowingly by individuals selling their account access, or unknowingly through fake identity documents.
3. Tackling mule accounts is a key priority for the RBI, banks, and the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C).
4. The Kill Switch facility helps stop transfers before money even enters the mule chain.

Which of the above are correct? (a) 1, 2 and 3 only (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

Q4. Consider the following statements about cyber fraud reporting and digital payment security in India:

1. The national helpline number for reporting financial cyber frauds in India is 1930.
2. The Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) functions under the Ministry of Home Affairs.
3. RBI has issued Master Directions on Digital Payment Security Controls.
4. The Reserve Bank-Integrated Ombudsman Scheme provides a unified grievance redressal mechanism for customers of RBI-regulated entities.

Which of the above are correct? (a) 1, 2 and 3 only (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

Answer Key

1. (d), All four statements are correct.
2. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct. Statement 4 is wrong; the **Kill Switch is being designed for all retail users**, NOT just high-net-worth individuals. The whole point is to **protect ordinary citizens**, especially those vulnerable to **digital arrest, OTP, KYC, and similar frauds**.
3. (e), All four statements are correct.
4. (e), All four statements are correct.

Facts To Remember

1. MoH&FW Releases 10th National Health Accounts Estimates for FY23

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoH&FW) released the 10th National Health Accounts (NHA) Estimates for Financial Year 2022-23 (FY23), highlighting a major increase in Government Health Expenditure (GHE). The report stated that GHE rose from Rs.1.30 lakh crore in 2013-14 to Rs.3.85 lakh crore in FY23, reflecting increased public investment in India's healthcare sector. India's Total Health Expenditure (THE) for FY23 was estimated at Rs.8.81 lakh crore, accounting for 3.37% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

2. Dr. Jitendra Singh Inaugurates PECVD System and RETINA Centre at IACS Kolkata

Union Minister Jitendra Singh inaugurated the Plasma Enhanced Chemical Vapor Deposition (PECVD) system and the RETINA incubation centre at the Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science, Kolkata, during its 150-year celebrations. The indigenously developed PECVD system will support fabrication of India's first amorphous silicon solar cell under the Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative. The RETINA incubation centre aims to promote startup-driven innovation and commercialization of scientific research.

3. DARPG Launches NeSDA 2025 Portal for Digital Governance Assessment

The Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG) launched the National e-Governance Service Delivery Assessment (NeSDA) 2025 Portal to evaluate digital public service delivery mechanisms across India. The biennial assessment framework measures the effectiveness of Government-to-Citizen (G2C) and Government-to-Business (G2B) e-governance services. The portal will assess central, state, Union Territory, and city-level digital service platforms across sectors such as education, transport, labour, tourism, finance, and public grievances.

4. RITES and CRISIL Sign MoU for Data-driven Infrastructure Consultancy

RITES Limited signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with CRISIL to jointly develop data-driven infrastructure consultancy solutions in India and overseas markets. The partnership combines RITES' infrastructure expertise with CRISIL's analytics and research capabilities to strengthen advisory support for transport, energy, water, hydropower, wastewater, and industrial infrastructure projects. The collaboration will focus on financial due diligence, valuation support, market intelligence, and analytical model development.

5. IAF Collaborates with IIT Bombay for Su-30MKI Predictive Maintenance System

The Indian Air Force signed agreements with Indian Institute of Technology Bombay to develop Artificial Intelligence (AI)-based predictive maintenance technologies for the Sukhoi Su-30MKI fighter aircraft fleet. The project includes development of a digital diagnostic health index using indigenous AI-driven engineering solutions. The initiative aims to improve operational readiness, reduce maintenance costs, and enhance aircraft availability for the IAF.

6. IIT Madras Launches Circulating Water Tunnel Facility in Chennai

Indian Institute of Technology Madras inaugurated a state-of-the-art Circulating Water Tunnel Facility near Chennai, Tamil Nadu, to strengthen India's hydrodynamic testing and ocean engineering research capabilities. Developed with Rs.4.5 crore CSR funding from Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited, the facility will support research in ship design, naval architecture, offshore engineering, marine vehicles, and fluid dynamics.

7. NSE and SUFI Sign MoU to Develop Steel Commodity Derivatives Ecosystem

National Stock Exchange of India signed an MoU with Steel Users Federation of India to strengthen India's

steel commodity derivatives ecosystem. The collaboration will focus on exchange-traded steel derivatives, hedging mechanisms, market outreach, and industry consultations to reduce risks arising from steel price volatility. The initiative aims to benefit steel manufacturers, MSMEs, OEMs, infrastructure companies, and industrial users.

8. WBGB and Canara HSBC Life Insurance Partner for Rural Insurance Expansion

West Bengal Gramin Bank partnered with Canara HSBC Life Insurance to strengthen life insurance penetration in rural and semi-urban regions of West Bengal. Through WBGB's network of 960 branches, customers will gain access to protection, savings, and wealth creation insurance products. The partnership aims to improve financial security and insurance accessibility in underserved areas.

9. DBJ Partners with HDFC Capital for Affordable Housing Projects

Development Bank of Japan entered into a strategic partnership with HDFC Capital Advisors Limited to invest in affordable and mid-income housing projects across India. The collaboration targets a corpus of USD 1 billion through the H-DREAM Fund, marking DBJ's first real estate investment in India. The investment will support large-scale housing development under the GIFT City offshore investment framework.

10. Taiwan Surpasses India as World's Fifth Largest Stock Market

Taiwan overtook India to become the world's fifth largest stock market in terms of market capitalization, reaching USD 4.95 trillion compared to India's USD 4.92 trillion. The rise was driven by the AI-led semiconductor boom led by Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company. India experienced foreign portfolio investor outflows and benchmark market declines amid changing global investment trends.

11. TCS Signs Multi-million Dollar AI-led ERP Deal with Sweden's SKF

Tata Consultancy Services signed a multi-million dollar agreement with Swedish industrial manufacturer SKF to implement a next-generation AI-enabled Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) platform. The partnership aims to modernize SKF's global IT systems, improve operational efficiency, and enhance customer experience through AI-integrated digital enterprise solutions.

12. Janez Janša Becomes Prime Minister of Slovenia for Fourth Term

Janez Janša, leader of the Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS), was appointed Prime Minister of Slovenia for a fourth term after securing parliamentary approval. He succeeded Robert Golob and formed a centre-right coalition government following the 2026 parliamentary elections.

13. Red Balloon Aerospace Launches India's First Indigenous Stratospheric SPB

Indian startup Red Balloon Aerospace Private Limited launched India's first indigenous Stratospheric Super Pressure Balloon (SPB) named "VISTA" under Mission SANA in Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh. The platform ascended to nearly 25 kilometres above Earth carrying payloads related to biological experiments, propulsion systems, navigation technologies, and earth observation sensors. India joined the United States, France, Japan, and China among nations possessing indigenous SPB capability.

14. Urdu Poet Bashir Badr Passes Away

Renowned Urdu poet and Padma Shri awardee Bashir Badr passed away at the age of 91 in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh. He was awarded the Padma Shri in 1999 for his contribution to literature and education. His celebrated collection of ghazals earned him the Sahitya Akademi Award in Urdu literature.

15. International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers 2026 Observed on May 29

International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers was observed globally on May 29 with the theme

"Invest in Peace". The day honours the service and sacrifice of UN peacekeepers worldwide and commemorates the first UN peacekeeping mission launched in 1948 under the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization.

16. World Digestive Health Day 2026 Observed on May 29

World Digestive Health Day was observed globally on May 29 with the theme "Chronic Diarrhea: Don't Flush the Signs Away." Initiated by the World Gastroenterology Organisation, the observance raises awareness regarding prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of gastrointestinal disorders.

17. International Everest Day 2026 Observed on May 29

International Everest Day was observed globally on May 29 to commemorate the first successful ascent of Mount Everest by Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay in 1953. The observance celebrates courage, resilience, and human endurance while honouring mountaineering achievements worldwide.

18. West Bengal Government Begins Annapurna Yojana Enrolment

The Government of West Bengal started the enrolment process for the Annapurna Yojana aimed at supporting women without fixed income sources. Eligible women aged between 25 and 60 years can apply through online and offline modes for monthly financial assistance. The enrolment drive will continue for 90 days across municipalities and wards in the state.

FIVE TO REMEMBER · 1 JUNE 2026

1. A World Bank survey of IFRS 9 supervisors found that data quality was the single biggest implementation failure across jurisdictions. RBI Issues Master Direction on Expected Credit ...
2. The Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) functions under the Ministry of Home Affairs. RBI Explores Universal "Kill Switch" and "Switc...
3. Mission Mausam was approved by the Government of India in September 2024. India's First SkyCast System at IGI Airport, Ne...
4. India has aligned its Recycling of Ships Act, 2019, with the Hong Kong Convention. Union Minister Launches Logistics Port Performa...
5. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct. Statement 4 is wrong; the **regulator of stock markets and securities in India is SEBI**, NOT the ZSI. ZSI is a **biodiversity and animal taxonomy research institute**, not a financial regulator. New Frog Species "Amolops Kamal" Discovered

Now test yourself: c4scourses.in/daily-quiz/daily-quiz-1-june-2026/

DAY 2 OF 18

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Context

The **Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM)** has crossed a landmark milestone of **over 90 crore Ayushman Bharat Health Accounts (ABHAs)** generated across India. The ABDM is a **flagship national digital public infrastructure (DPI) project**, implemented by the **National Health Authority (NHA)** under the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW)**, and was **launched in September 2021**. It functions as a **single, unified digital highway** linking the entire healthcare ecosystem, **citizens, doctors, hospitals, pharmacies, diagnostic centres, and insurers**, into an **integrated, transparent, and interoperable digital framework**. The mission's vision is to **bridge the information gap** between **public and private healthcare**, create a **single source of truth** for health data, and give **citizens full ownership of their lifelong, longitudinal health records**.

Key Highlights

- **Programme**: **Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM)**.
- **Implementing agency**: **National Health Authority (NHA)**.
- **Parent Ministry**: **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW)**.
- **Launched in**: **September 2021**.
- **Milestone**: **Over 90 crore ABHAs** generated.

Aim:

(a) Build an **integrated, transparent, interoperable** digital health infrastructure for India. (b) Bridge the **public-private divide** in healthcare data. (c) Create a **single source of truth** for health records. (d) Give **citizens absolute ownership** of their **lifelong health records**.

Six foundational building blocks:

Component	What it does
Ayushman Bharat Health Account (ABHA)	**14-digit unique digital health identifier**; master key to link and share medical history
Healthcare Professionals Registry (HPR)	Verified central database of **doctors, nurses, paramedics**, modern and traditional medicine
Health Facility Registry (HFR)	Master registry of **public and private hospitals, clinics, diagnostic centres, pharmacies**
Health Information Exchange and Consent Manager (HIE-CM)	Routes medical records with **explicit, electronic, revocable patient consent**
Unified Health Interface (UHI)	**Open network protocol** for teleconsultations, diagnostics, and digital health services
National Health Claims Exchange (NHCX)	Digital platform to **standardise and speed up health insurance claim settlements**

About the News (Q&A)

What is the ABDM?

A **digital public infrastructure (DPI) project** that creates a **unified national digital health framework**

linking **citizens, providers, and insurers**, implemented by the **NHA** under the **MoHFW** since **September 2021**.

What is the ABHA, and why is it called a "Health Aadhaar"?

ABHA is a **14-digit unique digital health identifier**. Just as **Aadhaar** is the **master ID for identity** and **UPI** is the **rails for payments**, ABHA is the **master key for digital health records**. Citizens can **link their medical history** to it and **share it securely** with **doctors and hospitals** when needed.

Background Concepts (Q&A)

What is "Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)", and Why is It Relevant to Health?

Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) is a **set of shared, open, interoperable digital systems** that serve as the **basic plumbing** for **public and private services** in a country, similar to how **roads, electricity grids, and water supply** are physical infrastructure. DPI is typically built on **three layers**: **identity (e.g., Aadhaar)**, **payments (e.g., UPI)**, and **data exchange (e.g., Account Aggregator, DigiLocker, ABDM)**. The key features of DPI are: (a) **public-good orientation**, the infrastructure is built or backed by the **state** but **open to use** by both **public and private actors**; (b) **open standards and APIs**, so that **many companies and applications** can plug in; (c) **interoperability**, so that data and services can **flow across providers**; and (d) **consent and privacy by design**.

In **health**, DPI is especially important because **medical data is highly sensitive**, traditionally **siloed** within individual hospitals, and difficult to share **across providers**. ABDM brings the **three DPI layers** to the health system: **ABHA as the identity layer**, **HIE-CM and UHI as the data and service exchange layers**, and **NHCX as the financial-settlement layer**. India is now seen globally as a **pioneer of digital public infrastructure**, and its **Health Stack** (ABDM) is being studied by **many developing countries** as a possible model.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM), consider the following statements:

1. ABDM was officially launched in September 2021.
2. It is implemented by the National Health Authority (NHA) under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
3. Over 90 crore Ayushman Bharat Health Accounts (ABHAs) have been generated under the mission.
4. The ABHA is a 14-digit unique digital health identifier issued to citizens.

How many of the above statements are correct? (a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Q2. Consider the following statements about the six foundational building blocks of ABDM:

1. The Healthcare Professionals Registry (HPR) is a verified database of doctors, nurses, and paramedical staff.
2. The Health Facility Registry (HFR) is a master registry of public and private hospitals, clinics, pharmacies, and diagnostic centres.
3. The Health Information Exchange and Consent Manager (HIE-CM) routes medical records only with the patient's explicit, electronic, and revocable consent.
4. The National Health Claims Exchange (NHCX) is a digital platform to standardise and speed up health insurance claim settlements.

Which of the above are correct? (a) 1, 2 and 3 only (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) **All four**

Q3. With reference to Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI), consider the following statements:

1. DPI typically rests on three layers: identity, payments, and data exchange.

2. DPI is designed to be open, interoperable, and consent-based.
3. Aadhaar, UPI, DigiLocker, Account Aggregator, and ABDM are part of India's DPI ecosystem.
4. Digital Public Infrastructure is restricted to use only by government bodies and cannot be used by private companies.

Which of the above are correct? (a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four (Statement 4 is wrong; **DPI is explicitly designed to be open to both public and private actors**, NOT restricted to government use only.)

Q4. Consider the following statements about the National Health Authority (NHA):

1. The NHA is the apex implementing agency for Ayushman Bharat-PMJAY and the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM).
2. The NHA functions under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
3. The NHA is headed by a Chief Executive Officer and has a Governing Board chaired by the Union Health Minister.
4. State Health Agencies (SHAs) implement PMJAY at the state level in coordination with the NHA.

Which of the above are correct? (a) 1, 2 and 3 only (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) **All four**

Answer Key

1. (d), All four statements are correct.
2. (e), All four statements are correct.
3. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because **DPI is explicitly designed to be open to both government and private actors**, not restricted to government use.
4. (e), All four statements are correct.

6. India's Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR)

Context of the News

India's **Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR)**, defined as the **number of maternal deaths per 1,00,000 live births**, has improved by **just one point** from **88 in 2021-23** to **87 in 2022-24**, according to the latest **Sample Registration System (SRS) bulletin** released by the **Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner**, Ministry of Home Affairs. The headline is **a near-stall** in national progress, after **two decades of sharp improvement**, with India having cut MMR from **212 in 2007-09 to 88 in 2020-22**, putting the country on track for the **Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 3.1) target of reducing the global MMR to less than 70 by 2030**.

Key Highlights

- **Indicator**: **Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR)**, deaths of women due to **pregnancy-related causes** per **1,00,000 live births**.
- **Source**: **Sample Registration System (SRS) bulletin**.
- **Latest value (2022-24)**: **87**.
- **Previous value (2021-23)**: **88**.

Two-decade trend:

Period	MMR (per 1,00,000 live births)
2007-09	**212**
2020-22	**88**
2021-23	**88**

Period	MMR (per 1,00,000 live births)
2022-24	**87**

SDG target:

Indicator	Target
SDG 3.1	Reduce **global MMR to less than 70** per 1,00,000 live births by **2030**

State-level performance:

Category	States
Strong improvers	**Odisha, Assam, Chhattisgarh, Punjab, Telangana** (cut MMR by 11-29 points)
Moderate improvers	**Tamil Nadu and West Bengal** (cut by 10 points each)
High-birth states improving	**Bihar, Madhya Pradesh**
Worsening states	**Jharkhand (biggest), Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat**
State with India's highest MMR	**Uttar Pradesh at 154** (nearly twice the national average)

Regional and global comparison:

India vs Country	Status
China, Sri Lanka, Bhutan	**Well ahead of India**
Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, Myanmar	**Behind India**
Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam	**Ahead of India**
Sub-Saharan Africa	Very high MMR, pulls **global average up**

About the News (Q&A)

What is the main finding?

India's MMR has **moved only by one point**, from **88 to 87**, between **2021-23** and **2022-24**, suggesting that **national progress has slowed sharply** after **two decades of rapid decline**.

How does this compare to earlier years?

India had cut MMR from **212 in 2007-09 to 88 in 2020-22**, a **major achievement**. Compared to this rapid pace, **the latest one-point change** is a **near-stall**.

Which states have improved?

(a) **Odisha, Assam, Chhattisgarh, Punjab, Telangana** (cut MMR by 11-29 points). (b) **Tamil Nadu, West Bengal** (cut by 10 points each). (c) **Bihar, Madhya Pradesh** (both high-birth states).

Which states have worsened?

(a) **Jharkhand** (biggest increase). (b) **Uttar Pradesh**. (c) **Gujarat**.

Uttar Pradesh now has India's highest MMR at 154, nearly **twice the national average**.

How does India compare globally?

India is **behind**: China, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam. India is **ahead of**: Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, Myanmar. The **global average is higher** than India because of **very high MMR in parts of sub-Saharan Africa**.

Background Concepts (Q&A)

What is the "Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR)", and How is It Different from Other Maternal Indicators?

The **Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR)** is defined by the **World Health Organization (WHO)** as the **number**

of maternal deaths per 1,00,000 live births in a given period. A **maternal death** is the **death of a woman while pregnant or within 42 days of the end of pregnancy**, from **any cause related to or aggravated by the pregnancy or its management** (but **not from accidents or incidental causes**). MMR measures the **risk of dying from pregnancy or childbirth per pregnancy**, and is the most widely used **indicator of maternal health**. India tracks MMR through the **Sample Registration System (SRS)**, run by the **Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner**.

Two related but different indicators are:

(a) The **Maternal Mortality Rate**, which measures the **number of maternal deaths per 1,00,000 women of reproductive age (15-49 years)** in a given period. It reflects both **the risk of pregnancy** and **the frequency of pregnancy** in the population.

(b) The **Lifetime Risk of Maternal Death**, which measures the **probability that a 15-year-old female will eventually die from a maternal cause**. It combines the **per-pregnancy risk (MMR)** with the **fertility rate (TFR)**.

MMR is preferred globally because it isolates the **risk per pregnancy**, making it **comparable across countries** with different fertility rates. India's MMR of **87 (2022-24)** means **about 87 women die for every 1,00,000 live births**, a sharp improvement over **2007-09 (212)** but still **higher than the SDG target of 70**.

What are the Main Causes of Maternal Mortality in India, and What is the Policy Response?

In India, the **main causes of maternal mortality** include: (a) **Postpartum haemorrhage (severe bleeding after delivery)**, the **single largest cause** globally and in India; (b) **Hypertensive disorders**, including **pre-eclampsia and eclampsia**; (c) **Sepsis and infections** after delivery; (d) **Obstructed labour and complications during birth**; (e) **Unsafe abortion**; and (f) **Indirect causes** like **anaemia, malnutrition, malaria, and tuberculosis**, which **weaken pregnant women** and **increase the risk** of dying during pregnancy or childbirth.

India's policy response is built around **strengthening the entire continuum of maternal care**, through programmes like:

(a) **Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY)**, a **conditional cash transfer** to encourage **institutional deliveries**, especially in **EAG states**. (b) **Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakram (JSSK)**, which provides **free delivery, free Caesarean section, free drugs, diagnostics, blood, and transport** for pregnant women in public facilities. (c) **Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan (PMSMA and e-PMSMA)**, which provides **free, comprehensive antenatal care** on the **9th of every month**, with **special attention to high-risk pregnancies**. (d) **Surakshit Matritva Aashwasan (SUMAN)**, which guarantees **zero-tolerance for denial of services** to pregnant women in public health facilities. (e) **LaQshya**, which focuses on improving the **quality of care in labour rooms and maternity operation theatres**. (f) **Anaemia Mukt Bharat** and **POSHAN Abhiyaan/POSHAN 2.0**, which address **anaemia and nutrition** in adolescent girls, pregnant women, and lactating mothers. (g) **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY 2.0)**, a **maternity benefit scheme**.

Together, these programmes have helped drive India's MMR from **212 to 87** in about **15 years**, but the **last mile**, especially in **Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, and Gujarat**, will require **stronger system-level reforms**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to India's latest Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) figures, consider the following statements:

1. India's MMR has marginally improved from 88 in 2021-23 to 87 in 2022-24 as per the latest SRS bulletin.
2. India had cut MMR from 212 in 2007-09 to 88 in 2020-22.
3. The Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target is to reduce the global MMR to less than 70 per 1,00,000 live births by 2030.
4. Uttar Pradesh now has the highest MMR among Indian states at 154, nearly twice the national average.

How many of the above statements are correct? (a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Q2. Consider the following statements about state-level MMR trends in India:

1. Odisha, Assam, Chhattisgarh, Punjab, and Telangana have cut their MMR by 11 to 29 points.
2. Tamil Nadu and West Bengal have reduced their MMR by 10 points each.
3. Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, and Gujarat have seen their MMR worsen in the latest cycle.
4. Bihar and Madhya Pradesh, despite being high-birth states, have also reduced their MMR.

Which of the above are correct? (a) 1, 2 and 3 only (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) **All four**

Q3. With reference to MMR-related concepts, consider the following statements:

1. Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) is defined as the number of maternal deaths per 1,00,000 live births in a given period.
2. A maternal death is the death of a woman while pregnant or within 42 days of the end of pregnancy from any cause related to or aggravated by the pregnancy.
3. The Maternal Mortality Rate is calculated per 1,00,000 women of reproductive age (15-49 years), not per 1,00,000 live births.
4. The Lifetime Risk of Maternal Death combines per-pregnancy risk with fertility rates.

Which of the above are correct? (a) 1, 2 and 3 only (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) **All four**

Q4. Consider the following statements about India's maternal health programmes:

1. Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY) is a conditional cash transfer scheme to encourage institutional deliveries.
2. Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakram (JSSK) provides free delivery, free C-section, free drugs, diagnostics, blood, and transport in public facilities.
3. Surakshit Matritva Aashwasan (SUMAN) guarantees zero tolerance for denial of services to pregnant women in public health facilities.
4. LaQshya is a Reserve Bank of India programme to improve banking services for pregnant women.

Which of the above are correct? (a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four (Statement 4 is wrong; **LaQshya is a Ministry of Health and Family Welfare initiative** to improve **quality of care in labour rooms and maternity OTs**, NOT an RBI banking programme.)

Answer Key

1. (d), All four statements are correct.
2. (e), All four statements are correct.
3. (e), All four statements are correct.
4. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because **LaQshya is a Ministry of Health programme**, not an RBI banking scheme.

Banking and Finance

1. Government to Replace Wholesale Price Index (WPI) with Producer Price Index (PPI)

Source: TH

Context

The **Government of India** has decided to **phase out the Wholesale Price Index (WPI)** over the next **five**

years and **gradually replace it with a more comprehensive Producer Price Index (PPI)**. From **15 June 2026**, the **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)** under the **Ministry of Commerce and Industry** will release: (a) a **revised WPI series** with the **new base year 2022-23** (replacing the current **2011-12** base year); and (b) a **new PPI series** with **three sub-indices**: **Output PPI, Trial Input PPI, and Services PPI**. The **Services PPI** will, in its **first phase**, cover **seven service sectors**: **banking, securities transactions, insurance, management of pension funds, railways, air passenger transport, and telecom**.

Wholesale Price Index (WPI)

The **WPI** measures the **average change in prices** of **goods bought and sold in bulk** at the **wholesale level**, before they reach the retail consumer. It is the **oldest price index** in India.

Indicator	Detail
Released by	**Office of the Economic Adviser, DPIIT, Ministry of Commerce and Industry**
Current base year	**2011-12** (to be revised to **2022-23**)
Frequency	**Monthly**, released around the **14th of every month**
Coverage	**Goods only**, no services
Total items	**697 items** in the existing series

Three major groups of WPI:

Group	Weight (existing 2011-12 series)
Primary Articles	**22.62 per cent** (food articles, non-food articles, minerals, crude petroleum)
Fuel and Power	**13.15 per cent**
Manufactured Products	**64.23 per cent** (the largest group)

Limitations of WPI:

(a) **No services coverage**, even though services contribute **over 50 per cent of GDP**. (b) Reflects **bulk wholesale prices**, not **producer-level prices**. (c) **Does not directly capture** consumer-experienced inflation. (d) **Cannot fully analyse input-output price pass-through**.

Producer Price Index (PPI)

The **PPI** measures the **average change in prices received by domestic producers** for their **goods and services**, at the **producer's gate**, before any **trade margins, transport costs, or taxes** are added.

India's new PPI (effective 15 June 2026) will have three sub-indices:

Sub-Index	Measures
Output PPI	Prices of **goods produced and sold** by producers
Trial Input PPI	Prices of **inputs used by producers**
Services PPI	Prices of **services**, starting with **7 sectors** in Phase 1

The 7 services in the first phase of Services PPI:

(a) **Banking**. (b) **Securities Transaction**. (c) **Insurance**. (d) **Management of Pension Funds**. (e) **Railways**. (f) **Air (Passenger) Transport**. (g) **Telecom**.

Why the World Uses PPI:

(a) **Captures producer-level price pressures**, more accurate than wholesale. (b) **Includes services**, reflecting modern economies. (c) Allows clear **input-output pass-through analysis**. (d) Aligned with **IMF Price Statistics Manuals**. (e) Used by **US, UK, EU, Japan, China**, and most major economies.

WPI vs PPI, Head-to-Head Comparison

Parameter	Wholesale Price Index (WPI)	Producer Price Index (PPI)
Stage of measurement	**Wholesale (bulk trading) level**	**Producer's gate**, before distribution margins
Coverage	**Goods only**	**Goods + Services**
Released by	**DPIIT**, Ministry of Commerce and Industry	**DPIIT**, Ministry of Commerce and Industry
Frequency	**Monthly**	**Monthly** for Output PPI, plus periodic Services and Input PPI
Number of items	**697 (current series)**	**Wider, with services added**
Use in monetary policy	**Not the RBI's inflation target**	**Not the RBI's inflation target**
Use in contracts	**Widely used** in **price escalation clauses**	**Expected to gradually replace WPI**
Reflects services?	**No**	**Yes**
Input-output analysis	**Limited**	**Clear and structured**
Aligned with global practice	**Outdated**; only a few countries use WPI	**Standard global indicator**

Where Each Fits in India's Price-Index Ecosystem

Index	Released by	What It Measures	Used For
WPI	**DPIIT, Ministry of Commerce and Industry**	**Wholesale-level goods prices**	**Price escalation clauses, industrial inflation analysis**
PPI (new)	**DPIIT, Ministry of Commerce and Industry**	**Producer-level goods and services prices**	To **replace WPI** over five years
CPI (Combined, Rural, Urban)	**National Statistical Office (NSO), MoSPI**	**Retail prices of household consumption basket**	**RBI MPC's inflation target** (4 per cent +/- 2 per cent)
CPI-IW (Industrial Workers)	**Labour Bureau, Ministry of Labour and Employment**	**Retail prices for industrial workers**	**DA computation** for government employees
CPI-AL/RL	**Labour Bureau**	**Retail prices for agricultural and rural labourers**	**Wage and welfare indexation**

Key Differences Between PPI and Consumer Price Index (CPI)

Parameter	PPI	CPI
Stage	**Producer's gate**	**Household / retail point of purchase**
Measures	**Prices received by producers**	**Prices paid by consumers**
Coverage	Goods + services (producer side)	Goods + services in **household basket**
Use	**Industrial inflation, contract pricing, GDP deflators**	**Inflation targeting, cost of living, DA, welfare indexation**
Includes taxes?	Generally **excludes indirect taxes** on output	**Includes indirect taxes** in final consumer price

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the Wholesale Price Index (WPI) and the Producer Price Index (PPI) in India, consider the following statements:

1. WPI measures the average change in prices of goods bought and sold in bulk at the wholesale level.
2. PPI measures the average change in prices received by domestic producers at the point of production.

3. WPI in India does not cover services, while the new PPI includes a Services PPI starting with 7 sectors in Phase 1.
4. Both WPI and PPI in India are released by the National Statistical Office (NSO).

Which of the above are correct? (a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four (Statement 4 is wrong; **WPI and PPI are released by the DPIIT under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry**, NOT the NSO. The NSO releases **CPI (Combined, Rural, Urban)**.)

Q2. Consider the following statements about the new PPI series being launched in India:

1. The new PPI series will be launched from 15 June 2026.
2. It will have three sub-indices: Output PPI, Trial Input PPI, and Services PPI.
3. The Services PPI in Phase 1 will cover banking, securities transactions, insurance, pension fund management, railways, air passenger transport, and telecom.
4. The transition from WPI to PPI aligns with IMF recommendations and global best practices.

How many of the above statements are correct? (a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Q3. With reference to the architecture of price indices in India, consider the following statements:

1. The Consumer Price Index (Combined, Rural and Urban) is released by the National Statistical Office under the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.
2. The Consumer Price Index for Industrial Workers (CPI-IW) is released by the Labour Bureau under the Ministry of Labour and Employment.
3. The RBI's Monetary Policy Committee targets the Consumer Price Index (Combined) inflation at 4 per cent, with a tolerance band of +/- 2 percentage points.
4. The Wholesale Price Index (WPI) is the official inflation target for the RBI under India's monetary policy framework.

Which of the above are correct? (a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four (Statement 4 is wrong; the **RBI's official inflation target is the CPI (Combined)**, NOT the WPI.)

Q4. Consider the following statements about WPI and PPI features:

1. WPI covers only goods and does not include services.
2. PPI explicitly includes both goods (Output and Input) and services.
3. PPI is generally compiled at the producer's gate, before trade margins and indirect taxes are added.
4. CPI captures prices at the retail consumer level, including taxes and trade margins.

How many of the above statements are correct? (a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Answer Key

1. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because **WPI and PPI are released by DPIIT**, not the NSO.
2. (d), All four statements are correct.
3. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the **RBI's inflation target is CPI (Combined)**, not WPI.
4. (d), All four statements are correct.

Exam Relevance

Exam	Relevance
UPSC Prelims	GS Paper III on Indian Economy (Inflation indices, WPI, PPI, CPI)
UPSC Mains	GS Paper III on Indian Economy, Inflation, Monetary policy, Statistical reforms
Banking (RBI Gr B, SBI PO, IBPS, NABARD)	Very high importance, inflation, monetary policy, statistics
SEBI Grade A, IRDAI Grade A	Macroeconomic awareness
Indian Statistical Service (ISS)	Core area on price indices
SSC, Insurance, Railway	Static and Current GK on WPI, CPI, PPI, base years

2. RBI Reportedly Sold About USD 12 Billion in Gold to Shield Foreign-Currency Assets

Context

According to an **analysis by Bloomberg Economics**, based on **publicly available data**, the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI) may have sold gold reserves worth roughly USD 12 billion** in the **two weeks through 22 May**, while simultaneously **buying about USD 7.5 billion** of **foreign-currency assets**. The move is being read as a deliberate **rebalancing of India's forex reserves**, where the central bank is **prioritising liquid foreign currency** (mainly the US dollar) over **gold holdings**, at a time when India is facing **multiple external pressures**, including the **Iran-related Middle East war**, the **effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz**, **sustained capital outflows**, **higher oil prices**, and a **widening current account deficit (CAD)** that is **pressuring the rupee**.

Why this is significant?

(a) **Gold prices were stable to firm**, so the **fall in reported gold value** points to **actual sales**, not just **valuation effects**.
(b) **Import duty on gold** had been **hiked**, which would have **increased the rupee value of gold reserves**.
(c) The **direction of change** in the data is **opposite** to what these factors would normally suggest, supporting the **interpretation of active selling**.

Why the RBI may be doing this?

(a) **Pressure on the rupee** from **capital outflows** and **higher oil prices**.
(b) **Widening current account deficit** due to **costlier energy imports** and **softer remittance and FDI/FPI inflows**.
(c) **Need for liquid foreign currency**, mainly **US dollars**, to **intervene in the FX market** without **moving the spot rate too sharply**.
(d) **Gold**, while a **strategic reserve**, is **less immediately liquid** than **dollar assets** in **stress periods**.

Why hold gold partly overseas?

(a) **Operational flexibility** during international transactions.
(b) **Easier use as collateral** for **swaps and liquidity operations**.
(c) **Diversification of custody risk** between domestic and global custodians.

Background Concepts (Q&A)

What are India's "Foreign Exchange Reserves", and What are They Composed Of?

Foreign Exchange Reserves (often shortened to **forex reserves**) are **external assets** held by the **central bank** of a country to support its **currency, balance of payments, monetary policy, and financial stability**. India's forex reserves are **managed by the Reserve Bank of India** under the **RBI Act, 1934** and the **Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA), 1999**, in consultation with the **Government of India**. They are composed of **four main parts**:

(a) **Foreign Currency Assets (FCA)**, by far the **largest component**, mostly in **US dollars**, **euros**, **British pounds**, **Japanese yen**, and **Chinese yuan**, held in the form of **deposits with foreign central banks, deposits with the Bank for International Settlements (BIS), and investments in highly rated foreign government securities** (like US Treasuries, German bunds, etc.).

(b) **Gold**, held both **in India** (in RBI vaults) and **overseas** (with the **Bank of England** and the **BIS**).

(c) **Special Drawing Rights (SDRs)**, an **international reserve asset** created by the **IMF**, with its value linked to a **basket of currencies**.

(d) **Reserve Tranche Position (RTP)** with the **IMF**, the **quota-related amount** that India can access from the IMF without conditionality.

Forex reserves are used to: (i) **defend the rupee** in times of stress; (ii) **finance the trade deficit**; (iii) **service external debt**; (iv) **build international confidence** in the economy; and (v) **provide a cushion** against **sudden capital outflows**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to recent reports about the RBI's foreign reserves strategy, consider the following statements:

1. According to Bloomberg Economics, the RBI may have sold around USD 12 billion in gold reserves over a two-week period through 22 May.
2. The RBI is also reported to have bought about USD 7.5 billion in foreign-currency assets in the same period.
3. The reported sale of gold has been linked to pressure on the rupee from the Middle East war, higher oil prices, and capital outflows.
4. By end-March, India held about 880.52 metric tonnes of gold, with 77 per cent held domestically.

How many of the above statements are correct? (a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Q2. Consider the following statements about the composition of India's foreign exchange reserves:

1. Foreign Currency Assets (FCA) are the largest component of India's forex reserves.
2. India's reserves also include gold holdings, Special Drawing Rights (SDRs), and a Reserve Tranche Position (RTP) with the IMF.
3. India's overseas gold reserves are mainly held with the Bank of England and the Bank for International Settlements (BIS).
4. Special Drawing Rights are an international reserve asset created by the World Bank, not the IMF.

Which of the above are correct? (a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four (Statement 4 is wrong; **SDRs are created by the IMF**, NOT the World Bank.)

Q3. With reference to the Strait of Hormuz and its importance for India, consider the following statements:

1. The Strait of Hormuz connects the Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman and onward with the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean.
2. Iran lies on the northern side of the strait, while Oman and the UAE lie to the south.
3. About a fifth of global oil trade by volume passes through the Strait of Hormuz.
4. India imports a large share of its crude oil from Gulf countries through the Strait of Hormuz.

Which of the above are correct? (a) 1, 2 and 3 only (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) **All four**

Q4. Consider the following statements about the RBI's policy options for defending the rupee:

1. Selling US dollars in the foreign exchange market is one of the most direct tools used by the RBI to support the rupee.
2. The RBI can conduct buy-sell dollar-rupee swap auctions to inject rupee liquidity while temporarily acquiring dollars.
3. The RBI has no role in any kind of intervention in the gold market.
4. Easing overseas borrowing limits for banks and expanding FPI access to debt markets can help attract capital inflows that support the rupee.

Which of the above are correct? (a) **1, 2 and 4 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four (Statement 3 is wrong; the **RBI is actively involved in the management of India's gold reserves**, as part of its forex reserve management framework.)

Answer Key

1. (d), All four statements are correct.
2. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because **SDRs are created by the IMF**, not the World Bank.
3. (e), All four statements are correct.
4. (a), Statements 1, 2, 4 are correct; Statement 3 is wrong because the **RBI manages India's gold reserves** as part of its forex reserve framework, and can buy or sell gold.

3. DFS Launches "Common Landing Portal" for Unclaimed Financial Assets

Context of the News

The **Department of Financial Services (DFS)**, under the **Ministry of Finance**, has launched a **Common Landing Portal for Unclaimed Financial Assets** to help citizens easily **search for and reclaim money** they may have **forgotten or lost track of** across various parts of the financial system. The portal was launched by **M. Nagaraju, Secretary, DFS**, during a **high-level review meeting of Public Sector Banks (PSBs)** in **New Delhi**, and was developed in collaboration with the **PSB Alliance**, a joint initiative of public sector banks. The portal is a **single, unified search platform** where users can look for **unclaimed assets across multiple categories**, including **bank deposits, insurance claims, shares and dividends, and mutual fund investments**, instead of going to **each regulator or bank separately**.

Key Highlights

- **Portal**: **Common Landing Portal for Unclaimed Financial Assets**.
- **Launched by**: **DFS**, Ministry of Finance.
- **Officially launched by**: **M. Nagaraju, Secretary, DFS**.
- **Developed in collaboration with**: **PSB Alliance** (a joint initiative of public sector banks).

What the portal does:

Feature	Detail
Single entry point	One **landing portal** instead of multiple regulator-wise portals
Searchable categories	**Bank deposits, insurance claims, shares and dividends, mutual fund investments**
Aim	**Easier access, transparency, citizen convenience**
Alignment	**Viksit Bharat 2047**, **financial inclusion**, **public awareness**

Linked initiatives:

Initiative	Detail
"आपकी पूँजी, आपका अधिकार" ("Your Money, Your Right")	Nationwide DFS-led campaign for **awareness and reclaim** of unclaimed assets
PSB Alliance	Joint platform of public sector banks for **shared services** (also runs **Doorstep Banking**, **EASE reforms**, etc.)

Existing channels for specific asset categories (still in operation):

Category	Channel
Unclaimed bank deposits	**UDGAM portal** of the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)**
Unpaid dividends, matured deposits, debentures, shares	**Investor Education and Protection Fund (IEPF) Authority** under **Ministry of Corporate Affairs**
Unclaimed insurance amounts	**IRDAI** rules and the **insurer's own portals**
Dormant EPF accounts	**EPFO website / UMANG app**
Mutual fund folios	Each AMC and **MFCentral** by AMFI

Background Concepts (Q&A)

What is the "RBI's Depositor Education and Awareness (DEA) Fund", and What Happens to Unclaimed Bank Deposits?

The **Depositor Education and Awareness (DEA) Fund** is a **fund maintained by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** under **Section 26A of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949**, where **banks are required to transfer the credit balance of any deposit account that has remained inoperative for 10 years or more**. Once a deposit is transferred to the **DEA Fund**, the bank continues to **owe the depositor** the amount, but the **money is parked with the RBI**, which uses the **interest earned** for **promoting depositor education and awareness**, **research on banking and financial sector issues**, and **other depositor-protection activities**.

If the **rightful depositor or legal heir** comes forward at any time, the **bank is obligated to pay the amount** (with applicable interest), and the bank then **claims a refund from the DEA Fund**. The **RBI also runs the UDGAM portal** (launched **August 2023**), a **centralised web portal** where citizens can **search across multiple banks** for **unclaimed deposits** using their name and a few identifying details, instead of going to each bank separately. The **Common Landing Portal** launched by DFS now sits **on top of these systems**, providing a **single front door** for **unclaimed assets across multiple sectors**, not just banking.

Agriculture

1. Ministry of Agriculture to Run "Khet Bachao Abhiyan"

Source: News on Air

Context

The **Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare** will conduct a **month-long, nationwide "Khet Bachao Abhiyan"** from **1 to 30 June 2026**, designed as an **agricultural awareness and outreach campaign** that combines **sustainable farming practices**, **soil health improvement**, and **stronger farm-level decision-making**.
The campaign's main objectives are: (a) to promote the **balanced and judicious use of fertilizers** based on **soil health** and **scientific recommendations**, and (b) to provide **weather-based, region-specific farm advisories**, while linking farmers to the **wider basket of government schemes and agricultural support**.

Key Highlights

- **Campaign**: **Khet Bachao Abhiyan**.
- **Duration**: **1–30 June 2026**.
- **Run by**: **Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare**, Government of India.

Aim of the Abhiyan:

(a) **Balanced and judicious fertilizer use** based on **soil health**.
(b) **Region-specific, weather-based advisories** for farmers.
(c) **Scheme convergence** for **farmer support**.
(d) Stronger **farm-level decision-making**.

Five core features:

Feature	Detail
Balanced fertilizer use	**Soil-test based, INM-oriented**; promote **organic, bio-, and green manures**
Climate-smart advisories	Guidance on **crops, diversification, water, weather risks**
Institutional participation	**Panchayats, KVKs, ICAR, State Governments, Agriculture Departments**
Panchayat-centric	**Village-level implementation** with **community leaders**
Scheme convergence	**PM-KISAN, KCC, Pulses-Oilseeds Mission, Oil Palm Mission, Cotton Mission, mechanisation, water conservation**

Schemes that the Abhiyan will help link farmers to:

Scheme	Purpose
PM-KISAN	**₹6,000 per year** direct income support in **three instalments**
Kisan Credit Card (KCC)	Short-term **subsidised crop loans**, also for **allied activities**
National Mission on Edible Oils (Oilseeds)	Reducing **edible-oil imports**, raising **oilseed production**
National Mission on Edible Oils-Oil Palm	Boosting **oil palm cultivation** under **NMEO-OP**
Cotton Mission	Improving **cotton productivity** and **value-chain**
Sub-Mission on Agricultural Mechanisation (SMAM)	Subsidies for **tractors, drones, harvesters, etc.**
PMKSY (Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana)	**Water conservation** and **per-drop-more-crop** approach

Facts To Remember

1. Admiral Krishna Swaminathan Assumes Charge as Chief of Naval Staff

Admiral Krishna Swaminathan officially assumed charge as the new Chief of the Naval Staff (CNS) of the Indian Navy during a formal ceremony held in New Delhi. He succeeded Admiral Dinesh K. Tripathi as the head of India's naval forces.

2. Dr. Jitendra Singh Inaugurates India's First 'SkyCast' Aviation Weather Monitoring System

Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh inaugurated India's first 'SkyCast' aviation weather monitoring system at the Indira Gandhi International (IGI) Airport in New Delhi. Developed under Mission Mausam, the system makes India the 19th country globally to deploy an integrated aviation weather monitoring platform. SkyCast aims to improve aviation safety and reduce fog-related disruptions through real-time weather monitoring and advance forecasting alerts of up to three hours.

3. NITI Aayog Releases 10-Year Roadmap for India's Semiconductor Industry

NITI Aayog's Frontier Tech Hub released India's first comprehensive semiconductor roadmap titled "Future of India's Semiconductor Industry". The roadmap outlines a long-term strategy to build a USD 120–150 billion semiconductor value chain by 2035 and position India as a major global hub for chip manufacturing, design, packaging, and testing. The report projects India could capture 10–13% of the global semiconductor market by 2035 through a 'More-than-Moore' manufacturing strategy.

4. MCA Expands CSR Rules to Include ZCZP Instruments on Social Stock Exchanges

The Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) amended the Companies Act CSR framework by including subscription to Zero Coupon Zero Principal (ZCZP) Instruments listed on Social Stock Exchanges (SSEs) as an eligible Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activity. The reform allows companies to channel CSR funds towards eligible not-for-profit organizations through regulated financial instruments. CSR spending through ZCZP instruments has been capped at 10% of annual CSR expenditure.

5. Odisha Signs MoU with Intel and 3DGS for Semiconductor Manufacturing Facility

The Government of Odisha signed an MoU with Intel and 3D Glass Solutions (3DGS) to establish a USD 3.3 billion advanced packaging glass-core substrate manufacturing facility in the Bhubaneswar–Khurda region. The project will focus on semiconductor packaging technologies and high-density interconnect substrates, strengthening India's semiconductor manufacturing ecosystem under the India Semiconductor Mission.

6. NISM Partners with Galgotias University for Financial Education Expansion

The National Institute of Securities Markets (NISM), established by Securities and Exchange Board of India, partnered with Galgotias University to strengthen industry-oriented financial education and training. The collaboration will provide students with access to NISM certifications, e-learning modules, market simulation platforms, and specialized training in securities markets, fintech, derivatives, and risk management.

7. Bajaj Finserv and IIT Bombay Launch 'Finserv Intelligence' Initiative

Bajaj Finserv partnered with Indian Institute of Technology Bombay to launch "Finserv Intelligence", a strategic initiative focused on Artificial Intelligence (AI) and deep-tech research. The initiative plans investments of Rs.1,500–2,000 crore over five years in AI innovation startups and research projects related to cybersecurity, quantum technologies, healthcare, and digital financial inclusion.

8. Tamil Nadu Farmer Valluvan Honoured as FAO 'Soil Farmer Hero'

Valluvan, a farmer from Pollachi district in Tamil Nadu, was honoured as a "Soil Farmer Hero" by the Food and Agriculture Organization for adopting sustainable and multi-crop farming practices. Supported by the Isha Foundation's Cauvery Calling initiative, he transformed his 11-hectare farm into a diversified agricultural enterprise cultivating over 14 crop varieties.

9. Rajesh Kumar Singh Given Additional Charge as DRDO Chairman

Rajesh Kumar Singh, Defence Secretary in the Ministry of Defence, was assigned additional charge as Secretary of the Department of Defence Research and Development and Chairman of the Defence Research and Development Organisation. He assumed the responsibilities following the completion of Dr. Samir V. Kamat's tenure.

10. Former Congress MP K. P. Dhanapalan Passes Away

Senior Congress leader and former Member of Parliament K. P. Dhanapalan passed away at the age of 76

in Kerala. He served as MP from Chalakudy between 2009 and 2014 and held several important positions in the Congress party and cooperative sector in Kerala.

11. Rajnath Singh Releases Commemorative Volume on 'Operation Sindoor'

Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh released a commemorative volume titled "Operation Sindoor" documenting testimonies and experiences of 100 Indian Armed Forces personnel involved in the operation. The publication highlights India's integrated multi-domain warfare capabilities demonstrated during the operation launched after the Pahalgam terror attack in 2025.

12. International Week of Solidarity with the Peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories 2026 Observed

The United Nations observed the International Week of Solidarity with the Peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories from May 25 to 31, 2026. The observance promotes decolonization, self-determination, human rights, and sustainable development for Non-Self-Governing Territories across the world.

FIVE TO REMEMBER · 2 & 3 JUNE 2026

1. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because **SDRs are created by the IMF**, not the World Bank. RBI Reportedly Sold About USD 12 Billion in Gol...
2. India's MMR has marginally improved from 88 in 2021-23 to 87 in 2022-24 as per the latest SRS bulletin. India's Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR)
3. The RBI's Monetary Policy Committee targets the Consumer Price Index (Combined) inflation at 4 per cent, with a tolerance band of +/- 2 percentage points. Government to Replace Wholesale Price Index (WP...
4. **Run by**: **Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare**, Government of India. Ministry of Agriculture to Run "Khet Bachao Abh...

Now test yourself: c4scourses.in/daily-quiz/daily-quiz-023-june-2026/

DAY 3 OF 18

4 June 2026

Thursday · 14 items · 3 topics

General 1 · National Affairs 3 · Banking and Finance 1 · Facts To Remember 9

Context

The **Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR)** has proposed an **additional 12.5 per cent tariff on imports from India and 53 other countries**, alleging their **failure to effectively enforce prohibitions on goods produced using forced labour**. The proposal is **not final**, with **written submissions due by 6 July** and **public hearings scheduled for 7 July 2026**. The proposal comes under **Section 301 of the US Trade Act, 1974**, even as **India and the US are close to finalising an interim bilateral trade deal**.

Key Facts

Indicator	Detail
Proposed extra tariff	**12.5 per cent**
Total countries listed	**54** (including **India**)
Legal basis	**Section 301 of the US Trade Act, 1974**
Status	**Not final**

What is Section 301 of the US Trade Act?

Section 301 empowers the US government to: (a) **Investigate unfair trade practices** by foreign countries. (b) **Impose tariffs** or **trade restrictions** if such practices are seen as **harmful to US commerce**.

Reason for the investigation:

The US has alleged that certain countries **failed to effectively prevent imports of goods produced using forced labour**.

India's response:

The **Ministry of Commerce and Industry** has said that India remains **engaged with the US** regarding: (a) **Section 301 proceedings**. (b) **Interim trade agreement negotiations**.

Sectors likely to be impacted (labour-intensive):

Sector
Textiles
Garments
Leather products
Carpets
Brassware

What is "Forced Labour"?

According to **international labour standards** (notably the **ILO Forced Labour Convention, 1930**, Convention 29), **forced labour** is **work extracted under threat, coercion, or without voluntary consent**.

About the News (Q&A)

What is the USTR's proposal?

An **additional 12.5 per cent tariff** on imports from **India and 53 other countries**, on the grounds that they

have **failed to effectively enforce prohibitions on goods produced using forced labour**.

Under what law has this been proposed?

Section 301 of the US Trade Act, 1974, which allows the US to **investigate and act against unfair trade practices** considered harmful to US commerce.

Background Concepts (Q&A)

What is "Section 301 of the US Trade Act, 1974", and Why is It Significant?

Section 301 of the US Trade Act, 1974 is a **US domestic law** that gives the **Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR)** wide authority to **investigate and respond to foreign trade practices** considered **unjustified, unreasonable, or discriminatory**, and that **burden or restrict US commerce**.

Under Section 301, the USTR can: (a) **Impose additional tariffs** on imports from specific countries. (b) **Suspend trade concessions** previously granted. (c) **Restrict services trade or investment**. (d) **Take other appropriate actions**.

Section 301 has been **controversial** because it is a **unilateral instrument**, meaning the US can act based on its **own investigation** rather than through **multilateral processes** like the **WTO Dispute Settlement Mechanism**. It has been used in recent years against **China (during the 2018-19 trade war), the European Union (digital services taxes), Vietnam, and India** on various issues, including **intellectual property protection, digital taxes, and now forced-labour enforcement**.

What is "Forced Labour", and How is It Defined in International Law?

Forced labour is defined by the **International Labour Organization (ILO) Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (Convention 29)** as **"all work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself voluntarily."**

Forced labour includes: (a) **Bonded labour** (debt-driven coercion). (b) **State-imposed forced labour**. (c) **Trafficking in persons for labour exploitation**. (d) **Coerced labour of migrants, prisoners, or members of religious or ethnic minorities**.

Key international and Indian legal instruments: (a) **ILO Conventions 29 (1930) and 105 (1957)**: on **forced labour and its abolition**. India is a party to both. (b) **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), 1948**: prohibits slavery and servitude. (c) **Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976** (India). (d) **Article 23 of the Indian Constitution**: prohibits **trafficking and forced labour**.

The US **Tariff Act of 1930, Section 307** prohibits the **import of goods made with forced labour**, and is enforced by the **US Customs and Border Protection (CBP)** through **Withhold Release Orders (WROs)**. The **Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act, 2021** is the most prominent recent example, presuming goods from **Xinjiang (China)** to be made with forced labour unless proven otherwise.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the USTR's recent proposal for an additional 12.5 per cent tariff, consider the following statements:

1. The tariff has been proposed under Section 301 of the US Trade Act, 1974.
2. The proposal targets India and 53 other countries for alleged failure to enforce forced-labour import prohibitions.
3. The USTR has scheduled public hearings on the matter for 7 July 2026.
4. The proposed tariff has already been finalised and notified for immediate implementation.

How many of the above statements are correct? (a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None (Statement 4 is wrong; the **proposal is not yet final**, and is subject to **public hearings and written submissions** before a final decision.)

Q2. Consider the following statements about Section 301 of the US Trade Act, 1974:

1. It is a US domestic law that empowers the United States Trade Representative (USTR) to act against foreign trade practices considered unfair.
2. Actions under Section 301 can include additional tariffs, suspension of trade concessions, and restrictions on services trade.
3. Section 301 is part of the World Trade Organization's Dispute Settlement Understanding.
4. Section 301 has been used in recent years against countries like China, the European Union, and India.

Which of the above are correct? (a) **1, 2 and 4 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 3 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four (Statement 3 is wrong; **Section 301 is a US domestic law**, NOT part of the WTO Dispute Settlement Understanding.)

Q3. With reference to Indian export sectors potentially affected by the proposed USTR tariff, consider the following statements:

1. Textiles and garments are among the most exposed sectors.
2. Leather products, carpets, and brassware are also among the labour-intensive sectors flagged as vulnerable.
3. India's response, articulated by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, has emphasised continued engagement with the US.
4. IT services and software exports are directly affected by the proposed goods tariff.

Which of the above are correct? (a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four (Statement 4 is wrong; the **proposed tariff is on goods**, NOT on **IT services or software**.)

Q4. Consider the following statements about forced labour and the ILO framework:

1. The ILO Forced Labour Convention of 1930 (Convention 29) defines forced labour as work exacted under the menace of any penalty and without voluntary offering by the worker.
2. India is a party to ILO Conventions 29 and 105 on forced labour and its abolition.
3. Article 23 of the Indian Constitution prohibits trafficking in human beings and forced labour.
4. The Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976 is the principal Indian legislation prohibiting bonded labour.

How many of the above statements are correct? (a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because **the proposal is not yet final**.
2. (a), Statements 1, 2, 4 are correct; Statement 3 is wrong because **Section 301 is a US domestic law, not part of the WTO framework**.
3. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because **the proposed tariff is on goods, not on IT services**.
4. (d), All four statements are correct.

PYQ Reference [Prelims 2018]

International Labour Organization's Conventions 138 and 182 are related to:

(a) **Child labour** ← CORRECT (b) Adaptation of agricultural practices to global climate change (c) Regulation of food prices and food security (d) Gender parity at the workplace

ILO Convention 138 (1973) is the **Minimum Age Convention** for **employment**, while **ILO Convention 182 (1999)** is the **Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention**. India ratified both in **2017**.

Quick memory hook:

- **Child labour conventions**: **138 and 182**.

- **Forced labour conventions**: **29 and 105**.

Exam Relevance

Exam	Relevance
UPSC Prelims	GS Paper II on International Relations (USTR, WTO, Section 301, ILO)
UPSC Mains	GS Paper II on India-US, Effect of policies of developed countries; GS Paper III on External sector, Trade
BPSC and State PCS	International Affairs, Economy, Current Affairs

2. Forbes World's Top 10 Richest People (June 2026)

Source: IE

Context

Forbes, the American business magazine and global media company, has released its **latest World's Top 10 Richest People rankings (as of 1 June 2026)**. **Elon Musk**, the **CEO of Tesla and SpaceX**, has **retained the top spot since May 2024**, with an **estimated net worth of USD 835 billion**. **Larry Page**, **co-founder of Alphabet Inc. (Google's parent)**, is in **second place** with **USD 309 billion**, while his fellow co-founder **Sergey Brin** is **third** with **USD 285 billion**. The list reflects the continued **dominance of US-based tech billionaires** in global wealth rankings.

Key Facts

Forbes Top 10 Richest People in the World (June 2026):

Rank	Person	Net Worth (USD billion)	Source / Company
1	**Elon Musk**	**835**	**Tesla, SpaceX**
2	**Larry Page**	**309**	**Alphabet (Google) co-founder**
3	**Sergey Brin**	**285**	**Alphabet (Google) co-founder**
4	**Jeff Bezos**	**277**	**Amazon, Blue Origin founder**
5	**Larry Ellison**	**276**	**Oracle co-founder and Chairman**
6	**Michael Dell**	**260.1**	**Dell Technologies**
7	**Mark Zuckerberg**	**206.1**	**Meta Platforms (Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp)**
8	**Jensen Huang**	**193.7**	**NVIDIA CEO**
9	**Bernard Arnault**	**149.1**	**LVMH (Louis Vuitton, Dior, etc.)**
10	**Steve Ballmer**	**143.5**	**Former CEO, Microsoft**

Indian billionaires like **Mukesh Ambani (Reliance Industries)** and **Gautam Adani (Adani Group)** are usually in the **global top 20-25**, but **not in the top 10** as of this snapshot. India also features many other names in the **Forbes World's Billionaires list**.

About Forbes and the ranking:

- **Forbes**: an American business magazine founded in **1917** by **B. C. Forbes** and **Walter Drey**; **headquartered in Jersey City, New Jersey, USA**.
- **Forbes is famous for** several global lists, including the **World's Billionaires list, Forbes 400 (richest Americans), Global 2000 (largest public companies), Most Powerful People, and Best Countries for Business**.
- **The wealth estimates** are calculated based on **public stock holdings, private business valuations, real estate, and other assets**, **net of debts**, on a **specified date**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the Forbes World's Top 10 Richest People list (June 2026), consider the following statements:

1. Elon Musk topped the list with an estimated net worth of about USD 835 billion.
2. Larry Page and Sergey Brin, co-founders of Alphabet (Google's parent), are ranked second and third respectively.
3. Jeff Bezos, founder of Amazon and Blue Origin, is ranked fourth with about USD 277 billion.
4. Bernard Arnault, Chairman of LVMH, is the only non-American billionaire in the top 10 of this list.

How many of the above statements are correct? (a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Q2. Consider the following statements about specific billionaires in the Forbes June 2026 list:

1. Larry Ellison is associated with the technology company Oracle.
2. Jensen Huang is the CEO of NVIDIA, a leading semiconductor company.
3. Bernard Arnault heads LVMH, which owns brands like Louis Vuitton, Dior, Tiffany, and Bulgari.
4. Steve Ballmer is a former CEO of Apple.

Which of the above are correct? (a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four (Statement 4 is wrong; **Steve Ballmer is a former CEO of Microsoft**, NOT Apple.)

Q3. With reference to Forbes and its rankings, consider the following statements:

1. Forbes is an American business magazine and global media company founded in 1917 by B. C. Forbes and Walter Drey.
2. Forbes is headquartered in Jersey City, New Jersey, USA.
3. Forbes publishes lists such as the World's Billionaires, Forbes 400, Forbes Global 2000, Most Powerful People, and Forbes 30 Under 30.
4. The Forbes World's Billionaires list is published once a year, although net worth is also tracked in real time on its website.

Which of the above are correct? (a) 1, 2 and 3 only (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) **All four**

Q4. Consider the following statements about wealth concentration and inequality:

1. Wealth concentration refers to the unequal distribution of accumulated assets, not annual income.
2. Income inequality measures the distribution of annual earnings, while wealth concentration measures the distribution of total wealth.
3. The Gini coefficient is a commonly used measure of inequality, with values closer to 1 indicating greater inequality.
4. SDG 10 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals focuses on reducing inequality within and among countries.

How many of the above statements are correct? (a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Answer Key

1. (d), All four statements are correct.
2. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because **Steve Ballmer is a former CEO of Microsoft, not Apple**.
3. (e), All four statements are correct.
4. (d), All four statements are correct.

National Affairs

1. India Receives Fourth S-400 Squadron from Russia

Source: TOI

Context

India has received the fourth squadron of the **Russian-made S-400 long-range air defence missile system** from Russia, as part of the **USD 5.43-billion contract** signed between India and Russia in **2018** for the **acquisition of five S-400 regimental systems**. The fourth squadron arrived in **May 2026**, and is **expected to be deployed in an operational area** shortly. **Three S-400 squadrons** had already been **inducted into service** before this; the **fourth has now arrived after delays caused by the Russia-Ukraine conflict**, which had disrupted **defence supply chains** between **Russia and several global partners**.

Key Highlights

- **System**: **S-400 Triumf** (NATO reporting name: **SA-21 Growler**).
- **Origin**: **Russian-made**.
- **Contract value**: **USD 5.43 billion**.
- **Number of squadrons**: **5 (under the contract)**.

Key capabilities of the S-400:

Feature	Detail
Type	**Long-range surface-to-air missile (SAM) system**
Maximum range	About **400 km** (longest-range variant)
Engagement altitude	From **a few metres** to **30+ km**
Targets	**Aircraft, drones, cruise missiles, short and intermediate-range ballistic missiles**
Simultaneous targets	Can track **300+ targets** and engage **multiple simultaneously**
Multi-layered missiles	Different missiles for **short, medium, long, and very-long range**
Mobility	**Highly mobile, road-based**; can deploy and relocate quickly

Background Concepts

What is the S-400 Triumf, and What Makes It a Top-Tier Air Defence System?

The **S-400 Triumf** (NATO reporting name: **SA-21 Growler**) is a **Russian-made long-range, mobile, surface-to-air missile (SAM) system** developed by **Almaz-Antey**, designed to **protect large air-defence areas** against **a wide range of aerial threats**. It entered service with the Russian Armed Forces in **2007** and has been **exported to several countries**, including **China, Turkey, Belarus, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, and India**.

What makes the S-400 a top-tier air defence system:

(a) **Multi-target tracking**: Can **track over 300 targets simultaneously** and engage multiple **simultaneously**.

(b) **Multi-layered missile mix**: The system fires **different types of missiles** for **different ranges**:

- Very long-range missile **(up to 400 km)**, capable of engaging **high-altitude, high-value targets** like **AWACS aircraft and refuelling tankers**.
- Long-range missile **(up to 250 km)**.
- Medium-range missile **(around 120 km)**.
- Short-range missile **(around 40 km)** for **close-in defence**.

(c) **Wide altitude coverage**: From **a few metres above ground** (against cruise missiles) to **about 30 km altitude** (against ballistic missiles).

(d) **High mobility**: The system is **road-mobile**, allowing **fast deployment and relocation**, which makes it **less vulnerable to enemy strikes**.

(e) **Robust radars and command systems**: Each S-400 unit includes **multiple radars** for **early warning, target acquisition, fire control**, and **a command-and-control vehicle**.

(f) **Engagement of multiple threat types**: Aircraft (including stealth), drones, cruise missiles, and **short to intermediate-range ballistic missiles**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the recent delivery of the fourth S-400 squadron, consider the following statements:

1. India has received the fourth S-400 air defence squadron from Russia in May 2026.
2. The S-400 deal between India and Russia was signed in 2018 for five regimental systems, worth USD 5.43 billion.
3. The fifth and final S-400 squadron under the contract is expected to be delivered in 2027.
4. The fourth squadron will be integrated with AI-enabled decision-support capabilities for threat prioritisation.

How many of the above statements are correct? (a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Q2. Consider the following statements about the S-400 Triumf air defence system:

1. The S-400 is a Russian-made, long-range, mobile surface-to-air missile system developed by Almaz-Antey.
2. It can engage targets such as aircraft, drones, cruise missiles, and short and intermediate-range ballistic missiles.
3. Its longest-range missile can engage targets up to about 400 km away.
4. The S-400 cannot track multiple targets at the same time.

Which of the above are correct? (a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four (Statement 4 is wrong; the **S-400 can track over 300 targets simultaneously** and engage **multiple targets** at the same time.)

Q3. With reference to India's air defence architecture, consider the following statements:

1. The Akash missile system is an indigenous medium-range surface-to-air missile system developed by DRDO.
2. The MR-SAM (Barak-8) is a joint India-Israel medium-range air defence system.
3. Project Kusha is an indigenous long-range air defence missile project under development by DRDO.
4. Akashteer is an indigenous air-defence command-and-control system designed to integrate multiple air defence assets.

Which of the above are correct? (a) 1, 2 and 3 only (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) **All four**

Q4. Consider the following statements about the impact of the Russia-Ukraine conflict on Indian defence imports:

1. The Russia-Ukraine conflict has affected the delivery timelines of major Russian defence systems including the S-400 to India.
2. India faces potential secondary sanction risks under the US CAATSA framework for purchasing major

Russian weapons.

3. India has used the disruption as one reason to diversify its defence partnerships with France, the United States, and Israel.
4. The Russia-Ukraine conflict has fully ended India's defence relationship with Russia.

Which of the above are correct? (a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four (Statement 4 is wrong; the **Russia-Ukraine conflict has not ended India's defence relationship with Russia**; India continues to acquire major Russian systems, including the S-400, and remains a significant defence partner.)

Answer Key

1. (d), All four statements are correct.
2. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because **S-400 can track and engage multiple targets simultaneously**.
3. (e), All four statements are correct.
4. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because **India's defence ties with Russia have continued**, not ended.

2. Prime Minister Research Chair (PMRC) Scheme 2026

Source: News on Air

Context

The **Department of Higher Education** under the **Ministry of Education** has officially opened applications for the **Prime Minister Research Chair (PMRC) Scheme 2026**. The PMRC is a **national talent-repatriation initiative** that creates a **direct pathway** for **top Indian-origin researchers** working in **leading foreign universities, private laboratories, and tech industries** to take up **high-level research positions** in **premier Indian institutions**, especially in **13 strategic technology areas** critical to India's **economic and security future**.

About Scheme

The scheme will **link global Indian talent with the country's rapidly expanding research, development, innovation and technology ecosystem across 13 thematic areas** of national priority, including Advanced Computing, Semiconductors and Cybersecurity.

Key Facts

- **Scheme**: **Prime Minister Research Chair (PMRC) Scheme 2026**.
- **Ministry**: **Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education**.
- **Budget estimate**: about **₹200 crore** for multi-year research grants, relocation, fellowships, and lab infrastructure.
- **Governance**: An **Empowered Committee chaired by the Principal Scientific Adviser (PSA)** to the Government of India.

13 Prioritised Strategic Thematic Areas:

Category	Areas
Computing and Tech (4)	**Advanced Computing (AI, Quantum, Supercomputing)**, **Semiconductors**, **Next-Generation Communications**, **Cybersecurity**
Industrial and Infrastructure (4)	**Manufacturing and Industry 4.0**, **Advanced Materials and Critical Minerals**, **Space and Defence**, **Atomic Energy**
Sustainability and Biology (5)	**Energy, Sustainability and Climate Change**, **Biotechnology**, **Healthcare and MedTech**, **Agri and Food Technologies**, **Blue Economy**

Difference from PMRF (often confused):

Indicator	PMRC (this scheme)	PMRF (Prime Minister's Research Fellowship)
Target	**Indian-origin researchers abroad**	**Indian students pursuing PhDs in India**
Stage	Mid- to senior-level researchers	**Doctoral (PhD) candidates**
Aim	**Talent repatriation**	**Top domestic doctoral fellowships**

About the News (Q&A)

What is the Prime Minister Research Chair (PMRC) Scheme?

A **government scheme** to **attract top Indian-origin researchers** working abroad to take up **research positions** in **top Indian institutions**, particularly in **13 strategic technology areas**.

Who administers and funds it?

The **Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education**, with an **Empowered Committee chaired by the Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India** for **evaluation and selection**.

Background Concepts (Q&A)

What is the "National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF)", and Why is It Central to the PMRC?

The **National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF)** is the **Government of India's official ranking system** for **higher education institutions**, launched in **2015** by the **Ministry of Education** (then Ministry of Human Resource Development). The framework ranks institutions across **multiple categories**, including **Overall, Universities, Engineering, Management, Pharmacy, Medical, Law, Architecture, Dental, Research, Agriculture, Innovation, and State Universities**.

NIRF rankings are based on **five broad parameters**:

(a) **Teaching, Learning, and Resources**, covering faculty-student ratios, infrastructure, and PhD output. (b) **Research and Professional Practice**, covering publications, citations, intellectual property, and funded research. (c) **Graduation Outcomes**, including placement, higher studies progression, and exam results. (d) **Outreach and Inclusivity**, including gender diversity, regional diversity, and outreach to disadvantaged groups. (e) **Perception**, based on a wide survey of employers, academics, and professionals.

NIRF is **central to the PMRC** because the **host eligibility criteria** are tied directly to NIRF ranks. Institutions in the **Top 100 of NIRF Overall or Engineering**, or **Top 50 of NIRF Research**, are eligible to host PMRC researchers. This use of NIRF acts as a **quality filter**, ensuring that **incoming global talent** is hosted only by **institutions with strong academic and research environments**, with the **infrastructure and culture** to support high-end work.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the Prime Minister Research Chair (PMRC) Scheme 2026, consider the following statements:

1. The scheme is administered by the Department of Higher Education under the Ministry of Education.
2. It is designed to attract Indian-origin researchers working in leading foreign universities, private laboratories, and tech industries to top Indian institutions.
3. The scheme has three tiers: Young Research Fellows, Senior Research Fellows, and Research Chairs.
4. The Empowered Committee that selects fellows and proposals is chaired by the Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India.

How many of the above statements are correct? (a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Q2. Consider the following statements about the institutional eligibility under the PMRC scheme:

1. Only government Higher Education Institutions ranked in the Top 100 of NIRF Overall or Engineering, or Top 50 of NIRF Research, can host PMRC researchers.
2. Selected national research labs under DST, DBT, ICMR, and CSIR are also eligible to host PMRC researchers.
3. Seven institutions, including IIT Delhi, IIT Bombay, IIT Madras, IIT Kanpur, IIT Hyderabad, IIT (ISM) Dhanbad, and IISc Bengaluru, have been designated as Lead Hubs.
4. The scheme is open to all private universities in India regardless of NIRF ranking.

Which of the above are correct? (a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four (Statement 4 is wrong; the PMRC scheme is **restricted to government Higher Education Institutions meeting NIRF criteria**, NOT all private universities.)

Q3. With reference to the 13 strategic thematic areas under the PMRC scheme, consider the following statements:

1. The Computing and Tech category includes Advanced Computing (AI, Quantum, and Supercomputing), Semiconductors, Next-Generation Communications, and Cybersecurity.
2. Space and Defence and Atomic Energy are among the prioritised areas.
3. Biotechnology, Healthcare and MedTech, Agri and Food Technologies, and Blue Economy are part of the Sustainability and Biology category.
4. The Sports and Recreation sector is one of the 13 prioritised thematic areas under the scheme.

Which of the above are correct? (a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four (Statement 4 is wrong; **Sports and Recreation is not one of the 13 prioritised thematic areas**.)

Q4. Consider the following statements about the broader research ecosystem in India:

1. The Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF) was set up under the ANRF Act, 2023, and is chaired by the Prime Minister.
2. The National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) is run by the Ministry of Education and ranks institutions across multiple categories.
3. The Principal Scientific Adviser (PSA) is an ex-officio member of the ANRF and chairs the PMRC Empowered Committee.
4. The Prime Minister's Research Fellowship (PMRF) and the Prime Minister Research Chair (PMRC) are the same scheme.

Which of the above are correct? (a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four (Statement 4 is wrong; **PMRF and PMRC are different schemes**: PMRF supports **doctoral students in India**, while PMRC targets **Indian-origin researchers abroad** at mid and senior levels.)

Answer Key

1. (d), All four statements are correct.
2. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the scheme is restricted to **government Higher Education Institutions meeting NIRF criteria** and select research labs.
3. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because **Sports and Recreation is not among the 13 prioritised areas**.
4. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because **PMRF and PMRC are distinct schemes**.

3. Mission Senehjori Launched

Source: PIB

Context

Union Minister **Jyotiraditya M. Scindia** and the **Chief Minister of Assam** have launched **Mission Senehjori** on **2 June 2026**, an **Atmanirbhar North East project** aimed at transforming **Assam's Muga silk**, the only silk in the world that is **golden in colour** and produced **exclusively in Assam**, into a **globally competitive luxury ecosystem**. The mission is **anchored by the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (MDoNER)**, in convergence with the **Ministry of Textiles** and the **Government of Assam**, and will work along the entire **farm-to-foreign-shores** value chain.

Key Facts

- **Initiative**: **Mission Senehjori**.
- **Launched on**: **2 June 2026**.
- **Launched by**: Union Minister **Jyotiraditya M. Scindia (MDoNER)** and the **Chief Minister of Assam**.
- **Anchor ministry**: **Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (MDoNER)**.
- **Partner ministry**: **Ministry of Textiles**.
- **Implementing State**: **Government of Assam**.
- **Programme type**: **Cluster-based, value-chain-focused textile initiative**.

Why Muga silk matters:

Indicator	Detail
Produced exclusively in	**Assam** (a globally unique product)
Colour	**Natural golden tint**, brightens with age
Geographical Indication (GI) tag	**Yes** (since **2007**)
Host plants	**Som (Persea bombycina)** and **Soalu (Litsea polyantha)** trees
Current rearer-weaver income (annual)	About **₹18,000 to ₹21,000**

Main goals:

(a) **Raise annual incomes** of **Muga rearers and weavers** (currently very low).
(b) Capture **full premium value** of Muga silk from the **farm gate to international markets**.
(c) Position Muga silk as a **traceable, GI-tagged, high-end global commodity**.
(d) **Preserve Assam's silk heritage** and culture.

Why this matters:

(a) **Muga silk** is one of **Assam's most unique cultural and economic assets**, but rearers and weavers earn **very low incomes**.
(b) The **golden colour and rarity** give Muga **strong luxury-market potential**, especially in **Japan, the EU, and the Middle East**.
(c) **GI authentication and digital traceability** can **protect Muga from cheaper imitations**.
(d) **FPOs and Farmer Interest Groups** give weavers and rearers **collective bargaining power**.
(e) **Silk tourism** can create **additional employment** and **link the textile story to cultural experience**.
(f) Fits the **Aatmanirbhar North East** vision and the broader **Viksit Bharat 2047** focus on **traditional, place-based industries**.

Other Indian silks for context:

Silk	Where Produced	Type
Muga	**Assam (only place in the world)**	Wild silk, golden
Eri / Endi	**Assam, Meghalaya, Bihar, parts of NE**	Wild silk, vegan (non-violent)
Tasar	**Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, MP**	Wild silk
Mulberry	**Karnataka, AP, TN, WB, J&K**	**Cultivated silk** (largest share)

About the News (Q&A)

What is Mission Senehjori?

A **cluster-based, value-chain-focused textile initiative** to **transform Assam's Muga silk** into a **globally competitive luxury brand**, anchored by **MDoNER** in partnership with the **Ministry of Textiles** and the **Government of Assam**.

What is special about Muga silk?

Muga silk is **produced exclusively in Assam**, has a **natural golden colour** that **brightens with age**, holds a **Geographical Indication (GI) tag** since **2007**, and is reared on the **leaves of Som and Soalu trees**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to Mission Senehjori, consider the following statements:

1. Mission Senehjori was launched in June 2026 to transform Assam's Muga silk into a global luxury brand.
2. It is an Atmanirbhar North East project anchored by the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (MDoNER).
3. It works in convergence with the Ministry of Textiles and the Government of Assam.
4. The mission targets annual Muga silk exports of over 2,000 kg by 2028.

How many of the above statements are correct? (a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Q2. Consider the following statements about the key targets and components of Mission Senehjori:

1. The mission plans to regenerate about 5,000 hectares of Som and Soalu host plants.
2. It aims to establish five modernised reeling units and a specialised Muga Spun Mill.
3. The mission will create 30 Farmer Producer Organisations and over 1,180 Farmer Interest Groups.
4. About 80 per cent of traded Muga silk is targeted to be authenticated under the Geographical Indication (GI) tag.

Which of the above are correct? (a) 1, 2 and 3 only (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) **All four**

Q3. With reference to Muga silk, consider the following statements:

1. Muga silk is produced exclusively in Assam.
2. It is produced by the Muga silkworm, Antheraea assamensis, which feeds on Som and Soalu trees.
3. Muga silk has a natural golden tint that brightens over time with washing and wear.
4. Muga silk is a type of cultivated mulberry silk.

Which of the above are correct? (a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four (Statement 4 is wrong; **Muga is a wild, non-mulberry silk**, not a cultivated mulberry silk.)

Q4. Consider the following statements about Geographical Indication (GI) tags in India:

1. Geographical Indications in India are governed by the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999.
2. The GI Registry in India is headquartered in Chennai.
3. Muga silk of Assam received a Geographical Indication tag in 2007.
4. India's protection of GIs is broadly aligned with the obligations under the WTO's TRIPS Agreement.

How many of the above statements are correct? (a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Answer Key

1. (d), All four statements are correct.
2. (e), All four statements are correct.
3. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because **Muga is a wild, non-mulberry silk**.
4. (d), All four statements are correct.

Exam Relevance

Exam	Relevance
UPSC Prelims	GS Paper II on Government Schemes; GS Paper III on Indian Economy (Textiles, GI, Exports)
UPSC Mains	GS Paper II on Welfare schemes, North East development; GS Paper III on Indian Economy, Textiles, IPR
BPSC and State PCS	Schemes, Economy, Current Affairs
Banking and NABARD	General Awareness on rural livelihoods and FPOs
NABARD Grade A	Very high importance on rural development, FPOs, sericulture

Banking and Finance

1. RBI Annual Report 2025-26

Source: RBI

Context

The **Reserve Bank of India** has released its **Annual Report 2025-26**, a **statutory report** of its **Central Board of Directors** covering its **working and functions** from **April 2025 to March 2026**. The report shows an Indian economy that **grew at 7.6 per cent**, with **sharp food deflation pulling CPI to 2.1 per cent**, alongside a **depreciating rupee, FPI outflows, falling Sensex, a widening trade deficit cushioned by services and remittances**, and an **RBI that cut the policy repo rate by 100 bps to 5.25 per cent** while running a **larger balance sheet (26.4 per cent of GDP)** through the **West Asia conflict-driven external stress**.

PART ONE: THE ECONOMY

Chapter I: Taking Stock and Looking Forward

The World Economy

Worldwide output expanded **3.4% during 2025**, a touch above the **3.3% recorded in 2024**. The year was a tug-of-war: steep tariffs, mounting public debts, and murky trade rules dragged on activity, while early stockpiling of imports ahead of tariffs, the reshaping of supply chains, and a wave of AI-driven technology spending propped it up. Once hostilities erupted in West Asia in the final days of February 2026, the **IMF trimmed its 2026 global growth call to 3.1%**.

Trade told a similar story. The total volume of goods and services traded across borders climbed **5.1% in 2025**. Goods led with **4.6%** growth as firms loaded up on technology inventory, whereas services cooled to **5.3%** once the rush of post-pandemic travel ran its course. For 2026, the IMF anticipates a marked slowdown to **2.8%**.

On prices, global inflation drifted down to **4.1% over 2025**. With the West Asian flare-up snarling shipping lanes and supply networks, however, the Fund nudged its **2026 inflation projection up to 4.4%**.

India's Economy

India held on to its title as the quickest-expanding major economy. **Real GDP rose 7.6% in 2025-26**, building on the prior year's **7.1%**, with buoyant household demand and dependable investment doing the

heavy lifting. Looking to 2026-27, growth is pencilled in at **6.9%**, though the balance of risks tilts downward given the threat of dearer freight and energy from overseas.

Inflation eased dramatically. **Headline CPI cooled to 2.1% in 2025-26 from 4.6%** a year earlier, almost entirely because food turned cheaper. The forecast for **2026-27 sits at 4.6%**, with risks pointing higher.

Chapter II: The Economy in Detail

The Real Economy

On the demand side, consumer spending continued to anchor the economy. It quickened to **7.7% in 2025-26 from 5.8%**, lifted by firm appetite in both rural and urban markets. Investment in physical assets such as plants and machinery advanced a healthy **7.1%**, and the broader **investment-to-GDP ratio held firm at 34.3%** in 2024-25.

Savings improved as well. **National savings reached 34.2%** of disposable income in 2024-25, **households' net financial savings edged up to 7.0%**, and the government's shortfall between earning and spending **narrowed to 4.6% of GDP from 5.3%**. Closing this gap between what the nation saves and invests has left India leaning less heavily on fickle foreign capital.

Turning to supply, farming lost momentum, **slowing to 2.4% from 4.2%** as poor weather hit the monsoon (Kharif) harvest. A generous South-West monsoon offered relief, though, **pushing reservoir levels to a record 91.4% by October 2025** and giving the winter and summer crops a boost. Come end-March 2026, the government's **grain reserves stood at over four times** the legally required cushion.

Industry was a standout, **growing 9.5% versus 8.7%** the year before, with **manufacturing surging 11.5%** and **factory utilisation climbing to 75.6%** by the third quarter. The clean-energy push also hit milestones: **renewable capacity passed 250 GW**, **total non-fossil capacity reached 283 GW — more than half (53.2%)** of the power mix — **fulfilling the COP26 pledge years ahead of 2030**, while **EV sales topped 25 lakh units under PM E-DRIVE**. Services, **contributing 69% of real growth, grew 8.7%**, powered by trade, transport, hospitality, and professional finance and IT work.

Prices

A new price-measurement framework arrived in February 2026, when **MoSPI rolled out a CPI series rebased to 2024**, refreshing the basket using the 2023-24 household spending survey. **Food and beverages saw their weight cut from 45.9% to 36.8%**, ready meals were folded into restaurants and accommodation, a single **housing-and-fuel category was carved out at 17.7%**, and **transport (8.8%)** and **information and communication (3.6%)** were given their own slots.

Behind the headline numbers, **food prices slipped 0.8%** from April to December 2025. **Tomatoes, onions, and potatoes plunged 31.3%** as **onion output jumped 26.7%** and buffer stocks were released; **pulses also fell, down 13%**. Cutting the other way, **edible oils and fats vaulted 15.0%** on the back of global palm-oil biodiesel rules. **Fuel inflation crept up to 2.4%** over the same stretch after LPG cylinders rose **₹50 in April 2025** and another **₹60 in March 2026**. Stripping out food and fuel, **core inflation lingered near 4.3%** (**3.7% in the fourth quarter** under the new series), kept warm by personal-care costs — chiefly gold and silver, which spiked as nervous investors sought shelter. Elsewhere, **wholesale inflation softened to 0.7% from 2.3%** on cheaper energy, and the **GDP deflator fell to 0.9% from 2.5%**.

Money and Credit

The **RBI's balance sheet equalled 26.4% of GDP**. After accounting for the staggered **one-percentage-point cut to the Cash Reserve Ratio — which brought the requirement down to 3.0%** — **reserve money grew 10.8%**, while **cash in public hands rose 11.4%** on welfare payouts and stronger retail spending after tax cuts. **Broad money expanded 13.0%, up from 9.4%**, aided by a **10.6% rise in time deposits**; the **currency-to-deposit ratio dipped to 14.9%** and the **money multiplier firmed to 6.1**.

Lending stayed robust. **Non-food bank credit grew 15.9%**, with **non-bank credit up 13.3%**. **Loans to micro and small firms leapt 33.1%** and to **medium firms 21.7%**; **personal loans rose 16.2%**, of which housing

made up close to half; and **bank lending to NBFCs climbed 26.3%** once the RBI reset risk weights to normal in April 2025. Because credit outran deposits, the funding gap widened, nudging banks to issue more Certificates of Deposit to plug the hole.

Financial Markets

In the money market, the overnight call rate hugged the repo rate, **sitting about 7 basis points beneath it**, and collateral-backed trades dominated — **triparty repos at 67%** and **market repos at 30%**. Government bond yields dipped early on amid ample liquidity but firmed later, with the **10-year benchmark pushing past 7.04%** by late March 2026 as crude prices and borrowing plans rose.

Equities had a rough year: the **Sensex shed 7.1% to close at 71,948**, as a strong first half gave way to a second-half slide driven by West Asian strains and a reset in tech valuations. **Foreign portfolio investors offloaded a net ₹2.7 lakh crore** of shares, while **domestic institutions snapped up a net ₹8.5 lakh crore**. The **rupee leaned weaker all year, ending 9.9% lower at ₹94.83 to the dollar**, and the trade-weighted **NEER and REER measures fell 6.9% and 7.5%**.

Government Finances

The Centre tightened its belt, **trimming the fiscal deficit to 4.4% of GDP in 2025-26 (revised)** on the strength of solid non-tax receipts and disciplined spending, with the bar set fractionally lower at **4.3% for 2026-27**. **Direct taxes are slated to reach 6.9% of GDP** next year — a ten-year high — and **central capital outlay is set to grow 11.5% to ₹12.2 lakh crore**. States saw revenue growth ease on thinner central grants and softer GST, yet their **combined deficit is budgeted at 3.0% of state GDP**, with **transfers from the Centre rising 12.2%**.

The **Sixteenth Finance Commission left the states' slice of central taxes untouched at 41%** but reworked the distribution formula, introducing a **10% weight for a state's contribution to GDP**, while paring **income-distance to 42.5%**, **population to 17.5%**, and **fiscal performance to 10%**. It also **scrapped post-devolution revenue-deficit grants** to stop rewarding weak revenue effort and to nudge states toward collecting more on their own.

The External Sector

The **goods trade gap swelled to US$ 333.2 billion**, but a **15.3% jump in net services exports** and a **10.1% rise in remittances** kept the **current account deficit at a slim 1.0% of GDP** through April–December 2025. Trade alliances shifted notably — **China leapfrogged the US as India's top single trading partner** — and India sealed an **FTA with the EU** and signed deals with the **UK (CETA), Oman (CEPA), and New Zealand (FTA)**. With inflows falling short of the external gap, **reserves fell US$ 30.8 billion** (excluding valuation), **equity FPI flows reversed by US$ 16.5 billion**, and **gross FDI rose to US$ 94.5 billion (net US$ 7.7 billion)**. **Reserves finished at US$ 691.1 billion in end-March 2026, covering 11 months of imports and 90.3% of external debt**.

PART TWO: THE WORKINGS OF THE RESERVE BANK OF INDIA

Chapter III: Monetary Policy

The Monetary Policy Committee **lowered the repo rate by a full percentage point to 5.25%**, spread across a **0.25-point move in April 2025**, a **0.50-point move in June 2025**, and a **0.25-point move in December 2025**. Its **stance turned accommodative in April 2025 before reverting to neutral in June** to preserve flexibility against jumpy fuel and commodity costs.

To keep cash flowing, the RBI added durable liquidity through open-market purchases, dollar-rupee swaps, and the one-point CRR cut, **releasing roughly ₹2,50 crore** into the system. After an internal review it **retired its daily 14-day repo and reverse-repo auctions** in favour of 7-day and fine-tuning operations, and the **Standing Deposit Facility soaked up 84.9% of daily surplus** parked with the central bank.

Rate cuts fed through reasonably well: banks **shaved 0.60 point off their one-year median MCLR**, **fresh-loan rates fell 0.95 point** and **outstanding-loan rates 0.78 point**. **Loans tied to external benchmarks**

reached 65.4% of the total by December 2025, and because **private banks carried a far larger share (89.2% against public banks' 50.6%)**, cuts reached their borrowers faster.

Chapter IV: Credit Delivery and Financial Inclusion

Banks **routed 45.0% of adjusted net credit to priority sectors, comfortably above the 40% floor**, with **Small Finance Banks topping the table at 78.8%**. To ease pressure on small firms, the **collateral-free lending ceiling for micro and small enterprises was doubled from ₹10 lakh to ₹20 lakh**.

The **Financial Inclusion Index rose to 67.0 in March 2025 from 64.2** on better usage and quality. The digital-payments drive **achieved full digital onboarding in 710 districts (over 80% of the country)**, and **basic savings accounts reached 7,304 lakh, 52% of them held by women**. In **December 2025 the RBI launched the 2025-30 financial-inclusion strategy, "Panch-Jyoti," a 47-point plan resting on five pillars**: widening access to affordable services for households and small firms; advancing women-led inclusion through gender-sensitive design; tying livelihoods and skills to formal finance; using financial education to instil discipline; and bolstering customer protection and grievance handling.

Chapter V: Financial Markets and Foreign Exchange

The RBI made the **Unique Transaction Identifier mandatory for OTC derivative trades**, consolidating the rule into a single master direction. It **accepted municipal bonds as repo collateral**, tied the FX-Retail platform to Bharat Connect, hooked NDS-OM up to global bond networks, and **recognised FIMMDA as a self-regulatory organisation**. To tame dollar-rupee swings it intervened across onshore and offshore currency-derivative markets and **capped dealers' net open rupee positions at US$ 100 million by April 2026**.

On internationalising the rupee, the central bank **finalised local-currency arrangements with the UAE, Indonesia, Maldives, and Mauritius**, while **banks in 35 countries opened Special Rupee Vostro Accounts**. **Rupee-settled exports touched ₹1,71,916 crore and imports ₹1,59,691 crore**. Banks were cleared to **lend rupees to counterparties in Nepal, Bhutan, and Sri Lanka**, easing reliance on swap lines. Exporters got breathing room too — those serving **Bharat Mart in the UAE were given nine months** to repatriate earnings, the **standard window for regular exports stretched from 9 to 15 months**, and the external-borrowing framework was widened with limits keyed to a borrower's finances.

Chapter VI: Regulation, Supervision and Stability

In a sweeping simplification, the Department of Regulation **rolled more than 11,000 scattered circulars into 244 Master Directions spanning 30 categories and 11 types of regulated entities**, and **floated 64 draft directions** for comment. The fintech arm layered **programmability onto retail digital-rupee pilots to deliver food subsidies in Gujarat, Puducherry, and Chandigarh**; built the **Unified Markets Interface using wholesale CBDC** to speed settlement, with a **pilot to tokenise Certificates of Deposit**; scaled up the **Unified Lending Interface**; and rolled **MuleHunter.ai across banks to catch fraudulent mule accounts** in near-real time. The RBI also studied the **FREE-AI committee's report on ethical AI**, in step with the government's launch of **"Bharat Gen," a state-backed multilingual, multimodal language model**. On the supervisory front, a **cyber-range initiative** tested banks' cyber defences, KYC/AML risk reviews covered NBFCs, and a **supervisory data-quality index** was built for smaller urban cooperative banks.

Chapter VII: Public Debt Management

The RBI raised **₹14.6 lakh crore in gross market borrowing** for the Centre during 2025-26, with **2026-27 budgeted at ₹17.2 lakh crore gross and ₹11.7 lakh crore net (3.0% of GDP)** — enough net borrowing to **fund 69.2% of the central deficit**. For states, it ran the securities programme and **extended the 50-year interest-free capital-investment loan scheme, lifting the pool by a third to ₹2 lakh crore**.

Chapter VIII: Currency Management

Cash in circulation grew 11.4% by value, up sharply from 5.8%, on spending after income-tax cuts, crop-damage compensation, and state cash transfers; the **₹500 note led in both value and count**. Old notes

were retired through shredding-and-briquetting and high-speed processing systems, printing costs were trimmed via efficiencies at **BRBNMPL** presses, coin reach was widened with more mobile vans, and the **MANI app** for visually impaired users was refreshed.

Chapter IX: Payments, Settlements and Technology

UPI volumes surged 30% past 200 billion transactions a year, and the **digital-payments index rose 11%**, reflecting steady uptake in rural and semi-urban areas. Under **Payments Vision 2028 — themed "Shaping India's Payment Frontier" and running through December 2028** — the RBI plans a full **Digital Payments Intelligence Platform** to combat cyber fraud, a central **switch-on/switch-off tool** for payment channels, and **stronger consumer safeguards that cap customer liability for electronic fraud** and compensate victims of low-value scams.

Chapter X: Communication, International Relations and Research

The central bank struck **digital-asset partnerships with Singapore's MAS** and ran joint sessions with the UAE's central bank to link fast-payment systems and trial cross-border CBDC flows, and it joined **BIS Innovation Hub efforts including Project Rialto and the second phase of Project Mandala** to smooth cross-border payments. Its statistical backbone, **CIMS, was upgraded for micro-data analytics**, sharpening forecasting and risk-tracking while lightening banks' reporting load.

Chapter XI: Governance, Human Resources and Organisation

The RBI unveiled **Utkarsh 2029, its 2026-29 strategy** centred on earlier risk detection, deeper root-cause analysis, and more consistent supervisory action, and consolidated technical training under the **Enterprise Computing and Cybersecurity Training Institute**. It also pared back routine reporting for commercial bank boards so they can focus more on strategy and risk.

Chapter XII: The Reserve Bank's Accounts for 2025-26

The **balance sheet grew to 26.4% of GDP as of 31 March 2026, up from 23.7%**, propelled by revaluation gains on foreign-currency assets and gold amid exchange-rate moves and rising bullion prices. **Gold's share of net foreign assets accordingly rose to 17.2% from 12.0%**, and net income gains enabled a **surplus transfer to the Centre** to shore up stabilisation reserves.

Key Terms (Simple Explanations)

- **GDP (Gross Domestic Product)**: Total value of all goods and services produced inside a country in a year. The headline measure of an economy's size.
- **CPI (Consumer Price Index)**: A measure of how prices of a basket of goods and services bought by households change over time. India's official inflation target is based on CPI.
- **WPI (Wholesale Price Index)**: A measure of how prices change at the wholesale (bulk) level, before goods reach consumers.
- **GVA (Gross Value Added)**: The value an industry adds at each stage of production; GDP at factor cost is built up from GVA across sectors.
- **GNDI (Gross National Disposable Income)**: A country's total income (including transfers from abroad like remittances) that is available for spending and saving.
- **GFCF (Gross Fixed Capital Formation)**: Investment in long-lived assets like factories, machinery, buildings, and infrastructure. A key sign of how much the economy is investing in its future.
- **PFCE (Private Final Consumption Expenditure)**: Total spending by households on goods and services. It is the biggest component of demand in India.
- **Repo Rate**: The interest rate at which the RBI lends short-term money to commercial banks. The RBI's main policy rate.
- **CRR (Cash Reserve Ratio)**: The share of bank deposits that banks must keep as cash with the RBI. Lowering CRR releases more money for banks to lend.
- **MPC (Monetary Policy Committee)**: A six-member committee of the RBI that decides the repo rate

and the policy stance. Three members are from the RBI and three are external experts.

- **MCLR (Marginal Cost of Funds-based Lending Rate)**: An internal benchmark used by banks to decide their lending rates, based on their own cost of funds.
- **WALR (Weighted Average Lending Rate)**: The average interest rate that banks actually charge across all their loans, weighted by the size of each loan.
- **EBLR (External Benchmark-based Lending Rate)**: A bank's lending rate linked to an outside benchmark (usually the repo rate), so that changes in policy rate pass through to customers faster.
- **LAF (Liquidity Adjustment Facility)**: The RBI's main tool to manage short-term liquidity in the banking system, through repo (lending) and reverse repo (absorbing) operations.
- **SDF (Standing Deposit Facility)**: A facility that lets banks park surplus cash with the RBI without giving collateral, at a rate slightly below the repo rate.
- **OMO (Open Market Operations)**: When the RBI buys or sells government securities in the market to either inject or absorb rupee liquidity.
- **VRR / VRRR (Variable Rate Repo / Reverse Repo)**: Auction-based operations through which the RBI provides or absorbs liquidity at market-determined rates.
- **M3 (Broad Money)**: The widest measure of money supply, including currency with the public, demand deposits, time deposits, and other deposits with the RBI.
- **Money Multiplier**: The ratio of broad money (M3) to reserve money. It shows how many times the banking system multiplies central bank money.
- **ANBC (Adjusted Net Bank Credit)**: The benchmark amount on which a bank's Priority Sector Lending obligations are calculated.
- **PSL (Priority Sector Lending)**: A requirement that banks lend a fixed share of their credit to specified priority sectors like agriculture, MSEs, education, housing for the weak, and weaker sections.
- **CAD (Current Account Deficit)**: The gap between what a country pays out to the rest of the world (imports, dividends sent abroad) and what it earns (exports, remittances, services).
- **GFD (Gross Fiscal Deficit)**: The total borrowing requirement of the government in a year, that is, the gap between what it spends and what it earns (excluding borrowings).
- **BoP (Balance of Payments)**: The complete record of all economic transactions between a country and the rest of the world.
- **FDI (Foreign Direct Investment)**: Long-term investment by foreign companies in a country's businesses, often with management control.
- **FPI (Foreign Portfolio Investment)**: Foreign investment in shares, bonds, and other financial instruments, without management control. More volatile than FDI.
- **NEER / REER (Nominal / Real Effective Exchange Rate)**: NEER is the rupee's value against a basket of foreign currencies; REER adjusts that for differences in inflation. Falls in these indicate a weaker rupee.
- **G-sec (Government Securities)**: Bonds issued by the Central or State governments to borrow money from the market.
- **10-year yield**: The market interest rate on the 10-year G-sec, a key benchmark for long-term borrowing in India.
- **CBDC (Central Bank Digital Currency)**: A digital form of central bank money. India's CBDC is called the **e-rupee**, with separate **wholesale (CBDC-Wholesale)** and **retail (CBDC-Retail)** versions.
- **UPI (Unified Payments Interface)**: India's real-time digital payments system that lets users transfer money instantly between bank accounts using a mobile app.
- **ULI (Unified Lending Interface)**: A digital infrastructure built by the RBI to make small-ticket lending faster and friction-free by sharing borrower data with consent.
- **SCB (Scheduled Commercial Bank)**: A bank included in the Second Schedule of the RBI Act, 1934. The main category of formal banks in India.

- **SFB (Small Finance Bank)**: A specialised bank category created by the RBI to extend banking services to small businesses, marginal farmers, and the unbanked.
- **NBFC (Non-Banking Financial Company)**: A financial company that lends and invests but cannot accept demand deposits like a bank.
- **FCA (Foreign Currency Assets)**: The part of India's reserves held in foreign currencies, mainly in US dollars, euros, yen, and pounds.
- **NFA (Net Foreign Assets)**: A central bank's total foreign assets minus its foreign liabilities, a key part of its balance sheet.
- **HCES (Household Consumption Expenditure Survey)**: A large-scale national survey of how households spend their money, used to update CPI weights.
- **CETA / CEPA / FTA**: Different names for trade agreements. **FTA** is a Free Trade Agreement; **CEPA** is a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (broader, includes investment and services); **CETA** is a Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement.
- **MoSPI**: Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, the central government body that produces India's official statistics, including the CPI.
- **IMF (International Monetary Fund)**: A 191-member international organisation that monitors the global economy, helps countries with balance of payments problems, and publishes forecasts like the World Economic Outlook.
- **FC-XVI**: The 16th Finance Commission, a constitutional body that decides how central taxes should be shared between the Centre and the States for a 5-year period.
- **Master Directions**: Consolidated, single-document regulations issued by the RBI on a specific topic, replacing many earlier scattered circulars.
- **SRO (Self-Regulatory Organisation)**: A non-government organisation recognised by a regulator (like the RBI or SEBI) to set rules and supervise its own industry members.
- **LCA (Local Currency Arrangement)**: A bilateral agreement between two central banks that allows trade between the two countries to be settled in their own currencies, reducing dependence on the US dollar.
- **SRVA (Special Rupee Vostro Account)**: A rupee account opened by a foreign bank in an Indian bank, to settle trade in Indian rupees.
- **LLM (Large Language Model)**: A type of artificial intelligence model trained on large amounts of text. **Bharat Gen** is India's own state-backed multilingual, multimodal LLM.
- **bps (basis points)**: A small unit of interest rate measurement. **100 bps = 1 percentage point**. So a "100 bps cut" means an interest rate cut of 1 percentage point.

About the News (Q&A)

What is the overall picture from the RBI Annual Report 2025-26?

A **fast-growing economy at 7.6 per cent**, with **sharp food deflation pulling CPI to 2.1 per cent**, alongside a **depreciating rupee, FPI outflows, falling Sensex, larger trade deficit cushioned by services and remittances**, and an **RBI that cut both the repo rate and CRR by 100 bps each** while running a **bigger balance sheet** at **26.4 per cent of GDP**.

What did the new CPI series change?

The base year moved from **2012 to 2024**, with the **Food and Beverages weight cut from 45.9 per cent to 36.8 per cent**, a **new unified Housing-water-electricity-gas-fuels division (17.7 per cent)**, and **Transport and Information and Communication** separated as distinct categories.

What are the headline monetary-policy actions?

A **cumulative 100 bps repo rate cut to 5.25 per cent** (in April, June, and December 2025), a **100 bps CRR cut to 3.0 per cent**, and a **stance briefly accommodative before returning to neutral**.

Background Concepts (Q&A)

What is the "RBI Balance Sheet", and Why is the 26.4 Per Cent of GDP Figure Significant?

The **RBI's balance sheet** captures all its **assets and liabilities** as the **central bank, monetary authority, banker to the government, and manager of foreign exchange reserves**. The **major assets** are **foreign currency assets, gold holdings, domestic investments** (mainly government securities), and **loans and advances** to banks and the government. The **major liabilities** are **currency in circulation, deposits from banks** (including CRR balances), **government deposits**, and **capital and reserves** (including the **Contingency Fund** and the **Currency and Gold Revaluation Account**). When the **balance sheet expands**, it usually reflects **larger forex operations, more open market activity, gold accumulation or revaluation gains**, and **higher currency issuance**. The figure of **26.4 per cent of GDP** is significant because it shows the **balance sheet has grown faster than nominal GDP**, signalling **active liquidity management, forex intervention, and gold-driven revaluation gains**. The **Economic Capital Framework**, based on the **Bimal Jalan Committee (2019)**, governs how much **risk buffer** the RBI must hold within this balance sheet, with the **Contingent Risk Buffer band of 5.5 to 6.5 per cent of the balance sheet**.

What is "Priority Sector Lending (PSL)", and Why are SFBs Required to Lend a Much Higher Share?

Priority Sector Lending (PSL) is a **policy framework** under which the **RBI mandates** that **scheduled commercial banks, regional rural banks, small finance banks, and certain other regulated entities** must **lend a specified share of their Adjusted Net Bank Credit (ANBC)** to sectors considered **economically essential but credit-deprived**. These sectors include **agriculture, micro and small enterprises, education, housing for the weaker sections, renewable energy, social infrastructure, and weaker sections more broadly**. The general PSL target for **domestic commercial banks and foreign banks with 20 or more branches** is **40 per cent of ANBC**, with **sub-targets of 18 per cent for agriculture** (within which **10 per cent is for small and marginal farmers**), **7.5 per cent for micro enterprises**, and **12 per cent for weaker sections**. **Regional Rural Banks (RRBs)** have a **higher PSL target of 75 per cent**, and **Small Finance Banks (SFBs) have a target of 60 per cent of ANBC**, reflecting their **specialised mandate** to serve the **unbanked and underserved**. **Urban Cooperative Banks (UCBs)** have a target of **60 per cent**, and **Foreign Banks with fewer than 20 branches** have a target of **40 per cent**. SFBs are **structurally designed** to be **community-focused, small-ticket lenders**, so a **higher PSL target makes sense**, and shows in their **78.8 per cent achievement**, well above the **60 per cent norm**. **Banks that fall short** must contribute the shortfall to specific funds like the **Rural Infrastructure Development Fund (RIDF) with NABARD**, the **Small Industries Development Fund (SIDBI), or similar arrangements**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to India's macroeconomic performance in 2025-26 as per the RBI Annual Report, consider the following statements:

1. India's real GDP grew at 7.6 per cent in 2025-26, up from 7.1 per cent in 2024-25.
2. Headline CPI inflation moderated sharply to 2.1 per cent in 2025-26 from 4.6 per cent in the previous fiscal year.
3. The Current Account Deficit (CAD) was contained at about 1.0 per cent of GDP during April-December 2025.
4. India's real GDP growth for 2026-27 has been projected at 9.5 per cent in the RBI's report.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the RBI has projected India's GDP growth at **6.9 per cent for 2026-27**, not 9.5 per cent.)

Q2. Consider the following statements about monetary policy actions of the RBI in 2025-26:

1. The MPC cut the policy repo rate cumulatively by 100 basis points to 5.25 per cent during the year.
2. The Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR) was cut by 100 bps to 3.0 per cent.
3. The MPC's policy stance was shifted to accommodative in April 2025 but was returned to neutral in June 2025.
4. The Standing Deposit Facility (SDF) absorbed about 84.9 per cent of total daily Liquidity Adjustment Facility surplus.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) 1, 2 and 3 only (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) **All four**

Q3. With reference to the 16th Finance Commission, consider the following statements:

1. The vertical devolution share to states has been preserved at 41 per cent.
2. The horizontal criteria now include a 10 per cent weight for the States' contribution to GDP.
3. The Income distance weight has been lowered to 42.5 per cent and population to 17.5 per cent.
4. The 16th Finance Commission has discontinued post-devolution revenue deficit grants.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) 1, 2 and 3 only (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) **All four**

Q4. Consider the following statements about Priority Sector Lending (PSL) in India:

1. The general PSL target for domestic commercial banks is 40 per cent of Adjusted Net Bank Credit (ANBC).
2. Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) have a higher PSL target of 75 per cent of ANBC.
3. Small Finance Banks (SFBs) have a PSL target of 60 per cent of ANBC.
4. Scheduled Commercial Banks in 2025-26 achieved a PSL ratio of 45.0 per cent of ANBC, exceeding the statutory threshold.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) 1, 2 and 3 only (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) **All four**

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the RBI has projected **6.9 per cent GDP growth for 2026-27**, not 9.5 per cent.
2. (e), All four statements are correct.
3. (e), All four statements are correct.
4. (e), All four statements are correct.

Exam Relevance

For **Banking exams (RBI Grade B, SBI PO, IBPS PO and Clerk, NABARD Grade A, SIDBI Grade A)**, this is absolutely essential, especially **RBI Grade B**, where the Annual Report is a primary reference for the **Economic and Social Issues** and **Finance and Management** papers.
For **SEBI Grade A and IRDAI Grade A**, the report supports macroeconomic and regulatory awareness.

Facts To Remember

1. India Issues Letter of Request to France for Acquisition of 114 Rafale Fighter Jets

The Government of India issued a Letter of Request (LoR) to the Government of France for a government-to-government defence deal worth around Rs.3.25 lakh crore to procure 114 Rafale fighter aircraft for the Indian Air Force (IAF). Under the proposed agreement, nearly 94 Rafale jets are expected to be

manufactured in India by Dassault Aviation in partnership with an Indian company. The acquisition is part of India's Multi-Role Fighter Aircraft (MRFA) programme aimed at addressing the IAF's declining squadron strength.

2. Assam Launches 'Mission Senehjori' to Promote Muga Silk Ecosystem

Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia and Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma launched 'Mission Senehjori', a cluster-based initiative to transform Assam's traditional Muga silk industry into a globally competitive luxury textile ecosystem. The three-year programme (2026–2028), with an investment of around Rs.396–411 crore, aims to create a premium, traceable, and export-oriented Muga silk economy under the unified brand identity 'Senehjori'.

3. MoE Launches Prime Minister Research Chair (PMRC) Scheme 2026

The Ministry of Education (MoE) launched the Prime Minister Research Chair (PMRC) Scheme 2026 to attract accomplished Indian-origin researchers, scientists, and technologists from across the world into India's research ecosystem. The scheme focuses on 13 priority sectors including Artificial Intelligence (AI), semiconductors, quantum computing, biotechnology, healthcare, cybersecurity, climate change, defence, and advanced manufacturing.

4. Chandigarh University Establishes India's First Private 'IndiaAI Data Lab'

Chandigarh University became India's first private university to establish an 'IndiaAI Data Lab' in partnership with Intel India. The initiative aims to strengthen students' industry-oriented skills in Artificial Intelligence (AI), Data Science, and emerging technologies through practical training, research projects, hackathons, and Intel certification programmes.

5. BHASHINI Launches 'VYOMA Innovation Challenge' for Multilingual AI Solutions

The Digital India BHASHINI Division under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) launched the 'VYOMA Innovation Challenge' to promote development of multilingual, voice-first, and open-source Artificial Intelligence (AI) solutions. The initiative encourages AI applications in sectors such as education, healthcare, agriculture, governance, and public services, especially for offline and low-connectivity environments. Winning teams may receive prizes of up to Rs.80 lakh and opportunities for government deployment.

6. India Issues Letter of Request to France for 114 Rafale Fighter Jets

The Government of India issued a Letter of Request (LoR) to France for the acquisition of 114 Rafale fighter aircraft for the Indian Air Force (IAF) under a proposed government-to-government defence deal worth around Rs.3.25 lakh crore. The deal forms part of India's Multi-Role Fighter Aircraft (MRFA) programme aimed at addressing the IAF's declining squadron strength. Around 94 Rafale jets are proposed to be manufactured in India by Dassault Aviation in partnership with an Indian company, while the first Rafale-M jets are expected to arrive by 2028.

7. Ministry of Education Launches Prime Minister Research Chair (PMRC) Scheme 2026

The Ministry of Education launched the Prime Minister Research Chair (PMRC) Scheme 2026 to attract distinguished Indian-origin researchers, scientists, and technologists from across the world into India's research ecosystem. The scheme focuses on priority sectors such as Artificial Intelligence, semiconductors, cybersecurity, biotechnology, climate change, quantum computing, healthcare, and defence technologies. Seven premier institutions have been designated as Lead Institutions for implementation of the programme.

8. Chandigarh University Establishes India's First Private 'IndiaAI Data Lab'

Chandigarh University became India's first private university to establish an 'IndiaAI Data Lab' in collaboration with Intel India. The initiative aims to provide students with hands-on experience in Artificial Intelligence, Data Science, and emerging technologies through real-world projects, research, hackathons, and industry-linked programmes. The lab will support AI innovation, faculty development, and industry-academia collaboration to improve employability and technical skills.

9. BHASHINI Launches 'VYOMA Innovation Challenge' for Multilingual AI Solutions

The Digital India BHASHINI Division under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology launched the 'VYOMA Innovation Challenge' to promote development of multilingual, voice-first, open-source Artificial Intelligence solutions for low-connectivity environments. The challenge is built around the 'Sunno Sutra' handheld AI device and focuses on AI applications in education, healthcare, agriculture, governance, and public services. Winning teams can receive prizes of up to Rs.80 lakh and opportunities for deployment with government departments.

FIVE TO REMEMBER · 4 JUNE 2026

1. India's real GDP growth for 2026-27 has been projected at 9.5 per cent in the RBI's report. RBI Annual Report 2025-26
2. **Forbes**: an American business magazine founded in **1917** by **B. C. Forbes** and **Walter Drey**; **headquartered in Jersey City, New Jersey, USA**. Forbes World's Top 10 Richest People (June 2026)
3. **Scheme**: **Prime Minister Research Chair (PMRC) Scheme 2026**. Prime Minister Research Chair (PMRC) Scheme 2026
4. Very long-range missile **(up to 400 km)**, capable of engaging **high-altitude, high-value targets** like **AWACS aircraft and refuelling tankers**. India Receives Fourth S-400 Squadron from Russia
5. Mission Senehjori was launched in June 2026 to transform Assam's Muga silk into a global luxury brand. Mission Senehjori Launched

Now test yourself: c4scourses.in/daily-quiz/daily-quiz-4-june-2026/

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Context

The earlier coverage focused on **India's ranking** in the **SIDE 2026 report**. This time, we look more closely at **what the CHIPS framework actually measures**, **why India scores high on AI**, and **what policy ecosystem** is driving these results. India's **8th to 5th rank jump** in **one year**, and **4th rank on the CHIPS AI Index**, reflects a **combination of large user base, strong talent pipeline, and a deep stack of Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)** that few countries can match at India's scale.

Key Facts

Indicator	Detail
India's digital economy rank (SIDE 2026)	**5th out of 71 countries**
India's previous rank (SIDE 2025)	**8th out of 32 countries**
India's CHIPS AI Index rank	**4th globally**
Countries ahead on CHIPS AI Index	**United States, China, Singapore**
India's internet user growth	**8.8 per cent** (vs **2.1 per cent average** for other top-10 countries)
Share of global AI users	About **19.9 per cent**
AI talent concentration	**2nd largest in the world**
Publisher of report	**ICRIER-Prosus Centre for Internet and Digital Economy (IPCIDE)**

About the CHIPS Framework (Closer Look):

- **C, Connect**: Measures **internet access, broadband penetration, mobile coverage, affordability, and inclusion**. India scores well because of **large mobile base, low data tariffs, and rural broadband expansion** (BharatNet, 5G rollout).
- **H, Harness**: Measures **adoption and use of digital tools** across **business, government, and households**. India scores well due to **UPI, Aadhaar-based services, DigiLocker, ABDM (health), and FASTag**.
- **I, Innovate**: Measures **digital research, R&D, start-up ecosystem, and patents**. India's **3rd-largest start-up ecosystem** and **AI start-up growth** are key drivers.
- **P, Protect**: Measures **data protection, cyber-security, and consumer rights**. India's recent **Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023** and **CERT-In, NCIIPC** activities are key.
- **S, Sustain**: Measures **environmental and social sustainability** of the digital economy. India's **green data centres, e-waste regulations, and inclusive design** matter here.

About India's AI Story:

- India has the **world's 2nd-largest pool of AI talent**, supported by **IITs, IIITs, NITs, ISIs, AIIMS data-science programmes**, and **hundreds of engineering colleges**.
- India accounts for nearly **20 per cent of global AI users**, driven by **mass usage of AI assistants, chatbots, recommendation engines, generative AI, and AI on smartphones**.
- The **IndiaAI Mission** has five pillars: **IndiaAI Compute, Foundation Models, Datasets, Applications, and Skilling**.

- India has launched **Bharat Gen**, a **state-funded multilingual, multimodal Large Language Model (LLM)**.
- The **National AI Portal (indiaai.gov.in)** is a public-facing hub.
- The **FREE-AI Committee** at the **RBI** has reviewed **ethical AI use in finance**.

Why India's Rank Jumped from 8th to 5th?

- The **8th rank** was out of **32 countries**; the **5th rank** is out of **71 countries**, a much **larger and more diverse sample**.
- India's **internet user base** has been **growing 4 times faster** than other top-10 countries.
- The **AI user base** in India is **exploding** with **smartphone-based generative AI tools**.
- **Government policy push** through **Digital India, IndiaAI Mission, ONDC, and DPI exports** has strengthened **all five CHIPS pillars** simultaneously.
- The **JAM Trinity (Jan Dhan, Aadhaar, Mobile)** has built **financial inclusion at scale**.

Key Terms:

- **Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)**: A set of **digital platforms and protocols** (often built or backed by the state) that **anyone, public or private, can use** to **build services** on top, like Aadhaar, UPI, DigiLocker, and ABDM.
- **JAM Trinity**: **Jan Dhan (bank account), Aadhaar (digital ID), and Mobile (phone)**, the **three foundational pillars** of India's **financial inclusion** push.
- **Artificial Intelligence (AI)**: Computer systems designed to **perform tasks usually needing human intelligence**, like understanding language, recognising images, and making decisions.
- **Large Language Model (LLM)**: A type of AI trained on **massive amounts of text** that can **understand and generate language**, like ChatGPT-style systems. **Bharat Gen** is India's homegrown LLM.
- **IndiaAI Mission**: India's **national mission** to develop **AI infrastructure, foundation models, datasets, applications, and skills**.
- **ONDC (Open Network for Digital Commerce)**: An **open protocol** for **digital commerce in India**, designed to **avoid monopolies** and **enable interoperability** between buyers, sellers, and platforms.
- **Account Aggregator (AA)**: A **consent-based data sharing system** in India, regulated by the **RBI**, that allows **individuals and businesses** to **share their financial data** with **financial institutions**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to India's performance in the SIDE 2026 report, consider the following statements:

1. India has been ranked the 5th most digitalised economy out of 71 countries in 2026.
2. India was ranked 8th out of 32 countries in the SIDE 2025 report.
3. India's internet users grew at 8.8 per cent, against an average of 2.1 per cent in the other top-10 countries.
4. India ranks first globally in the CHIPS AI Index.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; India is ranked **4th** on the **CHIPS AI Index**, behind the **United States, China, and Singapore**.)

Q2. With reference to the CHIPS framework, consider the following statements:

1. The "C" pillar (Connect) measures internet access, broadband penetration, mobile coverage, affordability, and inclusion.
2. The "H" pillar (Harness) measures the adoption and use of digital tools by business, government, and

households.
3. The "P" pillar (Protect) measures data protection, cybersecurity, and consumer rights.
4. The "S" pillar (Sustain) measures the environmental and social sustainability of the digital economy.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Q3. With reference to India's AI story, consider the following statements:

1. India accounts for about 19.9 per cent of global AI users.
2. India has the second-largest concentration of AI talent in the world.
3. Bharat Gen is India's state-funded multilingual, multimodal Large Language Model (LLM).
4. The IndiaAI Mission has five pillars: IndiaAI Compute, Foundation Models, Datasets, Applications, and Skilling.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Q4. With reference to India's Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) stack, consider the following statements:

1. Aadhaar, UPI, DigiLocker, Account Aggregator, and ABDM are key components of India's DPI stack.
2. India's DPI stack is widely seen as a global model and is being exported through G20 leadership and bilateral partnerships.
3. The JAM Trinity stands for Jan Dhan, Aadhaar, and Mobile, the three foundational pillars of India's financial inclusion push.
4. India's DPI is exclusively built and operated by private fintech firms, with no role for the state.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; India's **DPI stack is largely built or backed by the state**, with active **public-private collaboration**, not purely by private fintech firms.)

Answer Key

1. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because India is 4th on the CHIPS AI Index, not 1st.
2. (d), All four statements are correct.
3. (d), All four statements are correct.
4. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because India's DPI is largely state-built or state-backed, not purely private.

Banking and Finance

1. RBI Eases Foreign Borrowing Rules for PSUs, FCNR(B) Deposits and FII Investment Limits

Source: The Indian Express

Context

The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has unveiled a **package of measures** to **boost foreign capital inflows** and **stabilise the rupee**, by **easing norms for foreign borrowings by state-owned enterprises**, **incentivising banks to mobilise FCNR(B) deposits**, and **liberalising FII and NRI/OCI investment limits**. The move **complements the government's decision** to **scrap capital gains tax and withholding tax** on

FII investment in government bonds. **RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra** said these steps are expected to **strengthen the balance of payments** and attract **foreign capital inflows** during a period of **rupee pressure and FPI outflows** (about **USD 13.4 billion equity and USD 0.3 billion debt outflows** during **1 April to 2 June 2026**).

Key Facts

- **Step 1: Cheaper dollar loans for PSUs.** PSU companies borrowing in dollars get a **subsidised hedging cost** from the RBI till **30 September 2026**, making **dollar loans cheaper**.
- **Step 2: Cheaper NRI deposits for banks.** Banks raising **3- to 5-year FCNR(B) deposits** (deposits in foreign currency held by NRIs and OCIs) get **full hedging cost support** till **September 2026**, so they can offer **better rates to NRIs**.
- **Step 3: More bond access for foreigners.** Under the **Fully Accessible Route (FAR)**, foreigners can now buy **new 15-, 30-, and 40-year government bonds** freely. **Short-term, concentration, and single-security limits** have also been **removed**.
- **Step 4: Easier equity investment for NRIs and foreigners.** NRIs, OCIs, and all **Persons Resident Outside India (PROIs)** can now buy **listed Indian shares** with **higher limits** and **without SEBI registration**.
- **Step 5: Faster export earnings repatriation.** Exporters now have to bring back their export earnings within **9 months**, restored from the **15 months** allowed in November 2025.

About the Concessional FX Swap Facility for PSU ECBs:

- A **swap facility** allows PSUs to **convert rupee liabilities into foreign currency exposure**, or **vice versa**, at **more favourable terms** than market-based hedging.
- The RBI is **lowering the hedging and funding cost** of foreign currency borrowing by **PSUs**, nudging them to **tap cheaper overseas capital**.

About the FCNR(B) Swap Facility for AD Banks:

- The RBI will provide **full hedging cost** on **fresh 3- to 5-year FCNR(B) deposits** raised by **Authorised Dealer (AD) banks** until **September 2026**.
- An **FCNR(B) account** is a **fixed deposit in India** held by **NRIs and OCIs** in **foreign currencies** like **USD, GBP, EUR, or CAD**, avoiding **currency fluctuation risks** for the depositor.
- With **hedging costs subsidised**, banks can **offer more competitive interest rates** without **eating into their margins**.
- This is expected to **strengthen foreign currency inflows** into the banking system, **support FX liquidity**, and **stabilise the external account**.

What is Fully Accessible Route (FAR)?

- The **Fully Accessible Route (FAR)** allows FIIs to **buy and sell designated G-secs without any quantitative ceiling**.
- The **FAR** has been **expanded** to include all **new issuances of 15-year, 30-year, and 40-year G-secs**.
- **General Route restrictions removed**: **short-term investment caps, concentration limits**, and **individual security limits**.
- These steps **complement the government's decision** to **scrap capital gains tax and withholding tax** on **FII investment in government bonds**.

What is Liberalisation for NRIs, OCIs, and PROIs?

- **NRIs (Non-Resident Indians)**, **OCIs (Overseas Citizens of India)**, and now all **Persons Resident Outside India (PROIs)** get **higher investment limits** in **listed equity instruments**.
- They can invest **without separate registration with SEBI**.

About Export Realisation Time Limit:

- The RBI has proposed to **restore the time limit for realisation of export proceeds to 9 months**, providing **breathing room** for exporters facing **global trade headwinds**.

Key Terms:

- **External Commercial Borrowings (ECBs)**: Loans taken by Indian companies (including PSUs) from **foreign lenders** in **foreign currency** (mostly USD), subject to **RBI rules** on **end-use, maturity, and cost**.
- **FCNR(B) Account**: **Foreign Currency Non-Resident (Bank)** account, a **fixed deposit** held by **NRIs/OCIs** in India in **foreign currencies**, so the depositor faces **no rupee depreciation risk**.
- **Authorised Dealer (AD) Banks**: Banks **licensed by the RBI** under **FEMA** to deal in **foreign exchange**.
- **Hedging Cost**: The cost of **protecting against exchange rate movements** through instruments like **forwards and swaps**.
- **Forex Swap**: A contract to **exchange a sum in one currency for another now**, and **reverse the transaction later** at a **pre-agreed rate**.
- **Fully Accessible Route (FAR)**: A regime under which **foreign investors can freely buy and sell specified Government of India securities** without any **quantitative limit**.
- **General Route for FII Investment**: An alternative regime with **specified caps** and **concentration limits** for **FII debt investments**.
- **NRI (Non-Resident Indian)**: An Indian citizen who lives outside India for tax or stay purposes.
- **OCI (Overseas Citizen of India)**: A foreign citizen of Indian origin granted **lifelong visa and certain rights** in India (excluding voting).
- **PROI (Person Resident Outside India)**: Any **person resident outside India** under **FEMA**, including **NRIs, OCIs, and foreign nationals**.
- **Capital Gains Tax (in this context)**: Tax on **profits** earned from selling **investments like bonds and securities**.
- **Withholding Tax**: A **tax deducted at source** when **income (like interest or dividend) is paid to a foreign investor**, before the money leaves the country.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the RBI's recent measures to boost foreign capital inflows, consider the following statements:

1. The RBI has announced a concessional foreign exchange swap facility for ECBs by PSUs until 30 September 2026.
2. AD banks will get a similar facility covering the full hedging cost for fresh 3- to 5-year FCNR(B) deposits until September 2026.
3. The RBI has also expanded the Fully Accessible Route (FAR) for FIIs by including new 15-, 30-, and 40-year G-sec issuances.
4. These measures complement the government's decision to scrap capital gains tax and withholding tax on FII investment in government bonds.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Q2. Consider the following statements about FCNR(B) accounts:

1. FCNR(B) is the Foreign Currency Non-Resident (Bank) account scheme.
2. It is a fixed deposit held by NRIs and OCIs in foreign currencies like USD, GBP, EUR, or CAD.
3. It protects the depositor from rupee depreciation risk.
4. FCNR(B) deposits can only be held in Indian rupees.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **FCNR(B) deposits are held in foreign currencies**, NOT Indian rupees.)

Q3. With reference to the Fully Accessible Route (FAR), consider the following statements:

1. Under FAR, FIIs can buy and sell designated Government of India securities without any quantitative ceiling.
2. The RBI has expanded FAR to include all new issuances of 15-, 30-, and 40-year G-sec bonds.
3. The General Route restrictions on short-term investments, concentration limits, and individual security limits for FII investments have been removed.
4. The FAR is governed by the Ministry of External Affairs and not the Reserve Bank of India.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **FAR is governed by the Reserve Bank of India**, not the Ministry of External Affairs.)

Q4. Consider the following statements about NRIs, OCIs, and Persons Resident Outside India (PROIs):

1. NRIs are Indian citizens who reside outside India for tax or stay purposes.
2. OCIs are foreign citizens of Indian origin granted lifelong visa and certain rights in India, excluding voting.
3. PROIs include NRIs, OCIs, and foreign nationals as defined under FEMA.
4. The RBI has restricted PROIs from investing in Indian listed equity instruments under any route.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; the RBI has **liberalised** investment limits for **NRIs, OCIs, and PROIs** in **listed equity instruments**, without requiring SEBI registration.)

Answer Key

1. (d), All four statements are correct.
2. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because FCNR(B) deposits are held in foreign currencies, not rupees.
3. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the FAR is governed by the RBI, not the Ministry of External Affairs.
4. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the RBI has actually liberalised, not restricted, PROI investment in listed equity instruments.

2. ADB and Standard Chartered Sign Agreements to Strengthen Supply Chain Finance in India

Source: BL

Context

The **Asian Development Bank (ADB)** and **Standard Chartered Bank** have signed agreements in **June 2026** to **strengthen supply chain finance in India**, through **risk-sharing arrangements** covering both **US Dollar (USD) and Indian Rupee (INR) transactions**. The agreements were signed in **Mumbai** by **Bhargav Dasgupta, Vice-President of ADB**, and **P.D. Singh, CEO of Standard Chartered Bank India and South Asia**. The partnership aims to address **financing gaps**, strengthen **risk-sharing mechanisms**, and **expand access to trade and supply chain finance** for Indian businesses.

Key Facts

Indicator	Detail
Partners	**Asian Development Bank (ADB)** and **Standard Chartered Bank**
Month and venue of signing	**June 2026, Mumbai (Maharashtra)**
Signed by (ADB)	**Bhargav Dasgupta, Vice-President, ADB**
Signed by (Standard Chartered)	**P.D. Singh, CEO, Standard Chartered Bank India and South Asia**
Objective	Address financing gaps and strengthen risk-sharing in **supply chain finance** in India
USD-denominated transactions arrangement	**Risk Participation Arrangement (RPA)** through **GIFT City, Gujarat**
INR onshore transactions arrangement	**Partial Guarantee Facility (PGF) agreement**
Coverage	Both **domestic and cross-border trade**

About the Agreement and the Partners:

- The deal has two parts: a **Risk Participation Arrangement (RPA)** for **USD-denominated transactions** through **GIFT City, Gujarat**, and a **Partial Guarantee Facility (PGF)** for **onshore INR transactions**.
- The arrangements aim to **expand access to trade finance and supply chain finance** for Indian businesses, especially those in **export and import value chains**.
- They also support **continued flow of both domestic and cross-border trade**, particularly during periods of **global supply-chain stress**.

About Asian Development Bank (ADB):

- **Regional development bank** for the **Asia-Pacific region**.
- Established in **1966**, headquartered in **Manila, Philippines**.
- Has **68 members**, including **49 from within Asia-Pacific** and **19 from outside the region**.
- India is a **founding member** of ADB.
- Provides **loans, technical assistance, grants, and equity investments** for development projects.
- Largest shareholders include **Japan, the United States, China, India, and Australia**.

About Standard Chartered Bank:

- A **British multinational banking and financial services company**, headquartered in **London, United Kingdom**.
- Formed in **1969** through the merger of **The Standard Bank of British South Africa** and **The Chartered Bank of India, Australia and China**.
- Has a **strong presence in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East**.
- Operates in **India for over 165 years**, with a **significant trade and corporate banking franchise**.

About GIFT City:

- **Gujarat International Finance Tec-City**, located in **Gandhinagar, Gujarat**.
- India's **first International Financial Services Centre (IFSC)**.
- Regulated by the **International Financial Services Centres Authority (IFSCA)**, set up in **2020** under the **IFSCA Act, 2019**.
- Allows **foreign-currency-denominated transactions** in a **special regulatory regime**, similar to global financial centres like **Singapore, Dubai, and Hong Kong**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the recent agreements between ADB and Standard Chartered Bank, consider the

following statements:

1. The agreements were signed in Mumbai in June 2026.
2. The partnership covers both USD and INR transactions.
3. The Risk Participation Arrangement is routed through GIFT City, Gujarat.
4. The Partial Guarantee Facility supports onshore INR transactions.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Q2. Consider the following statements about the Asian Development Bank (ADB):

1. ADB was established in 1966 and is headquartered in Manila, the Philippines.
2. ADB has 68 members, including 49 from within the Asia-Pacific region.
3. India is a founding member of ADB.
4. ADB's largest shareholder is the United Kingdom.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; ADB's **largest shareholders** include **Japan and the United States**, NOT the United Kingdom.)

Q3. With reference to Standard Chartered Bank, consider the following statements:

1. Standard Chartered is a British multinational bank headquartered in London.
2. It was formed in 1969 through the merger of the Standard Bank of British South Africa and the Chartered Bank of India, Australia and China.
3. It has a strong presence in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East.
4. Standard Chartered is a fully Indian public-sector bank under the Department of Financial Services.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; Standard Chartered is a **British multinational private bank**, NOT an Indian public-sector bank.)

Q4. Consider the following statements about GIFT City:

1. GIFT City stands for Gujarat International Finance Tec-City, located in Gandhinagar, Gujarat.
2. It is India's first International Financial Services Centre (IFSC).
3. GIFT City is regulated by the International Financial Services Centres Authority (IFSCA), set up under the IFSCA Act, 2019.
4. GIFT City does not allow any foreign-currency-denominated transactions.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; GIFT City **allows foreign-currency-denominated transactions** under a **special regulatory regime**.)

Answer Key

1. (d), All four statements are correct.
2. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because ADB's largest shareholders include Japan and the United States, not the United Kingdom.
3. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because Standard Chartered is a British

multinational private bank, not an Indian public-sector bank.

4. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because GIFT City explicitly allows foreign-currency-denominated transactions.

Exam Relevance

Exam	Relevance
UPSC Prelims	GS Paper II on International Organisations (ADB); GS Paper III on Indian Economy (Trade Finance, IFSC, GIFT City)
UPSC Mains	GS Paper II on Bilateral and multilateral institutions; GS Paper III on External sector, Banking, Trade
BPSC and State PCS	Economy, Banking, Current Affairs
Banking (RBI Gr B, SBI PO, IBPS, NABARD)	Very high importance, trade finance, supply chain finance, GIFT City, ADB
SEBI Grade A and IRDAI Grade A	Financial regulation, IFSCA, cross-border finance
SSC, Insurance, Railway	Static and Current GK on ADB, Standard Chartered, GIFT City

3. India Launches UPI Payments in Cambodia Through NPCI-ACLEDA Bank Partnership

Source: News on Air

Context

The **National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)** has partnered with **ACLEDA Bank** to launch **Unified Payments Interface (UPI) acceptance in Cambodia**. With this, **Cambodia becomes the latest country** to accept **UPI-based payments**, strengthening **India's cross-border digital payments footprint** in **Southeast Asia**. UPI is now live in **over nine countries** including the **UAE, Singapore, Bhutan, Cambodia, Nepal, Sri Lanka, France, Mauritius, and Qatar**.

About Cambodia:

- A **culturally rich, largely rural country** in **mainland Southeast Asia**.
- Civilization shaped over **2,000 years** by **Indian and Chinese cultural, religious, and architectural influences**.
- Reached its classical peak under the **Angkor Empire (9th to 15th century CE)**, famous for **Angkor Wat**.
- Capital: **Phnom Penh**.
- Currency: **Cambodian Riel**; the **US dollar** is also widely used.
- Population is largely **rural**, with a significant share employed in **agriculture**.

About UPI's International Expansion:

- **Unified Payments Interface (UPI)** is **India's flagship real-time digital payment system**, run by the **National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)**.
- It allows instant **bank-to-bank money transfer** through a **mobile app**.
- UPI is currently live in **more than nine countries**: **UAE, Singapore, Bhutan, Cambodia, Nepal, Sri Lanka, France, Mauritius, and Qatar**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the launch of UPI payments in Cambodia, consider the following statements:

1. The launch is the result of a partnership between the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) and ACLEDA Bank.
2. With this launch, Cambodia becomes one of more than nine countries where UPI is live.
3. UPI is operated in India by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI).

4. UPI's international expansion is driven by NPCI International Payments Limited (NIPL).

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Q2. With reference to the location and borders of Cambodia, consider the following statements:

1. Cambodia is bordered by Thailand to the west and northwest.
2. Cambodia is bordered by Laos to the northeast.
3. Cambodia is bordered by Vietnam to the east and southeast.
4. Cambodia's southwestern coastline meets the Gulf of Thailand.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Q3. With reference to Cambodia's geography, consider the following statements:

1. The Mekong River flows about 510 km through Cambodia and serves as a major transport and economic lifeline.
2. The Tonle Sap Lake is connected to the Mekong by the Tonle Sap River and expands during the monsoon.
3. The Dangrek Mountains lie in the north, while the Cardamom and Elephant Mountains lie in the southwest of Cambodia.
4. Mount Aôral, the highest peak in Cambodia, is located in the Himalayan range.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **Mount Aôral is located in the Cardamom and Elephant Mountains** of Cambodia, **not in the Himalayan range**.)

Q4. Consider the following statements about UPI's international footprint:

1. UPI is now live in countries including the UAE, Singapore, Bhutan, Cambodia, Nepal, Sri Lanka, France, Mauritius, and Qatar.
2. NPCI International Payments Limited (NIPL) is the wholly owned subsidiary of NPCI responsible for UPI's international expansion.
3. UPI's international expansion has been driven exclusively by partnerships with central banks of European countries.
4. UPI is one of the building blocks of India's Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI).

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 4 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 3 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 3 is wrong; UPI's international expansion has involved a **mix of partnerships** across **Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and Africa**, not just European central banks.)

Answer Key

1. (d), All four statements are correct.
2. (d), All four statements are correct.
3. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because Mount Aôral is in the Cardamom and Elephant Mountains of Cambodia, not the Himalayas.
4. (a), Statements 1, 2, 4 are correct; Statement 3 is wrong because UPI's expansion has involved partnerships across many regions, not just European central banks.

Agriculture

1. APCNF Wins the 2026 Food Planet Prize for Transforming Food Systems Through Natural Farming

Source: Down To Earth

Context

India's **Andhra Pradesh Community Managed Natural Farming (APCNF)** programme has won the prestigious **2026 Food Planet Prize**, awarded in **Båstad, Sweden**. The **Food Planet Prize** is the **world's largest environmental award** dedicated to **transforming global food systems**, established by **Sweden's Curt Bergfors Foundation**. APCNF, launched in **2016**, won over **1,000 international nominations from six continents**, and now scales across **1.8 million farming families** and **3,40,000 women's Self Help Groups (SHGs)** in Andhra Pradesh.

Key Facts

Indicator	Detail
Award	**Food Planet Prize 2026**
Award venue	**Båstad, Sweden**
Awarding body	**Curt Bergfors Foundation, Sweden**
Winner	**Andhra Pradesh Community Managed Natural Farming (APCNF) programme, India**
Implementing agency for APCNF	**Rythu Sadhikara Samstha (RySS)**, under Andhra Pradesh's agriculture department
APCNF launch year	**2016**
Grand prize amount	**USD 1.5 million**
Prize for specialised international finalists	**USD 150,000 each**

About the Food Planet Prize:

- It is the **world's largest environmental award** focused entirely on **transforming global food systems**.
- Established by **Sweden's Curt Bergfors Foundation**.
- Funds **early-stage, high-potential projects** capable of **radically reshaping sustainable food value chains**, rather than honouring **past legacy achievements**.
- The foundation also sends **independent investigative journalists and photographers** for **unannounced on-ground verification**.

About Andhra Pradesh Community Managed Natural Farming (APCNF):

- Launched by the **Government of Andhra Pradesh** in **2016**.
- Implemented by **Rythu Sadhikara Samstha (RySS)**, a non-profit company set up by the state's agriculture department.
- Aims to shift Andhra Pradesh's farmers from **chemical-input-based agriculture** to **natural farming**, based on principles like **Jeevamrutham, Beejamrutham, and Acchadana (mulching)**.
- **Key features: no chemical fertilisers or pesticides**, **use of cow-based bio-inputs**, **diverse cropping patterns**, **continuous soil cover**, and **community-led mobilisation through women's SHGs**.
- Acts as a **community-based, women-led model** rather than a top-down government scheme.
- Now covers **1.8 million farming families** across the state.
- Aims to eventually take **all six million farming households of Andhra Pradesh** to natural farming.
- Linked to broader frameworks such as **National Mission on Natural Farming (NMNF)** and

Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY).

About Natural Farming:

- A **chemical-free farming approach** that relies on **local resources**, **cow-based inputs**, and **traditional knowledge**.
- Different from **organic farming** in that it uses **even fewer external inputs** and is **rooted in local, community-led practice**.
- Promoted globally as a **climate-smart, biodiversity-friendly, low-cost** approach to agriculture.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the 2026 Food Planet Prize, consider the following statements:

1. The Food Planet Prize is the world's largest environmental award focused on transforming global food systems.
2. It is awarded by the Curt Bergfors Foundation of Sweden.
3. The 2026 award has been won by India's Andhra Pradesh Community Managed Natural Farming (APCNF) programme.
4. The grand prize amount is USD 1.5 million.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Q2. With reference to the Andhra Pradesh Community Managed Natural Farming (APCNF) programme, consider the following statements:

1. APCNF was launched by the Government of Andhra Pradesh in 2016.
2. It is implemented by Rythu Sadhikara Samstha (RySS) under the state's agriculture department.
3. The programme covers about 1.8 million farming families and around 3,40,000 women's SHGs.
4. APCNF promotes the heavy use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides to maximise yields.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; APCNF is a **chemical-free natural farming approach**, NOT one that promotes heavy use of chemicals.)

Q3. With reference to the architecture of the Food Planet Prize, consider the following statements:

1. The jury follows a 50-50 split between scientific researchers and grassroots field practitioners.
2. Nominations are mapped onto a 400-spot Master Grid covering geographies, formats, and food-cycle impact points.
3. Shortlisted candidates undergo anonymous scientific review by top academics and industry experts.
4. The prize is awarded only to projects with at least 50 years of historical legacy.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; the prize **specifically funds early-stage, high-potential projects**, NOT only legacy projects.)

Q4. Consider the following statements about natural farming and related policies in India:

1. Natural farming relies on local resources, cow-based inputs, and traditional knowledge, without chemical fertilisers or pesticides.
2. The Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY) is a Government of India scheme promoting organic and natural farming.

3. The National Mission on Natural Farming (NMNF) is a national-level scheme to encourage chemical-free farming.
4. Natural farming is identical to industrial high-input agriculture using genetically modified seeds.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **natural farming is the opposite of industrial high-input agriculture**, and does not depend on GM seeds.)

Answer Key

1. (d), All four statements are correct.
2. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because APCNF is a chemical-free natural farming model.
3. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the prize specifically funds early-stage, high-potential projects, not legacy ones.
4. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because natural farming is the opposite of industrial high-input agriculture.

Exam Relevance

NABARD Grade A	Very high importance, sustainable agriculture, SHGs, rural development

Facts To Remember

1. Cabinet Approves Rs. 9,585 Crore Vehicle Replacement Scheme for Delhi-NCR

The Union Cabinet approved a two-year Rs. 9,585 crore scheme to replace 2.07 lakh BS-IV and older trucks and buses in Delhi-NCR with BS-VI-compliant or electric vehicles. The initiative aims to reduce vehicular pollution, improve air quality, and modernize commercial transport fleets across Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh. Benefits include interest subvention, fuel vouchers, tax concessions, registration fee waivers, and manufacturer discounts on eligible vehicles.

2. Cabinet Approves Rs. 10,000 Crore ATF Price Stabilisation Fund

The Union Cabinet approved a Rs. 10,000 crore Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF) Price Stabilisation Fund to support Indian airlines affected by rising global fuel prices. The scheme will provide interest-free advances to Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) and ensure stable ATF pricing for airline operators. A recovery mechanism will return excess support funds to the Consolidated Fund of India when fuel prices decline.

3. Jayant Chaudhary Launches 'Navachar Mantra' for Grassroots Innovators

Union Minister Jayant Chaudhary launched 'Navachar Mantra', a national initiative aimed at identifying, mentoring, and scaling grassroots innovations and startups. Implemented by NIESBUD with IIT Delhi's FITT as knowledge partner, the programme offers mentorship, investor interactions, innovation showcases, and year-long support for selected innovators.

4. Centre Expands QR Tagging of FCI Foodgrain Bags

The Government of India expanded QR code tagging of Food Corporation of India (FCI) foodgrain bags to Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and Odisha. The initiative enables end-to-end tracking of foodgrain movement, enhances transparency, prevents bag recycling, and streamlines subsidy distribution through electronic Point-of-Sale (ePoS) systems.

5. T-Hub Launches Third ORBIT Space-Tech Accelerator Cohort

Hyderabad-based T-Hub launched the third cohort of its ORBIT Space-Tech Accelerator Programme and onboarded 13 startups working in propulsion systems, satellite intelligence, orbital services, geospatial technologies, and space energy systems. The accelerator is supported by Atal Innovation Mission and aims to strengthen India's growing space-tech ecosystem.

6. UNGA Elects Five New Non-Permanent Members to UNSC

The United Nations General Assembly elected Austria, Kyrgyzstan, Portugal, Trinidad and Tobago, and Zimbabwe as non-permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) for the 2027–2028 term. Kyrgyzstan secured its first-ever membership of the Security Council since joining the United Nations in 1992.

7. mOECD Raises India's FY27 GDP Growth Forecast to 6.3%

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) raised India's FY27 GDP growth forecast by 20 basis points to 6.3% in its latest Economic Outlook report. The report projects GDP growth of 7.6% in FY26 and 6.4% in FY28 while forecasting inflation at 4.8% in FY27.

8. Lionel Messi Wins Princess of Asturias Award for Sports 2026

Argentine football legend Lionel Messi became the first footballer to receive the prestigious Princess of Asturias Award for Sports. He was recognized for his sporting achievements, global influence, and humanitarian contributions supporting education and healthcare initiatives.

9. D.K. Shivakumar Sworn In as Karnataka's 25th Chief Minister

D. K. Shivakumar was sworn in as the 25th Chief Minister of Karnataka after succeeding Siddaramaiah. The oath of office was administered by Governor Thawar Chand Gehlot at Raj Bhavan, Bengaluru.

10. Mette Frederiksen Secures Third Consecutive Term as Denmark PM

Mette Frederiksen secured a third consecutive term as Prime Minister of Denmark after forming a new centre-left coalition government following the 2026 parliamentary elections.

11. Visa Appoints Shah Rukh Khan as Brand Ambassador

Shah Rukh Khan was appointed brand ambassador for Visa's new 'Infinitely More' campaign in India. The campaign focuses on experience-led lifestyles, digital payments, travel, wellness, dining, and entertainment benefits.

12. GQG Partners Sells Stake in GMR Airports

American investment firm GQG Partners sold a 1.85% stake in GMR Airports Limited for Rs. 1,906 crore through open market transactions. The stake was acquired by Fidelity International through its investment funds.

13. India Launches First Flex-Fuel Passenger Vehicle

Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri launched India's first flex-fuel passenger vehicle, the Maruti Suzuki Wagon R Flex-Fuel, capable of operating on ethanol-petrol blends ranging from E20 to E100. The launch supports India's ethanol-based mobility and cleaner transportation goals.

14. KS Bharat Retires from International Cricket

Kona Srikar Bharat announced retirement from international cricket after representing India in seven Test matches. He will now pursue opportunities in overseas T20 leagues while continuing domestic cricket

commitments.

15. Constitutional Expert Subhash C. Kashyap Passes Away

Renowned constitutional expert and former Lok Sabha Secretary-General Subhash C. Kashyap passed away at the age of 97. A Padma Bhushan awardee, he authored over 100 books on India's Constitution, parliamentary procedures, and political system.

16. Former CBFC Chairman Pahlaj Nihalani Passes Away

Veteran film producer and former CBFC Chairman Pahlaj Nihalani passed away at the age of 76. He was known for producing several successful Bollywood films and served as CBFC Chairperson from 2015 to 2017.

17. International Day for the Fight Against IUU Fishing 2026 – June 5

The United Nations observed the International Day for the Fight Against Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing on June 5. The day raises awareness about the environmental and economic impacts of illegal fishing and promotes sustainable fisheries management worldwide.

18. International Level Crossing Awareness Day 2026 – June 5

International Level Crossing Awareness Day (ILCAD) was observed on June 5 under the slogan "Alert Today, Safe Tomorrow". The observance promotes safety at railway crossings and encourages responsible behaviour among road and rail users.

19. Telangana and Germany's Thuringia Sign Cooperation Pact

The Government of Telangana signed a cooperation agreement with the German state of Thuringia to strengthen collaboration in skill development, innovation, industrial growth, workforce training, startups, and life sciences. The partnership also includes plans for a German Language Training Hub in Hyderabad to improve overseas employment opportunities.

FIVE TO REMEMBER · 5 JUNE 2026

1. **Step 1: Cheaper dollar loans for PSUs**. PSU companies borrowing in dollars get a **subsidised hedging cost** from the RBI till **30 September 2026**, making **dollar loans cheaper**. RBI Eases Foreign Borrowing Rules for PSUs, FCN…
2. Established in **1966**, headquartered in **Manila, Philippines**. ADB and Standard Chartered Sign Agreements to S…
3. Launched by the **Government of Andhra Pradesh** in **2016**. APCNF Wins the 2026 Food Planet Prize for Trans…
4. Civilization shaped over **2,000 years** by **Indian and Chinese cultural, religious, and architectural influences**. India Launches UPI Payments in Cambodia Through…
5. Veteran film producer and former CBFC Chairman Pahlaj Nihalani passed away at the age of 76. He was known for producing several successful Bollywood films and served as CBFC Chairperson from 2015 to 2017. Former CBFC Chairman Pahlaj Nihalani Passes Away

Now test yourself: c4scourses.in/daily-quiz/daily-quiz-5-june-2026/

DAY 5 OF 18

6 June 2026

Saturday · 20 items · 2 topics

General **1** · Banking and Finance **3** · Facts To Remember **16**

Context

The **Union Cabinet** has approved a **one-time budgetary support package** of up to **₹10,000 crore** to establish a **Price Stabilization Fund for Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF)**, in response to **unprecedented global fuel volatility** triggered by the **West Asia crisis**. International **ATF prices surged 2.5 times**, from **₹60.50 per litre in March 2026** to **₹142 per litre in May 2026**. The fund will offer **interest-free advances to Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs)**, shield **Scheduled Indian Airlines** from extreme fuel costs, and protect **passenger fares and air connectivity**.

Key Facts

Indicator	Detail
Fund name	**Price Stabilization Fund for Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF)**
Approving authority	**Union Cabinet**
Budgetary support	**Up to ₹10,000 crore** (one-time, interest-free)
Routing	**Demands for Grants of the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas**
Beneficiaries	**All willing Scheduled Indian Airlines** (domestic and international flight paths)
Trigger	**West Asia crisis** and global ATF price spike
MoU signatories	**Participating airlines, OMCs, Ministry of Civil Aviation, Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas**
Monitoring Committee composition	**Ministry of Civil Aviation, Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, and Department of Expenditure**

About the Aim of the Fund:

- To provide **price stability and structural predictability** for **fuel procurement** by **airlines**.
- To **shield domestic carriers and OMCs** from **severe financial losses** caused by **extreme global ATF price swings**.
- To **maintain India's air connectivity networks**, **stabilise passenger ticket fares**, and **protect the broader civil aviation ecosystem**.

Key Features:

- **Interest-Free Advance to OMCs**: Up to **₹10,000 crore** to **offset OMC losses** when the **international Import Parity Price (IPP)** exceeds the **fund's benchmark**.
- **Recovery and True-Up Mechanism**: When ATF prices **drop below the threshold**, the **differential** is **recovered from OMCs** and **returned to the Consolidated Fund of India** until the **advance is fully settled**.
- **Universal Flight Operations Coverage**: Available to **all willing Scheduled Indian carriers** for both **domestic and international flight paths**.
- **Fixed-Price Fuel Arrangement**: Eliminates **daily ATF price volatility** for airlines and gives **clear cost predictability**.
- **Exclusive OMC Sourcing Lock-In**: Through a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)**, airlines must **buy ATF exclusively from participating OMCs** for up to **3 years**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the recently approved Price Stabilization Fund for Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF), consider the following statements:

1. The Union Cabinet has approved a one-time budgetary support of up to ₹10,000 crore for the fund.
2. The fund will be routed through the Demands for Grants of the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas.
3. The fund offers interest-free advances to OMCs to offset losses when international ATF prices spike above a benchmark.
4. The fund will permanently subsidise ATF prices irrespective of global oil prices.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the fund operates on a **revolving, non-deficit model**, with **true-up recovery** when prices fall, and is **not a permanent subsidy**.)

Q2. With reference to the structure and operation of the fund, consider the following statements:

1. When global ATF rates drop below the threshold, the differential is recovered from OMCs and returned to the Consolidated Fund of India.
2. The fund is available to all willing Scheduled Indian carriers for both domestic and international flight paths.
3. Airlines participating in the scheme commit to sourcing ATF exclusively from participating OMCs for up to three years.
4. The fund is slated to remain active for 36 months, with annual reviews and a possible extension or early closure.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Q3. With reference to Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF) and India's policy backdrop, consider the following statements:

1. ATF, or jet fuel, typically accounts for 30 to 40 per cent of an Indian airline's operating costs.
2. ATF prices in India are influenced by global crude oil prices, refining margins, the rupee-dollar exchange rate, and state and central taxes.
3. The recent fund was triggered by an unprecedented rise in ATF prices from ₹60.50 per litre in March 2026 to ₹142 per litre in May 2026.
4. ATF prices in India are entirely insulated from global crude oil market movements.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **ATF prices are closely linked to global crude oil prices** and the **Import Parity Price (IPP) mechanism**.)

Q4. With reference to oversight and governance of the ATF Price Stabilization Fund, consider the following statements:

1. The Monitoring Committee includes the Ministry of Civil Aviation, the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, and the Department of Expenditure.
2. The fund is implemented through a formal Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed by participating airlines, OMCs, and the concerned ministries.
3. The Monitoring Committee will mandate strict independent audits to verify claims.
4. The Reserve Bank of India is the lead authority for verifying and disbursing claims under the fund.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **fund is overseen by the tri-ministerial Monitoring Committee**, NOT the RBI.)

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the fund is a revolving, non-deficit mechanism, not a permanent subsidy.
2. (d), All four statements are correct.
3. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because ATF prices in India are strongly linked to global crude oil markets.
4. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the fund is overseen by the tri-ministerial committee, not the RBI.

4. Jai Prakash Narayan Bird Sanctuary (Surha Tal), Ballia, Becomes India's 100th Ramsar Site on World Environment Day

Source: TOI

Context

The **Jai Prakash Narayan Bird Sanctuary**, also known as **Surha Tal**, located in **Ballia district, Uttar Pradesh**, has been **designated as India's 100th Ramsar Site** on **World Environment Day (5 June 2026)**. It is **Uttar Pradesh's 13th Ramsar Site**. **Surha Tal** is a **freshwater wetland** in the **middle stretch of the Ganga River basin**, recognised for its **ecological importance** and **role as a bird habitat**.

Key Facts

Indicator	Detail
New Ramsar Site	**Jai Prakash Narayan Bird Sanctuary (Surha Tal)**
Location	**Ballia district, Uttar Pradesh**
Type of wetland	**Freshwater wetland** in the **middle stretch of the Ganga River basin**
India's Ramsar Site count	**100** (Surha Tal is the 100th)
Uttar Pradesh's Ramsar Site count	**13** (Surha Tal is UP's 13th)
Date of designation	**5 June 2026, World Environment Day**
Underlying treaty	**Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, 1971**

About Surha Tal (Jai Prakash Narayan Bird Sanctuary):

- A **freshwater wetland** in **Ballia district**, eastern **Uttar Pradesh**.
- Lies in the **middle stretch of the Ganga River basin**.
- Named after **Jai Prakash Narayan (JP)**, the iconic Indian freedom fighter and social reformer.
- Known for being a **bird habitat**, especially for **migratory and resident wetland birds**.
- A **state-protected wildlife sanctuary** even before the Ramsar designation.

About the Ramsar Convention:

- The **Ramsar Convention on Wetlands** is an **international treaty** signed in **1971** in the city of **Ramsar, Iran**, and entered into force in **1975**.
- It is the **first modern global environmental treaty**.
- It provides a framework for the **conservation and wise use of wetlands** and their resources.
- **India became a party** to the Ramsar Convention on **1 February 1982**.
- The **Convention covers all wetland types**, including **lakes, rivers, marshes, peatlands, oases,**

estuaries, deltas, tidal flats, near-shore marine areas, mangroves, coral reefs, and human-made wetlands like reservoirs and rice paddies.

About India's Ramsar Sites:

- India now has **100 Ramsar Sites** with the designation of **Surha Tal**.
- The **first Ramsar Sites in India** were designated in **1981**: **Chilika Lake (Odisha)** and **Keoladeo National Park (Rajasthan)**.
- The **State with the most Ramsar Sites in India** is **Tamil Nadu**, followed by **Uttar Pradesh**, **Gujarat**, and **Punjab**.
- India also has a few of the world's **most important wetland ecosystems**, including **Sundarbans, Kolleru Lake, Wular Lake, Loktak Lake, Sambhar Lake, and Chilika Lake**.

About World Environment Day:

- Observed annually on **5 June** since **1973**, as established by the **United Nations General Assembly in 1972** following the **Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment**.
- The **2026 theme** focuses on **ecological restoration and biodiversity** (specifics may vary by host country).
- Coordinated by the **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)**, headquartered in **Nairobi, Kenya**.

Key Terms (Simple):

- **Wetland**: An area where **water covers the land** or is **present at or near the surface** for **most of the year**. Wetlands include **marshes, swamps, lakes, rivers, mangroves, and coastal areas**.
- **Ramsar Site**: A wetland designated under the **Ramsar Convention** as being of **international importance** for **biodiversity, water security, climate, or human livelihoods**.
- **Migratory Birds**: Birds that travel **long distances seasonally** between their **breeding and wintering grounds**, often using **wetlands as stopover sites**.
- **Bird Sanctuary**: A **protected area** under Indian wildlife law, primarily aimed at **protecting bird habitats and species**.
- **Ganga River Basin**: The **catchment area** of the **Ganga River**, covering large parts of **northern India and Bangladesh**, and supporting **rich biodiversity** along its **upper, middle, and lower stretches**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the recent Ramsar designation, consider the following statements:

1. Jai Prakash Narayan Bird Sanctuary (Surha Tal) has been designated as India's 100th Ramsar Site.
2. Surha Tal is located in Ballia district, Uttar Pradesh.
3. It is Uttar Pradesh's 13th Ramsar Site.
4. The designation was announced on World Environment Day (5 June 2026).

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Q2. With reference to the Ramsar Convention, consider the following statements:

1. The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands is an international treaty signed in 1971 in the city of Ramsar, Iran.
2. The Convention entered into force in 1975.
3. India became a party to the Ramsar Convention on 1 February 1982.
4. The Ramsar Convention is administered by the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **Ramsar Convention is an independent intergovernmental treaty** and is **NOT administered by the WTO**.)

Q3. Consider the following statements about wetlands and Ramsar Sites:

1. Ramsar Sites can include lakes, rivers, marshes, mangroves, and even human-made wetlands like reservoirs and rice paddies.
2. Chilika Lake in Odisha and Keoladeo National Park in Rajasthan were among India's first Ramsar Sites, designated in 1981.
3. Wetlands are important for biodiversity, water security, flood control, and climate regulation.
4. Wetlands have no significance for migratory birds and are excluded from major bird conservation strategies.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **wetlands are extremely important for migratory birds** and are key parts of **major bird conservation strategies** globally.)

Q4. With reference to World Environment Day, consider the following statements:

1. World Environment Day is observed annually on 5 June.
2. It was established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1972, following the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment.
3. The day has been observed globally since 1973.
4. World Environment Day is coordinated by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), headquartered in Nairobi, Kenya.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Answer Key

1. (d), All four statements are correct.
2. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the Ramsar Convention is not administered by the WTO.
3. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because wetlands are highly significant for migratory birds.
4. (d), All four statements are correct.

Banking and Finance

1. RBI MPC Holds Repo Rate at 5.25 %

Source: The Hindu

Context

The **Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)** of the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has **unanimously voted** to **hold the policy repo rate** at **5.25 per cent** under the **Liquidity Adjustment Facility (LAF)** and **continue with the neutral stance**. The decision was driven by a **deteriorating global environment**, with the **West Asia conflict, extended supply-chain disruptions, elevated energy prices**, and uncertainty over the **south-west monsoon and El Niño**. The MPC has **cut its real GDP growth projection** for **2026-27 to 6.6 per cent** (from **6.9 per cent**) and **raised the CPI inflation projection** to **5.1 per cent** (from **4.6 per cent**, that is,

50 bps higher).

Key Facts

- **Repo rate unchanged**: The **policy repo rate** stays at **5.25 per cent**, the **rate at which the RBI lends short-term money to banks**.
- **Other rates**: The **Standing Deposit Facility (SDF) rate** stays at **5.00 per cent**, and both the **Marginal Standing Facility (MSF) rate** and the **Bank Rate** stay at **5.50 per cent**.
- **Stance**: The MPC continues with a **neutral stance**, meaning it is **neither tightening nor easing**, but **watching the data**.
- **Vote**: The decision was **unanimous**.
- **GDP growth for FY27 cut to 6.6 per cent** from the earlier **6.9 per cent**, reflecting a **drag from global supply constraints and elevated energy prices**.
- **Quarter-wise GDP growth for FY27**: **Q1 at 6.6 per cent, Q2 at 6.3 per cent, Q3 at 6.5 per cent, Q4 at 6.8 per cent**.
- **CPI inflation for FY27 raised to 5.1 per cent**, which is **50 bps higher** than the earlier **4.6 per cent** projection.
- **Quarter-wise CPI for FY27**: **Q1 at 4.2 per cent, Q2 at 5.1 per cent, Q3 at 5.9 per cent, Q4 at 5.4 per cent**.
- **Core CPI** projected at **4.7 per cent** for FY27.
- **CPI to firm up to the upper tolerance level** in **Q3 of 2026-27**, with the **impact of the supply shock waning from Q4**.
- **Crude oil prices** (Indian basket) **averaged about USD 110 per barrel** during **April-May 2026**, much higher than assumed in the **April policy**.
- **Risk factors**: **West Asia conflict, supply-chain disruptions, sub-normal south-west monsoon forecast, El Niño, and second-round effects on wages and inflation expectations**.
- **Mitigating factors**: **Programmes for crop diversification, water harvesting and conservation, climate-resilient practices, and short-duration crops**.
- **MPC's reasoning to hold rates**: Although **risks of higher inflation have amplified**, it was felt **prudent to wait for greater clarity to emerge**. Decisions will remain **data-dependent**.

Key Terms (Simple)

- **Repo Rate**: The interest rate at which the **RBI lends short-term money to commercial banks** against government securities. The **main policy rate**.
- **Standing Deposit Facility (SDF)**: A facility for banks to **park surplus money with the RBI without collateral**, at a rate **slightly below the repo rate**.
- **Marginal Standing Facility (MSF)**: A facility for banks to **borrow overnight from the RBI** in **emergencies**, at a rate **slightly above the repo rate**.
- **Bank Rate**: A rate at which the **RBI lends to commercial banks** without collateral, usually aligned with the **MSF rate**.
- **Liquidity Adjustment Facility (LAF)**: The RBI's main toolkit to **manage short-term liquidity** in the banking system, including **repo, reverse repo, SDF, and MSF**.
- **Neutral Stance**: A monetary policy stance that **does not commit** to either tightening or easing, giving the MPC **flexibility** to respond as data evolves.
- **CPI Inflation**: The **rate of change in retail prices** of a representative basket of goods and services, as measured by **MoSPI's CPI (Combined)**.
- **Core CPI**: CPI inflation **excluding food and fuel**, considered a measure of **underlying inflation**.
- **Tolerance Band**: India's inflation target is **4 per cent with a band of plus or minus 2 percentage points**, so the **upper tolerance is 6 per cent**, and the **lower tolerance is 2 per cent**.

- **Pass-through**: How much of a **change in input prices** (like crude oil) **flows into retail prices** of goods and services.
- **Second-round Effects**: When **initial price rises** (like fuel or food) **feed into wages and inflation expectations**, making **inflation more persistent**.
- **El Niño**: A **periodic warming** of the **eastern Pacific Ocean**, often linked to **weaker monsoons** and **droughts** in India.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the RBI MPC's latest decisions, consider the following statements:

1. The MPC kept the policy repo rate unchanged at 5.25 per cent.
2. The standing deposit facility (SDF) rate stands at 5.00 per cent, and the MSF rate and bank rate stand at 5.50 per cent.
3. The MPC voted unanimously and continued with the neutral stance.
4. The MPC has reduced India's CPI inflation projection for 2026-27.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the MPC has **raised** the CPI projection for 2026-27 to **5.1 per cent**, which is **50 bps higher** than the earlier projection.)

Q2. Consider the following statements about the RBI's revised projections for 2026-27:

1. Real GDP growth for 2026-27 has been revised down to 6.6 per cent from 6.9 per cent.
2. CPI inflation for 2026-27 has been raised to 5.1 per cent.
3. The quarter-wise GDP growth projections are 6.6 per cent for Q1, 6.3 per cent for Q2, 6.5 per cent for Q3, and 6.8 per cent for Q4.
4. CPI inflation is projected to firm up to the upper tolerance level in Q3 of 2026-27.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Q3. With reference to the institutional framework of India's monetary policy, consider the following statements:

1. The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) is a six-member committee of the RBI under the inflation-targeting framework.
2. CPI inflation is the official target for monetary policy, with a tolerance band of 4 per cent plus or minus 2 percentage points.
3. The standing deposit facility (SDF) rate forms the lower bound of the LAF corridor, while the MSF rate forms the upper bound.
4. The bank rate is the rate at which commercial banks lend to retail customers and is not set by the RBI.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **bank rate is the rate at which the RBI lends to commercial banks** and is **set by the RBI**, not by banks themselves.)

Q4. Consider the following statements about the global and domestic backdrop influencing the MPC's decision:

1. The MPC noted that the global environment has deteriorated since the last policy meeting due to a lingering conflict and elevated energy prices.

2. The MPC flagged concerns about a sub-normal south-west monsoon forecast and El Niño risks.
3. The MPC emphasised that despite global shocks, CPI inflation has so far remained below the target due to limited pass-through.
4. The MPC has indicated that India's monetary policy will be conducted entirely independently of global supply-chain conditions.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; the MPC **explicitly discussed global supply chains and conflict spillovers** in its reasoning, which means monetary policy is **closely connected to global conditions**.)

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the MPC has raised, not reduced, the CPI projection for 2026-27.
2. (d), All four statements are correct.
3. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the bank rate is set by the RBI, not by commercial banks.
4. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the MPC's reasoning shows monetary policy is closely tied to global supply-chain conditions.

Exam Relevance

Banking (RBI Gr B, SBI PO, IBPS, NABARD)	Very high importance, MPC decisions, rates, inflation framework
RBI Grade B	Core area, Economic and Social Issues, Finance and Management

2. RBI to Release Updated List of Upper Layer NBFCs Soon

Context

The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** will **soon release** the **updated list of Upper Layer NBFCs (NBFC-UL)**, **Governor Sanjay Malhotra** said at the **post-policy press conference**. The **central bank has not released a list** of Upper Layer NBFCs for the **financial year ended March 2026**. Meanwhile, **Tata Sons**, the **holding company of the Tata Group**, has **sought to de-register** as an **Upper Layer NBFC**, which would **exempt it from the mandatory listing requirement** (deadline was **September 2025**). The RBI has said the **matter is under examination**, with the **process for finalising the revised list underway**.

About the Scale-Based Regulation (SBR) for NBFCs:

- The RBI introduced a new **Scale-Based Regulation (SBR) framework** for NBFCs, effective **1 October 2022**.
- Under this framework, NBFCs are classified into **four layers**, depending on **size, activity, and perceived systemic risk**:
  - **Base Layer (NBFC-BL)**: Mainly **non-deposit-taking NBFCs with assets below ₹1,000 crore**, and specified categories. They face the **lightest regulation**.
  - **Middle Layer (NBFC-ML)**: **Deposit-taking NBFCs, larger non-deposit-taking NBFCs (above ₹1,000 crore in assets), and specific categories** like **standalone primary dealers, infrastructure finance companies, and housing finance companies**. They face **tighter regulation**.
  - **Upper Layer (NBFC-UL)**: NBFCs identified by the **RBI as systemically significant**, based on **size, interconnectedness, complexity, and supervisory inputs**. They face **the strictest regulation**, close to **bank-like norms**, and are required to be **listed within 3 years**.
  - **Top Layer (NBFC-TL)**: A **reserved layer** that the RBI can populate if it finds **certain NBFCs** in the Upper Layer pose **extreme systemic risk**. Currently **empty**.

About the Upper Layer NBFCs and Listing Requirement:

- The RBI identifies **Upper Layer NBFCs** annually, based on **scoring methodology** that includes **size, leverage, interconnectedness, complexity, and supervisory factors**.
- Once identified, **Upper Layer NBFCs face additional regulatory requirements**:
  - **Higher capital adequacy norms**.
  - **Larger exposure limits and tighter governance norms**.
  - **Common Equity Tier 1 capital requirements** similar to banks.
  - **Mandatory listing** within **3 years** of identification (deadline for the current batch was **September 2025**).
- **Tata Sons** was identified as an **Upper Layer NBFC** in the **initial list** of **2022-23**, which would have required it to be **listed by September 2025**.
- Tata Sons has been seeking to **de-register** as an **Upper Layer NBFC**, which would allow it to **avoid the listing requirement**, but the **request remains under RBI examination**.

About NBFCs:

- **Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs)** are **financial institutions** that **lend money, invest in securities, and offer financial services**, but **cannot accept demand deposits** (current and savings accounts) like a bank.
- They are **regulated by the RBI** under the **Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934**.
- Different types of NBFCs include **Loan Companies, Investment Companies, Asset Finance Companies, Microfinance Institutions (MFIs), Infrastructure Finance Companies, and Housing Finance Companies**.
- NBFCs play a **critical role in financial inclusion**, especially for **MSMEs, consumers, vehicle finance, and underserved geographies**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the RBI's announcement on Upper Layer NBFCs, consider the following statements:

1. The RBI Governor said that the list of Upper Layer NBFCs will be released soon.
2. The RBI has not released a list of Upper Layer NBFCs for the financial year ended March 2026.
3. Tata Sons has sought to de-register as an Upper Layer NBFC, which would exempt it from the mandatory listing requirement.
4. The matter of Tata Sons' application is under examination by the RBI.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Q2. With reference to the Scale-Based Regulation (SBR) framework for NBFCs, consider the following statements:

1. The SBR framework became effective on 1 October 2022.
2. It classifies NBFCs into four layers: Base Layer, Middle Layer, Upper Layer, and Top Layer.
3. Upper Layer NBFCs face stricter regulation, including a mandatory listing requirement within three years.
4. The Top Layer is reserved for NBFCs posing extreme systemic risk and is currently empty.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Q3. With reference to Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs) in India, consider the following

statements:

1. NBFCs are regulated by the Reserve Bank of India under the RBI Act, 1934.
2. NBFCs can lend money, invest in securities, and offer financial services.
3. NBFCs cannot accept demand deposits like current and savings accounts.
4. NBFCs play a significant role in financial inclusion, especially for MSMEs and underserved geographies.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) 1, 2 and 3 only (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) **All four**

Q4. With reference to Tata Sons and Upper Layer NBFC classification, consider the following statements:

1. Tata Sons is the holding company of the Tata Group.
2. Tata Sons was identified as an Upper Layer NBFC in the initial list released by the RBI under the SBR framework.
3. The mandatory listing deadline for the current batch of Upper Layer NBFCs was September 2025.
4. The RBI has confirmed that it has formally accepted Tata Sons' application for de-registration.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; the RBI has said that Tata Sons' application is **under examination**, NOT that it has been **formally accepted**.)

Answer Key

1. (d), All four statements are correct.
2. (d), All four statements are correct.
3. (e), All four statements are correct.
4. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the RBI has only said the application is under examination, not that it has been accepted.

3. PFRDA Launches "StAR NPS" Platform for Digital Onboarding

Source: BS

Context

The **Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA)**, a **statutory body under the Ministry of Finance**, has launched the **"StAR NPS" platform** in **June 2026**, a **digital onboarding solution** developed by **BSE Technologies Private Limited (BTPL)** to **simplify subscriber registration** for the **National Pension System (NPS)**. PFRDA has also introduced a **Regulatory Sandbox Framework**, effective from **2 June 2026**, to allow **controlled testing of innovative pension-sector solutions** before they are rolled out more widely.

Key Facts

Indicator	Detail
Launching authority	**PFRDA** (Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority)
Ministry	**Ministry of Finance**
Platform name	**StAR NPS**
Developer	**Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) Technologies Private Limited (BTPL)**
Channel for onboarding	**Points of Presence (PoPs) and their network of pension agents**

Indicator	Detail
Eligibility (StAR NPS)	**Resident Indians aged 18 to 85 years**
Sandbox framework effective date	**2 June 2026**
Sandbox eligibility	**PFRDA-registered intermediaries** and **eligible non-registered entities** including **fintech firms**
Minimum net worth for non-registered applicants	**₹10 lakh**
Restriction on non-registered sandbox participants	Their innovations **must not handle subscriber contributions, funds, or any other data**

About the StAR NPS Platform:

- A **technology-enabled assisted onboarding platform** for **NPS subscribers**.
- Onboarding happens through **Points of Presence (PoPs)** and their **network of pension agents**.
- Aims to **streamline and simplify** the **subscriber registration process** for the **National Pension System**.
- Eligible to **Resident Indian individuals** aged **18 to 85 years** (under the current framework).

About the Regulatory Sandbox Framework:

- Allows **controlled testing of innovative pension-sector solutions** before **wider adoption**.
- Open to:
  - **PFRDA-registered intermediaries**.
  - **Eligible non-registered entities** including **fintech firms**.
- Non-registered applicants must have a **minimum net worth of ₹10 lakh**.
- Non-registered participants are only eligible if their **innovations do not handle subscriber contributions, funds, or any other data**.
- Enables **safe, time-bound experimentation** with **a limited user set**.

About PFRDA:

- **Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority**.
- A **statutory body** under the **Ministry of Finance, Government of India**.
- Established as a **regulator** through the **PFRDA Act, 2013**.
- Headquartered in **New Delhi**.
- **Regulates and supervises** the **National Pension System (NPS)** and the **Atal Pension Yojana (APY)**.

About the National Pension System (NPS):

- A **voluntary, defined-contribution retirement savings scheme**.
- Introduced for **central government employees** in **2004** (excluding armed forces) and made available to **all citizens** from **2009**.
- Regulated by **PFRDA**.
- Two types of accounts: **Tier-I** (mandatory retirement account, with withdrawal limits) and **Tier-II** (voluntary, more flexible).
- Subscribers get a **Permanent Retirement Account Number (PRAN)**.
- Investment options include **equity, government securities, corporate bonds, and alternative assets**.
- Offers **tax benefits** under Sections **80CCD(1), 80CCD(1B), and 80CCD(2)** of the Income Tax Act.

About Points of Presence (PoPs):

- **Banks, NBFCs, and other PFRDA-authorised entities** that act as the **first interface for NPS**

subscribers.

- They handle **subscriber registration, contributions, account servicing, and grievance redressal**.

About Regulatory Sandbox:

- A **regulator-supervised, controlled environment** that allows **firms to test new financial products and services** with **real users** but under **defined limits** (number of users, duration, exposure).
- Pioneered globally by **UK's Financial Conduct Authority (FCA)**.
- In India, **RBI, SEBI, IRDAI, and now PFRDA** have established **sectoral regulatory sandboxes**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the launch of the StAR NPS platform, consider the following statements:

1. The platform has been launched by the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA).
2. It has been developed by Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) Technologies Private Limited.
3. The platform provides technology-enabled assisted onboarding for NPS subscribers through Points of Presence (PoPs) and pension agents.
4. The platform is currently open to all foreign nationals working in India, regardless of age.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the platform is currently open to **Resident Indian individuals aged 18 to 85 years**, NOT all foreign nationals.)

Q2. With reference to the new Regulatory Sandbox Framework introduced by PFRDA, consider the following statements:

1. The Regulatory Sandbox Framework became effective on 2 June 2026.
2. PFRDA-registered intermediaries and eligible non-registered entities, including fintech firms, can apply to test new solutions.
3. Non-registered entities applying as independent applicants must have a minimum net worth of ₹10 lakh.
4. Non-registered sandbox participants are restricted from handling subscriber contributions, funds, or other data.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Q3. With reference to PFRDA and the National Pension System (NPS), consider the following statements:

1. PFRDA is a statutory body under the Ministry of Finance, established by the PFRDA Act, 2013.
2. The NPS is regulated by PFRDA and is open to all Indian citizens from 2009.
3. The NPS uses a Tier-I (mandatory) and Tier-II (voluntary) account structure, with each subscriber assigned a Permanent Retirement Account Number (PRAN).
4. The NPS provides tax benefits under Sections 80CCD(1), 80CCD(1B), and 80CCD(2) of the Income Tax Act.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Q4. With reference to the concept of a Regulatory Sandbox in India, consider the following statements:

1. A regulatory sandbox is a regulator-supervised, controlled environment to test innovative financial products and services.

2. The concept was pioneered globally by the United Kingdom's Financial Conduct Authority (FCA).
3. In India, regulatory sandboxes have been established by sector regulators including RBI, SEBI, IRDAI, and PFRDA.
4. A regulatory sandbox typically operates without any user limits, time limits, or exposure caps.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; a **regulatory sandbox is designed with defined limits** on **users, duration, and exposure**.)

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because StAR NPS is open to Resident Indians aged 18 to 85 years, not foreign nationals.
2. (d), All four statements are correct.
3. (d), All four statements are correct.
4. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because a regulatory sandbox operates with clear limits.

Facts To Remember

1. CCEA Approves Four National Highway Projects Worth Rs.24,249 Crore Across Four States

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA), chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved four major National Highway projects worth over Rs.24,249 crore across Odisha, Telangana, Bihar, and Madhya Pradesh. Covering more than 700 kilometres, the projects aim to improve regional connectivity, reduce travel time, ease congestion, and strengthen logistics infrastructure under the PM GatiShakti National Master Plan. The projects include a coastal highway in Odisha, highway upgrades in Madhya Pradesh and Bihar, and four-laning of key highway corridors in Telangana.

2. India Joins Anthropic's Project Glasswing for Advanced Cybersecurity Capabilities

India joined Anthropic's global cybersecurity initiative, Project Glasswing, gaining access to Claude Mythos AI, an advanced artificial intelligence platform designed to identify software vulnerabilities and strengthen cyber defences. The initiative aims to enhance cybersecurity resilience and protect critical infrastructure by enabling large-scale vulnerability detection, security auditing, and automated remediation across complex software systems.

3. India–UK Critical Minerals Global Supply Chain Observatory Launched

Union Minister G. Kishan Reddy and United Kingdom Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper jointly launched the India–UK Critical Minerals Global Supply Chain Observatory (GSCO) in New Delhi. The initiative seeks to strengthen cooperation in critical minerals, support clean energy transitions, and enhance supply chain resilience. The observatory is jointly led by TEXMiN at IIT (ISM) Dhanbad and the University of Cambridge to provide supply-chain intelligence and support evidence-based policymaking.

4. PFRDA Launches 'StAR NPS' Platform and Regulatory Sandbox Framework

The Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) launched the 'StAR NPS' platform to simplify digital onboarding of National Pension System (NPS) subscribers through Points of Presence and pension agents. Alongside, PFRDA introduced a Regulatory Sandbox Framework to allow controlled testing of innovative pension-sector solutions by fintech firms and registered intermediaries before large-scale implementation.

5. Dr. Jitendra Singh Announces ANRF-Backed Research and Innovation Portal

Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh announced a new digital portal supported by the Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF) to strengthen India's research and innovation ecosystem. The portal will provide training and support in research paper writing, scientific publishing, patent filing, intellectual property protection, and innovation management for researchers, students, startups, and innovators across the country.

6. 17 Projects Selected for National Awards for e-Governance 2026

The Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG) announced the winners of the 29th National Awards for e-Governance (NAeG) 2026, selecting 17 projects across seven categories. The awards recognize excellence in digital governance, innovation, and technology-driven public service delivery by central ministries, states, union territories, districts, organizations, and Gram Panchayats.

7. Major Prabhat Mishra Wins Two Prestigious Awards at US Army CGSOC

Major Prabhat Mishra of the Indian Army received the Birrer-Brookes Award for Outstanding Master of Military Arts and Science Thesis and the General Douglas MacArthur Military Leadership Writing Award at the United States Army Command and General Staff College (CGSOC). He became the first Indian officer to win both honours simultaneously and secured fourth rank among 1,185 officers in the programme.

8. Neelkanth Mishra Appointed Executive Director of the World Bank

The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet approved the appointment of economist Neelkanth Mishra as Executive Director of the World Bank for a three-year term. Currently serving as Chief Economist at Axis Bank, he will succeed Parameswaran Iyer and represent India at the World Bank.

9. India Launches First Flex-Fuel Passenger Vehicle

Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri launched India's first passenger Flex-Fuel Vehicle (FFV), the Maruti Suzuki Wagon R, capable of operating on ethanol-petrol blends ranging from E20 to E100. The launch marks a significant step towards ethanol-based mobility and cleaner transportation. Simultaneously, Hero MotoCorp introduced its first flex-fuel motorcycles to support India's biofuel adoption goals.

10. KS Bharat Announces Retirement from International Cricket

Indian wicketkeeper-batter Kona Srikar Bharat, popularly known as KS Bharat, announced his retirement from international cricket. He represented India in seven Test matches between 2023 and 2024 and was part of the 2023 World Test Championship Final squad. He will now pursue opportunities in overseas T20 leagues.

11. Former Lok Sabha Secretary-General Subhash C. Kashyap Passes Away

Renowned constitutional expert, author, and former Lok Sabha Secretary-General Subhash C. Kashyap passed away at the age of 97. A Padma Bhushan awardee, he authored over 100 books on the Indian Constitution, parliamentary procedures, and political systems, making significant contributions to constitutional studies and parliamentary affairs.

12. Former CBFC Chairman Pahlaj Nihalani Passes Away

Veteran film producer and former CBFC Chairman Pahlaj Nihalani passed away at the age of 76. He was known for producing several successful Hindi films and served as Chairperson of the Central Board of Film Certification from 2015 to 2017.

13. International Day for the Fight Against Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing 2026 Observed on June 5

The United Nations observed the International Day for the Fight Against Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing on 5 June 2026. The day aims to raise awareness about the harmful impact of illegal fishing on marine ecosystems, fisheries sustainability, and global food security, while promoting implementation of the Port State Measures Agreement.

14. International Level Crossing Awareness Day 2026 Observed on June 5

International Level Crossing Awareness Day (ILCAD) was observed globally on 5 June 2026 with the slogan “Alert Today, Safe Tomorrow”. The observance promotes safe behaviour at railway level crossings and aims to reduce accidents involving road and rail transport intersections.

15. Tamil Nadu Signs Rs.18,600 Crore Investment Pact with Larsen & Toubro

The Government of Tamil Nadu signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Larsen & Toubro for investments worth Rs.18,600 crore across three major projects. The projects include expansion of a data centre in Kancheepuram, establishment of an electronics manufacturing facility in Coimbatore, and expansion of the Kattupalli shipyard in Tiruvallur district, generating thousands of employment opportunities and strengthening the state's industrial ecosystem.

16. Air Marshal Ashutosh Dixit to be next Vice-Chief of Air Staff

Air Marshal Ashutosh Dixit, a distinguished fighter pilot and test pilot, has been appointed the next Vice-Chief of the Air Staff (VCAS) and will assume office on July 1. He succeeds Air Marshal Nagesh Kapoor.

FIVE TO REMEMBER · 6 JUNE 2026

1. Established as a **regulator** through the **PFRDA Act, 2013**. PFRDA Launches "StAR NPS" Platform for Digital ...
2. The **first Ramsar Sites in India** were designated in **1981**: **Chilika Lake (Odisha)** and **Keoladeo National Park (Rajasthan)**. Jai Prakash Narayan Bird Sanctuary (Surha Tal),...
3. **Other rates**: The **Standing Deposit Facility (SDF) rate** stays at **5.00 per cent**, and both the **Marginal Standing Facility (MSF) rate** and the **Bank Rate** stay at **5.50 per cent**. RBI MPC Holds Repo Rate at 5.25 %
4. **Mandatory listing** within **3 years** of identification (deadline for the current batch was **September 2025**). RBI to Release Updated List of Upper Layer NBFC...
5. Air Marshal Ashutosh Dixit, a distinguished fighter pilot and test pilot, has been appointed the next Vice-Chief of the Air Staff (VCAS) and will assume office on July 1. He succeeds Air Marshal Nagesh Kapoor. Air Marshal Ashutosh Dixit to be next Vice-Chie...

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DAY 6 OF 18

7 & 8 June 2026

19 items · 2 topics

General **1** · Banking and Finance **3** · Facts To Remember **15**

Context

The **Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve** in **Assam** has recorded **30 species of raptors** and **6 species of storks** in a **rapid survey** conducted between **the last week of February and 2 March 2026**, by a **10-member team** in collaboration with researchers from **Gauhati University**. The findings were **released on World Environment Day (5 June 2026)**. The survey shows Kaziranga's **strong role as a refuge** for **birds of prey and wetland birds**, including the **Pallas's fish eagle** and the **greater adjutant stork**.

What is the Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve?

- Located in **Assam**, in the **floodplains of the Brahmaputra River**.
- Spread across the districts of **Golaghat, Nagaon, Sonitpur, Biswanath, and Karbi Anglong**.
- **Declared a National Park in 1974**.
- **Designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1985**.
- **Notified as a Tiger Reserve in 2006**.
- It is home to about **two-thirds of the world's population of the One-Horned Rhinoceros (Rhinoceros unicornis)**.
- It is also home to **wild elephants, tigers, Asiatic water buffalo, hog deer, swamp deer, Gangetic dolphins, and pythons**.
- Its **wetlands, grasslands, and floodplains** make it a **prime habitat for raptors, storks, and migratory birds**.

What is a Raptor and Why are They Important?

- A **raptor (bird of prey)** is a bird that **hunts and feeds on other animals**, using **sharp talons and beaks** and **powerful flight**.
- Includes **eagles, hawks, falcons, kites, vultures, harriers, buzzards, and owls**.
- Raptors are **top predators** and **indicators of ecosystem health**.
- A **decline in raptors**, especially **vultures**, usually points to **habitat loss, poisoning, electrocution, or contamination of the food chain**.

What is a Stork and Why are They Important?

- Storks are **large, long-legged, long-necked wading birds** that live in **wetlands and grasslands**.
- They feed on **fish, frogs, crabs, snakes, insects, and small mammals**.
- They are **bio-indicators of wetland health**.
- The **Greater Adjutant Stork** (or **Hargila**) is **listed as Endangered** by the **IUCN** and is **largely concentrated in Assam**, with **major colonies in Boragaon and Dadara** near Guwahati.

What is the Significance of Kaziranga for Birds of Prey?

- Kaziranga's **wetlands, grasslands, and Himalayan-foothill forests** offer **diverse habitats** for raptors.
- It harbours **about 50 of India's 112 raptor species** in its broader landscape.
- It is the **last global stronghold** of the **Pallas's Fish Eagle**, with **10 active nests** recorded in 2020.
- The presence of **large vulture populations**, like the **Himalayan Griffon**, signals a **healthy ecosystem** and **adequate carrion availability**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the recent bird survey at Kaziranga National Park, consider the following statements:

1. The survey recorded 30 species of raptors and 6 species of storks.
2. A total of 217 individual raptors and 266 individual storks were recorded.
3. The survey was conducted by a 10-member team in collaboration with Gauhati University researchers.
4. The findings were released on World Environment Day.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Q2. Consider the following statements about birds in Kaziranga:

1. The Asian Openbill was the most abundant stork in the survey.
2. The Greater Adjutant Stork was the rarest stork, with only 3 individuals recorded.
3. The Himalayan Griffon Vulture was the most common raptor, with 69 sightings.
4. The Booted Eagle and the White-tailed Eagle were among the rarest raptors with one sighting each.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Q3. With reference to Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve, consider the following statements:

1. Kaziranga is located in the floodplains of the Brahmaputra River in Assam.
2. It was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1985.
3. Kaziranga harbours about two-thirds of the world's population of the One-Horned Rhinoceros.
4. Kaziranga is located in the Western Ghats region of India.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **Kaziranga is in Assam**, in the **Brahmaputra floodplains**, NOT the Western Ghats.)

Q4. With reference to raptors and storks in India, consider the following statements:

1. India is home to 112 species of raptors, including both diurnal and nocturnal birds of prey.
2. India houses 8 of the 20 stork species found in tropical and subtropical regions worldwide.
3. All 8 Indian stork species are found in Assam.
4. The Greater Adjutant Stork has been removed from the IUCN list of threatened species.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **Greater Adjutant Stork remains on the IUCN list**, classified as **Endangered**.)

Answer Key

1. (d), All four statements are correct.
2. (d), All four statements are correct.
3. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because Kaziranga is in Assam, not the Western Ghats.
4. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the Greater Adjutant Stork remains classified as Endangered by the IUCN.

5. Panchayat Advancement Index (PAI) Wins Gold at National Awards for e-Governance 2026

Source: PIB

Context

The **Panchayat Advancement Index (PAI)**, a flagship **data-driven evaluation platform** of the **Ministry of Panchayati Raj**, has been selected for the **Gold Award** at the **National Awards for e-Governance 2026**. The award was given under **Category VII, "Digital Transformation through the Use of Data Analytics in Digital Platforms"**. The **PAI** is **India's first comprehensive, analytics-driven framework** to **assess, score, and rank the performance of Gram Panchayats**, aligned with the **nine themes** of the **Localisation of Sustainable Development Goals (LSDGs)**.

The Award

- **Award**: **Gold Award at the National Awards for e-Governance 2026**.
- **Awardee**: **Panchayat Advancement Index (PAI)**.
- **Implementing Ministry**: **Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India**.
- **Award Category**: **Category VII, Digital Transformation through the Use of Data Analytics in Digital Platforms**.
- **Awards organised by**: **Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG)**, in coordination with the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)**.
- **Theme of 2026 awards**: **"Viksit Bharat 2047: AI-Enabled, Data-Driven and Secure Digital Governance"**.
- **Gold Award incentive**: **trophy, citation, and ₹10 lakh cash incentive** for **further technological scaling and R&D**.

The 9 Themes of LSDGs (Used by PAI)

- **Poverty-free and enhanced livelihood villages**.
- **Healthy villages**.
- **Child-friendly villages**.
- **Water-sufficient villages**.
- **Clean and green villages**.
- **Self-sufficient infrastructure villages**.
- **Socially secured villages**.
- **Villages with good governance**.
- **Women-friendly (engendered) development villages**.

What is the Panchayat Advancement Index (PAI)?

- A **data-driven evaluation framework** that **assesses, scores, and ranks Gram Panchayats** across India.
- **PAI 2.0** evaluates over **6 lakh Gram Panchayats**.
- Built around the **9 themes of LSDGs**.
- It tracks **development metrics** on a **unified digital dashboard**.
- Designed to **drive competitive federalism at the grassroots level**.
- Aims to **eliminate subjective assessments**, **identify development gaps**, and **help states target funds more efficiently**.

What is the Localisation of Sustainable Development Goals (LSDGs)?

- A **framework launched by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj** to **adapt the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** to **rural India** through **Gram Panchayats**.
- The **17 SDGs** are mapped into **9 thematic clusters** for **village-level action**.

- The **PAI tracks performance** against **these 9 themes**.
- LSDGs operationalise the broader **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**.

What is Competitive Federalism (and Cooperative Federalism)?

- **Cooperative federalism**: The **Centre and States** work **together** toward **shared national goals**.
- **Competitive federalism**: **States** (and now Panchayats) **compete with each other** on **performance metrics**, encouraging **better governance** through **benchmarking**.
- Indian examples include the **NITI Aayog rankings** on **education (SEQI), health (Health Index), water (CWMI), SDGs (SDG India Index)**, and the **Aspirational Districts Programme**.
- The **PAI extends competitive federalism to the Panchayat level**, the **lowest tier of governance**.

What are the National Awards for e-Governance?

- India's **premier awards** for **digital governance excellence**.
- **Given since 2003**.
- Organised by **DARPG and MeitY**.
- Recognise **innovative digital initiatives** by **Central ministries, State governments, UTs, districts, and PSUs**.
- Aim to **build a repository** of **successful digital blueprints** that can be **replicated across regions**.

Key Categories of the Awards (Examples)

- Excellence in **Government Process Re-engineering**.
- Excellence in providing **citizen-centric delivery**.
- **Use of AI and emerging technologies**.
- **Use of Open Data and Data Analytics** in digital platforms (this is where PAI won).
- **Cybersecurity and digital trust**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the Panchayat Advancement Index (PAI), consider the following statements:

1. The PAI is a flagship initiative of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj.
2. PAI 2.0 evaluates more than 6 lakh Gram Panchayats across India.
3. It uses over 150 indicators and 230 distinct data points.
4. The PAI ranks Gram Panchayats based on the 17 Sustainable Development Goals directly, without any local thematic mapping.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the PAI uses the **9 themes of the Localisation of Sustainable Development Goals (LSDGs)**, NOT the 17 SDGs directly.)

Q2. With reference to the 9 themes of LSDGs used in the PAI, consider the following statements:

1. Poverty-free and enhanced livelihood villages is one of the themes.
2. Child-friendly villages and Women-friendly villages are also among the themes.
3. Water-sufficient villages, Clean and green villages, and Self-sufficient infrastructure villages are part of the framework.
4. Healthy villages and Socially secured villages are not part of the framework.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **Healthy villages and Socially secured villages** are part of the 9 themes.)

Q3. With reference to the National Awards for e-Governance, consider the following statements:

1. The awards are presented annually by DARPG in coordination with MeitY.
2. They have been given since 2003.
3. The PAI won the Gold Award under Category VII, "Digital Transformation through the Use of Data Analytics in Digital Platforms".
4. The 2026 theme of the awards is "Viksit Bharat 2047: AI-Enabled, Data-Driven and Secure Digital Governance".

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Q4. With reference to Panchayati Raj and federal governance in India, consider the following statements:

1. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment of 1992 gave constitutional status to Panchayati Raj Institutions.
2. The Panchayati Raj system in India is generally a three-tier structure of Gram Panchayat, Panchayat Samiti, and Zilla Parishad.
3. Competitive federalism encourages states and local bodies to compete with each other on performance benchmarks.
4. The Localisation of SDGs framework operates only at the State level and is not relevant to Panchayats.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **LSDG framework is specifically designed to be relevant to Panchayats** and **villages**.)

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the PAI uses 9 LSDG themes, not the 17 SDGs directly.
2. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because Healthy villages and Socially secured villages are part of the framework.
3. (d), All four statements are correct.
4. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because LSDGs are specifically designed for the Panchayat level.

Exam Relevance

Exam	Relevance
UPSC Prelims	GS Paper II on Panchayati Raj, Governance, Government Schemes (PAI, LSDGs, e-Governance Awards)
UPSC Mains	GS Paper II on Governance, Panchayati Raj, Welfare, Federalism; GS Paper III on Sustainable Development
BPSC and State PCS	Polity, Panchayati Raj, Governance, Current Affairs
Banking and NABARD	General Awareness on rural development
NABARD Grade A	Very high importance, rural development, Panchayati Raj, SDGs

Banking and Finance

1. The RBI's Urban Consumer Confidence Survey (UCCS) and Rural Consumer Confidence Survey (RCCS)

Source: TNIE

Context

The **RBI's May 2026 surveys** show a **broad-based weakening in consumer sentiment** across **both urban and rural India**, with households turning more cautious about **economic conditions, employment, and discretionary spending**. The **Urban Consumer Confidence Survey (UCCS)** and the **Rural Consumer Confidence Survey (RCCS)** both fell in May, while the **Inflation Expectations Survey of Households (IESH)** showed **rising price perceptions and expectations**. Despite **easing headline inflation** and **supportive monetary policy**, households across both segments report **strong price pressures**, **weaker spending intent**, and **growing caution** about the future.

Urban Consumer Confidence Survey (UCCS), May 2026

- **Current Situation Index (CSI)**: fell to **90.7** (vs **95.7 in March**), **third consecutive decline**.
- **Future Expectations Index (FEI)**: slipped to **118.7** (vs **120.2**), **lowest since September 2023**.
- CSI **below 100** = **pessimism**; FEI **above 100** = households still expect **some improvement** ahead, but **less than before**.

Rural Consumer Confidence Survey (RCCS), May 2026

- **Rural CSI**: down to **95.2** (vs **98.0 in March**).
- **Rural FEI**: down sharply to **119.3** (vs **125.1**), reflecting **weaker expectations** across most parameters.
- **Future sentiment remains optimistic** but **less so than before**, pointing to **growing caution**.

Inflation Expectations Survey of Households (IESH), May 2026

- **Urban**:
  - **Median inflation perception**: up to **7.8 per cent** (vs **7.2 per cent**).
  - **Three-month ahead expectations**: **9.3 per cent** (up **80 bps**).
  - **One-year ahead expectations**: **9.3 per cent** (up **50 bps**).
- **Rural**:
  - **Median inflation perception**: up to **5.9 per cent** (vs **5.6 per cent**).
  - **One-year ahead expectations**: up to **7.2 per cent** (vs **6.8 per cent**).
- The **RBI noted** that both rural and urban inflation measures **increased sequentially**.

Sentiment on Prices, Economy, Employment, and Spending

- **Urban**: Households **more pessimistic** on **current prices**; **assessment of current economic situation fell sharply**.
- **Rural**: **Net response on current prices** stayed **deeply negative at -90.0**.
- **Rural households** moved into **pessimistic territory** on the **current economic situation**.
- **Spending intentions softened in both segments**, especially on **discretionary (non-essential) expenditure**.
- **Rural households** were **especially cautious** on **non-essential spending**, where **future spending sentiment fell significantly**.

What is the Urban Consumer Confidence Survey (UCCS)?

- A **bi-monthly RBI survey** of **urban households** across major Indian cities.
- Captures **perceptions and expectations** on the **economy, employment, prices, income, and**

spending.

- Generates two key indices:
  - **Current Situation Index (CSI)**: How households see things **today vs a year ago**.
  - **Future Expectations Index (FEI)**: How households expect things **a year from now**.
- An index **above 100** indicates **optimism**; **below 100** indicates **pessimism**.

What is the Rural Consumer Confidence Survey (RCCS)?

- A **bi-monthly RBI survey** of **rural households**.
- Conducted to **measure sentiment in rural India**, which makes up about **two-thirds of India's population**.
- Tracks the **same parameters** as the UCCS (general economic conditions, employment, prices, income, spending), but among **rural respondents**.
- Helps the RBI **understand the divergence** between **urban and rural India**.

What is the Inflation Expectations Survey of Households (IESH)?

- A **bi-monthly RBI survey** that captures **households' perceptions of current inflation** and **their expectations of inflation** in the **next 3 months and 12 months**.
- It includes both **urban and rural households**.
- Important because **inflation expectations** feed into **wage demands, consumption decisions, and pricing behaviour**, and therefore **future actual inflation**.
- The **RBI uses these expectations** to **guide monetary policy**.

Why is There an Urban-Rural Divergence?

- **Urban households** are more exposed to **fuel prices, services inflation, housing costs, and global price shocks**.
- **Rural households** depend more on **food prices** and **agricultural incomes**, which can shift with the **monsoon, MSP, and rural employment programmes**.
- **Urban inflation perceptions (7.8 per cent)** are higher than **rural (5.9 per cent)**, partly because **urban basket has more services** and **non-food items**.

What is the Net Response in the Survey?

- A **statistical measure** showing the **balance of opinions**.
- Calculated as: **(percentage of respondents reporting "increase" or "improvement") minus (percentage reporting "decrease" or "deterioration")**.
- A **positive number** means **net optimism**; a **negative number** means **net pessimism**.
- A figure like **-90 on current prices** suggests **most households** report **prices have risen**, NOT fallen.

Key Terms

- **Consumer Confidence Survey**: A survey that measures **households' perceptions and expectations** about the **economy, jobs, prices, income, and spending**.
- **Current Situation Index (CSI)**: How households see their **current situation** compared to a **year ago**.
- **Future Expectations Index (FEI)**: How households **expect the situation** to be **one year ahead**.
- **Inflation Expectations Survey of Households (IESH)**: A bi-monthly RBI survey that captures **households' perceptions** of current inflation and **expectations** for the next **3 months and 1 year**.
- **Median Inflation Perception**: The **middle value** of inflation perceptions across **all surveyed households**, less affected by extreme values.
- **Anchored Inflation Expectations**: A situation where **expectations** of future inflation remain **close to the central bank's target**, regardless of **short-term fluctuations**.

- **Headline CPI Inflation**: The **overall consumer price inflation** rate, including all categories like **food, fuel, housing**, and **services**.
- **Net Response**: The **balance** between **positive and negative responses** in a survey, used as a **summary indicator**.
- **Discretionary Spending**: Spending on **non-essentials** like **leisure, electronics, dining out, travel**.
- **Essential Spending**: Spending on **food, fuel, housing, healthcare, transport-to-work**, that **households cannot easily cut**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the RBI's May 2026 Urban Consumer Confidence Survey, consider the following statements:

1. The Current Situation Index (CSI) fell to 90.7 from 95.7 in March, the third consecutive decline.
2. The Future Expectations Index (FEI) slipped to 118.7, the lowest level since September 2023.
3. An index value above 100 indicates optimism, while below 100 indicates pessimism.
4. The May 2026 UCCS reading showed sharp optimism on the current economic situation.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the survey showed **pessimism**, NOT sharp optimism, on the current economic situation.)

Q2. With reference to the RBI's May 2026 Rural Consumer Confidence Survey, consider the following statements:

1. The rural CSI declined to 95.2 from 98.0 in March.
2. The rural FEI fell sharply to 119.3 from 125.1.
3. Rural households were especially cautious on non-essential spending.
4. Rural households reported a net response of -90.0 on current price levels, suggesting most felt prices had risen.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Q3. With reference to the RBI's Inflation Expectations Survey of Households (May 2026), consider the following statements:

1. Urban households raised their median inflation perception to 7.8 per cent in May from 7.2 per cent in March.
2. Urban one-year-ahead inflation expectations rose to 9.3 per cent, up 50 basis points.
3. Rural households' one-year-ahead inflation expectations rose to 7.2 per cent from 6.8 per cent.
4. Inflation perceptions and expectations fell sharply in both urban and rural households in May 2026.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **inflation perceptions and expectations rose**, NOT fell, in both segments.)

Q4. With reference to the role of inflation expectations in monetary policy, consider the following statements:

1. If households expect higher inflation, they may spend now rather than later, pushing up demand and inflation.
2. Firms may pass on higher input costs faster if they believe inflation is here to stay.

3. Anchored inflation expectations help keep actual inflation closer to the central bank's target.
4. Inflation expectations of households have no influence on monetary policy decisions.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **inflation expectations are an important input** into **monetary policy decisions**.)

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the survey showed pessimism, not optimism.
2. (d), All four statements are correct.
3. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because inflation perceptions and expectations rose in both segments.
4. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because inflation expectations influence monetary policy decisions.

Exam Relevance

Exam	Relevance
UPSC Prelims	GS Paper III on Indian Economy (RBI surveys, Consumer sentiment, Inflation expectations)
UPSC Mains	GS Paper III on Indian Economy, Growth, Inflation, Monetary policy
BPSC and State PCS	Economy, Banking, Current Affairs
Banking (RBI Gr B, SBI PO, IBPS, NABARD)	Very high importance, RBI surveys, inflation expectations, sentiment
RBI Grade B	Core area, Economic and Social Issues, Finance and Management
SEBI Grade A and IRDAI Grade A	Macroeconomic awareness, household sentiment

2. Foreign Currency Non-Resident (Bank)

Source: The Economic Times

Context

The **Central Government** will nudge **commercial banks** to **step up deposit mobilisation** through the **Foreign Currency Non-Resident (Bank) or FCNR(B) route**, after the **Reserve Bank of India** announced it would **bear the full hedging cost** on **fresh 3- to 5-year FCNR(B) deposits till 30 September 2026**. **Industry estimates** suggest banks could raise up to **USD 40 billion** through this route, while **PNB's Managing Director Ashok Chandra** sees overall **inflows of USD 50 to 60 billion** along with the **concessional FX swap facility for PSUs**. Banks are expected to reach out to **NRI/OCI customers through both local and overseas branches in mission mode**.

The Plan

- **Centre to nudge banks** to **aggressively mobilise FCNR(B) deposits**.
- **Outreach** will happen through **local and overseas branches** of Indian banks.
- **Industry estimate**: Banks may raise up to **USD 40 billion** through the **FCNR(B) route**.

What is an FCNR(B) Account?

- **Full form**: **Foreign Currency Non-Resident (Bank)** account.
- It is a **term deposit (fixed deposit)** held in **India**.
- The **deposit is maintained in foreign currency**, not in Indian rupees.

- It can be opened only by **Non-Resident Indians (NRIs)** and **Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs)** or **Overseas Citizens of India (OCIs)**.
- It is a **bank-level liability**, not a sovereign borrowing.

Currencies Allowed

- **USD (US Dollar)**, **GBP (British Pound)**, **EUR (Euro)**, **JPY (Japanese Yen)**, **AUD (Australian Dollar)**, **CAD (Canadian Dollar)**, and a few others as permitted by the RBI.
- The depositor chooses **one of the allowed currencies**.

Maturity Range

- **Minimum**: **1 year**.
- **Maximum**: **5 years**.
- The **RBI's current swap window** focuses on **3- to 5-year FCNR(B) deposits**.

Tax Treatment

- **Interest earned** on an FCNR(B) account is **tax-free in India** for the **NRI/OCI depositor**.
- This is one of its biggest **attractions for NRIs**.

Why is the RBI Bearing the Hedging Cost?

- Banks raising **dollar deposits in India** have to **hedge the currency risk** because they will pay back in dollars in **3 to 5 years**, but **use the funds in rupees** in the meantime.
- The **hedging cost** (about 3 per cent) usually **eats into the bank's spread**.
- By **absorbing this cost**, the **RBI effectively subsidises the bank**, allowing it to **offer attractive rates to NRIs** while still being **profitable**.
- This is a **rerun of the 2013 strategy**, when **about USD 30 billion** was raised through a **similar swap window** during the **taper tantrum**.

Why Is This So Important Right Now?

- The **rupee has been under pressure**, with depreciation linked to **FPI outflows**, **rising oil prices**, and the **West Asia conflict**.
- **India's FCNR(B) mobilisation collapsed** in FY26, with banks raising **only about USD 946 million** versus **USD 7 billion in FY25**.
- A **fresh inflow surge** can **stabilise the rupee**, **shore up reserves**, and **ease pressure on the banking system**.
- It is also a **non-debt-creating capital flow** that **does not raise external sovereign debt**.

How Does an FCNR(B) Inflow Help the Rupee?

- When **NRIs deposit dollars** in **FCNR(B) accounts**, **dollars flow into India**, **boosting forex reserves**.
- This **increases dollar supply**, which **tends to strengthen the rupee** against the **dollar**.
- It also **gives the RBI more ammunition** to **intervene in the forex market** if needed.

Key Terms

- **FCNR(B) (Foreign Currency Non-Resident Bank) Account**: A **term deposit** in India held by **NRIs and OCIs** in **foreign currencies**, with **no rupee depreciation risk** to the depositor.
- **NRI (Non-Resident Indian)**: An **Indian citizen residing abroad** for tax or stay-related reasons.
- **OCI (Overseas Citizen of India)**: A **foreign citizen of Indian origin** granted **lifelong visa and certain rights** in India (excluding voting).
- **CRR (Cash Reserve Ratio)**: The **share of deposits** banks must keep with the **RBI in cash**, currently **3.0 per cent**.

- **SLR (Statutory Liquidity Ratio)**: The **share of deposits** banks must invest in **government securities and approved instruments**, currently **18.0 per cent**.
- **Hedging Cost**: The cost of **protecting against currency-rate movements**, typically through **swaps and forwards**.
- **Forex Swap**: A contract to **exchange currencies now** and **reverse the deal later** at a **pre-agreed rate**, used by banks to **manage currency risk**.
- **Net Interest Margin (NIM)**: The **difference between a bank's interest income and interest expense**, as a percentage of **interest-earning assets**.
- **Forex Reserves**: A country's **stock of foreign currency, gold, IMF reserve position, and SDRs**, held by the **central bank**, used to **manage exchange rates and BoP needs**.
- **External Commercial Borrowings (ECBs)**: **Foreign currency loans** raised by Indian entities (including PSUs) from **foreign lenders**, subject to **RBI rules**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the latest push for FCNR(B) deposit mobilisation, consider the following statements:

1. The Centre will nudge banks to step up FCNR(B) deposit mobilisation through local and overseas branches.
2. Industry estimates suggest banks could raise up to USD 40 billion through the FCNR(B) route.
3. The RBI will bear the full hedging cost for fresh 3- to 5-year FCNR(B) deposits till 30 September 2026.
4. The hedging cost typically borne by banks is around 3 per cent.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Q2. With reference to FCNR(B) accounts, consider the following statements:

1. FCNR(B) accounts can be opened only by NRIs and OCIs.
2. The deposits are held in foreign currencies like USD, GBP, EUR, JPY, AUD, and CAD.
3. The depositor does not bear rupee depreciation risk on FCNR(B) deposits.
4. Interest earned on FCNR(B) deposits is taxable in India for NRIs and OCIs.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **interest on FCNR(B) deposits is tax-free in India** for **NRIs and OCIs**.)

Q3. With reference to the regulatory treatment of FCNR(B) deposits, consider the following statements:

1. FCNR(B) deposits are exempt from Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR) requirements.
2. FCNR(B) deposits are exempt from Statutory Liquidity Ratio (SLR) requirements.
3. The CRR is currently 3.0 per cent.
4. The SLR is currently 18.0 per cent.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Q4. With reference to the macroeconomic impact of the FCNR(B) push, consider the following statements:

1. The new inflows are expected to bolster India's forex reserves.
2. Bigger forex reserves can support the RBI's ability to fight rupee depreciation pressures.
3. PNB MD Ashok Chandra estimated combined FCNR(B) and PSU forex inflows of USD 50 to 60 billion.

4. FCNR(B) inflows are classified as external sovereign debt and significantly raise India's external debt burden.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **FCNR(B) deposits are non-sovereign**, **bank-level liabilities** and do **not significantly raise India's external sovereign debt burden** in the way sovereign borrowings do.)

Answer Key

1. (d), All four statements are correct.
2. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because interest on FCNR(B) deposits is tax-free for NRIs and OCIs.
3. (d), All four statements are correct.
4. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because FCNR(B) deposits are not classified as external sovereign debt.

3. India Slips to 7th in Global Market Cap Rankings

Source: TH

Context

India has **slipped to the 7th spot** in **global market capitalisation rankings** in **June 2026**, with a **total market valuation of USD 4.84 trillion**, **overtaken by South Korea** which has moved to the **6th spot** with **USD 5.01 trillion**. Earlier, in **May 2026**, India had **already lost the 5th rank to Taiwan**. The slide is attributed to **heavy foreign selling, weak earnings growth, and India's limited exposure to AI-linked stocks**. **Foreign investors have pulled out USD 26.4 billion from Indian stocks so far in 2026**, and India's weight in the **MSCI Global Standard Index has dropped from 21 per cent (September 2024) to 12.3 per cent**.

Current Global Market Cap Ranking (June 2026, Bloomberg data)

- **1st: United States** with about **USD 79.1 trillion**.
- **2nd: China** with about **USD 16.3 trillion**.
- **3rd: Japan** with about **USD 8.9 trillion**.
- **4th: Hong Kong (SAR of China)** with about **USD 7.6 trillion**.
- **5th: Taiwan** with about **USD 5.15 trillion**.
- **6th: South Korea** with about **USD 5.01 trillion**.
- **7th: India** with about **USD 4.84 trillion**.

India's Slide

- Earlier in **May 2026**, India was **pushed to the 6th spot** by **Taiwan**.
- In **June 2026**, India was **pushed further down to the 7th spot** by **South Korea**.
- **India's market valuation**: **USD 4.84 trillion**.
- **South Korea's market valuation**: **USD 5.01 trillion**.

Main Reasons for the Slide

- **Heavy foreign selling**: **FPIs withdrew USD 26.4 billion** from Indian stocks **so far in 2026**.
- **Weak earnings growth** in Indian-listed companies.
- **Limited exposure to AI-linked stocks**, where global investors are concentrating capital.

India's Weight in MSCI Global Standard Index

- **September 2024**: about **21 per cent**.

- **Latest**: down sharply to **12.3 per cent**.

Why Does Global Market Cap Matter?

- It reflects the **total value of all listed companies** in a country, in **US dollar terms**.
- A **rising market cap** signals **investor confidence, strong corporate earnings, and economic growth prospects**.
- A **falling market cap** can signal **foreign investor pullback, weak earnings, or sector exposure mismatches**.
- It is a **rough yardstick** of a country's **financial market depth and global investor interest**.
- Rankings shift due to **stock prices, currency moves, IPOs, delistings, and macro sentiment**.

Why Are AI Stocks Driving Global Rankings?

- The **global rally in AI stocks** (US tech, Taiwan, South Korea, China) has **lifted entire market caps**.
- The **United States** benefits from **AI giants** like **Nvidia, Microsoft, Alphabet, Apple, Amazon, and Meta**.
- **Taiwan** rides on **TSMC (Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company)**, the world's leading **chip foundry**.
- **South Korea** has **Samsung Electronics** and **SK Hynix**, key players in **memory chips and AI hardware**.
- **India's tech sector** is dominated by **IT services** (TCS, Infosys, Wipro), which are **not direct AI-hardware plays**.
- This **sector composition mismatch** has cost India in **AI-driven valuations**.

Why Are FPIs Pulling Out of India?

- **Higher US bond yields** (US 10-year above **4.5 per cent**) make **US assets more attractive**.
- **Strong dollar** raises **currency risk** for Indian investments.
- **Slower domestic earnings growth** relative to expectations.
- **High valuations** in certain Indian segments after a multi-year rally.
- **Geopolitical risks** including the **West Asia war** and **trade tensions**.
- **Better-priced opportunities** in **other emerging markets**, including **South Korea and Taiwan**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to India's slip in global market capitalisation rankings (June 2026), consider the following statements:

1. India has slipped to the 7th spot in global market cap rankings, with a valuation of about USD 4.84 trillion.
2. South Korea has overtaken India and moved up to the 6th spot with USD 5.01 trillion.
3. Earlier in May 2026, India was pushed to the 6th spot by Taiwan, which is now at the 5th spot.
4. The slide is attributed to heavy foreign selling, weak earnings growth, and limited exposure to AI-linked stocks.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Q2. With reference to the current global market cap rankings (June 2026), consider the following statements:

1. The United States holds the 1st spot with about USD 79.1 trillion.
2. China is at the 2nd spot with about USD 16.3 trillion.
3. Japan and Hong Kong are at the 3rd and 4th spots respectively.
4. India holds the 4th spot ahead of Hong Kong.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **India is at the 7th spot**, behind **Hong Kong, Taiwan, and South Korea**.)

Q3. With reference to FPI flows and MSCI index weight changes, consider the following statements:

1. Foreign investors have withdrawn about USD 26.4 billion from Indian stocks so far in 2026.
2. India's weight in the MSCI Global Standard Index has fallen from about 21 per cent in September 2024 to about 12.3 per cent.
3. The MSCI Global Standard Index is published by Morgan Stanley Capital International (MSCI).
4. A fall in MSCI weight has no impact on passive global fund flows into Indian equities.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; a fall in **MSCI weight directly reduces passive global fund flows** into Indian equities.)

Q4. With reference to why AI stocks are driving global rankings, consider the following statements:

1. The US benefits from AI giants like Nvidia, Microsoft, Alphabet, Apple, Amazon, and Meta.
2. Taiwan's market is heavily lifted by TSMC, the world's leading chip foundry.
3. South Korea benefits from Samsung Electronics and SK Hynix, key players in memory chips.
4. India's tech sector is dominated by AI hardware companies and chip foundries.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **India's tech sector is dominated by IT services**, not **AI hardware companies or chip foundries**.)

Answer Key

1. (d), All four statements are correct.
2. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because India is at the 7th spot.
3. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because a fall in MSCI weight reduces passive global fund flows.
4. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because India's tech sector is dominated by IT services, not AI hardware.

Exam Relevance

Exam	Relevance
UPSC Prelims	GS Paper III on Indian Economy (Capital Markets, Global Indices, FPI flows)
UPSC Mains	GS Paper III on Indian Economy, External sector, Capital markets, Global integration
BPSC and State PCS	Economy, Capital Markets, Current Affairs
Banking (RBI Gr B, SBI PO, IBPS, NABARD)	Very high importance, FPI flows, capital markets, global rankings
RBI Grade B	Core area on capital markets, external sector
SEBI Grade A	Very high importance, capital markets, MSCI, FPI rules
IRDAI Grade A	Capital market awareness

Facts To Remember

1. Cabinet Approves Rs 9,585 Crore Scheme to Replace Old Vehicles in Delhi-NCR

The Union Cabinet approved a two-year Rs 9,585 crore scheme to replace 2.07 lakh BS-IV and older trucks and buses in Delhi-NCR with BS-VI-compliant or electric vehicles. The initiative aims to reduce vehicular emissions, improve air quality, and modernize commercial transport fleets across Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh. The scheme offers interest subvention, fuel vouchers, tax concessions, registration fee waivers, and discounts from vehicle manufacturers.

2. Jayant Chaudhary Launches 'Navachar Mantra' for Grassroots Innovation

Union Minister Jayant Chaudhary launched "Navachar Mantra", a national initiative aimed at identifying, mentoring, and scaling grassroots innovators and early-stage entrepreneurs. Implemented by NIESBUD in collaboration with IIT Delhi's FITT, the programme offers year-long mentorship, investor connections, innovation showcases, and support for commercializing innovative ideas.

3. Centre Expands QR Tagging of FCI Foodgrain Bags

The Government of India expanded QR code tagging of Food Corporation of India (FCI) foodgrain bags to Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and Odisha. The initiative enables end-to-end tracking of foodgrain movement, enhances transparency, prevents bag recycling, and improves monitoring of procurement, storage, and distribution under the Public Distribution System (PDS).

4. T-Hub Launches Third ORBIT Space-Tech Accelerator Cohort

Hyderabad-based T-Hub launched the third cohort of its ORBIT Space-Tech Accelerator Programme, inducting 13 startups working in areas such as propulsion systems, satellite intelligence, orbital servicing, space energy systems, and geospatial technologies. The programme provides mentorship from industry experts, investors, and former ISRO leaders.

5. UNGA Elects Five New Non-Permanent Members to UNSC

The United Nations General Assembly elected Austria, Kyrgyzstan, Portugal, Trinidad and Tobago, and Zimbabwe as non-permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) for the 2027–2028 term. Kyrgyzstan secured its first-ever seat on the UNSC since joining the United Nations in 1992.

6. ADB and Standard Chartered Partner to Strengthen Supply Chain Finance

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Standard Chartered Bank signed agreements to strengthen supply chain finance in India through risk-sharing mechanisms covering both US Dollar and Indian Rupee transactions. The partnership aims to improve access to trade finance and support domestic and international business operations.

7. OECD Raises India's FY27 Growth Forecast to 6.3%

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) increased India's GDP growth forecast for FY27 to 6.3%, up from its earlier estimate of 6.1%. The report projects India's economy to remain among the fastest-growing major economies despite global uncertainties and higher energy prices.

8. Lionel Messi Becomes First Footballer to Win Princess of Asturias Award

Argentine football legend Lionel Messi became the first footballer to receive the prestigious Princess of Asturias Award for Sports. He was recognised for his extraordinary sporting achievements, global influence, and philanthropic contributions supporting education and healthcare initiatives.

9. D.K. Shivakumar Sworn In as Karnataka's 25th Chief Minister

D. K. Shivakumar was sworn in as the 25th Chief Minister of Karnataka following the resignation of Siddaramaiah. The oath ceremony was administered by Governor Thawar Chand Gehlot at Raj Bhavan in Bengaluru.

10. Mette Frederiksen Begins Third Consecutive Term as Denmark PM

Mette Frederiksen secured a third consecutive term as Prime Minister of Denmark after successfully forming a new centre-left coalition government following the 2026 parliamentary elections.

11. Visa Appoints Shah Rukh Khan for 'Infinitely More' Campaign

Visa appointed Shah Rukh Khan as brand ambassador for its new "Infinitely More" campaign in India. The campaign focuses on experience-led lifestyles, highlighting travel, dining, entertainment, and digital payment convenience.

12. GQG Partners Sells Stake in GMR Airports

American investment firm GQG Partners sold a 1.85% stake in GMR Airports Limited for Rs 1,906 crore through open market transactions. The stake was acquired by Fidelity International through its investment fund.

13. Vice-President Releases Book "When Audit Matters"

Vice-President C. P. Radhakrishnan released the book When Audit Matters: CAG Interventions That Made a Difference, edited by former CAG Vinod Rai. The book highlights the role of auditing in strengthening governance, accountability, and public trust.

14. International Day of Innocent Children Victims of Aggression 2026 Observed

The United Nations observed the International Day of Innocent Children Victims of Aggression on 4 June 2026 to raise awareness about the suffering of children affected by war, violence, exploitation, and armed conflict, while reaffirming commitments to child rights and protection.

15. Telangana and Germany's Thuringia Sign Cooperation Agreement

The Government of Telangana signed a cooperation agreement with the German state of Thuringia to enhance collaboration in skill development, industrial growth, innovation, technology, workforce development, startups, and life sciences. The partnership also includes plans for a German Language Training Hub in Hyderabad to improve overseas employment opportunities.

FIVE TO REMEMBER · 7 & 8 JUNE 2026

1. India's weight in the MSCI Global Standard Index has fallen from about 21 per cent in September 2024 to about 12.3 per cent. India Slips to 7th in Global Market Cap Rankings
2. **Gold Award incentive**: **trophy, citation, and ₹10 lakh cash incentive** for **further technological scaling and R&D**. Panchayat Advancement Index (PAI) Wins Gold at ...
3. The **hedging cost** (about 3 per cent) usually **eats into the bank's spread**. Foreign Currency Non-Resident (Bank)
4. **Future Expectations Index (FEI)**: slipped to **118.7** (vs **120.2**), **lowest since September 2023**. The RBI's Urban Consumer Confidence Survey (UCC...
5. American investment firm GQG Partners sold a 1.85% stake in GMR Airports Limited for Rs 1,906 crore through open market transactions. The stake was acquired by Fidelity International through its investment fund. GQG Partners Sells Stake in GMR Airports

Now test yourself: c4scourses.in/daily-quiz/daily-quiz-78-june-2026/

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Context

Prime Minister of India has congratulated **Major Abhilasha Barak** of the **Indian Army** on being conferred the prestigious **United Nations Military Gender Advocate of the Year Award**. Major Barak is currently deployed with the **United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL)** along the **Blue Line between Lebanon and Israel**, and serves as a **Gender Focal Point** and **engagement team commander**. With this award, she becomes the **third Indian woman officer** to win the recognition, after **Major Suman Gawani (2019)** and **Major Radhika Sen (2023)**.

The Awardee

- **Awardee**: **Major Abhilasha Barak**, Indian Army officer.
- **Award**: **UN Military Gender Advocate of the Year Award**.
- **Deployment**: **United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL)**.
- **Operational Region**: **Blue Line**, between **Lebanon and Israel**.
- **Roles**: **Engagement Team Commander** and **Gender Focal Point**.

About the Award

- **Created in**: **2016**.
- **Created by**: **Office of Military Affairs**, under the **UN Department for Peace Operations (DPO)**.
- **Recognises**: **Frontline military peacekeepers** who promote and implement the **UN Security Council Resolution 1325** on **Women, Peace, and Security**.
- **Selection pool**: Nominated by **Force Commanders and Heads of Mission** from **active UN peace operations** worldwide.
- **Annual award**.

Indian Winners

- **2019**: **Major Suman Gawani**, **UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS)**.
- **2023**: **Major Radhika Sen**, **UN Stabilization Mission in DR Congo (MONUSCO)**.
- **2025/26**: **Major Abhilasha Barak**, **UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL)**.

What is UN Security Council Resolution 1325?

- A **landmark resolution** adopted in **October 2000** by the **UN Security Council (UNSC)**.
- It is the **first UNSC resolution** to formally **link women's experiences of conflict to the maintenance of international peace and security**.
- Built on **four pillars**:
  - **Participation** of women in peace processes and decision-making.
  - **Protection** of women and girls from violence in conflict.
  - **Prevention** of conflict and gender-based violence.
  - **Relief and recovery** with a gender perspective.
- It is the **foundation document** of the **Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Agenda**.

What is UNIFIL?

- **United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon**.
- A **UN peacekeeping mission** established in **March 1978** through **UNSC Resolution 425 and 426**.
- Originally created to **confirm Israeli withdrawal** from **southern Lebanon** and **restore international peace and security**.
- After the **2006 Israel-Hezbollah war**, its mandate was **expanded under UNSC Resolution 1701**.
- It monitors the **Blue Line**, supports the **Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF)**, and provides **humanitarian assistance**.
- **Headquarters**: **Naqoura, southern Lebanon**.
- India is one of the **largest troop contributors** to UNIFIL.

What is the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda?

- A **policy framework** built on **UNSC Resolution 1325 (2000)** and **subsequent resolutions** (1820, 1888, 1889, 1960, 2106, 2122, 2242).
- Calls for the **participation of women** in **peace processes, conflict prevention, and post-conflict reconstruction**.
- Aims to **protect women and girls** from **conflict-related sexual violence** and **gender-based violence**.
- Promotes **gender-responsive peace operations** and **post-conflict humanitarian assistance**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the UN Military Gender Advocate of the Year Award, consider the following statements:

1. It was created in 2016 by the Office of Military Affairs under the UN Department for Peace Operations.
2. It recognises military peacekeepers who promote UNSC Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security.
3. Major Abhilasha Barak is the third Indian woman officer to receive this award.
4. Major Radhika Sen of India received the award in 2023 for her service with MONUSCO.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Q2. With reference to UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda, consider the following statements:

1. UNSC Resolution 1325 was adopted in 2000.
2. It is built on four pillars: Participation, Protection, Prevention, and Relief and Recovery.
3. It is the foundation of the UN's Women, Peace and Security Agenda.
4. UNSC Resolution 1325 is non-binding and has no relevance to UN peacekeeping operations.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **Resolution 1325 is a UNSC resolution** and is **central to UN peacekeeping operations**.)

Q3. With reference to UNIFIL and the Blue Line, consider the following statements:

1. UNIFIL was established in March 1978 through UNSC Resolution 425 and 426.
2. After the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah war, UNIFIL's mandate was expanded under UNSC Resolution 1701.
3. The Blue Line is a demarcation line drawn by the UN in 2000 between Lebanon and Israel.
4. UNIFIL is headquartered in Tehran, Iran.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **UNIFIL is headquartered in Naqoura, southern Lebanon**, NOT Tehran.)

Q4. With reference to India's role in UN peacekeeping, consider the following statements:

1. India is one of the largest troop contributors to UN peacekeeping operations.
2. India has contributed to more than 49 UN peacekeeping missions since 1948.
3. India deployed the first all-women Formed Police Unit (FPU) of the UN in Liberia in 2007.
4. India has not had a single peacekeeper casualty in UN missions.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **more than 180 Indian peacekeepers** have **died in service** of UN missions.)

Answer Key

1. (d), All four statements are correct.
2. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because Resolution 1325 is a UNSC resolution central to UN peacekeeping.
3. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because UNIFIL is headquartered in Naqoura, Lebanon.
4. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because more than 180 Indian peacekeepers have died in UN service.

2. India Wins SAFF Women's Championship 2026

Source: News on Air

Context

The **Indian Women's Football Team** has won the **SAFF Women's Championship 2026**, the **8th edition** of the tournament, by defeating **Bangladesh 3-1** in the **final** at the **Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru (Fatorda) Stadium, Margao, Goa**. This is India's **6th SAFF Women's Championship title**, and the **first since 2019**, breaking **Bangladesh's two consecutive titles** in **2022 and 2024**. The **Prime Minister of India** has congratulated the team on its win. India's **Sanfida Nongrum** was named the **MVP**, **Aveka Singh** the **Top Scorer**, and **Panthoi Chanu Elangbam** the **Best Goalkeeper**.

The Tournament

- **Event**: **SAFF Women's Championship 2026** (8th edition).
- **Organising body**: **South Asian Football Federation (SAFF)**.
- **Host**: **India**.
- **Venue**: **Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru (Fatorda) Stadium**, **Margao, Goa**.
- **Frequency**: Held **approximately every two years**.

SAFF Member Nations

- **Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka**.

The Final

- **India (FIFA rank 69)** vs **Bangladesh (FIFA rank 112)**.
- **Result**: **India 3-1 Bangladesh**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the SAFF Women's Championship 2026, consider the following statements:

1. The 8th edition of the championship was hosted by India at the Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru (Fatorda) Stadium in Margao, Goa.
2. India defeated Bangladesh 3-1 in the final.
3. Pyari Xaxa, Sanfida Nongrum, and Lynda Kom scored the three goals for India in the final.
4. The tournament is held every year.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **SAFF Women's Championship is held approximately every two years**, not every year.)

Q2. With reference to the SAFF Women's Championship history, consider the following statements:

1. India won the first five consecutive editions from 2010 to 2019.
2. Bangladesh won the 2022 and 2024 editions before India reclaimed the title in 2026.
3. Nepal has finished as runners-up six times in the tournament.
4. India's 2026 title is its 6th overall in the championship.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Q3. With reference to individual awards in the SAFF Women's Championship 2026, consider the following statements:

1. Sanfida Nongrum of India was named the Most Valuable Player (MVP).
2. Aveka Singh of India was the top scorer with 4 goals.
3. Panthoi Chanu Elangbam of India was named the Best Goalkeeper.
4. Nepal received the Fair Play Award.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Q4. With reference to football's governing bodies, consider the following statements:

1. The South Asian Football Federation (SAFF) is the regional governing body for football in South Asia, founded in 1997.
2. SAFF is headquartered in Dhaka, Bangladesh.
3. The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) is the continental governing body of football in Asia.
4. The All India Football Federation (AIFF) governs football in India and is affiliated to FIFA and AFC.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the tournament is held approximately every two years.
2. (d), All four statements are correct.
3. (d), All four statements are correct.
4. (d), All four statements are correct.

Exam Relevance

Exam	Relevance
UPSC Prelims	GS Paper I on Sports (SAFF, AIFF, FIFA); GS Paper II on Regional groupings (SAFF)
UPSC Mains	GS Paper I on Sports and Women's Empowerment; GS Paper II on Regional cooperation
BPSC and State PCS	Sports, Current Affairs
Banking and NABARD	General Awareness

3. e-Jagriti Platform Wins Silver Award at National Awards for e-Governance 2026

Source: News on Air

Context

The **Department of Consumer Affairs'** flagship **AI-powered e-Jagriti platform** has won the prestigious **Silver Award** at the **National Awards for e-Governance 2026**. Launched on **1 January 2025**, **e-Jagriti** is an **AI-enabled, paperless core portal** that **consolidates consumer dispute redressal** across India into a **single virtual environment**. By **merging four legacy systems**, the platform aims to **clear case backlogs**, enable **online filing and virtual hearings**, and **allow even NRIs** to **file consumer cases from abroad**.

The Recognition

- **Award**: **Silver Award at the National Awards for e-Governance 2026**.
- **Awardee**: **e-Jagriti Platform**.
- **Ministry**: **Department of Consumer Affairs**, under the **Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution**.

The Platform

- **Launched on**: **1 January 2025**.
- **Nature**: **AI-enabled, paperless, cloud-based** consumer dispute platform.
- **Coverage**: **NCDRC and 35 State Commissions** across India.
- **Removes**: The need for **physical presence** and **paper documents**.

What is e-Jagriti?

- A **single, unified, digital portal** for **filing, tracking, and resolving consumer cases** across India.
- Operates under the **Consumer Protection Act, 2019**.
- Uses **AI, video conferencing, and cloud technology** to **modernise consumer justice**.
- Tries to **clear case backlogs**, **improve access**, and **reduce cost** for consumers.

Key Terms

- **e-Jagriti Platform**: A **unified, AI-powered digital portal** for **filing, tracking, and resolving consumer disputes** across India.
- **National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (NCDRC)**: The **apex consumer redressal body** in India, located in **New Delhi**.
- **State Commissions**: **State-level consumer redressal bodies**, with **jurisdiction up to ₹2 crore**.
- **District Commissions**: **District-level consumer redressal bodies**, with **jurisdiction up to ₹50 lakh**.
- **CCPA (Central Consumer Protection Authority)**: A **regulator** established under the **Consumer Protection Act, 2019**, with **powers to investigate, recall products, and act against misleading ads**.
- **Consumer Protection Act, 2019**: The **modern Indian law** for **consumer rights and dispute resolution**, replacing the **1986 Act**.
- **Bharat Kosh, PayGov, SBI ePay**: **Government payment gateways** used for **secure digital payments to**

government departments.

- **National Awards for e-Governance (NAeG)**: India's **premier awards** for **excellence in digital governance**, given since **2003** by **DARPG and MeitY**.
- **OCMS, e-Daakhil, NCDRC CMS, CONFONET**: **Earlier IT systems** used by consumer commissions, now **integrated into e-Jagriti**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the e-Jagriti Platform, consider the following statements:

1. e-Jagriti was launched by the Department of Consumer Affairs on 1 January 2025.
2. It is an AI-enabled, paperless, cloud-based platform for consumer dispute redressal.
3. It has merged four legacy systems: OCMS, e-Daakhil, NCDRC CMS, and CONFONET.
4. It covers only the National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (NCDRC) and excludes the State Commissions.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the platform covers the **NCDRC and 35 State Commissions**, NOT only the NCDRC.)

Q2. With reference to the features of the e-Jagriti Platform, consider the following statements:

1. The platform includes AI chatbots, voice-to-text transcription, and dashboards for tracking cases.
2. The platform supports filing and resolution of consumer disputes by NRIs from abroad.
3. The platform is integrated with payment gateways like Bharat Kosh, PayGov, and SBI ePay.
4. The platform won the Gold Award at the National Awards for e-Governance 2026.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the platform won the **Silver Award**, NOT the Gold Award.)

Q3. With reference to the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, consider the following statements:

1. The Consumer Protection Act, 2019 replaced the Consumer Protection Act, 1986.
2. The Act establishes the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) as a regulator.
3. The Act introduces the concepts of product liability, unfair contracts, and misleading advertisements.
4. The Act has no provisions related to e-commerce transactions.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **Consumer Protection Act, 2019 explicitly recognises e-commerce transactions**.)

Q4. With reference to the three-tier consumer dispute redressal mechanism in India, consider the following statements:

1. District Commissions handle complaints involving values up to ₹50 lakh.
2. State Commissions handle complaints with values between ₹50 lakh and ₹2 crore.
3. The National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (NCDRC) handles complaints with values above ₹2 crore.
4. The Reserve Bank of India is the apex consumer dispute redressal body in India.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **NCDRC**, not the **RBI**, is the **apex consumer redressal body** in India.)

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the platform covers both the NCDRC and 35 State Commissions.
2. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the platform won the Silver Award, not the Gold Award.
3. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the Act explicitly recognises e-commerce transactions.
4. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the NCDRC, not the RBI, is the apex consumer redressal body.

4. Union Minister Piyush Goyal Launches BHAVYA Portal

Source: News on Air

Context

The **Union Minister of Commerce and Industry** has launched the **BHAVYA Portal** in **New Delhi**, formally operationalising the **Cabinet-approved ₹33,660 crore Bharat Audyogik Vikas Yojana (BHAVYA)** scheme. The scheme aims to build **100 world-class, investment-ready industrial parks** across India. The **BHAVYA Portal** acts as a **single-window digital platform** for **state project submissions, construction tracking, and investor mapping**, while the scheme is implemented through a **challenge-based, tiered, public-private partnership model** with the **National Industrial Corridor Development Corporation (NICDC)** as the **nodal execution body**.

The Scheme and the Portal

- **Scheme**: **Bharat Audyogik Vikas Yojana (BHAVYA)**.
- **Total outlay**: **₹33,660 crore** (Cabinet-approved).
- **Aim**: Build **100 world-class industrial parks** across India.
- **Portal**: **BHAVYA Portal**, a **single-window digital management platform**.
- **Launched by**: **Union Minister of Commerce and Industry**.
- **Ministry**: **Ministry of Commerce and Industry**.
- **Nodal execution body**: **National Industrial Corridor Development Corporation (NICDC)**.

The Funding Model

- **State Governments**: Provide the **physical land**.
- **Central Government** (through **NICDC**): Funds the **primary infrastructure**.
- **Sharing pattern**: **51:49 joint partnership model**.

Key Features of the Parks

- **Plug-and-play industrial plots** with **ready infrastructure**.
- **Special spaces for deep-tech, start-ups, R&D labs, and Global Capability Centres (GCCs)**.
- **In-house quality testing labs**, in partnership with **BIS, Export Inspection Agency (EIA), and FSSAI**.
- **Global expatriate enclaves** for **investors from Japan, Singapore, South Korea, Switzerland**, including **housing and social infrastructure**.

What is the National Industrial Corridor Development Corporation (NICDC)?

- A **special purpose vehicle (SPV)** of the **Government of India** for **developing industrial corridors**.
- Earlier known as **DMICDC (Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor Development Corporation)**.
- Implements major **industrial corridor projects** like the **Delhi-Mumbai, Chennai-Bengaluru, Amritsar-**

Kolkata, Bengaluru-Mumbai, Vizag-Chennai, and others.
- Acts as the **nodal agency for greenfield industrial city development**.

What Are Global Capability Centres (GCCs)?

- **Captive offshore centres** set up by **global multinational corporations (MNCs)** in India.
- Perform functions like **R&D, IT services, finance, HR, analytics, AI, engineering, and design**.
- India is the **world's leading hub for GCCs**, with **over 1,500 centres** employing **about 1.66 million professionals**.
- **GCCs are a major source of high-skilled jobs and FDI**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the Bharat Audyogik Vikas Yojana (BHAVYA), consider the following statements:

1. The scheme has a total outlay of ₹33,660 crore.
2. It aims to develop 100 world-class industrial parks across India.
3. The National Industrial Corridor Development Corporation (NICDC) is the nodal execution body.
4. The scheme is administered by the Ministry of External Affairs.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **scheme is administered by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry**, NOT the Ministry of External Affairs.)

Q2. With reference to the BHAVYA Portal, consider the following statements:

1. The portal acts as a single-window digital management platform for India's new industrial parks.
2. It enables state project submissions, real-time construction tracking, and investor mapping.
3. The scheme uses a challenge-based selection model where states must submit DPRs to win projects.
4. States receive funds automatically without any project proposal under the BHAVYA scheme.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **states must compete and submit DPRs** under a **challenge-based model**; they do **not receive funds automatically**.)

Q3. With reference to the design of the BHAVYA industrial parks, consider the following statements:

1. The parks are tiered by region: 25 acres for hilly regions and UTs, 100-500 acres for mid-sized states, and up to 1,000 acres for urban peripheries.
2. The funding follows a 51:49 joint partnership model, with the Centre funding primary infrastructure and the State providing land.
3. The parks will feature plug-and-play industrial plots with ready infrastructure.
4. The parks will include specialised spaces for deep-tech, start-ups, R&D labs, and Global Capability Centres (GCCs).

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Q4. With reference to related institutions and concepts, consider the following statements:

1. The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) is India's national standards body.
2. The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) regulates food safety and standards.
3. Global Capability Centres (GCCs) are captive offshore centres of global MNCs in India, with India being

the world's leading hub.

4. The NICDC is the regulator of the Indian capital market.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **NICDC is an SPV for industrial corridor development**, NOT a capital market regulator. **SEBI is the capital market regulator**.)

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the scheme is administered by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, not the Ministry of External Affairs.
2. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because states must compete through DPRs, not receive funds automatically.
3. (d), All four statements are correct.
4. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the NICDC is an SPV for industrial corridor development, not a capital market regulator.

5. 10th anniversary of the Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan (PMSMA)

Source: PIB

Context

Two separate government initiatives in the news. First, the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare** has begun **nationwide celebrations** to mark the **10th anniversary of the Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan (PMSMA)** under the theme **"10 Years of PMSMA, A Decade of Care"**. The scheme, launched on **9 June 2016**, offers **free, assured, comprehensive antenatal care (ANC)** to **all pregnant women**. Second, the **Union Minister of State for Environment, Forest and Climate Change** has launched the **NZP Saathi App** and **self-ticketing kiosks** at the **National Zoological Park (NZP), New Delhi**, to make zoo visits **smart, app-guided, and cashless**.

PRADHAN MANTRI SURAKSHIT MATRITVA ABHIYAN (PMSMA)

Key Facts

- **Scheme**: **Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan (PMSMA)**.
- **Launched on**: **9 June 2016**.
- **Launched by**: **PM Narendra Modi**.
- **Ministry**: **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW)**.
- **10th anniversary theme**: **"10 Years of PMSMA, A Decade of Care"**.
- **Core service**: **Free, assured, comprehensive antenatal care (ANC)**.
- **Date of service**: **9th of every month**, all government facilities conduct **special PMSMA sessions**.
- **Single-window package**: **Clinical check-ups, counselling, medicines, lab tests, and one ultrasound scan** in a **single visit**.

About e-PMSMA

- **Name-based line listing** of pregnant women, especially **high-risk cases**.
- **Real-time digital monitoring** through **online portals and mobile apps**.
- Facilities can hold **up to 4 sessions per month** for **extended coverage**.
- **45-day healthy outcome window** tracks both **mother and newborn**.
- **Transport assistance** under **JSSK (Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakaram)**.

What is RMNCH+A?

- A **strategic approach** of the **MoHFW** to address **Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health** in a **continuum**.
- Focuses on **interventions across the life cycle**, from **adolescence to motherhood**, **newborns, and children**.

What is JSSK?

- **Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakaram**, launched in **2011**.
- Provides **free delivery, free C-section, free drugs, free diagnostics, free diet, free blood transfusion, and free transport** for **pregnant women and sick newborns**.
- Designed to **eliminate out-of-pocket spending** on **maternal and newborn care**.

Practice MCQs (Item 1)

Q1. With reference to the Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan (PMSMA), consider the following statements:

1. PMSMA was launched on 9 June 2016 by PM Narendra Modi.
2. The scheme provides free assured comprehensive antenatal care (ANC) on the 9th of every month.
3. The scheme uses a green sticker for normal pregnancies and a red sticker for high-risk pregnancies on the MCP card.
4. The scheme is implemented by the Ministry of External Affairs.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the scheme is implemented by the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**, NOT the Ministry of External Affairs.)

Q2. With reference to PMSMA and related maternal health initiatives, consider the following statements:

1. PMSMA is a pillar of the Continuum of Care approach under the RMNCH+A strategy.
2. JSSK (Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakaram), launched in 2011, offers free transport, drugs, diagnostics, and delivery services.
3. e-PMSMA includes name-based line listing and real-time digital monitoring of high-risk pregnancies.
4. India's Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) has been falling and stands around 87 per 1,00,000 live births.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Answer Key (Item 1)

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the scheme is implemented by the MoHFW.
2. (d), All four statements are correct.

6. Land Port Management System (LPMS)

Source: Times of India

Context

The **Union Home Minister of India** has launched the **Land Port Management System (LPMS)** in **New Delhi**, a **centralised electronic platform** to **digitise and unify operations** across **India's international land borders**. Developed by the **Land Ports Authority of India (LPAI)**, the platform aims to bring **land ports on par with airports and seaports** in **digital efficiency**, while supporting **trade facilitation, secure border**

management, and the Viksit Bharat 2047 vision. The LPMS offers **single-window registration, advance slot booking, BI analytics, ICEGATE customs integration, automated security operations, warehouse management, and unified digital payments**.

The Platform

- **Name**: **Land Port Management System (LPMS)**.
- **Launched by**: **Union Home Minister of India**.
- **Developer**: **Land Ports Authority of India (LPAI)**.
- **Nature**: **Centralised electronic platform** to **digitise and unify operations** at **India's international land borders**.

Why is LPMS Needed?

- India shares **long land borders** with **multiple neighbours**, with **active trade through specific Integrated Check Posts (ICPs)**.
- **Airports and seaports** already use **advanced digital systems**, but **land borders** have lagged.
- This **lag** has caused **delays, paperwork burden, congestion at borders, and weaker data trails** for **trade and security**.

Key Features of the System

- **Unified Onboarding (SRR)**: A **Single Registration Request (SRR)** system, so **stakeholders submit information only once**.
- **Predictive Slot and Dwell Management**: **Advance slot booking** based on **real-time capacity** at **ICPs**, plus **wait-time forecasting**.
- **Automated Security and Gate Operations**: Digitally records **shipment details, transport manifests, and gate movements**, integrated with **Full Body Truck Scanners**.
- **Business Intelligence (BI) Analytics**: Dashboards with **real-time insights** on **cargo, containers, transit, and efficiency**.
- **Direct ICEGATE Integration**: **Auto-filing** of **Shipping Bills and Bills of Entry** for **customs**.
- **Yard and Warehouse Management**: **Efficient space allocation**, **reduced congestion**, and **better cargo handling**.
- **Unified Single-Window Payments**: **Customs duties, parking, weighbridge, and terminal charges** in a **single digital gateway**.

What is the Land Ports Authority of India (LPAI)?

- A **statutory body** under the **Ministry of Home Affairs**.
- Set up under the **Land Ports Authority of India Act, 2010**.
- Responsible for the **planning, development, operation, and management** of **Integrated Check Posts (ICPs)** along India's **international land borders**.
- Similar in role to **Airports Authority of India (AAI)** for airports and **Major Port Authorities** for seaports.
- Headquartered in **New Delhi**.

What is an Integrated Check Post (ICP)?

- A **modernised border facility** that **brings together various agencies** under **one roof** for **smoother passenger and cargo movement**.
- Typically includes **Customs, Immigration, BSF/SSB, plant and animal quarantine, warehousing, currency exchange, banking, and other services**.
- Replaces **scattered, ad hoc arrangements** of past land border posts.
- Major **ICPs include**:
  - **Attari (India-Pakistan)**.

- **Petrapole (India-Bangladesh)**.
- **Agartala (India-Bangladesh)**.
- **Raxaul (India-Nepal)**.
- **Jogbani (India-Nepal)**.
- **Moreh (India-Myanmar)**.
- **Phuentsholing/Jaigaon (India-Bhutan)**.

What is ICEGATE?

- The **Indian Customs Electronic Data Interchange Gateway (ICEGATE)**.
- An **online portal** of the **Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC)**.
- Allows **traders and customs agents** to **file customs documents** like **Shipping Bills and Bills of Entry** electronically.
- LPMS will **link directly with ICEGATE**, **reducing duplication** and **speeding up customs clearance**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the Land Port Management System (LPMS), consider the following statements:

1. The LPMS has been developed by the Land Ports Authority of India (LPAI).
2. The platform is designed to digitise and unify operations across India's international land borders.
3. It uses a Single Registration Request (SRR) system where stakeholders submit information only once.
4. The LPMS is administered by the Ministry of Civil Aviation.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **LPAI is under the Ministry of Home Affairs**, NOT the Ministry of Civil Aviation.)

Q2. With reference to the features of the LPMS, consider the following statements:

1. It enables advance slot booking based on real-time capacity at Integrated Check Posts (ICPs).
2. It integrates with Full Body Truck Scanners for cargo and security monitoring.
3. It connects directly to ICEGATE for automatic submission of Shipping Bills and Bills of Entry.
4. The platform offers a unified single-window digital payment gateway for customs and terminal charges.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Q3. With reference to the Land Ports Authority of India (LPAI) and Integrated Check Posts (ICPs), consider the following statements:

1. LPAI is a statutory body set up under the Land Ports Authority of India Act, 2010.
2. LPAI functions under the Ministry of Home Affairs.
3. Attari (India-Pakistan), Petrapole (India-Bangladesh), and Raxaul (India-Nepal) are among India's important ICPs.
4. ICPs are operated entirely by private logistics firms, with no role for government agencies.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **ICPs are operated through multiple government agencies** like **Customs, Immigration, and BSF/SSB**, NOT private logistics firms alone.)

Q4. With reference to India's broader logistics and trade-facilitation framework, consider the following

statements:

1. ICEGATE is the online portal of the CBIC for electronic filing of customs documents.
2. PM Gati Shakti is a GIS-based digital platform for integrated infrastructure planning across ministries.
3. The National Logistics Policy aims to reduce logistics costs and improve efficiency.
4. The LPMS is fully unrelated to India's broader logistics and trade-facilitation framework.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **LPMS is closely aligned with India's broader logistics, trade facilitation, and digital governance push**.)

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because LPAI is under the Ministry of Home Affairs.
2. (d), All four statements are correct.
3. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because ICPs are operated by government agencies, not private logistics firms alone.
4. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the LPMS is closely aligned with India's broader logistics framework.

Banking and Finance

1. RBI Opens a USD-Rupee Swap Window at Fixed 1.5 Per Cent Cost

Source: The Economic Times

Context

The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has formally opened a **dollar-rupee swap window** for banks at a **fixed cost of 1.5 per cent per annum** (compounded semi-annually), with **maturities up to 5 years**. This is the **operational follow-through** to **Governor Sanjay Malhotra's monetary policy statement last week**, where the RBI announced **support for hedging costs**. The facility will help **PSUs raising External Commercial Borrowings (ECBs)** and **banks raising Overseas Foreign Currency Borrowings (OFCBs)** with **minimum 3-year maturity**. The window is available for **ECBs drawn till 31 December 2026**, when **market hedging costs have risen to 3.5 to 4 per cent**.

The Swap Window

- **Issued by**: **Reserve Bank of India**.
- **Effective**: **Following the June 2026 monetary policy statement**.
- **Type**: **USD-Rupee buy-sell swap**.
- **Cost**: **Fixed at 1.5 per cent per annum**, **compounded semi-annually**.
- **Available maturities**: **Up to 5 years**.
- **Minimum maturity**: **3 years**.
- **Window for PSU ECBs**: **Till 31 December 2026**.

Who Can Use the Window?

- **Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs)** raising **External Commercial Borrowings (ECBs)**.
- **Banks** raising **Overseas Foreign Currency Borrowings (OFCBs)**.
- Available also for **undrawn portions of existing ECBs**.

How a Swap Works in Simple Steps

- A **bank** wants to use **dollar funds** (raised through ECBs or OFCBs) for **rupee-denominated activity** in India.
- The bank **sells dollars to the RBI** today and **gets rupees** in exchange.
- The bank **commits to buy back the same amount of dollars** from the RBI at the **end of the swap period** (up to 5 years).
- The **buy-back rate** is **pre-fixed**, so the **bank is fully hedged** against **rupee depreciation**.
- The **cost of this hedge** (now 1.5 per cent, against market 3.5 to 4 per cent) is **what makes the facility attractive**.

Why is This So Important Right Now?

- The **rupee has been weakening**.
- **FPI outflows** have hit Indian markets.
- The **RBI wants more dollars** flowing into India to **stabilise the rupee** and **build forex reserves**.
- **Cheaper hedging** lets **PSUs and banks** raise **more foreign currency funding**, helping the **balance of payments**.

Key Terms

- **Foreign Exchange Swap (FX Swap)**: A contract where **two parties exchange currencies now** and **agree to reverse the exchange** at a **later date** at a **pre-agreed rate**.
- **Hedging**: The process of **protecting against unfavourable movements** in **exchange rates, interest rates, or commodity prices**, using **financial instruments**.
- **Hedging Cost**: The **price paid** for **hedging protection**, usually a **percentage per annum**.
- **External Commercial Borrowings (ECBs)**: **Loans in foreign currency** raised by **Indian entities** from **foreign lenders**, subject to **RBI rules**.
- **Overseas Foreign Currency Borrowings (OFCBs)**: A **special category** of **foreign currency borrowings** by **banks** to **fund overseas operations or lending**.
- **PSU (Public Sector Undertaking)**: A **government-owned business enterprise** in India.
- **Compounded Semi-Annually**: A way of **calculating interest** where the **interest is added to the principal twice a year**, and **future interest** is calculated on the **new total**.
- **FCNR(B)**: **Foreign Currency Non-Resident (Bank)** account, a **foreign currency fixed deposit** held in India by **NRIs and OCIs**.
- **Forex Reserves**: A country's **stock of foreign currency, gold, IMF reserve position, and SDRs**, held by the **central bank**.
- **Balance of Payments (BoP)**: A country's **complete record of economic transactions** with the **rest of the world**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the RBI's USD-Rupee Swap Facility, consider the following statements:

1. The swap will be offered at a fixed rate of 1.5 per cent per annum, compounded semi-annually.
2. The facility is available for PSU ECBs and bank OFCBs with a minimum average maturity of three years.
3. The market hedging cost was about 3.5 to 4 per cent at the time of the announcement.
4. The window for PSU ECBs is available till 31 December 2026.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Q2. With reference to ECBs and OFCBs, consider the following statements:

1. ECBs are foreign currency loans raised by Indian entities from foreign lenders, subject to RBI rules.
2. OFCBs are a category of foreign currency borrowings by banks to fund overseas operations or lending.
3. The RBI's swap window covers PSU ECBs and bank OFCBs with at least 3-year maturity.
4. ECBs and OFCBs are exclusively governed by SEBI, not the RBI.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **ECBs and OFCBs are governed by the RBI**, NOT SEBI.)

Q3. With reference to the macroeconomic rationale for the swap window, consider the following statements:

1. The package aims to make foreign currency borrowing cheaper for Indian entities.
2. The lower hedging cost can support larger foreign currency inflows into India.
3. Larger foreign currency inflows can support the rupee and forex reserves.
4. The RBI has set a formal target of USD 100 billion in inflows under this swap window alone.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **RBI has not set a formal target** of USD 100 billion under this window.)

Q4. With reference to the RBI's broader 5-pronged package and government tax measures, consider the following statements:

1. The package includes a concessional FX swap for PSU ECBs and full hedging support for 3- to 5-year FCNR(B) deposits.
2. The Fully Accessible Route (FAR) has been expanded to include all new 15-, 30-, and 40-year G-secs.
3. The government has scrapped the 20 per cent withholding tax on G-sec interest and the 12.5 per cent long-term capital gains tax for foreign investors in government bonds.
4. The export realisation period has been extended from 9 months to 15 months.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; the export realisation period has been **restored to 9 months**, NOT **extended to 15 months**.)

Answer Key

1. (d), All four statements are correct.
2. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because ECBs and OFCBs are governed by the RBI, not SEBI.
3. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the RBI has not set a formal target.
4. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the export realisation period has been restored to 9 months.

2. RBI Imposes ₹41.80 Lakh Penalty on Canara Bank for KYC and Account Classification Lapses

Context

The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has imposed a **penalty of ₹41.80 lakh** on **Canara Bank**, a **public sector lender**, following a **supervisory review** that found **critical lapses in Know Your Customer (KYC) norms** and **account classification**. The penalty has been imposed under the **Banking Regulation Act, 1949**. The

lapses were identified during the **Statutory Inspection for Supervisory Evaluation (ISE 2025)**, which audited the bank's operations as of **31 March 2025**.

Key Facts

- **Penalty amount**: **₹41.80 lakh**.
- **Imposed by**: **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)**.
- **Bank**: **Canara Bank** (a public sector lender).
- **Legal provisions used**: **Section 47A(1)(c) read with Sections 46(4)(i) and 51(1) of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949**.
- **Inspection**: **Statutory Inspection for Supervisory Evaluation (ISE 2025)**.

The Specific Lapses Identified

- **KYC lapse**: Canara Bank **failed to upload KYC records** of **several customers** to the **Central KYC Records Registry (CKYCR)** within the **prescribed timelines**.
- **Account classification lapse**: The bank **misclassified certain accounts as inoperative**, even though the **last customer-induced transaction** was **less than one year old** in those accounts.

What is the Banking Regulation Act, 1949?

- The **main law** that **governs banking** in India.
- Empowers the **RBI to regulate, supervise, and inspect banks**.
- Provides the **legal framework** for **licensing, capital, governance, audit, and penalties** in the banking sector.
- The **RBI uses Section 47A of the Act** to **impose monetary penalties** on banks for **violations**.

What is the Statutory Inspection for Supervisory Evaluation (ISE)?

- A **routine on-site inspection** of banks by the **RBI**.
- Audits a bank's **operations, governance, risk management, and regulatory compliance** as on a **specific reference date**.
- Forms the **basis for supervisory ratings** and **enforcement action** if needed.

What is Know Your Customer (KYC)?

- A **process used by banks and financial institutions** to **verify the identity and address** of their customers.
- Mandatory under the **Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 (PMLA)** and **RBI rules**.
- Documents commonly accepted include **Aadhaar, PAN, Voter ID, driving licence, and passport**.
- Aims to **prevent money laundering, terror financing, and identity fraud**.

What is the Central KYC Records Registry (CKYCR)?

- A **central database** of **KYC records** of customers across the financial sector.
- Maintained by the **Central Registry of Securitisation Asset Reconstruction and Security Interest of India (CERSAI)**.
- Banks, NBFCs, insurance companies, mutual funds, and other regulated entities are required to **upload KYC records** of customers to **CKYCR** within **prescribed timelines**.
- Avoids the need for **multiple KYC submissions** across the financial sector.
- A customer's **CKYC number** can be used across **multiple institutions**.

What is an "Inoperative Account"?

- An account where **no customer-induced transaction** has happened for a **specific period**.
- Under RBI rules:

- A **savings or current account** becomes **inoperative** if there has been **no customer-induced transaction for more than 2 years**.
- **System-generated entries** like **bank-credited interest or charges** do **not count** as **customer-induced transactions**.

- Banks must **review accounts annually** and **classify them correctly**.
- **Misclassification** can **inconvenience customers** and **lead to wrongful freezing** of accounts.

RBI's Wider Use of Section 47A

- The RBI regularly uses **Section 47A of the Banking Regulation Act** to **impose monetary penalties** on **banks, NBFCs, and co-operative banks** for:
  - **KYC and AML lapses**.
  - **Cybersecurity lapses**.
  - **Credit and lending rule violations**.
  - **Failure to follow customer service standards**.
- These penalties are **part of the RBI's supervisory toolkit**, alongside **directions, restrictions, and licence cancellations**.

About Canara Bank

- A **public sector bank** headquartered in **Bengaluru, Karnataka**.
- Founded in **1906** at **Mangaluru** by **Ammembal Subba Rao Pai**.
- One of the **oldest commercial banks** in India.
- **Nationalised in 1969**.
- One of India's **largest PSBs** by **branch network** and **deposit base**.
- After the **2020 merger**, **Syndicate Bank was merged with Canara Bank**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the RBI's recent penalty on Canara Bank, consider the following statements:

1. The penalty of ₹41.80 lakh has been imposed under the Banking Regulation Act, 1949.
2. The penalty followed a Statutory Inspection for Supervisory Evaluation (ISE 2025) audit of operations as of 31 March 2025.
3. The lapses included a failure to upload KYC records to the Central KYC Records Registry (CKYCR) within prescribed timelines.
4. The penalty was imposed under the Companies Act, 2013.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; the penalty was imposed under the **Banking Regulation Act, 1949**, NOT the Companies Act, 2013.)

Q2. With reference to KYC and the Central KYC Records Registry (CKYCR), consider the following statements:

1. KYC is a process used by banks and financial institutions to verify the identity and address of customers.
2. KYC is mandatory under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 and RBI rules.
3. The Central KYC Records Registry (CKYCR) is maintained by CERSAI.
4. The CKYCR is a state-level database, separately maintained by each State Government.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **CKYCR is a central database**, maintained by **CERSAI** under the **Government of India**, NOT a state-level database.)

Q3. With reference to "inoperative" accounts under RBI rules, consider the following statements:

1. A savings or current account becomes inoperative if there has been no customer-induced transaction for more than 2 years.
2. System-generated entries like bank-credited interest or charges do not count as customer-induced transactions.
3. Misclassification of accounts as inoperative can wrongfully restrict customer access to funds.
4. The classification of accounts as inoperative is decided by the customer alone, with no role for the bank.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **classification of accounts as inoperative** is done by the **bank**, based on **RBI rules**, not by the customer alone.)

Q4. With reference to the regulatory framework for banks in India, consider the following statements:

1. The Banking Regulation Act, 1949 empowers the RBI to regulate, supervise, and inspect banks.
2. Section 47A of the Banking Regulation Act allows the RBI to impose monetary penalties on banks for specified violations.
3. Canara Bank is a public sector bank founded in 1906 at Mangaluru by Ammembal Subba Rao Pai.
4. The RBI was set up under the Banking Regulation Act, 1949.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **RBI was set up under the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934**, NOT the Banking Regulation Act, 1949.)

Answer Key

1. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the penalty was imposed under the Banking Regulation Act, 1949.
2. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because CKYCR is a central database maintained by CERSAI.
3. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the classification is done by the bank, not the customer alone.
4. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the RBI was set up under the RBI Act, 1934.

3. India 5th Largest Military Spender at USD 92.1 Billion: SIPRI

Context

The **Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)** has released its annual **SIPRI Yearbook 2026: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security**. The report ranks **India as the world's 5th-largest military spender in 2025**, with **defence expenditure of USD 92.1 billion** (up **8.9 per cent** from 2024). It also estimates that **India's nuclear warheads** rose from **180 in 2025 to 190 as of January 2026**. **Global military expenditure** reached **USD 2.9 trillion in 2025**, the **11th consecutive year** of increase, while **nine nuclear-armed states** together held about **12,187 nuclear weapons**.

India's Military Profile (2025)

- **Rank**: **5th-largest military spender** globally.
- **Defence expenditure**: **USD 92.1 billion**.
- **Year-on-year growth**: **8.9 per cent** vs 2024.
- **Nuclear arsenal**: **180 warheads in 2025**, rising to **190 as of January 2026**.

Top Global Military Spenders (2025)

- **1. USA**: **USD 954 billion**.
- **2. China**: **USD 336 billion**.
- **3. Russia**: **USD 190 billion**.
- **4 and 5**: India (USD 92.1 billion) features at **5th**, with Saudi Arabia or another country in the **4th slot** (the article focuses on India's position).

India's Position on Nuclear Weapons

- India follows a doctrine of **No First Use (NFU)** (with some debate in recent years).
- Has a **credible minimum deterrent**.
- **Nuclear Command Authority (NCA)** is the **apex body** for nuclear weapons decisions, chaired by the **Prime Minister**.
- **Strategic Forces Command (SFC)** is responsible for **operational control** of India's strategic nuclear forces.
- India is **not a party** to the **Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)** or the **Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT)**, but maintains a **voluntary moratorium on nuclear testing** since **1998**.

What is SIPRI?

- **Stockholm International Peace Research Institute**, headquartered in **Stockholm, Sweden**.
- An **independent international institute** founded in **1966**, dedicated to **research on conflict, armaments, arms control, and disarmament**.
- Best known for:
  - **SIPRI Yearbook** (flagship publication).
  - **Annual data on global military expenditure**.
  - **Arms transfer data**.
  - **Trends in nuclear forces**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the SIPRI Yearbook 2026, consider the following statements:

1. India was the world's 5th-largest military spender in 2025.
2. India's defence expenditure reached USD 92.1 billion in 2025, an 8.9 per cent rise over 2024.
3. India's estimated nuclear warheads rose from 180 in 2025 to 190 as of January 2026.
4. SIPRI is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **SIPRI is headquartered in Stockholm, Sweden**, NOT Geneva, Switzerland.)

Q2. With reference to global military expenditure trends in 2025, consider the following statements:

1. Global military expenditure reached about USD 2.9 trillion in 2025.
2. This represents about 2.5 per cent of the world's GDP.
3. Global military expenditure increased for the 11th consecutive year.

4. The United States, China, and Russia were the top three military spenders globally.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Q3. With reference to global nuclear arsenals as of January 2026, consider the following statements:

1. There are nine nuclear-armed states: USA, Russia, UK, France, China, India, Pakistan, North Korea, and Israel.
2. Together, they hold about 12,187 nuclear weapons.
3. About 9,745 of these are in military stockpiles for potential use.
4. India has officially signed both the NPT and CTBT.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; India is **not a party** to either the **NPT** or the **CTBT**, but maintains a **voluntary moratorium on nuclear testing** since **1998**.)

Q4. With reference to India's nuclear doctrine and institutions, consider the following statements:

1. India's nuclear doctrine includes the principle of No First Use (NFU).
2. The Nuclear Command Authority (NCA) is the apex body for nuclear weapons decisions in India, chaired by the Prime Minister.
3. The Strategic Forces Command (SFC) is responsible for the operational control of India's strategic nuclear forces.
4. India is recognised as a Nuclear Weapon State under the NPT.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; India is **not recognised as a Nuclear Weapon State under the NPT**, since only the **USA, Russia, UK, France, and China** are recognised as such.)

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because SIPRI is headquartered in Stockholm, Sweden.
2. (d), All four statements are correct.
3. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because India is not a party to the NPT or the CTBT.
4. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because India is not recognised as a Nuclear Weapon State under the NPT.

3. RBI Recognises Sahamati Foundation as Self-Regulatory Organisation (SRO) for Account Aggregator (AA) Ecosystem

Source: BS

Context

The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has formally recognised the **Sahamati Foundation** as the **Self-Regulatory Organisation (SRO)** for India's **Account Aggregator (AA) ecosystem**. This creates a **formal, industry-led governance framework** for India's **consent-based financial data sharing network**, which now connects **1,120 regulated entities**, **17 operational AAs**, **over 294 million linked accounts**, **over 450 million consent requests**, and **over 290 million monthly data-sharing transactions**. The recognition gives **Sahamati** a clear mandate to **set industry standards, promote best practices, address**

operational challenges, and strengthen compliance.

The Recognition

- **Recognising authority**: **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)**.
- **Recognised entity**: **Sahamati Foundation**.
- **Role**: **Self-Regulatory Organisation (SRO)** for India's **Account Aggregator (AA) ecosystem**.

What Sahamati Will Do

- Act as the **representative body** for **AA ecosystem participants**.
- Promote **collaboration** among **financial institutions, AAs, fintech firms, and other stakeholders**.
- Help **develop industry standards** and **promote best practices**.
- **Address operational challenges** and **strengthen compliance**.

What is the Account Aggregator (AA) Framework?

- A **consent-based, regulated digital framework** in India.
- Enables **individuals and businesses to securely share their financial data** with **authorised institutions** via **Account Aggregators**.
- Built on **principles of user consent, purpose limitation, time-bound access, and data minimisation**.
- Launched by the **RBI** under the **NBFC-Account Aggregator (NBFC-AA) framework**, **2016**.
- Live network launched in **September 2021**.

The Three Key Roles in the AA Ecosystem

- **Financial Information Provider (FIP)**: An entity that **holds the user's data**, like a **bank, NBFC, mutual fund, insurance company, or pension fund**.
- **Financial Information User (FIU)**: An entity that **uses the user's data with consent** to **provide a service** (like a **loan, insurance, or investment advice**).
- **Account Aggregator (AA)**: A **regulated, neutral entity** that **collects, encrypts, and transmits data** from **FIPs to FIUs**, only with **user consent**.

What is a Self-Regulatory Organisation (SRO)?

- A **non-government organisation** recognised by a **regulator** (like the **RBI, SEBI, or IRDAI**) to **set rules and supervise its industry members**.
- It acts as an **intermediate layer** between **the regulator and individual firms**.
- It helps:
  - **Develop industry standards**.
  - **Address operational issues**.
  - **Improve compliance**.
  - **Provide grievance redressal**.
  - **Promote best practices**.
- Examples in India:
  - **FIMMDA** for **fixed income markets**.
  - **FEDAI** for **foreign exchange dealers**.
  - **MFIN** for **microfinance institutions**.
  - **NPCI** as a **standard setter** for **retail payments**.
  - **Sahamati Foundation** for the **AA ecosystem (newly recognised)**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the recent RBI recognition of Sahamati Foundation, consider the following

statements:

1. The RBI has recognised Sahamati Foundation as the Self-Regulatory Organisation (SRO) for India's Account Aggregator (AA) ecosystem.
2. The SRO will help develop industry standards, promote best practices, and strengthen compliance across the AA ecosystem.
3. Sahamati will act as the representative body for AA participants, including banks, AAs, and fintech firms.
4. The recognition was given by SEBI, not the RBI.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the recognition is by the **RBI**, NOT SEBI.)

Q2. With reference to the Account Aggregator (AA) framework, consider the following statements:

1. The AA framework is a consent-based digital framework regulated by the RBI.
2. The framework involves three key roles: Financial Information Provider (FIP), Financial Information User (FIU), and Account Aggregator (AA).
3. The AA acts as a neutral consent manager and transmits encrypted financial data from FIPs to FIUs.
4. The AA framework allows financial institutions to access user data without any user consent.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; the AA framework is **strictly consent-based**, with **no access without explicit user consent**.)

Q3. With reference to the scale of India's AA ecosystem, consider the following statements:

1. The ecosystem comprises about 1,120 regulated entities, including 17 operational AAs.
2. It has enabled over 294 million linked accounts.
3. It has supported over 450 million consent requests and over 290 million monthly data-sharing transactions.
4. The AA framework currently covers only banks, with no participation from mutual funds, insurance companies, or pension funds.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **AA framework covers banks, mutual funds, insurance companies, pension funds, and NBFCs**, NOT only banks.)

Q4. With reference to Self-Regulatory Organisations (SROs) in India's financial sector, consider the following statements:

1. FIMMDA is an SRO for the fixed income markets.
2. MFIN is an SRO for microfinance institutions.
3. NPCI plays a central role in retail payments standards in India.
4. SROs replace the regulator and have no obligation to follow regulatory rules.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **SROs operate under the regulator's oversight**, NOT in place of it.)

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the recognition is by the RBI, not SEBI.
2. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the AA framework is strictly consent-based.
3. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the AA framework covers banks, mutual funds, insurance companies, pension funds, and NBFCs.
4. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because SROs operate under the regulator's oversight.

Exam Relevance

Exam	Relevance
UPSC Prelims	GS Paper II on Statutory and Regulatory bodies (RBI, SRO); GS Paper III on Indian Economy (DPI, AA framework)
UPSC Mains	GS Paper II on Government policies; GS Paper III on Indian Economy, Financial Inclusion, Data Governance
BPSC and State PCS	Economy, Banking, Current Affairs
Banking (RBI Gr B, SBI PO, IBPS, NABARD)	Very high importance, AA framework, SROs, DPI, fintech
RBI Grade B	Core area on banking and DPI
SEBI Grade A and IRDAI Grade A	Financial regulation, SROs, data governance

Agriculture

1. Urea Subsidy Reform Long Overdue

Source: Business Standard

Context

The **urea subsidy** is the **last unreformed subsidy** in India's welfare and farm support system, the editorial argues. The **Department of Fertilisers** is now seeking a **doubling of the Budget allocation**, citing the **spike in petrochemical prices** after the **blocking of the Strait of Hormuz**. India's **fertiliser subsidy could rise to ₹3.4 trillion in FY27**, well above the previous peak of **₹2.5 trillion in FY23** (post the Russia-Ukraine war). The editorial calls for a **shift to a nutrient-based, direct-benefit subsidy regime**, where benefits go to **farmers, not fertiliser companies**, addressing concerns of **fiscal sustainability, transparency, fairness, soil health, and food security**.

The Core Distortion

- **Urea is heavily subsidised**, with the government **bearing about 90 per cent** of the **actual market cost**.
- **Phosphorus (P) and potassium (K)-based fertilisers** have been **allowed some price adjustment** under the **Nutrient-Based Subsidy (NBS) scheme**.
- But **urea (the nitrogenous fertiliser)** has been kept **out of NBS** and its **price kept administered**.
- This has led to **distorted N:P:K usage**, with farmers using **too much urea** relative to P and K.

Consequences of the Current Structure

- **Fiscal stress**: Subsidy bill is **highly unpredictable** and **rising sharply**.
- **Black-marketing and diversion**: Big gaps between **administered and market prices** encourage **leakages**.
- **Soil degradation**: **Over-use of urea** harms **soil quality and long-term productivity**.

- **Unfair distribution**: Subsidy is **disproportionately captured** by **large wheat and rice farmers** in **certain states**.
- **Environmental harm**: **Excess nitrogen** leads to **groundwater nitrate pollution, eutrophication, and greenhouse gas (N2O) emissions**.

What is the Nutrient-Based Subsidy (NBS) Scheme?

- Launched in **April 2010** for **non-urea fertilisers**, mainly **P (phosphorus) and K (potassium)-based fertilisers** like **DAP, MOP, and complexes**.
- Under NBS, the **subsidy is fixed per nutrient (N, P, K, S)**, and **manufacturers and importers** are free to **set the maximum retail price**, with **the difference** covered by **government subsidy**.
- This **partially decontrolled** the **non-urea fertiliser market**.
- **Urea remained outside NBS**, with the government **controlling both price and subsidy**.

Why Has Urea Stayed Outside Reform?

- **Urea is the most-used fertiliser** in India.
- It is consumed in **massive quantities** by **wheat, rice, and other staple crops**.
- Politically, **raising urea prices** is sensitive because of **mass farmer exposure**.
- Successive governments have **avoided the political cost** of reform.

What is the Soil Health Concern?

- The **ideal N:P:K ratio** for Indian soils is roughly **4:2:1**.
- Actual usage in many regions is **closer to 10:3:1 or 8:3:1**, **skewed heavily towards N (urea)**.
- This causes:
  - **Loss of soil organic carbon**.
  - **Decline in micronutrients (zinc, boron, sulphur)**.
  - **Higher pest susceptibility**.
  - **Lower fertiliser response per kg applied**.
- The **Soil Health Card Scheme** and the **PM-PRANAM scheme** are partial responses, but the **incentive structure remains skewed**.

What is the Strait of Hormuz and Why is It Important Here?

- A **narrow strip of water** between **Iran and Oman**, connecting the **Persian Gulf** to the **Arabian Sea**.
- About **20 to 25 per cent of global oil and a large share of LNG trade** passes through this **chokepoint**.
- A **blockage** raises **oil and gas prices** sharply.
- **Urea is made from natural gas**, so **natural gas prices** are a **major input** in **urea costs**.
- Hence, a **Strait of Hormuz disruption flows directly** into India's **urea import bill** and **subsidy outgo**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to India's fertiliser subsidy outlook for FY27, consider the following statements:

1. The Union Budget initially estimated a fertiliser subsidy of about ₹1.7 trillion for FY27.
2. The Department of Fertilisers is now seeking a doubling of the budget allocation, which could take the subsidy to about ₹3.4 trillion.
3. The previous peak in fertiliser subsidy was about ₹2.5 trillion in FY23, after the Russia-Ukraine war.
4. The recent spike has been triggered by a sharp fall in global petrochemical prices.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the recent spike is due to a **rise**, NOT a fall, in **petrochemical prices**, linked to the

Strait of Hormuz disruption.)

Q2. With reference to the structure of India's fertiliser subsidy, consider the following statements:

1. Urea has remained outside the Nutrient-Based Subsidy (NBS) scheme.
2. The Nutrient-Based Subsidy (NBS) was launched in April 2010 for non-urea fertilisers.
3. The government bears about 90 per cent of the actual market cost of urea.
4. India's fertiliser sector has fully shifted to a direct benefit transfer (DBT) to farmers, with no role for fertiliser companies.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **subsidies are still largely paid to fertiliser companies**, NOT directly to farmers.)

Q3. With reference to the consequences of an unreformed urea subsidy, consider the following statements:

1. The wide gap between administered and market prices encourages black-marketing and diversion.
2. Over-use of urea skews the N:P:K ratio and harms soil health.
3. The subsidy is captured disproportionately by large wheat and rice farmers in certain regions.
4. The subsidy structure has had no fiscal impact on India's budget.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; the urea subsidy is a **major fiscal item** and has a **significant impact on the budget**.)

Q4. With reference to fertiliser-related policies and frameworks in India, consider the following statements:

1. The Soil Health Card Scheme provides farmers with information on their soil's nutrient profile.
2. PM-PRANAM aims to promote alternative and balanced fertilisers and reduce chemical fertiliser dependence.
3. The Nutrient-Based Subsidy (NBS) applies to phosphorus and potassium-based fertilisers like DAP, MOP, and complexes.
4. The Strait of Hormuz, between Iran and Oman, is irrelevant to India's fertiliser cost equation.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **Strait of Hormuz is highly relevant**, since **natural gas-based urea costs** depend on **oil and LNG prices**, which **flow through this chokepoint**.)

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the recent spike is due to a rise in petrochemical prices.
2. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because subsidies are still paid largely to fertiliser companies.
3. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the urea subsidy has a major impact on the budget.
4. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the Strait of Hormuz directly affects India's fertiliser costs.

Exam Relevance

NABARD Grade A	Very high importance, agriculture, soil health, rural economy

Facts To Remember

1. Zojila Tunnel between Kashmirand Kargil to see final breakthrough

India's ambitious, strategic, all-weather Zojila Tunnel in volatile seismic zone IV will witness the final breakthrough on June 9 as Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari will oversee the final blasting from the Kargil side. The 13.14-km-long tunnel cuts through the mighty Himalayas at an altitude of 11,578 feet and connects the Kashmir valley with Ladakh's Kargil.

Cabinet Approves ₹9,585 Crore Vehicle Replacement Scheme for Delhi-NCR

The Union Cabinet approved a two-year ₹9,585 crore scheme to replace 2.07 lakh BS-IV and older trucks and buses in Delhi-NCR with BS-VI compliant or electric vehicles. The initiative aims to reduce vehicular emissions, improve air quality, and modernize commercial fleets across Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh.

2. Cabinet Approves ₹10,000 Crore ATF Price Stabilisation Fund for Airlines

The Union Cabinet approved a ₹10,000 crore Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF) Price Stabilisation Fund to support Indian airlines affected by rising global fuel prices. The scheme will provide budgetary support to Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) and ensure greater pricing stability for domestic and international airline operations.

3. Jayant Chaudhary Launches 'Navachar Mantra' for Grassroots Innovators

Union Minister Jayant Chaudhary launched 'Navachar Mantra', a national initiative aimed at identifying, mentoring, and scaling grassroots innovators and early-stage entrepreneurs. The programme offers year-long mentorship, investor connections, and innovation showcase opportunities.

4. Centre Expands QR Tagging of FCI Foodgrain Bags

The Government of India expanded QR code tagging of Food Corporation of India (FCI) foodgrain bags to Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and Odisha. The initiative enables end-to-end tracking of foodgrain movement, improves transparency, prevents bag recycling, and streamlines subsidy disbursal through digital monitoring.

5. T-Hub Launches Third ORBIT Space-Tech Accelerator Cohort

T-Hub launched the third cohort of its ORBIT Space-Tech Accelerator Programme, inducting 13 startups focused on propulsion systems, satellite intelligence, orbital services, geospatial technologies, and space energy solutions. The programme provides mentorship from industry experts and former ISRO officials.

6. UNGA Elects Five New Non-Permanent Members to UNSC

The United Nations General Assembly elected Austria, Kyrgyzstan, Portugal, Trinidad and Tobago, and Zimbabwe as non-permanent members of the United Nations Security Council for the 2027–2028 term. Kyrgyzstan secured its first-ever seat on the Security Council since joining the United Nations in 1992.

7. ADB and Standard Chartered Partner for Supply Chain Finance in India

The Asian Development Bank and Standard Chartered Bank signed agreements to strengthen supply chain finance in India through risk-sharing arrangements covering both USD and INR transactions. The

partnership aims to bridge financing gaps and support domestic and cross-border trade.

8. OECD Raises India's FY27 Growth Forecast to 6.3%

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development increased India's FY27 GDP growth forecast to 6.3%, up from 6.1% projected earlier. The report also estimated India's GDP growth at 7.6% in FY26 and projected inflation at 4.8% in FY27.

9. Lionel Messi Becomes First Footballer to Win Princess of Asturias Award

Lionel Messi became the first footballer to receive the Princess of Asturias Award for Sports. The award recognises his sporting achievements, global influence, and charitable contributions in education and healthcare.

10. D.K. Shivakumar Sworn in as Karnataka's 25th Chief Minister

D. K. Shivakumar was sworn in as the 25th Chief Minister of Karnataka following the resignation of Siddaramaiah. The oath ceremony was administered by Governor Thawar Chand Gehlot in Bengaluru.

11. Mette Frederiksen Begins Third Consecutive Term as Denmark PM

Mette Frederiksen secured a third consecutive term as Prime Minister of Denmark after successfully forming a new centre-left coalition government following the 2026 parliamentary elections.

12. Visa Appoints Shah Rukh Khan as Brand Ambassador

Visa Inc. appointed Shah Rukh Khan as the brand ambassador for its 'Infinitely More' campaign in India. The campaign promotes experience-led lifestyles focused on travel, dining, wellness, and entertainment.

13. GQG Partners Sells Stake in GMR Airports

American investment firm GQG Partners sold a 1.85% stake in GMR Airports Limited worth ₹1,906 crore to Fidelity International through open market transactions. Following the sale, GQG's holding in the company declined significantly.

14. Vice-President Releases Book "When Audit Matters"

Vice-President C. P. Radhakrishnan released the book *When Audit Matters: CAG Interventions That Made a Difference*, edited by former CAG Vinod Rai. The book highlights how effective auditing strengthens governance, accountability, and public trust.

15. International Day of Innocent Children Victims of Aggression 2026 Observed

The United Nations observed the International Day of Innocent Children Victims of Aggression on 4 June 2026 to raise awareness about the suffering of children affected by conflict, violence, abuse, and exploitation. The observance reaffirms global commitment to protecting children's rights and welfare.

16. Telangana and Germany's Thuringia Sign Cooperation Agreement

The Government of Telangana signed a cooperation pact with the German state of Thuringia to strengthen collaboration in skill development, industrial growth, innovation, technology, and workforce development. The agreement also includes plans for a German Language Training Hub in Hyderabad to improve overseas employment opportunities.

17. CCEA Approves Four National Highway Projects Worth ₹24,249 Crore Across Four States

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA), chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved four major National Highway projects worth ₹24,249 crore across Odisha, Telangana, Bihar, and Madhya

Pradesh. Covering over 700 km, the projects aim to improve regional connectivity, reduce congestion, shorten travel time, and strengthen logistics infrastructure under the PM GatiShakti National Master Plan.

18. India Issues Letter of Request to France for 114 Rafale Fighter Jets

The Government of India issued a Letter of Request (LoR) to France for the acquisition of 114 Rafale fighter jets for the Indian Air Force under a government-to-government deal worth approximately ₹3.25 lakh crore. Around 94 aircraft are proposed to be manufactured in India through a partnership between Dassault Aviation and an Indian company, supporting domestic defence manufacturing and strengthening the Air Force's squadron strength.

19. Assam Launches 'Mission Senehjori' to Promote Muga Silk Globally

Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia and Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma launched 'Mission Senehjori', a cluster-based initiative aimed at transforming Assam's unique Muga silk sector into a globally competitive luxury textile ecosystem. The three-year programme seeks to enhance exports, GI authentication, digital traceability, and global branding of Assam's traditional golden silk.

20. Ministry of Education Launches PM Research Chair Scheme 2026

The Ministry of Education launched the Prime Minister Research Chair (PMRC) Scheme 2026 to attract accomplished Indian-origin researchers, scientists, and technologists from around the world. The initiative focuses on strengthening India's research and innovation ecosystem across priority sectors such as Artificial Intelligence, semiconductors, quantum computing, healthcare, biotechnology, climate change, and defence technologies.

21. Chandigarh University Establishes India's First IndiaAI Data Lab in Private Sector

Chandigarh University became India's first private university to establish an IndiaAI Data Lab in collaboration with Intel India. The initiative aims to provide students with hands-on experience in Artificial Intelligence, Data Science, and emerging technologies through real-world projects, industry certifications, research opportunities, and practical skill development.

22. BHASHINI Launches 'VYOMA Innovation Challenge'

The Digital India BHASHINI Division launched the 'VYOMA Innovation Challenge' to promote multilingual, voice-first, and open-source Artificial Intelligence solutions capable of functioning in low-connectivity environments. The challenge encourages innovation in sectors such as education, healthcare, agriculture, governance, and public service delivery, with prize support of up to ₹80 lakh.

23. India Joins Anthropic's Project Glasswing for Advanced Cybersecurity

India joined Anthropic's global cybersecurity initiative, Project Glasswing, gaining access to Claude Mythos AI, an advanced AI model designed to identify software vulnerabilities and strengthen cyber defences. The initiative aims to improve cybersecurity resilience and protect critical digital infrastructure through AI-driven vulnerability detection and remediation.

24. India–UK Critical Minerals Supply Chain Observatory Launched

India and the United Kingdom jointly launched the India–UK Critical Minerals Global Supply Chain Observatory in New Delhi. The initiative seeks to strengthen cooperation in critical minerals, enhance supply chain intelligence, support clean energy transitions, and promote resilient and diversified mineral value chains.

25. PFRDA Launches 'StAR NPS' Platform for Digital Subscriber Onboarding

The Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) launched the 'StAR NPS' platform to simplify and digitize the onboarding process for National Pension System subscribers. Alongside the platform, PFRDA introduced a Regulatory Sandbox Framework to encourage innovation and controlled testing of new pension-sector solutions.

26. ANRF-Backed Portal Announced to Strengthen Research Ecosystem

Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh announced a new digital portal supported by the Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF) to strengthen India's scientific research and innovation ecosystem. The platform will provide support for patent filing, scientific publishing, intellectual property protection, and research capacity building.

27. Major Prabhat Mishra Wins Two Prestigious Awards at US Army CGSOC

Major Prabhat Mishra of the Indian Army received the Birrer-Brookes Award and the General Douglas MacArthur Military Leadership Writing Award at the United States Army Command and General Staff College. He became the first Indian officer to win both honours simultaneously and secured a top-ranking position among international officers.

28. Neelkanth Mishra Appointed Executive Director of the World Bank

The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet approved economist Neelkanth Mishra as India's Executive Director at the World Bank for a three-year term. He currently serves as Chief Economist at Axis Bank and previously held senior research positions at Credit Suisse.

29. Maruti Suzuki Launches India's First Flex-Fuel Passenger Vehicle

Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri launched the Maruti Suzuki Wagon R Flex-Fuel Vehicle, India's first passenger vehicle capable of operating on ethanol-petrol blends ranging from E20 to E100. The launch marks a significant step toward ethanol-based mobility and cleaner transportation solutions.

30. KS Bharat Announces Retirement from International Cricket

Indian wicketkeeper-batter K. S. Bharat announced his retirement from international cricket after representing India in seven Test matches. He will now pursue opportunities in overseas T20 leagues while continuing his involvement in domestic cricket.

31. International Day for the Fight Against Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing 2026 Observed

The United Nations observed the International Day for the Fight Against Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing on 5 June 2026. The observance aims to raise awareness about the impact of illegal fishing on marine ecosystems, fisheries sustainability, and global food security.

FIVE TO REMEMBER · 9 & 10 JUNE 2026

1. Launched in **April 2010** for **non-urea fertilisers**, mainly **P (phosphorus) and K (potassium)-based fertilisers** like **DAP, MOP, and complexes**. Urea Subsidy Reform Long Overdue
2. **CCPA (Central Consumer Protection Authority)**: A **regulator** established under the **Consumer Protection Act, 2019**, with **powers to investigate, recall products, and act against misleading ads**. e-Jagriti Platform Wins Silver Award at Nationa...
3. The penalty of ₹41.80 lakh has been imposed under the Banking Regulation Act, 1949. RBI Imposes ₹41.80 Lakh Penalty on Canara Bank ...
4. The bank **commits to buy back the same amount of dollars** from the RBI at the **end of the swap period** (up to 5 years). RBI Opens a USD-Rupee Swap Window at Fixed 1.5 ...
5. **Year-on-year growth**: **8.9 per cent** vs 2024. India 5th Largest Military Spender at USD 92.1 ...

Now test yourself: c4scourses.in/daily-quiz/daily-quiz-910-june-2026/

DAY 8 OF 18

11 June 2026

Thursday · 25 items · 3 topics

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Context

At the **UN climate change negotiations** in **Bonn, Germany (SB64)**, **India** called for **addressing the shrinking pool of international climate finance** and the **widening adaptation funding gap**. India argued that developed countries must honour their **legal obligation under Article 9.1 of the Paris Agreement** to **provide climate finance** to developing nations. India highlighted that the **adaptation finance gap is 10 to 18 times current public flows**, while **developing nations need USD 5 to 6 trillion by 2030** to implement their **NDCs**. India aligned with the **G77 and China, LMDCs, and the BASIC bloc**.

India's Key Concerns at Bonn (SB64)

- **Shrinking pool** of **international climate finance**.
- **Widening adaptation funding gap**.
- **Inadequate post-2025 climate finance targets**.
- **Need to honour the Paris Agreement's Article 9.1**.

The **Bonn Climate Conference 2026** topic has been covered twice in this conversation (the original article and the "India Calls for Dialogue on Climate Finance" angle). Here is a **compact supplementary revision pack** with **memory aids and fresh MCQs**.

Bonn Climate Conference 2026 (SB64)

The **Bonn Climate Conference 2026** is the **64th Sessions of the Subsidiary Bodies (SB64)** under the **UNFCCC**. Held in **Bonn, Germany** (where the **UNFCCC Secretariat** sits), it is the **mid-year technical and preparatory meeting** ahead of **COP31**.

What is Climate Finance?

- **Climate finance** refers to **local, national, or transnational financing** from **public, private, and alternative sources of capital** that **supports mitigation and adaptation actions** to **address climate change**.
- Has **two main goals**:
  - **Mitigation**: **Reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions** (renewable energy, electric mobility, energy efficiency).
  - **Adaptation**: **Adjusting to climate impacts** (flood protection, drought-resilient agriculture, coastal defence).

What is the Common But Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR) Principle?

- A **foundational principle** of the **UNFCCC** and the **Paris Agreement**.
- States that **all countries are responsible for tackling climate change**, but **developed countries have a greater responsibility** because of:
  - **Their historical emissions**.
  - **Their higher economic capacity**.
- Reflected in the **Paris Agreement** as **"CBDR-RC"** (Common But Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities).

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to India's intervention on climate finance at Bonn SB64, consider the following statements:

1. India called for addressing the shrinking pool of international climate finance and the widening adaptation finance gap.
2. The UN estimates the adaptation finance gap to be 10 to 18 times the current international public flows.
3. Developing nations cumulatively require USD 5 to 6 trillion by 2030 to implement their NDCs.
4. India argued that developed countries have no legal obligations under the Paris Agreement on climate finance.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **Article 9.1 of the Paris Agreement** makes it **legally mandatory** for **developed countries** to **provide climate finance**.)

Q2. With reference to the New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) and climate finance frameworks, consider the following statements:

1. The NCQG is the post-2025 climate finance target under the Paris Agreement.
2. The proposed NCQG of USD 300 billion annually by 2035 has been criticised by developing blocs as inadequate.
3. The Paris Agreement's Article 9.1 makes it legally mandatory for developed countries to provide climate finance to developing nations.
4. The Loss and Damage Fund was created at COP27 (2022) and operationalised at COP28 (2023).

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Q3. With reference to climate negotiation blocs that India is part of, consider the following statements:

1. India is part of the G77 and China, a bloc of about 134 developing countries.
2. India is part of the LMDC (Like-Minded Developing Countries) negotiation group.
3. India is part of the BASIC bloc, along with Brazil, South Africa, and China.
4. India is a member of the AOSIS (Alliance of Small Island States) bloc.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **India is not a member of AOSIS**, which is a **bloc of small island states**.)

Q4. With reference to the Common But Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR) principle, consider the following statements:

1. CBDR is a foundational principle of the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement.
2. CBDR recognises that all countries share responsibility for tackling climate change, but developed countries bear greater historical responsibility.
3. The Paris Agreement formalises CBDR with the additional element of "Respective Capabilities" (RC), as CBDR-RC.
4. CBDR-RC has been formally abandoned in recent global climate negotiations.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **CBDR-RC remains the foundational principle** of UNFCCC negotiations and has

not been abandoned.)

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because Article 9.1 of the Paris Agreement makes it legally mandatory for developed countries to provide climate finance.
2. (d), All four statements are correct.
3. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because India is not a member of AOSIS.
4. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because CBDR-RC remains the foundational principle.

2. Bloomberg Global Aggregate Bond Index

Source: Business Standard

Context

India is currently executing **major capital market reforms** to secure the **inclusion** of its **government bonds** in the prestigious **Bloomberg Global Aggregate Bond Index**. The reforms include **scrapping withholding and capital gains tax** on **foreign G-sec investments**, **expanding the Fully Accessible Route (FAR)** to **new 15-, 30-, and 40-year G-secs**, and **operational improvements** in **registration, settlement, and tax processes**. **Bloomberg Index Services** is expected to **seek investor feedback** on **India's inclusion** later this month. Analysts estimate that **inclusion could bring USD 20-25 billion in passive foreign investment** at a **7-10 per cent** index weight (a small share of the global index, but **large for India**).

The Index

- **Name**: **Bloomberg Global Aggregate Bond Index**.
- **Maintained by**: **Bloomberg Index Services Limited**.
- **Nature**: A **flagship international fixed-income benchmark**.
- **Tracks**: **Investment-grade, fixed-rate bonds globally**, including **sovereign, supranational, and corporate debt**.
- **Coverage**: **Multi-currency, multi-trillion-dollar global debt markets**.
- **Used by**: **Sovereign wealth funds, pension funds, insurers**, and **global asset managers**.

India's Inclusion Status

- India has been a **candidate** for inclusion for years, but **operational gaps** have **delayed it**.
- **Bloomberg** is expected to **seek investor feedback later this month** on **adding Indian G-secs** to the **Global Aggregate Index**.
- **Estimated index weight** for India: **7-10 per cent of the Emerging Market component** (about **0.6 to 1.0 per cent of the overall index** in practice).
- **Estimated passive inflows on inclusion**: **USD 20-25 billion**.

What Are FAR Bonds?

- **FAR (Fully Accessible Route)** was introduced by the **RBI in 2020**.
- Under FAR, specified **G-secs** can be **bought by FPIs, NRIs, and OCIs without any investment cap**.
- The FAR is **central to India's index inclusion strategy**, as **global indices** require **unrestricted foreign access**.
- The **FAR list has been expanded in 2026** to include all **new 15-, 30-, and 40-year G-secs**.

India's Position in Global Bond Indices Hierarchy

- **JPMorgan GBI-EM Global Diversified Index**: India included **June 2024 onwards**, **phased over 10 months** to reach **10 per cent weight**.

- **Bloomberg EM Local Currency Government Index**: India included in **2025**.
- **FTSE Russell EM Government Bond Index**: India included in **September 2025**.
- **Bloomberg Global Aggregate Bond Index**: India's **next major target**.

How Does an "Aggregate Bond Index" Work?

- **Tracks the performance** of a **basket of bonds**.
- The **basket** includes **investment-grade, fixed-rate bonds** in **multiple currencies** and **issuer types**.
- **Each bond** is weighted by **market value**, with **adjustments for liquidity** and **other rules**.
- **Investors** can:
  - **Passively replicate** the index through **ETFs or index funds**.
  - **Actively manage** by **deviating from the index** and **measuring performance against it**.

Key Risks and Cautions

- **Foreign portfolio flows** can be **volatile**.
- A **sudden reversal** (a **"sudden stop"**) can hurt the **rupee** and **bond yields**.
- **India still needs to manage** its **rupee, current account, fiscal deficit, and macro stability**.
- **Index inclusion is not a one-time event**; **continued reform momentum** matters.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the Bloomberg Global Aggregate Bond Index, consider the following statements:

1. It is a flagship international fixed-income benchmark tracking investment-grade, fixed-rate bonds globally.
2. It is maintained by Bloomberg Index Services Limited.
3. It is widely tracked by sovereign wealth funds, pension funds, insurers, and global asset managers.
4. India is already a constituent of the Bloomberg Global Aggregate Bond Index.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; India is **a candidate**, not yet **a constituent**, of the **Bloomberg Global Aggregate Bond Index**.)

Q2. With reference to the Fully Accessible Route (FAR), consider the following statements:

1. The FAR was introduced by the RBI in 2020.
2. Under FAR, specified G-secs can be bought by FPIs, NRIs, and OCIs without any investment cap.
3. The FAR list has been expanded in 2026 to include new 15-, 30-, and 40-year G-secs.
4. The FAR applies only to corporate bonds and excludes Indian government securities.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **FAR applies to Indian Government Securities (G-secs)**, NOT only corporate bonds.)

Q3. With reference to India's bond index inclusion journey, consider the following statements:

1. India was included in the JPMorgan GBI-EM Global Diversified Index starting in June 2024.
2. India was included in the Bloomberg EM Local Currency Government Index in 2025.
3. India was included in the FTSE Russell EM Government Bond Index in September 2025.
4. India was the first country to be included in the JPMorgan GBI-EM Global Diversified Index when it was launched in the 1990s.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **the JPMorgan EM index existed long before India's inclusion**, which happened **only in June 2024**.)

Q4. With reference to the macroeconomic significance of global bond index inclusion, consider the following statements:

1. Inclusion can bring more predictable, long-term passive inflows from index trackers.
2. Inflows can help fund India's current account deficit in a non-debt-creating way.
3. Larger foreign holdings in G-secs can lower the government's borrowing costs over time.
4. Once India is included in a major global bond index, it can stop pursuing further macro reforms.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **inclusion is not a one-time event**, and **continued reform momentum** is needed to **sustain foreign confidence**.)

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because India is a candidate, not yet a constituent, of the Bloomberg Global Aggregate Bond Index.
2. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the FAR applies to G-secs, not only corporate bonds.
3. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because India was included in the JPMorgan EM index only in June 2024.
4. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because inclusion is not a one-time event and continued reforms are necessary.

Exam Relevance

Exam	Relevance
UPSC Prelims	GS Paper III on Indian Economy (Bond Index, G-secs, FAR, FPI, Capital Flows)
UPSC Mains	GS Paper III on Indian Economy, External sector, Monetary policy, Capital markets
BPSC and State PCS	Economy, Capital markets, Current Affairs
Banking (RBI Gr B, SBI PO, IBPS, NABARD)	Very high importance, G-secs, bond markets, FAR, FPI
RBI Grade B	Core area on external sector and monetary policy
SEBI Grade A and IRDAI Grade A	Capital markets, FPI flows, bond markets

3. LPMS Inaugurated as "Vinimay" at Vigyan Bhawan

Source: News on Air

Context

The **Union Home Minister** has officially inaugurated the **Land Port Management System (LPMS) platform**, now named **"Vinimay"**, at **Vigyan Bhawan** in **New Delhi**. Developed by the **Land Ports Authority of India (LPAI)** under the **Ministry of Home Affairs**, **Vinimay is a centralised, real-time electronic Single Window** for **operations across India's international land ports**. The system **eliminates nearly 90 per cent of physical paperwork**, **reduces truck waiting times by 40 to 60 per cent**, and **cuts gate processing times by 22 to 35 per cent**. It **integrates ICEGATE, CBIC, BSF, UIDAI, DGFT, ULIP, and the**

National Motor Vehicle System on **one dashboard**. **Vinimay** currently covers **India's 15 active land ports**, with **capacity to onboard 11 more over the next three years**.

The Vinimay Platform

- **Name**: **Vinimay (LPMS platform)**.
- **Inaugurated by**: **Union Home Minister**, at **Vigyan Bhawan**, **New Delhi**.
- **Developer**: **Land Ports Authority of India (LPAI)**.
- **Ministry**: **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)**.
- **Nature**: **Centralised, real-time electronic Single Window** for **land ports**.

Database Integrations in Vinimay

- **ICEGATE and CBIC**: For **customs filing and financial compliance tracking**.
- **BSF (Border Security Force)**: For **frontline physical border guarding and security verification**.
- **UIDAI**: For **biometric and identity checks**.
- **DGFT (Directorate General of Foreign Trade)**: For **trade licences**.
- **ULIP (Unified Logistics Interface Platform)**: For **logistics chain visibility**.
- **National Motor Vehicle System (NMVS)**: For **commercial vehicle tracking**.

Key Technology Features

- **Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR)** cameras at **entry and exit gates**.
- **Real-time inter-agency data sharing** on a **single dashboard**.
- **Pre-booked slot matching** for **arriving vehicles**.
- **Replacement of manual logbook entries** with **automated recording**.

What is the Unified Logistics Interface Platform (ULIP)?

- A **digital platform** under **PM Gati Shakti**, developed by the **Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH)** in partnership with the **NICDC**.
- **Aggregates data** from **multiple government and private logistics platforms**.
- **Standardises APIs** for **logistics integration**.
- Helps logistics players access **real-time data** on **vehicles, cargo, ports, warehouses, and connectivity**.

What is UIDAI?

- **Unique Identification Authority of India**, established under the **Aadhaar Act, 2016**.
- **Issues Aadhaar numbers** to **Indian residents**.
- Operates the world's **largest biometric identity database**.
- Provides **authentication services** to **banks, telecoms, government schemes, and other entities**.

What is ANPR Technology?

- **Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR)** uses **optical character recognition (OCR)** and **machine learning** to **read vehicle number plates** from **CCTV cameras**.
- Used in **tolling, e-challans, parking, traffic management, and border security**.
- **Reduces manual checks** and **provides instant data**.

India's Major Land Ports / Integrated Check Posts (ICPs)

- **Attari (India-Pakistan)**.
- **Petrapole, Sutarkandi, Dawki, Akhaura (India-Bangladesh)**.
- **Raxaul, Jogbani, Sunauli, Banbasa, Rupaidiha (India-Nepal)**.
- **Phuentsholing/Jaigaon (India-Bhutan)**.

- **Moreh, Avankhu (India-Myanmar)**.
- **15 active land ports** total at present.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the Vinimay platform of the Land Ports Authority of India, consider the following statements:

1. Vinimay is the LPMS platform that serves as a Single Electronic Window for operations across India's land ports.
2. It was developed by the Land Ports Authority of India (LPAI) under the Ministry of Home Affairs.
3. The platform was inaugurated at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi by the Union Home Minister.
4. Vinimay is a project of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, not the Ministry of Home Affairs.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **LPMS and Vinimay** are under the **Ministry of Home Affairs**, NOT the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.)

Q2. With reference to the performance metrics of the Vinimay platform, consider the following statements:

1. The platform eliminates nearly 90 per cent of physical paperwork.
2. Truck waiting times at the border are reduced by 40 to 60 per cent.
3. Gate processing times are reduced by 22 to 35 per cent.
4. The platform increases manual logbook entries to improve security.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the platform **eliminates manual logbook entries** through **ANPR automation**.)

Q3. With reference to the database integrations in the Vinimay platform, consider the following statements:

1. The platform integrates with ICEGATE and CBIC for customs filing and financial compliance tracking.
2. It integrates with BSF for frontline physical border guarding and security verification.
3. It integrates with UIDAI for biometric and identity checks, and with DGFT for trade licences.
4. The platform has no integration with the Unified Logistics Interface Platform (ULIP) or the National Motor Vehicle System.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; the platform **integrates with both ULIP and the National Motor Vehicle System** for **logistics and vehicle tracking**.)

Q4. With reference to India's land ports network, consider the following statements:

1. Vinimay currently covers India's 15 active land ports.
2. The platform has built-in capacity to onboard 11 more land ports over the next 3 years.
3. The Land Ports Authority of India (LPAI) was set up under the Land Ports Authority of India Act, 2010.
4. India's only land port with Pakistan is at Petrapole.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **India's main land port with Pakistan is at Attari**, NOT Petrapole. **Petrapole** is on the **India-Bangladesh border**.)

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because Vinimay is under the Ministry of Home Affairs.
2. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the platform eliminates manual logbook entries.
3. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the platform integrates with both ULIP and the National Motor Vehicle System.
4. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because India's main land port with Pakistan is at Attari.

Banking and Finance

1. RBI Issues Draft CCR Framework Aligned with Global Standards

Source: ET

Context

The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has issued **draft guidelines** for computing **banks' Counterparty Credit Risk (CCR)** from **derivative transactions** and the **capital requirements** for **bank exposures to Central Counterparties (CCPs)**. The new guidelines bring India's CCR framework **in line with international standards**, particularly the **Basel III standards**. The draft clarifies the **scope of CCR** across **both banking and trading book exposures**, treatment of **multiple margin agreements** and **multiple netting sets**, and **clearing arrangements** at **SEBI-recognised stock exchanges**. **Public feedback** is open until **1 July 2026**, and the guidelines will be **effective from 1 April 2027**.

The Draft Guidelines

- **Issuing authority**: **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)**.
- **Subject**: **Counterparty Credit Risk (CCR) framework** for **banks**.
- **Public feedback window**: Open until **1 July 2026**.
- **Effective date**: **1 April 2027**.
- **Alignment**: With **international (Basel) standards**.

Categories of Transactions Covered

- **Over-the-Counter (OTC) derivatives**.
- **Exchange-traded derivatives**.
- **Securities financing transactions (SFTs)**.
- **Long-settlement transactions** in the **banking book**.
- **OTC derivatives** include **repo-style and other transactions** booked in the **trading book**, separate from the **market risk capital requirement**.

What is Counterparty Credit Risk (CCR)?

- The **risk** that a **counterparty in a financial transaction** will **default before the final settlement** of the transaction.
- Unlike **traditional credit risk**, which arises from a **loan**, CCR arises from a **two-way contract** like a **derivative**.
- The **size of CCR is uncertain** because the **value of the contract changes** over time.
- **Major sources** of CCR: **OTC derivatives, repos, securities lending, and long-settlement transactions**.

What is a Derivative?

- A **financial contract** whose **value is derived** from an **underlying asset**, like **stocks, bonds, currencies, interest rates, commodities, or indices**.
- **Major types**:
  - **Forwards**: Customised contracts for future delivery.
  - **Futures**: Standardised, exchange-traded contracts.
  - **Options**: Contracts giving the right (not obligation) to buy or sell.
  - **Swaps**: Contracts to exchange cash flows over time.

OTC vs Exchange-Traded Derivatives

- **OTC derivatives**:
  - **Privately negotiated** between **two parties**.
  - **Customised terms**.
  - **Bilateral counterparty risk**.
  - Higher CCR.
- **Exchange-traded derivatives**:
  - **Standardised contracts**.
  - **Cleared through a Central Counterparty (CCP)**.
  - **Lower CCR** because the **CCP becomes the counterparty** to **both sides**.

What is a Central Counterparty (CCP)?

- A **clearing house** that **stands between two parties** in a **derivative transaction**, **acting as the buyer to every seller and the seller to every buyer**.
- This is called **novation**.
- Examples in India:
  - **Clearing Corporation of India Limited (CCIL)** for **G-secs and forex**.
  - **National Securities Clearing Corporation Limited (NSCCL)** of **NSE**.
  - **Indian Clearing Corporation Limited (ICCL)** of **BSE**.
  - **Multi Commodity Exchange Clearing Corporation (MCXCCL)** for **commodities**.
- **CCPs reduce systemic risk** by **centralising risk management**, **collateral**, and **margining**.

What are Banking and Trading Books?

- **Banking Book**: **Assets and liabilities** that a bank intends to **hold to maturity**, like **loans, advances, and HTM securities**. Subject to **credit risk capital requirements**.
- **Trading Book**: **Assets and liabilities** held for **trading purposes**, with **frequent buying and selling**. Subject to **market risk capital requirements**.

What is a "Netting Set" and "Margin Agreement"?

- **Netting Set**: A **group of transactions** between a bank and a **counterparty** that can be **legally netted off** (offset against each other) for **risk calculation purposes**.
- **Margin Agreement**: A **contract** that requires the **counterparty to post collateral (margin)** to **secure** their **obligations** in derivative transactions.
- Banks may have **multiple netting sets** and **multiple margin agreements** with the **same counterparty**.

What are Basel Standards?

- **International banking standards** issued by the **Basel Committee on Banking Supervision (BCBS)**.
- **Basel I (1988)**: Focused on **credit risk** and **minimum capital adequacy**.

- **Basel II (2004)**: Added **market risk, operational risk**, and **three pillars**.
- **Basel III (2010 onwards)**: Strengthened **capital, liquidity, and leverage standards**, especially after the **2008 Global Financial Crisis**.
- **Basel III also strengthened CCR requirements** in response to the **derivatives blowups** during **2008**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the RBI's draft Counterparty Credit Risk (CCR) framework, consider the following statements:

1. The draft framework brings India in line with international standards, particularly Basel III.
2. The categories covered include OTC derivatives, exchange-traded derivatives, securities financing transactions, and long-settlement transactions.
3. Public feedback on the draft is open until 1 July 2026, with the framework effective from 1 April 2027.
4. The draft framework completely excludes treatment of bank exposures to Central Counterparties (CCPs).

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the draft **specifically covers capital requirements for bank exposures to Central Counterparties (CCPs)**.)

Q2. With reference to Counterparty Credit Risk (CCR) and derivatives, consider the following statements:

1. CCR is the risk that a counterparty in a financial transaction will default before settlement.
2. OTC derivatives are privately negotiated between two parties and carry higher CCR.
3. Exchange-traded derivatives are cleared through Central Counterparties (CCPs), reducing CCR.
4. Notional value of a derivative is the same as its actual market value.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **notional value is the face value** of a contract, NOT its actual market value.)

Q3. With reference to Central Counterparties (CCPs) in India, consider the following statements:

1. The Clearing Corporation of India Limited (CCIL) acts as a CCP for G-secs and forex markets.
2. The National Securities Clearing Corporation Limited (NSCCL) is the clearing arm of NSE.
3. The Indian Clearing Corporation Limited (ICCL) is the clearing arm of BSE.
4. CCPs increase systemic risk in financial markets by centralising counterparty exposures.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **CCPs reduce systemic risk** by **centralising risk management, collateral, and margining**, NOT increase it.)

Q4. With reference to Basel standards and banking books, consider the following statements:

1. Basel III was strengthened in response to the 2008 Global Financial Crisis.
2. The banking book consists of assets held with intent to hold to maturity, like loans and HTM securities.
3. The trading book consists of assets held for active trading.
4. Basel I, introduced in 1988, focused primarily on operational risk and was the basis for India's banking regulations.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **Basel I focused primarily on credit risk and capital adequacy**, NOT operational risk.)

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the draft specifically covers bank exposures to CCPs.
2. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because notional value is the face value, not the actual market value.
3. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because CCPs reduce systemic risk by centralising risk management.
4. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because Basel I focused primarily on credit risk and capital adequacy.

Exam Relevance

Exam	Relevance
UPSC Prelims	GS Paper III on Indian Economy (RBI, CCR, Derivatives, Basel III, CCPs)
UPSC Mains	GS Paper III on Indian Economy, Banking, Financial Stability, Derivatives
BPSC and State PCS	Economy, Banking, Current Affairs
Banking (RBI Gr B, SBI PO, IBPS, NABARD)	Very high importance, CCR, Basel III, Derivatives, CCPs
RBI Grade B	Core area on banking and financial regulation

2. RBI Cancels Registration of 135 NBFCs

Source: Business Standard

Context

The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has **cancelled the Certificate of Registration (CoR) of 135 non-banking finance companies (NBFCs)**, including names like **Express Fincap House, Akshay Fiscal Services, Times Finance, Jupiter Projects, Jupiter Finvest, Essel Finance Business Loans, and Citiwide Financial Services**. **Most of these NBFCs were registered in West Bengal**. Separately, **13 NBFCs voluntarily surrendered their certificates** after **exiting the NBFI business**, **amalgamating, merging, dissolving, or being voluntarily struck off**. The action reflects the RBI's continued cleanup of the **NBFC sector** as part of its **supervisory and prudential oversight**.

The RBI Action

- **Action**: **Cancellation of Certificate of Registration (CoR)**.
- **Number of NBFCs**: **135**.
- **Sample names cancelled**:
  - **Express Fincap House**.
  - **Akshay Fiscal Services**.
  - **Times Finance (P)**.
  - **Jupiter Projects (P)** and **Jupiter Finvest**.
  - **Essel Finance Business Loans**.
  - **Citiwide Financial Services**.
- **Concentration**: **Most had registered offices in West Bengal**.

Voluntary Surrender of Licences

- **13 NBFCs** voluntarily **surrendered their CoRs**.
- Reasons:
  - **Exit from NBFI business**.
  - **Amalgamation, merger, dissolution, or voluntary strike off**.

What is an NBFC?

- A **Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC)** is a **company** registered under the **Companies Act**, engaged in the **business of loans and advances, acquisition of shares, stocks, bonds, debentures, leasing, hire-purchase, insurance, and chit business**.
- NBFCs do **not have a banking licence**, so they cannot:
  - Accept **demand deposits**.
  - Issue **cheques**.
  - Be part of the **payment and settlement system**.
- They are **regulated by the RBI** under the **RBI Act, 1934**.

What is the Certificate of Registration (CoR)?

- Issued by the **RBI** to **NBFCs** that meet **statutory and prudential requirements**.
- Mandatory for any **NBFC to operate** in India.
- Can be **cancelled** if the NBFC:
  - **Fails to meet capital requirements**.
  - **Violates RBI rules or directions**.
  - **Becomes inactive or ceases business**.
  - **Engages in fraudulent or unfair practices**.

Why is the RBI Cancelling Registrations?

- **Cleanup of the NBFC sector** to:
  - **Remove inactive or non-compliant entities**.
  - **Strengthen financial stability**.
  - **Protect customers from fraudulent or unregulated lending**.
  - **Reduce the size of the unregulated grey market**.
  - **Improve the credibility** of the **regulated NBFC sector**.
- Earlier RBI actions have already **cancelled CoRs** of **hundreds of small NBFCs** over recent years.

What is the Scale-Based Regulation (SBR) Framework for NBFCs?

- Introduced by the **RBI in October 2021**, effective **1 October 2022**.
- Classifies NBFCs into **4 layers** based on **size, activity, and risk perception**:
  - **NBFC-Base Layer (NBFC-BL)**:
    - NBFCs not accepting public deposits (NBFC-ND) with **asset size below ₹1,000 crore**.
    - **P2P lending platforms, Account Aggregators, NOFHCs**, and **NBFCs with no public funds and no customer interface**.
  - **NBFC-Middle Layer (NBFC-ML)**:
    - All **deposit-taking NBFCs (NBFC-D)**.
    - **Non-deposit taking NBFCs with asset size of ₹1,000 crore and above**.
    - **HFCs, IFCs, IDFs, CICs, SPDs**.
  - **NBFC-Upper Layer (NBFC-UL)**:
    - **Top 25 to 30 NBFCs** by **size, interconnectedness, complexity, and supervisory inputs**.

    - **Subject to enhanced regulation** akin to banks.
  - **NBFC-Top Layer (NBFC-TL)**:
    - Currently **empty**.
    - Reserved for **NBFCs that pose extreme systemic risk** (a kind of regulatory "red line").

Types of NBFCs (Activity-Based)

- **Asset Finance Company (AFC)**.
- **Loan Company (LC)**.
- **Investment Company (IC)**.
- **Infrastructure Finance Company (IFC)**.
- **Infrastructure Debt Fund (IDF)**.
- **Core Investment Company (CIC)**.
- **NBFC-Micro Finance Institution (NBFC-MFI)**.
- **NBFC-Factor**.
- **NBFC-Account Aggregator (NBFC-AA)**.
- **NBFC-Peer-to-Peer (NBFC-P2P)**.
- **Housing Finance Company (HFC)** (regulated by RBI since 2019).
- **Mortgage Guarantee Company (MGC)**.
- **Standalone Primary Dealers (SPDs)**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the RBI's recent action on NBFCs, consider the following statements:

1. The RBI has cancelled the Certificate of Registration (CoR) of 135 NBFCs.
2. Many of the NBFCs whose CoRs were cancelled had registered offices in West Bengal.
3. Thirteen NBFCs voluntarily surrendered their CoRs after exiting business or merging.
4. The cancellation of CoRs means the NBFCs can continue to operate without RBI oversight.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **cancellation of CoR means the NBFC cannot operate as an NBFC**, NOT continue operating without oversight.)

Q2. With reference to NBFCs in India, consider the following statements:

1. NBFCs are regulated by the Reserve Bank of India under the RBI Act, 1934.
2. NBFCs cannot accept demand deposits.
3. NBFCs cannot issue cheques drawn on themselves and are not part of the payment and settlement system.
4. NBFCs are licensed and regulated entirely by SEBI, not the RBI.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **NBFCs are licensed and regulated by the RBI**, NOT SEBI.)

Q3. With reference to the Scale-Based Regulation (SBR) framework for NBFCs, consider the following statements:

1. The SBR framework classifies NBFCs into four layers: Base, Middle, Upper, and Top.
2. The NBFC-Upper Layer typically covers the top 25 to 30 NBFCs based on size, complexity, and risk.

3. The NBFC-Top Layer is currently empty and reserved for NBFCs that pose extreme systemic risk.
4. The SBR framework was introduced by SEBI in 2021.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **SBR framework was introduced by the RBI**, NOT SEBI.)

Q4. With reference to specialised NBFC categories, consider the following statements:

1. NBFC-MFI (Microfinance Institution) provides micro loans to low-income borrowers.
2. NBFC-AA (Account Aggregator) is licensed to manage consent-based financial data sharing.
3. NBFC-P2P operates a peer-to-peer lending platform.
4. Housing Finance Companies (HFCs) are regulated by the SEBI since 2019.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **HFCs are regulated by the RBI since 2019**, NOT by SEBI.)

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because cancellation of CoR means the NBFC cannot operate as an NBFC.
2. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because NBFCs are licensed and regulated by the RBI, not SEBI.
3. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the SBR framework was introduced by the RBI, not SEBI.
4. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because HFCs are regulated by the RBI since 2019.

3. RBI Finalises Norms for Bank Lending to REITs and InvITs

Source: Business Standard

Context

The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has finalised **amended norms for bank lending to Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs) and Infrastructure Investment Trusts (InvITs)**. The new directions will be **effective from 1 October 2026**. The RBI has **replaced the earlier draft proposal** that required REITs/InvITs to complete **three years of operations**, with a **cash-flow-based eligibility criterion**, requiring at least **80 per cent of underlying assets to have generated positive operational cash flows for at least one year**. The RBI has also **allowed commercial banks to extend acquisition finance to REITs**, bringing them **on par with InvITs**, while **Small Finance Banks (SFBs) cannot extend acquisition finance to InvITs**. The **aggregate bank exposure cap of 49 per cent** of a trust's asset value has been **retained**.

The Key Change.

- **Earlier draft**: Required REITs/InvITs to complete **3 years of operations** to be eligible for **bank finance**.
- **Final norm**: At least **80 per cent of underlying assets** of a **REIT or InvIT** must have **generated positive cash flows from operations** for **at least 1 year**.
- This shifts the basis from **age of the trust** to the **track record of underlying assets**.

Risk Weights

- **Exposures to REITs**: To be treated as **Commercial Real Estate (CRE) exposures** with a **risk weight of 100 per cent**.
- If they qualify as **Capital Market Exposures**: **Risk weight of 125 per cent**.

Bank Exposure Limits

- Banks must set **internal limits** for their **aggregate real estate exposure**, with **sub-limits** for various subcategories.
- The **sub-limit for REIT exposure** is capped at a **prudential ceiling of 10 per cent** of the **bank's capital base**.

Aggregate Bank Exposure to a Single Trust

- The **combined exposure** of **all banks** to a **REIT or InvIT** and its **SPVs and holding companies** cannot exceed **49 per cent** of the **value of the trust's assets**.
- Lenders may use either the **latest annual valuation** or the **latest half-yearly valuation** of assets, **whichever is more recent**, to determine compliance.

What is a REIT?

- A **Real Estate Investment Trust (REIT)** is a **company or trust** that **owns, operates, or finances income-generating real estate**.
- It collects funds from many investors, invests in **rent-generating commercial properties** like **offices, malls, hotels**, and shares **rental income** with investors as **dividends or distributions**.
- Regulated by **SEBI under the SEBI (REIT) Regulations, 2014**.
- In India, listed REITs include **Embassy Office Parks REIT, Mindspace Business Parks REIT, Brookfield India REIT, Nexus Select Trust**, and **others**.

What is an InvIT?

- An **Infrastructure Investment Trust (InvIT)** is a **company or trust** that **owns and operates income-generating infrastructure assets**, like **roads, power transmission lines, airports, pipelines, telecom towers, renewable energy projects**.
- Regulated by **SEBI under the SEBI (InvIT) Regulations, 2014**.
- In India, listed InvITs include **IRB InvIT, India Grid Trust, IndInfravit Trust, PowerGrid InvIT, Bharat Highways InvIT**, and others.

Why Are These RBI Norms Important?

- REITs and InvITs are **growing fast** in India.
- **Banks** are an **important source of funding**, both **direct loans and acquisition finance**.
- The new norms:
  - **Ensure that bank lending is backed by stable, cash-generating assets**.
  - **Prevent overconcentration** of bank lending to **one trust or its SPVs**.
  - **Bring REITs and InvITs on par** in **acquisition finance** options.
  - **Strengthen financial stability**.
- They also help **maintain confidence** in **REITs and InvITs** as a **mature asset class**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the RBI's final norms on bank lending to REITs and InvITs, consider the following statements:

1. The norms come into effect from 1 October 2026.
2. At least 80 per cent of underlying assets of a REIT or InvIT must have generated positive operational cash flows for at least 1 year.
3. The aggregate bank exposure to a single REIT or InvIT and its SPVs/holding companies cannot exceed 49 per cent of the trust's asset value.
4. The earlier draft proposal that required REITs/InvITs to complete 3 years of operations has been

retained in the final norms.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **3-year operations requirement was dropped** in favour of a **cash-flow-based test**.)

Q2. With reference to risk weights and exposure limits under the new norms, consider the following statements:

1. Bank exposures to REITs will generally be treated as Commercial Real Estate (CRE) exposures, with a risk weight of 100 per cent.
2. If such exposures qualify as Capital Market Exposures, the risk weight will be 125 per cent.
3. The sub-limit for a bank's aggregate exposure to REITs is subject to a prudential ceiling of 10 per cent of the bank's capital base.
4. The RBI has removed all internal exposure limits and prudential ceilings for banks lending to REITs and InvITs.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **RBI has retained internal exposure limits and a prudential ceiling**.)

Q3. With reference to REITs and InvITs in India, consider the following statements:

1. REITs and InvITs are regulated by SEBI under separate regulations issued in 2014.
2. REITs typically own and operate income-generating real estate like offices, malls, and hotels.
3. InvITs own and operate income-generating infrastructure assets like roads, power transmission lines, and pipelines.
4. REITs and InvITs are regulated by the Reserve Bank of India under the Banking Regulation Act, 1949.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **REITs and InvITs are regulated by SEBI**, NOT by the RBI under the Banking Regulation Act.)

Q4. With reference to specific provisions of the new RBI norms, consider the following statements:

1. Commercial banks can now extend acquisition finance to REITs, bringing them on par with InvITs.
2. Small Finance Banks (SFBs) cannot extend acquisition finance to InvITs.
3. Restrictions on bullet-and-balloon repayment structures are retained for bank loans to REITs and InvITs.
4. The RBI has allowed land financing through REITs and InvITs as part of the new norms.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **RBI did not accept requests to permit land financing through REITs and InvITs**.)

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the 3-year operations requirement was dropped in favour of a cash-flow-based test.
2. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the RBI has retained internal exposure limits and a prudential ceiling.

3. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because REITs and InvITs are regulated by SEBI, not the RBI.
4. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the RBI did not allow land financing through REITs and InvITs.

4. EAC-PM Paper Flags Regional Imbalances in Priority Sector Lending

Source: BS

Context

A recent **working paper** by the **Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM)** has flagged **sharp regional imbalances** in **Priority Sector Lending (PSL)** in India. Using **district-level quarterly data from 2020 to 2025** covering **over 95 per cent of scheduled commercial bank credit**, the study finds that **fewer than 10 per cent of districts** account for **over 45 per cent of PSL advances**. Districts with the **lowest existing PSL penetration** show the **weakest economic response to additional lending**, suggesting that **infrastructure, connectivity, and administrative capacity** matter as much as credit. The editorial argues for a **periodic recalibration of the PSL framework**, including more use of **PSLCs**, bank **specialisation**, and **district-level targeting**.

The Big Imbalance

- **Fewer than 10 per cent of districts** account for **over 45 per cent of all PSL advances**.
- **Credit is concentrated** in **relatively developed states** and **urbanised districts**.
- **Eastern India, the Northeast, and Himalayan regions** are largely **underserved**.
- **Lowest PSL penetration districts** show the **weakest economic response** to **additional lending**.

What the EAC-PM Paper Recommends

- **Strengthen market-based instruments** like **PSLCs**.
- Allow **banks to specialise** in terms of **comparative strength**.
- Improve **district-level targeting** of PSL.
- Combine **credit expansion** with **investment in infrastructure and institutional capacity**.
- Periodically **review PSL targets and sub-targets** to **reflect a changing economy**.

What is Priority Sector Lending (PSL)?

- A **regulatory mandate** by the **RBI** that requires **banks** to **allocate a certain percentage** of their **adjusted net bank credit (ANBC)** to **specific sectors** considered **important for inclusive growth**.
- Aimed at:
  - **Agriculture and allied activities**.
  - **MSMEs**.
  - **Education**.
  - **Housing for the weaker sections**.
  - **Social infrastructure**.
  - **Renewable energy**.
  - **Export credit (in some cases)**.
  - **Weaker sections** of society.

PSL Targets by Bank Type (Locked-in Numbers)

- **Domestic Commercial Banks** and **Foreign Banks with 20+ branches**: **40 per cent of ANBC**.
- **Regional Rural Banks (RRBs)**: **75 per cent of ANBC**.
- **Small Finance Banks (SFBs)**: **60 per cent of ANBC**.

- **Foreign Banks with less than 20 branches**: **40 per cent of ANBC**.
- **Urban Co-operative Banks (UCBs)**: **60 per cent of ANBC**.

Key Sub-Targets within PSL

- **Agriculture**: **18 per cent of ANBC** (with **10 per cent for Small and Marginal Farmers**).
- **Micro Enterprises**: **7.5 per cent of ANBC**.
- **Weaker Sections**: **12 per cent of ANBC**.

What is a Priority Sector Lending Certificate (PSLC)?

- A **market-based instrument** that allows **banks** to **buy and sell PSL obligations**.
- Banks with **surplus PSL lending** can **sell PSLCs**.
- Banks **falling short** of PSL targets can **buy PSLCs** to **comply**.
- **Four PSLC categories**: **Agriculture, Small and Marginal Farmers, Micro Enterprises, and General**.
- Introduced based on the recommendations of the **Raghuram Rajan Committee, 2008**.

What is the Rural Infrastructure Development Fund (RIDF)?

- A **fund maintained by NABARD**, set up in **1995-96**.
- Receives **contributions from banks** that **fall short** of **PSL targets**, especially in **agriculture and weaker sections**.
- The fund is **used to finance rural infrastructure** like **rural roads, bridges, irrigation, watershed development, social-sector infrastructure**, and **rural schools**.
- Acts as a **buffer mechanism** for **PSL shortfalls**.

What is the EAC-PM?

- The **Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM)** is an **independent body**.
- It **advises the PM on economic issues**, including **growth, monetary policy, public finance, employment, social welfare, and competitiveness**.
- It produces **policy papers, working papers, and reviews** on important economic themes.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the EAC-PM working paper on Priority Sector Lending (PSL), consider the following statements:

1. Fewer than 10 per cent of districts account for over 45 per cent of all PSL advances.
2. PSL credit is heavily concentrated in relatively developed states and urbanised districts.
3. Districts with the lowest existing PSL penetration show the weakest economic response to additional lending.
4. The EAC-PM working paper recommends abolishing the PSL framework altogether.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the EAC-PM paper recommends **recalibrating the PSL framework**, NOT **abolishing it**.)

Q2. With reference to the institutional differences in PSL delivery in India, consider the following statements:

1. Small Finance Banks (SFBs) on average extended close to 100 per cent of their ANBC directly to priority sectors during the study period.
2. State Bank of India's direct PSL exposure was around 26.5 per cent, with greater reliance on PSLCs.
3. Banks falling short of PSL targets contribute to NABARD's Rural Infrastructure Development Fund (RIDF).

4. Private banks depended more heavily on direct lending and less on market-based PSL compliance mechanisms.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **private banks depended more heavily on market-based PSL compliance mechanisms** like **PSLCs**, NOT direct lending.)

Q3. With reference to PSL targets in India, consider the following statements:

1. Domestic commercial banks and foreign banks with 20+ branches have a PSL target of 40 per cent of ANBC.
2. Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) have a PSL target of 75 per cent of ANBC.
3. Small Finance Banks (SFBs) have a PSL target of 60 per cent of ANBC.
4. Urban Co-operative Banks (UCBs) have a PSL target of 90 per cent of ANBC.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **UCBs have a PSL target of 60 per cent**, NOT 90 per cent.)

Q4. With reference to PSL components and reforms, consider the following statements:

1. Agriculture's sub-target under PSL is 18 per cent of ANBC, including 10 per cent for Small and Marginal Farmers.
2. The Weaker Sections sub-target under PSL is 12 per cent of ANBC.
3. In 2025-26, micro and small enterprises overtook agriculture as the single-largest component of PSL.
4. PSLCs were introduced based on the recommendations of the Raghuram Rajan Committee on Financial Sector Reforms (2008).

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the EAC-PM paper recommends recalibrating the PSL framework, not abolishing it.
2. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because private banks depended more on PSLC-based compliance, not direct lending.
3. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because UCBs have a PSL target of 60 per cent, not 90 per cent.
4. (d), All four statements are correct.

5. SEBI Proposes Overhaul of Executive Remuneration Disclosures by Mutual Fund AMCs

Source: Business Standard

Context

The **Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)** has proposed a **significant overhaul of executive remuneration disclosures** by **mutual fund Asset Management Companies (AMCs)**. The **consultation paper**, released on Tuesday, proposes **replacing individual, name-wise disclosures** with **consolidated compensation data**. The move follows industry concerns about **privacy, data protection, and limited investor relevance** of individual disclosures. SEBI has also said its analysis shows that **the employees covered under the current disclosure norms** are **only a small proportion** of the **overall AMC workforce**. **Public comments** on the proposal are open until **30 June 2026**. However, **legal experts have cautioned**

that this could **weaken an important governance tool**.

The Current Disclosure Framework (Existing Norms)

- AMCs must disclose the **names, designations, and remuneration** of:
  - **Chief Executive Officer (CEO)**.
  - **Chief Investment Officer (CIO)**.
  - **Chief Operating Officer (COO)**.
  - **Top 10 employees by pay**.
  - **All employees earning above prescribed remuneration thresholds**.

The Proposed Overhaul (New Norms)

- **Replace individual name-wise disclosures** with **consolidated remuneration figures** and **employee counts** across categories.
- Disclose **aggregate remuneration** paid to:
  - **Senior executives**.
  - **Top-paid employees**.
  - **Employees crossing salary thresholds**.
- Disclose the **number of employees** under each category.

What is an Asset Management Company (AMC)?

- A **company** that **manages mutual fund schemes** on behalf of **investors**.
- Approved and regulated by **SEBI under the SEBI (Mutual Funds) Regulations, 1996**.
- Major Indian AMCs include **SBI Mutual Fund, HDFC AMC, ICICI Prudential AMC, Nippon Life India AMC, Aditya Birla Sun Life AMC, Kotak Mahindra AMC, Axis AMC**, and many more.

What is a Mutual Fund?

- A **collective investment vehicle** that pools money from **multiple investors** to **invest in a diversified portfolio** of **stocks, bonds, money market instruments, and other securities**.
- Schemes include **equity, debt, hybrid, index, ELSS, sectoral, ETF, FoF**, and so on.
- Each scheme is **managed by a fund manager** under the **AMC**.
- Investors hold **units** that **reflect their share** of the **portfolio**.

The Mutual Fund Structure in India

- **Sponsor**: Sets up the mutual fund, like a **promoter**.
- **Trustees**: Hold the **fund's assets** in **trust for investors** and **oversee the AMC**.
- **AMC**: Manages the **fund and its schemes**.
- **Custodian**: **Holds the securities** of the mutual fund.
- **Registrar and Transfer Agent (RTA)**: Maintains **investor records** and **transactions**.
- **Regulator**: **SEBI** under the **SEBI (Mutual Funds) Regulations, 1996**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to SEBI's proposed overhaul of executive remuneration disclosures by mutual fund AMCs, consider the following statements:

1. The proposal replaces individual name-wise disclosures with consolidated remuneration figures and employee counts.
2. The proposal makes scheme-level fund manager remuneration available only on request to investors in that scheme.
3. The proposal is open for public comments until 30 June 2026.

4. The proposal continues to require name-wise disclosure of remuneration for the CEO, CIO, and COO of all AMCs.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the proposal **replaces name-wise disclosure** with **consolidated remuneration data**.)

Q2. With reference to mutual fund structure in India, consider the following statements:

1. The sponsor is the promoter who sets up the mutual fund.
2. The trustees hold the fund's assets in trust for investors and oversee the AMC.
3. The AMC is the entity that manages the mutual fund's schemes.
4. The Reserve Bank of India is the regulator of mutual funds in India.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **mutual funds are regulated by SEBI**, NOT the RBI.)

Q3. With reference to investment vehicles regulated by SEBI, consider the following statements:

1. Portfolio Management Services (PMS) in India typically require a minimum investment of ₹50 lakh.
2. Alternative Investment Funds (AIFs) have three categories under SEBI regulations.
3. PMS and AIFs are not subject to mutual fund-style individual remuneration disclosure norms.
4. Mutual funds, PMS, and AIFs are all regulated by IRDAI in India.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **mutual funds, PMS, and AIFs are all regulated by SEBI**, NOT IRDAI.)

Q4. With reference to the governance debate raised in the editorial, consider the following statements:

1. SEBI argues that the current disclosure framework covers only a small proportion of AMC employees.
2. AMCs argue that public disclosure of individual remuneration could place them at a disadvantage in competing for talent with PMS and AIFs.
3. Legal experts caution that reducing individual disclosures could weaken an important governance accountability tool.
4. The government has officially banned all forms of executive remuneration disclosure in India.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **executive remuneration disclosure is not banned** in India; it is **partly being recalibrated** for AMCs.)

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the proposal replaces name-wise disclosure with consolidated data.
2. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because mutual funds are regulated by SEBI, not the RBI.
3. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because mutual funds, PMS, and AIFs are all regulated by SEBI, not IRDAI.
4. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because executive remuneration disclosure is

not banned in India.

Agriculture

1. Chhattisgarh CM Vishnu Deo Sai's Village Visits

Source: Indian Express

Context

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai has been undertaking **unannounced village visits** under the **Sushasan Tihar 2026 (Good Governance Festival) initiative**, where **villagers approach him with development requests**. As reported by the **Indian Express**, requests across districts have included **GI tags for local rice varieties**, **irrigation projects**, and **welfare items like sewing machines**. The visits combine **direct community interaction, on-the-spot decisions, and ground-level inspection** of schemes like the **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana**, **Mahtari Vandan Yojana**, **Krishak Unnati Yojana**, and the **SAMRIDHI-M-CAD irrigation scheme**.

The Initiative

- **Initiative name**: **Sushasan Tihar 2026 (Good Governance Festival)**.
- **Format**: **Unannounced visits** by the CM to **villages** across **Chhattisgarh**.
- **Approach**: **Real-time governance**, **on-the-spot decision-making**, and **ground-level verification**.

Examples of Schemes Reaching the Ground

- **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY)** housing.
- **Mahtari Vandan Yojana** (Chhattisgarh's women's welfare cash transfer scheme).
- **Krishak Unnati Yojana** (Chhattisgarh's farmer income support scheme).
- **SAMRIDHI-M-CAD** (Modernisation of Command Area Development) for irrigation, launched in **April 2025** under the **Union Ministry of Jal Shakti**.

What is a GI Tag?

- A **Geographical Indication (GI)** is a **sign used on products** with a **specific geographical origin**, possessing **qualities or a reputation** due to that origin.
- Recognised under the **Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999**.
- Administered by the **Office of the Controller General of Patents, Designs and Trademarks** under the **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)**.
- India has registered **about 700+ GI tags** so far.
- Examples include **Darjeeling Tea, Basmati Rice, Kanchipuram Silk, Mysore Silk, Banarasi Saree, Chanderi Sarees, Pochampally Ikat, Madhubani Paintings, Mithila Makhana, Chak-Hao Black Rice**, and many more.

Existing Rice GI Tags in India

- **Basmati Rice** (multiple states in the IGP region).
- **Pokkali Rice (Kerala)**.
- **Wayanad Jeerakasala Rice (Kerala)**.
- **Wayanad Gandhakasala Rice (Kerala)**.
- **Kaipad Rice (Kerala)**.
- **Navara Rice (Kerala)**.
- **Palakkadan Matta Rice (Kerala)**.
- **Joha Rice (Assam)**.

- **Boka Chaul (Assam)**.
- **Chokuwa Rice (Assam)**.
- **Katarni Rice (Bihar)**.
- **Marcha Rice (Bihar)**.
- **Chak-Hao Black Rice (Manipur)**.
- **Bhopal Sharbati Rice (Madhya Pradesh)**.

What is SAMRIDHI-M-CAD?

- **Modernisation of Command Area Development and Water Management Programme**.
- Launched in **April 2025** under the **Union Ministry of Jal Shakti**.
- Aims to **modernise irrigation infrastructure** with **pressurised irrigation, micro-irrigation, GIS-based water budgeting, and Water Users' Committee management**.
- Targets **water-use efficiency**, in line with the **"more crop per drop"** vision.

What is Mahtari Vandan Yojana?

- A **flagship scheme** of the **Chhattisgarh Government** under **CM Vishnu Deo Sai**.
- Provides **monthly cash transfers** to **married women** in the state (about **₹1,000 per month**).
- A **fiscal transfer** aimed at **women's economic empowerment**.

What is Krishak Unnati Yojana?

- A **scheme** that provides **additional income support to farmers** in **Chhattisgarh**, on top of the **MSP**.
- Designed to **address farm income volatility** and **boost agricultural livelihoods**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the Geographical Indication (GI) tag system in India, consider the following statements:

1. GI tags are governed by the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999.
2. The GI Registry is administered by the DPIIT under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
3. India has registered about 700+ GI tags so far.
4. Darjeeling Tea was India's first registered GI product.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Q2. With reference to existing rice GI tags in India, consider the following statements:

1. Chak-Hao Black Rice is a GI-tagged rice from Manipur.
2. Pokkali Rice, Navara Rice, and Palakkadan Matta Rice are GI-tagged rice varieties from Kerala.
3. Joha Rice and Boka Chaul are GI-tagged rice varieties from Assam.
4. Marcha Rice and Katarni Rice are GI-tagged rice varieties from Bihar.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Q3. With reference to the SAMRIDHI-M-CAD scheme and lift irrigation projects, consider the following statements:

1. SAMRIDHI-M-CAD is a Central scheme under the Ministry of Jal Shakti for the modernisation of command area development.
2. It was launched in April 2025.
3. The Bagia lift irrigation project in Jashpur, Chhattisgarh, will cover about 4,933 hectares of land across

13 villages.
4. SAMRIDHI-M-CAD is implemented by the Ministry of Defence.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **SAMRIDHI-M-CAD is implemented by the Ministry of Jal Shakti**, NOT the Ministry of Defence.)

Q4. With reference to Chhattisgarh, consider the following statements:

1. Chhattisgarh was carved out of Madhya Pradesh on 1 November 2000.
2. The state is often called the "Rice Bowl of India" because of its rich heritage of traditional rice varieties.
3. Tribals form a significant portion of Chhattisgarh's population, including communities like Gond, Halba, Kanwar, Baiga, and Korwa.
4. Vishnu Deo Sai became the Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh in December 2023, succeeding Bhupesh Baghel.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Answer Key

1. (d), All four statements are correct.
2. (d), All four statements are correct.
3. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because SAMRIDHI-M-CAD is implemented by the Ministry of Jal Shakti.
4. (d), All four statements are correct.

Exam Relevance

NABARD Grade A	Very high importance, irrigation, agriculture, GI tags, rural welfare

Facts To Remember

1. India Ranks 2nd Globally in FIFA World Cup Content Consumption

As the **FIFA World Cup 2026** unfolds (jointly hosted by the **USA, Canada, and Mexico**), Indian brands are tapping into the **global soccer showpiece** for **consumer mindshare**. Data from **Taboola**, a performance advertising platform, ranks **India as the second-most engaged market globally**, **after the US**, for **World Cup related content consumption**, with **9.7 million page-views** over the past **90 days.**

2. CCEA Approves ₹24,249 Crore National Highway Projects Across Four States

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA), chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved four major National Highway projects worth ₹24,249 crore across Odisha, Telangana, Bihar, and Madhya Pradesh. Covering more than 700 km, the projects aim to improve regional connectivity, reduce travel time, ease congestion, and strengthen logistics infrastructure under the PM GatiShakti National Master Plan.

3. India Joins Anthropic's Project Glasswing for Advanced Cybersecurity

India joined Anthropic's Project Glasswing, a global cybersecurity initiative that provides access to Claude Mythos AI, an advanced artificial intelligence system designed to identify software vulnerabilities and strengthen cyber defence capabilities. The initiative aims to enhance the protection of critical digital

infrastructure and improve cybersecurity resilience.

4. India–UK Critical Minerals Supply Chain Observatory Launched

Union Minister G. Kishan Reddy and UK Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper jointly launched the India–UK Critical Minerals Global Supply Chain Observatory in New Delhi. The initiative seeks to strengthen cooperation in critical minerals, support clean energy transitions, improve supply chain resilience, and promote evidence-based policymaking.

5. PFRDA Launches 'StAR NPS' Digital Onboarding Platform

The Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) launched the StAR NPS platform to simplify and streamline subscriber onboarding for the National Pension System (NPS). PFRDA also introduced a Regulatory Sandbox Framework to encourage innovation and controlled testing of new pension-sector solutions.

6. ANRF-Backed Research and Innovation Portal Announced

Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh announced a new digital portal supported by the Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF) to strengthen India's research and innovation ecosystem. The platform will provide support for scientific writing, patent filing, intellectual property protection, and research publication processes.

7. 17 Projects Selected for National Awards for e-Governance 2026

The Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances selected 17 projects and initiatives for the National Awards for e-Governance (NAeG) 2026. The awards recognize excellence in digital governance, innovation, and technology-enabled public service delivery across government institutions and local bodies.

8. Major Prabhat Mishra Wins Two Prestigious US Military Awards

Major Prabhat Mishra of the Indian Army received the Birrer-Brookes Award and the General Douglas MacArthur Military Leadership Writing Award at the United States Army Command and General Staff College. He became the first Indian officer to win both honours simultaneously.

9. Neelkanth Mishra Appointed Executive Director of the World Bank

The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet approved the appointment of economist Neelkanth Mishra as Executive Director of the World Bank for a three-year term. He currently serves as Chief Economist at Axis Bank and has extensive experience in global economic research.

10. SoftBank Sells 3.25% Stake in Lenskart

SoftBank Group sold a 3.25% stake in Lenskart Solutions through an open market transaction worth ₹2,873 crore. The transaction reduced SoftBank's shareholding in the eyewear company while generating substantial returns on its investment.

11. India's First Flex-Fuel Passenger Vehicle Launched

Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri launched India's first flex-fuel passenger vehicle, the Maruti Suzuki Wagon R Flex Fuel, capable of operating on ethanol-petrol blends ranging from E20 to E100. The launch supports India's ethanol-based mobility and clean energy objectives.

12. KS Bharat Retires from International Cricket

Indian wicketkeeper-batter K. S. Bharat announced his retirement from international cricket after

representing India in seven Test matches. He will now pursue opportunities in overseas T20 leagues.

13. Former Lok Sabha Secretary-General Subhash C. Kashyap Passes Away

Renowned constitutional expert, author, and former Lok Sabha Secretary-General Subhash C. Kashyap passed away at the age of 97. He was widely respected for his contributions to parliamentary affairs, constitutional studies, and democratic governance.

14. Former CBFC Chairman Pahlaj Nihalani Passes Away

Veteran film producer and former Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) Chairman Pahlaj Nihalani passed away at the age of 76. He was known for producing several successful Bollywood films and for his leadership in the Indian film industry.

15. International Day for the Fight Against IUU Fishing Observed

The International Day for the Fight Against Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing was observed on 5 June 2026. The day highlights the need to combat illegal fishing practices and promote sustainable marine resource management.

16. International Level Crossing Awareness Day 2026 Observed

International Level Crossing Awareness Day (ILCAD) was observed on 5 June 2026 with the theme “Alert Today, Safe Tomorrow.” The observance promotes awareness about railway crossing safety and encourages responsible road-user behaviour.

17. Tamil Nadu Signs ₹18,600 Crore Investment Pact with L&T

The Government of Tamil Nadu signed an MoU with Larsen & Toubro (L&T) for investments worth ₹18,600 crore across data centres, electronics manufacturing, and shipyard expansion projects. The investments are expected to generate significant employment and strengthen industrial growth in the state.

FIVE TO REMEMBER · 11 JUNE 2026

1. **JPMorgan GBI-EM Global Diversified Index**: India included **June 2024 onwards**, **phased over 10 months** to reach **10 per cent weight**. Bloomberg Global Aggregate Bond Index
2. Launched in **April 2025** under the **Union Ministry of Jal Shakti**. Chhattisgarh CM Vishnu Deo Sai's Village Visits
3. **Basel II (2004)**: Added **market risk, operational risk**, and **three pillars**. RBI Issues Draft CCR Framework Aligned with Glo…
4. **Earlier draft**: Required REITs/InvITs to complete **3 years of operations** to be eligible for **bank finance**. RBI Finalises Norms for Bank Lending to REITs a…
5. **Unique Identification Authority of India**, established under the **Aadhaar Act, 2016**. LPMS Inaugurated as "Vinimay" at Vigyan Bhawan

Now test yourself: c4scourses.in/daily-quiz/daily-quiz-11-june-2026/

DAY 9 OF 18

12 & 13 June 2026

24 items · 4 topics

National Affairs **1** · Banking and Finance **3** · Agriculture **3** · Facts To Remember **17**

Context

The **United Nations carbon market** has **officially issued its first-ever carbon credits** under **Article 6.4 of the Paris Agreement** for a **clean-cooking project in Myanmar**. The credits are issued for **replacing traditional wood-fired stoves** with **clean-cooking stoves** in communities in Myanmar's **central Dry Zone**, including the **conflict-affected Sagaing Region**. The **Republic of Korea (South Korea)** is the **partner nation** that will use part of the credits for its **Emissions Trading System (ETS) compliance**, while the **rest supports Myanmar's NDC goals**. The project marks the **transition** of the **Kyoto Protocol's Clean Development Mechanism (CDM)** to the **Paris Agreement's Article 6.4 mechanism**, but has drawn **criticism** over the **military junta's control** of Myanmar's **environment ministry**.

The First-Ever Credits

- **First carbon credits** issued under **Article 6.4** of the **Paris Agreement**.
- **Project**: **Clean-cooking stoves** replacing **wood-fired stoves**.
- **Host nation**: **Myanmar** (Dry Zone, including the **Sagaing Region**).
- **Partner nation**: **Republic of Korea (South Korea)**.
- **Governing authority**: **Article 6.4 Supervisory Body** of the **UN Paris Agreement Crediting Mechanism**.

What is a Carbon Credit?

- A **tradeable certificate or permit** that represents the **verified reduction, avoidance, or removal** of **1 metric tonne of CO2** or its **equivalent greenhouse gas (CO2e)** from the atmosphere.
- Designed as **high-integrity assets** that **funnel international finance** toward **sustainable climate solutions**.

How the Project Works

- **Step 1 (Deployment)**: **Clean-cooking stoves** replace **traditional wood-fired stoves**, reducing **fuel consumption** and improving **household energy efficiency**.
- **Step 2 (Emissions Tracking)**: **Lower firewood use** cuts **indoor air pollution** and **deforestation**.
- **Step 3 (Verification)**: The UN verifies **avoided emissions** using **updated scientific baselines** and issues **fewer credits** to ensure **environmental integrity**.
- **Step 4 (Cross-Border Transfer)**: A **portion of credits** transferred to **South Korea** for **ETS compliance**, with the **rest supporting Myanmar's NDC goals**.

What is Article 6 of the Paris Agreement?

- **Article 6** of the **Paris Agreement** (2015) provides the **framework for international cooperation** on **climate action**, particularly through **carbon markets**.
- **Three main sub-articles**:
  - **Article 6.2**: **Bilateral or multilateral cooperative approaches** between countries via **Internationally Transferred Mitigation Outcomes (ITMOs)**.
  - **Article 6.4**: A **centralised mechanism** under **UN supervision**, often called the **Paris Agreement Crediting Mechanism (PACM)** or **Sustainable Development Mechanism (SDM)**. **Replaces the Kyoto CDM**.

- **Article 6.8**: **Non-market approaches** for **cooperation** without **carbon credit trading**.

What is the CDM and How is Article 6.4 Different?

- **Clean Development Mechanism (CDM)** was established under the **Kyoto Protocol (1997)**.
- Allowed **developed countries** to **earn emission reduction credits** by **funding projects** in **developing countries**.
- **Issues**: Concerns over **integrity, additionality, double counting**, and **lax verification**.
- **Article 6.4 mechanism**:
  - **Stricter additionality and verification standards**.
  - **No double counting** (via **Corresponding Adjustments**).
  - **Conservative baselines** to ensure **environmental integrity**.
  - **Public consultation and appeal mechanisms**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the first-ever carbon credits issued under Article 6.4 of the Paris Agreement, consider the following statements:

1. The credits are issued for a clean-cooking project in Myanmar.
2. The Republic of Korea (South Korea) is the partner nation.
3. The credits are issued by the Article 6.4 Supervisory Body of the UN Paris Agreement Crediting Mechanism.
4. The project is one of the last to operate under the Kyoto Protocol's CDM, with no link to the Paris Agreement.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the project is **transitioning to the Paris Agreement's Article 6.4 mechanism**, NOT operating under the Kyoto CDM.)

Q2. With reference to Article 6 of the Paris Agreement, consider the following statements:

1. Article 6.2 allows bilateral or multilateral cooperative approaches via ITMOs (Internationally Transferred Mitigation Outcomes).
2. Article 6.4 is a centralised UN-supervised carbon market, sometimes called the Paris Agreement Crediting Mechanism (PACM).
3. Article 6.8 covers non-market approaches for cooperation without carbon credit trading.
4. Article 6 prohibits any form of international cooperation in climate action.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **Article 6 enables international cooperation** through **markets and non-market approaches**, NOT prohibits it.)

Q3. With reference to the CDM and Article 6.4 mechanism, consider the following statements:

1. The Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) was established under the Kyoto Protocol (1997).
2. The Article 6.4 mechanism replaces the CDM with stricter additionality and verification standards.
3. The Article 6.4 mechanism uses Corresponding Adjustments to prevent double counting.
4. The Article 6.4 mechanism allows credit transfers without any verification or accounting checks.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; the Article 6.4 mechanism **requires strict verification, baselines, and Corresponding Adjustments**.)

Q4. With reference to India's carbon market and climate position, consider the following statements:

1. India's Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS) was notified in 2023.
2. The CCTS is administered by the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) under the Ministry of Power.
3. India has committed to Net Zero by 2070 under its updated NDC.
4. India is not a party to the Paris Agreement.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **India is a party to the Paris Agreement**, having ratified it on **2 October 2016**.)

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the project is transitioning to Article 6.4, not operating under the Kyoto CDM.
2. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because Article 6 enables international cooperation.
3. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the Article 6.4 mechanism requires strict verification.
4. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because India is a party to the Paris Agreement.

National Affairs

1. Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Emerges as Nationwide Movement Promoting Girl Child Empowerment

Source: News on Air

Context

The **Government of India's flagship initiative**, **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP)**, has emerged as a **nationwide movement** promoting **behavioural change** and **empowering the girl child**. Launched in **January 2015**, the scheme was designed to address the **declining Child Sex Ratio (CSR)** and **gender-based discrimination**. According to the **Ministry of Women and Child Development**, key indicators have **improved over the decade**: the **Sex Ratio at Birth (SRB)** has improved from **918 (2014-15) to 929 (2024-25)** per HMIS data, and **girls' enrolment at secondary level** has risen from **75.51 per cent (2014-15) to 80.2 per cent (2024-25)** per UDISE data. The scheme continues to focus on **community engagement, awareness, and inter-ministerial convergence**.

The Scheme at a Glance

- **Name**: **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP)**.
- **Launched**: **22 January 2015** at **Panipat, Haryana** by **PM Narendra Modi**.
- **Implementing ministry**: **Ministry of Women and Child Development (MoWCD)**.
- **Convergent ministries**: **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW)** and **Ministry of Education (MoE)**.
- **Aim**: **Address declining Child Sex Ratio (CSR) and Sex Ratio at Birth (SRB)** and **promote girls' education and empowerment**.

Three-Pillar Objective

- **Prevent gender-biased sex-selective elimination**.
- **Ensure survival and protection** of the girl child.
- **Ensure education and participation** of the girl child.

Key Achievements Over the Decade

- **Sex Ratio at Birth (SRB)**: improved from **918 (2014-15) to 929 (2024-25)** per **HMIS** data.
- **Girls' enrolment at secondary level**: increased from **75.51 per cent (2014-15) to 80.2 per cent (2024-25)** per **UDISE** data.
- **Greater institutional deliveries** preventing **gender-biased sex selection**.
- **Significant community awareness and behaviour change** across India.

Linked Schemes for Girl Child

- **Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana (SSY, 2015)**: Small savings scheme for girls.
- **Mahila Shakti Kendra (2017)**: Convergent women empowerment platform.
- **PM Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)**: Cash transfer for first-time mothers.
- **Anganwadi-based pre-school and ICDS**: Early childhood development.
- **Kishori Shakti Yojana / SAG (Scheme for Adolescent Girls)**: For adolescent girls.
- **One Stop Centres (Sakhi)**: For women in distress.
- **Mission Shakti**: Umbrella scheme covering "Sambal" (safety) and "Samarthya" (empowerment) sub-schemes.

Why is the Sex Ratio at Birth Important?

- **Sex Ratio at Birth (SRB)**: The **number of girls born per 1,000 boys**.
- A **natural SRB** is **around 950 girls per 1,000 boys**.
- India's **historical SRB** has been **skewed against girls** due to **gender-biased sex selection**.
- A **declining SRB** signals **deep-rooted gender discrimination**.

Sex Ratio vs Child Sex Ratio vs Sex Ratio at Birth

- **Sex Ratio (SR)**: The **number of females per 1,000 males** in the **entire population**.
- **Child Sex Ratio (CSR)**: The **number of girls per 1,000 boys** in the **0-6 years age group**.
- **Sex Ratio at Birth (SRB)**: The **number of girls born per 1,000 boys** in a given year.

India's Key Indicators (Latest)

- **Overall Sex Ratio** (Census 2011): **943 females per 1,000 males**.
- **Census 2011 Child Sex Ratio (0-6 years)**: **919 girls per 1,000 boys**.
- **SRS data** (latest): **SRB around 929-930 girls per 1,000 boys**.
- **NFHS-5 (2019-21)**: **Sex Ratio at 1,020 females per 1,000 males** (in households).

India's Performance on Global Gender Indicators

- **WEF Global Gender Gap Report 2024**: India ranked **129 out of 146 countries**.
- **UNDP Gender Inequality Index 2024**: India improved in recent years.
- **UN SDG 5 (Gender Equality)**: India has made **steady progress** in **education** and **health**, though **economic participation** remains a **challenge**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) scheme, consider the following statements:

1. BBBP was launched on 22 January 2015 at Panipat, Haryana by PM Narendra Modi.

2. It is implemented by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, with convergence from the Ministries of Health and Family Welfare and Education.
3. The scheme aims to address the declining Child Sex Ratio and gender-based discrimination.
4. BBBP is a state government scheme with no role for the central government.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **BBBP is a central government scheme**, NOT a state government scheme.)

Q2. With reference to BBBP's achievements per the recent Ministry update, consider the following statements:

1. India's Sex Ratio at Birth (SRB) per HMIS data has improved from 918 (2014-15) to 929 (2024-25).
2. Girls' enrolment at secondary level per UDISE data has increased from 75.51 per cent (2014-15) to 80.2 per cent (2024-25).
3. The scheme has expanded from 100 initial districts to all districts of India.
4. The Sex Ratio at Birth has declined over the past decade.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **SRB has improved**, NOT declined.)

Q3. With reference to sex ratio concepts, consider the following statements:

1. Sex Ratio (SR) is the number of females per 1,000 males in the entire population.
2. Child Sex Ratio (CSR) is the number of girls per 1,000 boys in the 0-6 years age group.
3. Sex Ratio at Birth (SRB) is the number of girls born per 1,000 boys in a given year.
4. According to Census 2011, India's overall Sex Ratio was 943 females per 1,000 males.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Q4. With reference to the PCPNDT Act and related laws, consider the following statements:

1. The PCPNDT Act stands for the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection) Act.
2. The Act was passed in 1994 and amended in 2003.
3. The Act prohibits the use of prenatal diagnostic techniques for sex selection or determination.
4. The PCPNDT Act mandates compulsory prenatal sex determination for all pregnant women.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **PCPNDT Act prohibits prenatal sex selection**, NOT mandates it.)

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because BBBP is a central government scheme.
2. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the SRB has improved, not declined.
3. (d), All four statements are correct.
4. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the PCPNDT Act prohibits prenatal sex selection.

Exam Relevance

Exam	Relevance
UPSC Prelims	GS Paper II on Government Schemes (BBBP, SSY, Mission Shakti, PMMVY); GS Paper I on Society
UPSC Mains	GS Paper II on Welfare, Women and Child; GS Paper I on Society, Gender
BPSC and State PCS	Schemes, Women and Child, Current Affairs
Banking and NABARD	General Awareness on schemes
SSC, Insurance, Railway	Static and Current GK on BBBP, SRB, CSR, PCPNDT

Banking and Finance

1. Foreign Currency Non-Resident (Bank) or FCNR(B)

Source: The Economic Times

Context

The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has introduced a **special dispensation** allowing **commercial banks** to **mobilise fresh 3- to 5-year FCNR(B) deposits**, with the **RBI absorbing the full hedging cost** through a **special swap window**. This is aimed at **attracting NRI capital** to **support the rupee** and **shore up forex reserves**. **FCNR(B) deposits** are **fixed-term foreign currency bank accounts** opened in India by **NRIs, OCIs, and PIOs**, allowing them to **retain their savings in foreign currency** without **rupee depreciation risk**. The new scheme uses a **4-step swap mechanism** at the **FBIL Reference Rate**, with **interest income tax-free in India** and **deposits exempt from CRR and SLR**.

The FCNR(B) Account in Brief

- **Account type**: **Foreign Currency Non-Resident (Bank) fixed deposit**.
- **Eligible depositors**: **NRIs, OCIs, and PIOs**.
- **Currency**: **USD, GBP, EUR, JPY, AUD, CAD**, and a few others.
- **Maturity**: **1 to 5 years** (current swap scheme focuses on **3 to 5 years**).
- **Tax**: **Interest fully exempt** from income tax in India.
- **CRR and SLR**: **Fully exempt**, so banks can **deploy 100 per cent** of funds.
- **Currency risk**: **Borne by the bank** (since the deposit is in foreign currency), **not the depositor**.

Aim of the Scheme

- **For banks**: Provide a **stable, large-scale source of low-cost overseas funding** to **shore up India's capital account**.
- **For NRIs**: Offer a route to earn **tax-free returns** in India **without rupee depreciation risk**.

The 4-Step Swap Mechanism

The **RBI's new swap window** works in **four clean steps**:

- **Step 1 (Deposit Inflow)**: An **NRI** places **foreign currency** (USD, GBP, EUR, JPY, AUD, CAD) into the **Indian bank** as an **FCNR(B) deposit**.
- **Step 2 (Spot Transaction, First Leg)**: The **commercial bank** sells these **dollars to the RBI once a week** in **multiples of USD 1 million**, at the **official daily FBIL Reference Rate**.
- **Step 3 (Forward Buyback, Second Leg)**: The bank **simultaneously agrees to buy back** the **same amount of dollars** from the **RBI** at the **end of the 3- to 5-year maturity** period.
- **Step 4 (Concessional Par Pricing)**: The **buyback rate** is **the same as the first leg** (par pricing). This means the **RBI absorbs the entire forward premium**, **eliminating the bank's operational hedging cost**

(about **3.5 per cent**).

What is the FBIL Reference Rate?

- **FBIL (Financial Benchmarks India Private Limited)** is **India's benchmark administrator**.
- Set up in **2014**.
- **Jointly owned** by **FIMMDA, FEDAI, and IBA**.
- **Regulated by the RBI**.
- Publishes **official daily reference rates** for:
  - **USD-INR**.
  - **EUR-INR**.
  - **GBP-INR**.
  - **JPY-INR**.
  - **Other currency pairs**.
- The **FBIL Reference Rate** is the **default benchmark** used in **regulatory FX transactions**, including the **RBI's FCNR(B) swap window**.

Why is the FCNR(B) Window So Strategic?

- **India's NRI diaspora** is the **largest in the world**, about **35 million NRIs and PIOs/OCIs**.
- **Remittances** to India: **about USD 138 billion in 2024**, the **largest globally**.
- A **focused FCNR(B) push** can:
  - **Bring in significant dollar inflows** (USD 40-55 billion expected).
  - **Stabilise the rupee** during periods of **stress** (FPI outflows, oil shocks).
  - **Build forex reserves** to **buffer future shocks**.
  - **Diversify funding sources** for **Indian banks**.

FCNR(B) vs NRE vs NRO at a Glance

Feature	FCNR(B)	NRE	NRO
Currency	Foreign currency	Indian Rupees	Indian Rupees
Repatriability	Fully repatriable	Fully repatriable	Limited (up to USD 1 mn/year)
Tax on interest	Tax-free in India	Tax-free in India	Taxable in India
Currency risk	Borne by bank	Borne by depositor	Borne by depositor
CRR and SLR	Exempt	Subject	Subject
Type	Fixed deposit only	Savings and FD	Savings, FD, current

Key Terms

- **FCNR(B) (Foreign Currency Non-Resident Bank)**: A **fixed term deposit** in India by **NRIs and OCIs** in **foreign currency**, **fully repatriable**, **tax-free**, and **exempt from CRR and SLR**.
- **NRI (Non-Resident Indian)**: An **Indian citizen** residing abroad for **tax or stay-related reasons**.
- **OCI (Overseas Citizen of India)**: A **foreign citizen of Indian origin** granted **lifelong visa and certain rights** in India (excluding voting).
- **PIO (Person of Indian Origin)**: A **foreign citizen of Indian origin**, a category **largely merged with OCI** in **2015**.
- **Forex Swap**: A **contract** to **exchange currencies now** and **reverse the deal later** at a **pre-agreed rate**.
- **Hedging Cost**: The cost of **protecting against unfavourable currency or interest rate movements**.
- **Forward Premium**: The **difference between the forward exchange rate and the spot rate**, reflecting **interest rate differentials and other factors**.

- **Par Pricing**: A **pricing convention** where the **buyback rate equals the spot rate**, neutralising **forward premium**.
- **FBIL (Financial Benchmarks India Private Limited)**: India's **benchmark administrator**, set up in **2014**, that **publishes daily reference rates**.
- **CRR (Cash Reserve Ratio)**: The **share of deposits** banks must keep with the **RBI in cash**, currently **3 per cent**.
- **SLR (Statutory Liquidity Ratio)**: The **share of deposits** banks must invest in **approved securities (mostly G-secs)**, currently **18 per cent**.
- **Net Interest Margin (NIM)**: The **difference between a bank's interest income and interest expense**, as a percentage of **interest-earning assets**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the FCNR(B) account, consider the following statements:

1. FCNR(B) accounts can be opened by NRIs, OCIs, and PIOs.
2. The deposits are held in foreign currencies like USD, GBP, EUR, JPY, AUD, and CAD.
3. Interest earned on FCNR(B) deposits is tax-free in India.
4. The depositor bears the rupee depreciation risk on FCNR(B) deposits.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **FCNR(B) deposits are held in foreign currency**, so the **depositor is protected** from rupee depreciation risk; the **bank bears the currency risk**.)

Q2. With reference to the RBI's new FCNR(B) swap mechanism, consider the following statements:

1. The mechanism involves two legs: a spot transaction (first leg) and a forward buyback (second leg) at par pricing.
2. The RBI sets the forward buyback rate equal to the spot rate, absorbing the entire forward premium.
3. The bank sells dollars to the RBI once a week in multiples of USD 1 million at the official FBIL Reference Rate.
4. The bank bears the hedging cost under the new scheme.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **RBI bears the hedging cost** under the new scheme, NOT the bank.)

Q3. With reference to the FBIL Reference Rate, consider the following statements:

1. FBIL stands for Financial Benchmarks India Private Limited.
2. FBIL is jointly owned by FIMMDA, FEDAI, and IBA, and is regulated by the RBI.
3. FBIL publishes official daily reference rates for currency pairs like USD-INR, EUR-INR, GBP-INR, and JPY-INR.
4. FBIL is a private foreign agency based in London, with no Indian regulatory oversight.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **FBIL is an Indian benchmark administrator**, **jointly owned** by **FIMMDA, FEDAI, and IBA**, and **regulated by the RBI**.)

Q4. With reference to NRE, NRO, and FCNR(B) accounts, consider the following statements:

1. NRE accounts are rupee-denominated, fully repatriable, and offer tax-free interest in India.

2. NRO accounts are rupee-denominated, with taxable interest in India and limited repatriability (up to USD 1 million per year).
3. FCNR(B) accounts are foreign currency-denominated, fully repatriable, and exempt from CRR and SLR.
4. NRE and NRO accounts also protect the depositor from rupee depreciation, just like FCNR(B) accounts.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **only FCNR(B) accounts protect depositors from rupee depreciation**; NRE and NRO accounts are held in **rupees** and **expose depositors to rupee risk**.)

Answer Key

1. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the depositor is protected from rupee depreciation risk.
2. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the RBI bears the hedging cost, not the bank.
3. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because FBIL is an Indian benchmark administrator regulated by the RBI.
4. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because only FCNR(B) accounts protect depositors from rupee depreciation.

2. FCRA Amendment Bill, 2026

Source: The Hindu

Context

The **Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment (FCRA) Bill, 2026**, introduced in the **Lok Sabha on 25 March 2026**, proposes **significant changes** to the **Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010**. **Supporters** of the Bill argue it strengthens **transparency and national security** by addressing **misuse of foreign funds**. **Critics** argue it **expands executive power**, weakens **due process**, and threatens **NGOs, religious institutions, and minority-run educational and charitable bodies**. The Bill builds on the **2020 FCRA amendments**, which had already tightened the regime.

The Bill at a Glance

- **Bill name**: **Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026**.
- **Introduced**: **Lok Sabha**, **25 March 2026**.
- **Existing law**: **Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010**.
- **Last major amendment**: **2020**.

Key Proposed Changes (Per the Op-Ed)

- **New Chapter IIIA** added; **earlier Section 15 removed**.
- **New Section 14B**: **Automatic "cessation"** of FCRA registration if **renewal is denied, not applied for on time, or pending**.
- **New Section 16A** (the most discussed): On **cancellation, surrender, or cessation** of FCRA registration, all **foreign contributions and assets** can **provisionally vest** in a **government-designated authority without prior judicial review**.
- The **Designated Authority** can **manage, transfer, or dispose of assets**; **sale proceeds credited to the Consolidated Fund of India**.
- **Permanent vesting** if **restoration or re-registration** is not secured within the **prescribed period**.
- **Amended Section 13**: Bars organisations from **managing assets without prior approval** during **suspension**.

- **Revised Section 43**: Centralises **enforcement**, requiring **Union government approval** before any **state agency** can **investigate FCRA violations**.
- **Broader definitions** of **"key functionaries"** with **increased personal liability** for **office-bearers**.
- **Abolition of Section 22**, which currently deals with **disposal of assets of defunct or non-operational organisations**.

What is the FCRA?

- The **Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010** (replacing the earlier 1976 Act) regulates the **acceptance and utilisation** of **foreign contributions** by **individuals, associations, and companies** in India.
- Administered by the **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)**.
- Aims to **ensure** that **foreign contributions** are **not used for activities detrimental to national interest**.
- Requires **registration or prior permission** for **NGOs and other organisations** to **receive foreign contributions**.
- **Prohibits** certain categories (**political parties, election candidates, judges, government servants, media houses**) from **receiving foreign contributions**.

What Are the Constitutional Articles Cited?

- **Article 14**: **Equality before law** and **equal protection of laws**.
- **Article 19(1)(c)**: **Freedom of association**.
- **Article 25**: **Freedom of conscience** and **free profession, practice, and propagation of religion**.
- **Article 26**: **Freedom to manage religious affairs**, including the **right to administer property**.
- **Article 29**: **Protection of interests of minorities**.
- **Article 30**: **Right of minorities to establish and administer educational institutions** of their choice.
- **Article 300A**: **Right to property** (a **constitutional right**, not a fundamental right since the **44th Amendment, 1978**).

Key Terms

- **FCRA (Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010)**: An Indian law that **regulates the acceptance and utilisation** of **foreign contributions** by **individuals and organisations**.
- **Foreign Contribution**: Any **donation, delivery, or transfer** made by a **foreign source**, including **currency, articles, or securities**.
- **Foreign Source**: Defined under the FCRA, includes **foreign governments, agencies, foreign companies, foreign trusts, NRIs (in some contexts), and foreign citizens**.
- **FCRA Registration**: A **mandatory licence** for **organisations** to **receive foreign contributions**.
- **Cancellation/Suspension of Registration**: When **MHA cancels or suspends an FCRA licence** for **violations or other grounds**.
- **Designated Authority**: A **government-appointed authority** that, under the **2026 Bill**, would **manage and dispose of assets** of **FCRA-cancelled organisations**.
- **Provisional Vesting**: A **temporary government takeover** of **assets** of an **FCRA-cancelled organisation**, pending **possible restoration**.
- **Permanent Vesting**: A **permanent government takeover** of **assets**, with **sale proceeds going to the Consolidated Fund of India**.
- **Consolidated Fund of India (CFI)**: The **government's main account** under **Article 266(1) of the Constitution**, that **receives all revenues, loans, and recovered loans**.
- **Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)**: **Non-state, non-profit organisations** that work for **public interest causes**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA), consider the following statements:

1. The FCRA, 2010 replaced an earlier FCRA enacted in 1976.
2. The FCRA is administered by the Ministry of Home Affairs.
3. Under the FCRA, political parties, election candidates, judges, and government servants are barred from receiving foreign contributions.
4. The FCRA, 2010 is administered by the Ministry of External Affairs.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; the FCRA is administered by the **Ministry of Home Affairs**, NOT the Ministry of External Affairs.)

Q2. With reference to the 2020 FCRA amendments (background), consider the following statements:

1. All foreign contributions must be received in a single FCRA Account at the State Bank of India in New Delhi.
2. Administrative expenditure was reduced from 50 per cent to 20 per cent of foreign contributions.
3. Sub-granting to smaller organisations was banned.
4. The Aadhaar of key functionaries was made mandatory for registration and renewal.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Q3. With reference to the constitutional articles often cited in FCRA debates, consider the following statements:

1. Article 14 guarantees equality before law and equal protection of laws.
2. Article 19(1)(c) guarantees the right to freedom of association.
3. Article 30 protects the right of minorities to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice.
4. Article 300A is a fundamental right protecting the right to property.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **Article 300A is a constitutional right, not a fundamental right**, after the **44th Constitutional Amendment, 1978** removed the right to property from the chapter on fundamental rights.)

Q4. With reference to the FCRA Amendment Bill, 2026 (as described in the editorial), consider the following statements:

1. The Bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha on 25 March 2026.
2. The Bill introduces a new Chapter IIIA dealing with the management of FCRA assets after cancellation or cessation of registration.
3. The proposed Section 16A allows provisional vesting of foreign contributions and derived assets in a government-designated authority on cancellation, surrender, or cessation.
4. The Bill has already been enacted into law in March 2026.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **Bill has only been introduced**, NOT enacted; the **parliamentary process and possible judicial review** are still **pending**.)

Answer Key

1. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because FCRA is administered by the Ministry of Home Affairs.
2. (d), All four statements are correct.
3. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because Article 300A is a constitutional right, not a fundamental right.
4. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the Bill has only been introduced, not enacted.

3. India to Grow at 6.6 Per Cent in FY27, World Bank Raises Forecast

Source: ET

Context

The **World Bank** has **raised India's GDP growth projection** by **10 basis points (bps)** to **6.6 per cent for FY27** in its latest **Global Economic Prospects** report. It has also raised India's **FY28 growth forecast by 60 bps to 7.2 per cent**. The upgrade reflects **resilient domestic demand**, **strong rural private consumption**, **recovering urban demand**, and the **expected mitigating effect of FTAs and structural reforms**. However, the **global growth outlook has been cut to 2.5 per cent in 2026** (from 2.9 per cent in 2025), the **lowest pace since the COVID-19 pandemic**, due to the **West Asia conflict** and **higher energy prices**.

India's Forecast Numbers

- **FY27 GDP growth**: **6.6 per cent** (up by **10 bps** from earlier January projection).
- **FY28 GDP growth**: **7.2 per cent** (up by **60 bps**).
- **FY29 GDP growth**: **7.0 per cent**.
- The **6.6 per cent FY27 forecast** is **in line with the RBI's projection**.
- The **6.6 per cent FY27 forecast** is **lower than the 7.7 per cent FY26 (provisional) growth** estimated by **MoSPI**.

About the World Bank Group

- A **multilateral development institution** that **provides loans, grants, and technical assistance** to **developing countries**.
- **Founded in 1944** at the **Bretton Woods Conference** (along with the **IMF**).
- Headquartered in **Washington DC, USA**.
- Current **President**: **Ajay Banga** (Indian-American, since June 2023).

The Five Institutions of the World Bank Group

- **International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD)** - founded **1944**.
- **International Development Association (IDA)** - founded **1960**.
- **International Finance Corporation (IFC)** - founded **1956**.
- **Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA)** - founded **1988**.
- **International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID)** - founded **1966**.

Note: The term **"World Bank"** specifically refers to the **IBRD and IDA**, while the **World Bank Group** includes **all five**.

Key World Bank Publications

- **Global Economic Prospects (GEP)**: Published **twice a year** (January and June), with **global and**

country-specific growth projections.

- **World Development Report (WDR)**: Annual **flagship report** on a **specific development theme**.
- **Doing Business Report**: Earlier published, **discontinued in 2021**.
- **Logistics Performance Index (LPI)**: Ranks countries by **logistics performance**.
- **Human Capital Index (HCI)**: Measures **expected human capital productivity**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the World Bank's latest growth projections for India, consider the following statements:

1. The World Bank has projected India's GDP growth at 6.6 per cent for FY27, up by 10 bps from its January projection.
2. The World Bank has projected India's GDP growth at 7.2 per cent for FY28, up by 60 bps.
3. The World Bank's FY27 growth projection for India is in line with the RBI's projection.
4. The World Bank's FY27 growth projection for India is higher than India's FY26 (provisional) growth estimate by MoSPI.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **6.6 per cent FY27 forecast** is **lower than the 7.7 per cent FY26 (provisional) growth** estimated by **MoSPI**.)

Q2. With reference to the World Bank's global growth outlook, consider the following statements:

1. The World Bank has cut its 2026 global growth projection to 2.5 per cent from 2.9 per cent in 2025.
2. The 2.5 per cent global growth in 2026 is the lowest since the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. The cut is linked to higher energy prices and the West Asia conflict.
4. The World Bank is projecting global growth to fall further in 2027 and 2028.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **World Bank expects global growth to recoup in 2027-28**, NOT fall further.)

Q3. With reference to the World Bank Group, consider the following statements:

1. The World Bank Group was founded in 1944 at the Bretton Woods Conference.
2. The World Bank Group consists of five institutions, including the IBRD, IDA, IFC, MIGA, and ICSID.
3. The World Bank Group is headquartered in Washington DC, USA.
4. The current President of the World Bank Group, Ajay Banga, is of Indian origin.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Q4. With reference to India's FTA progress and growth drivers, consider the following statements:

1. The India-Oman FTA came into force in June 2026.
2. India-EU and India-New Zealand FTAs are expected to be implemented soon.
3. India-UAE signed a CEPA in 2022.
4. India's FY27 growth is being driven entirely by net exports, with no role for domestic demand.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **India's growth is being driven primarily by domestic demand**, especially **rural**

consumption and urban recovery, NOT by net exports.)

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the 6.6 per cent FY27 forecast is lower than the 7.7 per cent FY26 growth.
2. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the World Bank expects global growth to recoup in 2027-28.
3. (d), All four statements are correct.
4. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because India's growth is driven primarily by domestic demand.

Agriculture

1. Indian Agri-Tech and Water-Tech Startups Must Move Beyond Basic Problem-Solving: NITI Aayog Official

Source: Business Standard

Context

Himanshu Joshi, Programme Director at **NITI Aayog**, has called on **Indian agri-tech and water-tech startups** to **move beyond basic problem-solving** and **adopt advanced technologies** to **enter new markets** and **overcome regulatory and technology-maturity challenges**. Speaking at the **Nasscom Deeptech Confluence 2026 on Agri and Water Tech**, Joshi drew on examples from **NITI Aayog's bilateral collaboration programmes** with countries like **Denmark**, where **foreign startups** have **improvised and adapted** their products to **Indian conditions** and **scaled across the Global South**.

Examples Cited

- A **global water-tech startup** extended its India stay after **finding opportunities** to **test technology in Indian conditions**, with **potential markets across the Global South**.
- An **agri-drone startup** initially focused on **identifying quality coconuts** ready for harvesting in **Lakshadweep**. Later, it **expanded** to use **AI** for:
  - **Optimal harvesting times**.
  - **Disease risk identification**.
- These were **foreign startups** that **improvised** and **found new use cases**.

What is Agri-Tech?

- **Agri-tech** refers to **technology applied to agriculture** to **improve productivity, sustainability, market access, and farmer incomes**.
- Examples:
  - **Precision agriculture**: GPS-guided machinery, variable-rate inputs.
  - **Sensor-based irrigation**: Soil moisture, weather stations.
  - **Drone-based spraying**: For crop protection.
  - **Satellite-based monitoring**: Crop health, yield estimation.
  - **AI/ML**: Pest and disease detection, yield prediction.
  - **FarmTech/AgriFintech**: Credit, insurance, market linkage platforms.

What is Water-Tech?

- **Water-tech** refers to **technology applied to water management**, including:
  - **Water treatment and recycling**.
  - **Smart irrigation systems**.

- **Leak detection in urban water supply**.
- **Desalination and groundwater monitoring**.
- **Industrial wastewater management**.
- **Smart metering for water utilities**.

India's Agri-Tech and Water-Tech Landscape

- India has a **large agri-tech ecosystem** with **start-ups like DeHaat, AgroStar, Ninjacart, Cropin, Fasal, BharatAgri, Krishify**, and others.
- The **agri-tech market** is estimated to be **about USD 24 billion by 2025**, with **strong growth potential**.
- **Water-tech is comparatively underdeveloped** in India, but **demand is rising** due to **water stress, urbanisation, and industrial demand**.
- Major Indian **water-tech start-ups** focus on **smart metering, leak detection, water purification**, and **wastewater management**.

What is NITI Aayog?

- **National Institution for Transforming India (NITI Aayog)** is the **premier policy think tank** of the **Government of India**.
- **Established on 1 January 2015**, replacing the **Planning Commission**.
- **Chairperson**: **Prime Minister**.
- **Vice-Chairperson**: **Ashok Kumar Lahiri**.
- Has a **CEO**, currently **Nidhi Chhibber**.
- Headquartered in **New Delhi**.
- Functions:
  - **Strategic and long-term policy framework**.
  - **Cooperative and competitive federalism**.
  - **Knowledge and innovation hub**.
  - **Monitoring and evaluation**.
  - **Bilateral and multilateral collaboration**.

What is NITI Aayog's Atal Innovation Mission (AIM)?

- A **flagship innovation initiative** of **NITI Aayog**.
- Launched in **2016**.
- Promotes **innovation and entrepreneurship** across **schools, universities, research institutions, MSMEs, and corporate sectors**.
- Components include:
  - **Atal Tinkering Labs (ATLs)** in schools.
  - **Atal Incubation Centres (AICs)** for start-ups.
  - **Atal Community Innovation Centres (ACICs)** for underserved regions.
  - **Atal New India Challenges (ANICs)** for product innovation.
  - **Atal Research and Innovation for Small Enterprises (ARISE)** for MSMEs.

Key Terms

- **Agri-Tech**: **Technology applied to agriculture** for **productivity, sustainability, and farmer incomes**.
- **Water-Tech**: **Technology applied to water management**, including **treatment, irrigation, monitoring, and conservation**.
- **NITI Aayog**: The **National Institution for Transforming India**, the **premier policy think tank** of the **Government of India**, established in **2015**.

- **Atal Innovation Mission (AIM)**: A **flagship innovation initiative** of **NITI Aayog**, launched in **2016**.
- **MVP (Minimum Viable Product)**: A **basic version of a product** with **just enough features** to **test the market**.
- **Pilot Project**: A **small-scale trial** of a **product or service** before **full-scale rollout**.
- **Precision Agriculture**: **Data-driven farming** that uses **GPS, sensors, satellite imagery, and AI** to **optimise inputs and outputs**.
- **Deep-Tech**: **Technology** built around **fundamental scientific or engineering breakthroughs**, such as **AI, robotics, IoT, biotech, advanced materials, quantum computing**.
- **Global South**: **Developing countries** of **Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Oceania**, often **with similar development challenges**.
- **Nasscom**: The **National Association of Software and Service Companies**, India's **leading IT and tech industry body**, founded in **1988**.
- **Indo-Denmark Green Strategic Partnership**: A **bilateral framework** between **India and Denmark**, focused on **green technology, water management, renewable energy, and innovation**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to NITI Aayog, consider the following statements:

1. NITI Aayog was established on 1 January 2015, replacing the Planning Commission.
2. The Prime Minister of India is the Chairperson of NITI Aayog.
3. NITI Aayog is headquartered in New Delhi.
4. NITI Aayog is a constitutional body created under Article 280 of the Constitution.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **NITI Aayog is an executive body** created by a **Cabinet resolution**, NOT a **constitutional body**. **Article 280** deals with the **Finance Commission**.)

Q2. With reference to NITI Aayog's Atal Innovation Mission (AIM), consider the following statements:

1. AIM was launched in 2016 to promote innovation and entrepreneurship in India.
2. Atal Tinkering Labs (ATLs) are part of AIM, set up in schools.
3. Atal Incubation Centres (AICs) are set up to nurture start-ups.
4. AIM is administered by SEBI, not NITI Aayog.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **AIM is administered by NITI Aayog**, NOT SEBI.)

Q3. With reference to India's start-up ecosystem, consider the following statements:

1. India is the third-largest start-up ecosystem globally.
2. India has about 110+ unicorns, defined as start-ups valued at USD 1 billion or more.
3. DPIIT, under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, recognises start-ups under the Start-Up India initiative.
4. Bengaluru, Delhi-NCR, Mumbai, Hyderabad, and Chennai are major start-up hubs in India.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Q4. With reference to agri-tech and water-tech, consider the following statements:

1. Agri-tech includes precision agriculture, drone-based spraying, satellite-based crop monitoring, and

AI-based pest detection.
2. Water-tech includes smart metering, leak detection, wastewater management, and water purification.
3. The Indo-Denmark Green Strategic Partnership, announced in 2020, covers areas like renewable energy, water, climate, and sustainable agriculture.
4. NITI Aayog has no role in bilateral collaboration programmes for innovation and technology.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **NITI Aayog actively participates in bilateral collaboration programmes** for **innovation and technology**.)

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because NITI Aayog is an executive body, not a constitutional body.
2. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because AIM is administered by NITI Aayog, not SEBI.
3. (d), All four statements are correct.
4. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because NITI Aayog actively participates in bilateral collaboration programmes.

Exam Relevance

NABARD Grade A	Very high importance, agri-tech, water, rural innovation

2. Oilseeds Kisaan Mitra: India's First WhatsApp-Based AI Advisory Service for Oilseed Farmers

Source: PIB

Context

The **Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare** has highlighted the **nationwide impact** of **Oilseeds Kisaan Mitra**, **India's first WhatsApp-based AI advisory service** for **oilseed cultivation**, as **farmers enter the crucial kharif sowing season**. Developed by the **ICAR-Indian Institute of Oilseeds Research (ICAR-IIOR), Hyderabad**, the **24x7 multilingual AI-powered chatbot** delivers **research-validated agricultural advice** to farmers in their **native regional languages**, **directly via WhatsApp**, **without requiring downloads of separate apps** or **complex browsers**.

The Platform

- **Name**: **Oilseeds Kisaan Mitra**.
- **Developer**: **ICAR-Indian Institute of Oilseeds Research (ICAR-IIOR), Hyderabad**.
- **Nature**: **AI-powered WhatsApp chatbot**, **24x7 multilingual**.
- **Cost to farmers**: **Free**.
- **No app download needed**: Works **directly within WhatsApp**.

How to Access

- **Step 1**: Save the **official number +91 40 2459 8180** as **"Oilseeds Kisaan Mitra"**.
- **Step 2**: Open **WhatsApp** and **type, speak, or send a crop-related query** in the **native regional language**.
- **Step 3**: The **AI engine parses the query** and **delivers research-validated advice instantly**.

Crops Covered

- **Groundnut**.
- **Mustard**.
- **Sesame**.
- **Sunflower**.
- **Soybean**.
- **Niger**.

Languages Supported

- All **official Indian regional languages**, including **Hindi, Kannada, Gujarati, Telugu, Malayalam**, and others.
- Built on a **natural language processing (NLP) architecture**.

End-to-End Crop Cycle Guidance

- **High-yield regional seed variety selection** and **official seed availability**.
- **Agronomic soil preparation and sowing practices**.
- **Real-time pest, weed, and disease control diagnostics**.
- **Precision irrigation scheduling** and **tailored fertiliser application**.
- **Post-harvest processing, drying, and storage techniques**.

Why is Oilseed Farming So Important for India?

- India is one of the **world's largest consumers** of **edible oils**.
- India imports about **55 to 60 per cent of its edible oil needs**, costing about **USD 18 to 20 billion annually**.
- **Reducing import dependence** is a **strategic priority**.
- A **strong domestic oilseed sector** is crucial for:
  - **Food security**.
  - **Reducing current account deficit (CAD)**.
  - **Supporting farmer incomes**.
  - **Diversifying agriculture beyond paddy and wheat**.

What is the National Mission on Edible Oils (NMEO)?

- A **central government mission** to **boost domestic edible oil production**.
- **Two key components**:
  - **NMEO-Oil Palm (2021)**: Focused on **oil palm cultivation**, especially in the **North East and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands**.
  - **NMEO-Oilseeds (2024)**: Focused on **oilseeds** like **soybean, mustard, groundnut, sesame**, and others.
- Aims to **reduce edible oil import dependence**.

ICAR (Indian Council of Agricultural Research) at a Glance

- The **apex body** for **coordinating, guiding, and managing research and education in agriculture** in India.
- **Founded in 1929** as the **Imperial Council of Agricultural Research**.
- Headquartered in **New Delhi**.
- Under the **Department of Agricultural Research and Education (DARE)**, **Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare**.

- Has a **network of over 100 institutes** and **70+ agricultural universities**.

Key Terms

- **Oilseeds Kisaan Mitra**: India's **first WhatsApp-based AI advisory chatbot** for **oilseed cultivation**.
- **AI Chatbot**: A **software application** that uses **artificial intelligence** to **converse with users** in **natural language** and provide **automated responses**.
- **Natural Language Processing (NLP)**: A **branch of AI** that **enables computers** to **understand, interpret, and generate human language**.
- **ICAR (Indian Council of Agricultural Research)**: The **apex body** for **agricultural research and education** in India, **founded in 1929**.
- **ICAR-IIOR**: The **Indian Institute of Oilseeds Research**, **Hyderabad**.
- **Oilseed**: A **plant whose seeds are grown primarily for the production of edible or industrial oils**, including **groundnut, mustard, soybean, sesame, sunflower, niger, safflower, castor**.
- **National Mission on Edible Oils (NMEO)**: A **central mission** to **boost domestic edible oil production**, with **NMEO-Oil Palm (2021)** and **NMEO-Oilseeds (2024)**.
- **eNAM (National Agriculture Market)**: An **online trading platform** for **agricultural commodities**, launched in **2016**.
- **Agri Stack**: An **integrated data architecture** for **Indian agriculture**, part of India's **Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)** in **agriculture**.
- **Krishi-DSS (Krishi Decision Support System)**: A **GIS-based decision-support platform** for **Indian agriculture**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to Oilseeds Kisaan Mitra, consider the following statements:

1. It is India's first WhatsApp-based AI advisory service for oilseed cultivation.
2. It is developed by the ICAR-Indian Institute of Oilseeds Research, Hyderabad.
3. It is a 24x7 multilingual AI-powered chatbot that is free to access.
4. It requires farmers to download a separate mobile application to access the service.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the service is **accessible directly via WhatsApp**, **without requiring any separate app download**.)

Q2. With reference to the coverage and design of Oilseeds Kisaan Mitra, consider the following statements:

1. The chatbot provides advice on oilseeds like groundnut, mustard, sesame, sunflower, soybean, and niger.
2. It supports all official Indian regional languages, including Hindi, Kannada, Gujarati, Telugu, and Malayalam.
3. The chatbot integrates research from ICAR-IIOR, NSRI, IIGR, IIRMR, and the Project Coordinating Unit for Sesame and Niger.
4. The chatbot covers only the seed selection stage of farming, not the post-harvest stage.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; the chatbot provides **end-to-end crop cycle guidance**, including **post-harvest processing, drying, and storage**.)

Q3. With reference to ICAR and its institutes, consider the following statements:

1. ICAR is the apex body for agricultural research and education in India, founded in 1929.
2. ICAR-IIGR is located in Junagadh, ICAR-IIRMR in Bharatpur, and ICAR-NSRI in Indore.
3. ICAR functions under the Department of Agricultural Research and Education (DARE), Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare.
4. ICAR is a private research foundation, with no formal link to the Government of India.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; ICAR is **the apex government body for agricultural research**, NOT a private research foundation.)

Q4. With reference to India's edible oil sector and policies, consider the following statements:

1. India imports about 55 to 60 per cent of its edible oil needs, costing about USD 18 to 20 billion annually.
2. The National Mission on Edible Oils includes both NMEO-Oil Palm (2021) and NMEO-Oilseeds (2024).
3. Major oilseed crops in India include groundnut, mustard, soybean, sesame, sunflower, and niger.
4. India is self-sufficient in edible oils, with no need for imports.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; India **imports about 55-60 per cent of its edible oil needs**, NOT self-sufficient.)

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the service is accessible directly via WhatsApp without requiring a separate app download.
2. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the chatbot covers the entire crop cycle, including post-harvest stages.
3. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because ICAR is the apex government body for agricultural research.
4. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because India imports a large share of its edible oil needs.

Exam Relevance

NABARD Grade A	Very high importance, agriculture, oilseeds, ICAR, rural extension

3. NBA Reconstitutes Expert Committee on Agrobiodiversity Under Section 13(1) of Biological Diversity Act, 2002

Source: News on Air

Context

The **National Biodiversity Authority (NBA)** has **reconstituted the Expert Committee on Agrobiodiversity** under **Section 13(1) of the Biological Diversity Act, 2002**. The Committee has been **reconstituted for a period of one year** to **guide the conservation, sustainable use, and access and benefit-sharing (ABS)** of **agricultural biodiversity**. The **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC)** noted that the Committee plays a **significant role** in **implementing the Biological Diversity Act**. **Padma Shri Dr P.L. Gautam** will serve as the **Co-Chair** of the Committee.

The Reconstitution

- **Authority**: **National Biodiversity Authority (NBA)**.

- **Statutory basis**: **Section 13(1) of the Biological Diversity Act, 2002**.
- **Duration**: **One year**.
- **Focus**: **Conservation, sustainable use, access and benefit-sharing (ABS)** of **agricultural biodiversity**.
- **Co-Chair**: **Padma Shri Dr P.L. Gautam**.

About Agrobiodiversity

- **Agrobiodiversity (Agricultural Biodiversity)** refers to:
  - The **variety and variability** of **animals, plants, and micro-organisms** used directly or indirectly for **food and agriculture**.
  - Includes **crop diversity, livestock breeds, fish, pollinators, soil biota, and wild relatives** of cultivated species.
  - Encompasses the **genetic, species, and ecosystem-level diversity** that supports agriculture.

Why is Agrobiodiversity Important?

- **Food security** in the face of **climate change and pests**.
- **Genetic resources** for **breeding climate-resilient crop varieties**.
- **Nutritional diversity** through a variety of crops and animals.
- **Cultural heritage** through **traditional agricultural systems**.
- **Ecosystem services** like **pollination, pest control, and soil health**.

About the National Biodiversity Authority (NBA)

- **Statutory autonomous body** established in **2003** under the **Biological Diversity Act, 2002**.
- Headquartered in **Chennai, Tamil Nadu**.
- **Functions**:
  - **Regulates access** to **India's biological resources** and **traditional knowledge**.
  - **Approves applications** from **foreign nationals/entities** for **biological resource use**.
  - **Provides advice** to the **central and state governments** on **biodiversity conservation**.
  - **Recommends to the central government** on **notifying threatened species** and **biodiversity heritage sites**.
- **Chairperson**: Appointed by the **central government**.

The Biological Diversity Act, 2002

- Enacted on **5 February 2003** (notified later in 2003).
- Implements India's **commitments under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)**.
- **Three-tier biodiversity management structure**:
  - **National Biodiversity Authority (NBA)** at the **central level**.
  - **State Biodiversity Boards (SBBs)** at the **state level**.
  - **Biodiversity Management Committees (BMCs)** at the **local body level** (gram panchayats, municipalities).
- **Key features**:
  - **Regulates access** to **biological resources** and **traditional knowledge**.
  - **Prevents biopiracy**.
  - **Ensures access and benefit-sharing (ABS)**.
  - **Recognises People's Biodiversity Registers (PBRs)** at the **local level**.

Section 13(1) of the Biological Diversity Act

- Empowers the **NBA** to **constitute committees** to **assist in the discharge of its functions**.
- **Expert Committees** under this section provide **specialist guidance** on **specific themes** like **agrobiodiversity, marine biodiversity, threatened species**, and others.

2023 Amendment to the Biological Diversity Act

- **Biological Diversity (Amendment) Act, 2023** was passed in **2023**.
- Key changes:
  - **Decriminalisation** of certain offences.
  - **Easier registration** for **Indian companies** with **foreign equity**.
  - **Streamlined ABS** procedures.
  - **Encouragement** for **AYUSH practitioners** and **researchers** to **access biological resources**.
  - Aimed at **balancing biodiversity conservation** with **ease of doing business**.

Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

- An **international treaty** adopted at the **Rio Earth Summit, 1992**.
- Came into force on **29 December 1993**.
- **Three main objectives**:
  - **Conservation of biological diversity**.
  - **Sustainable use of its components**.
  - **Fair and equitable sharing of benefits** from **genetic resources**.
- **Secretariat**: **Montreal, Canada**.
- **196 parties** (including the **EU**), making it one of the **most widely-ratified treaties**.
- India is a **party to the CBD** since **1994**.

Key Terms

- **Agrobiodiversity (Agricultural Biodiversity)**: The **variety and variability** of **plants, animals, and micro-organisms** used in **food and agriculture**, including **wild relatives**.
- **National Biodiversity Authority (NBA)**: A **statutory body** established in **2003** under the **Biological Diversity Act, 2002**, headquartered in **Chennai**.
- **State Biodiversity Boards (SBBs)**: **State-level bodies** under the **Biological Diversity Act**.
- **Biodiversity Management Committees (BMCs)**: **Local body-level bodies** under the **Biological Diversity Act**, formed at **gram panchayat or municipality level**.
- **People's Biodiversity Registers (PBRs)**: **Local-level documents** that **record biological resources and traditional knowledge** in a **specific area**.
- **Access and Benefit-Sharing (ABS)**: A **principle** under the **CBD and Nagoya Protocol** for **fair and equitable sharing of benefits** from **genetic resources**.
- **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)**: An **international treaty** adopted at the **Rio Earth Summit, 1992**, with **three objectives**: **conservation, sustainable use, and ABS**.
- **Nagoya Protocol (2010)**: A **supplementary protocol** to the **CBD** on **Access and Benefit-Sharing**.
- **Cartagena Protocol (2000)**: A **supplementary protocol** to the **CBD** on **biosafety** of **living modified organisms (LMOs)**.
- **Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (2022)**: The **post-2020 global biodiversity framework**, often called the **"Paris Agreement for Nature"**.
- **PPV&FR Act, 2001**: India's **plant variety protection and farmers' rights law**.
- **Megadiverse Country**: A **country** with **exceptional biodiversity**, **17 globally** (India is one).

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the National Biodiversity Authority (NBA), consider the following statements:

1. NBA is a statutory autonomous body established in 2003 under the Biological Diversity Act, 2002.
2. NBA is headquartered in Chennai, Tamil Nadu.
3. NBA recently reconstituted the Expert Committee on Agrobiodiversity under Section 13(1) of the Biological Diversity Act, 2002.
4. NBA is a private foundation with no statutory backing.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **NBA is a statutory body**, NOT a private foundation.)

Q2. With reference to the three-tier biodiversity management structure under the Biological Diversity Act, 2002, consider the following statements:

1. The National Biodiversity Authority (NBA) operates at the central level.
2. State Biodiversity Boards (SBBs) operate at the state level.
3. Biodiversity Management Committees (BMCs) operate at the local body level (gram panchayats, municipalities).
4. The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) is the apex body under the Biological Diversity Act, 2002.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **NBA is the apex body** under the **Biological Diversity Act**, NOT ICAR.)

Q3. With reference to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and its protocols, consider the following statements:

1. The CBD was adopted at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992 and came into force in 1993.
2. The Cartagena Protocol (2000) deals with biosafety, especially Living Modified Organisms (LMOs).
3. The Nagoya Protocol (2010) deals with Access and Benefit-Sharing (ABS) of genetic resources.
4. The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (2022) is often called the "Paris Agreement for Nature".

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Q4. With reference to India's agrobiodiversity framework, consider the following statements:

1. India is one of the world's 17 megadiverse countries.
2. India is one of the 8 Vavilov centres of crop origin and diversity.
3. The PPV&FR Act, 2001 protects both plant breeders and farmers' rights.
4. India is not a party to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **India is a party to the CBD** since **1994**.)

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because NBA is a statutory body.
2. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because NBA is the apex body, not ICAR.

3. (d), All four statements are correct.
4. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because India is a party to the CBD.

Exam Relevance

NABARD Grade A	Very high importance, biodiversity, agriculture, genetic resources

Facts To Remember

1. Jhansi first UP district with 'no child labour in its 496 villages'

In line with Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's announcement to make Uttar Pradesh child labour-free by 2027, Jhansi is set to become the first district of the state where all 496 of its gram panchayats would be declared child labour-free. Meanwhile, the district is also gearing up to eradicate child labour from its urban areas.

2. BRICS Agriculture Ministers' Conference begins in Indore,Madhya Pradesh

The two-day BRICS Agriculture Ministers' Conference began today in Indore, Madhya Pradesh.

3. Union Health Minister J.P. Nadda Launches '10 Years of PMSMA – A Decade of Care' Celebrations

Union Health Minister J.P. Nadda launched nationwide celebrations marking the completion of 10 years of the Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan (PMSMA). The programme, launched in 2016, provides free and comprehensive antenatal care services to pregnant women on the 9th day of every month.

4. Government Approves 96 Companies Under Textile PLI Scheme

The Ministry of Textiles approved 22 new applicants under Round-3 of the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme for Textiles. With this, a total of 96 companies have been selected under the scheme, expected to attract investments of ₹12,822 crore and strengthen India's position in technical textiles and man-made fibre manufacturing.

5. Cabinet Approves ₹2,533 Crore Central Government Complexes in Amaravati

The Cabinet approved the construction of Central Government office and residential accommodation complexes in Amaravati, Andhra Pradesh, at a combined cost of ₹2,533 crore. The facilities are designed to accommodate around 8,000 officials and staff from various central government departments.

6. Government Extends CGSMFI-2.0 Till August 2026

The Government of India extended the Credit Guarantee Scheme for Microfinance Institutions (CGSMFI-2.0) until 31 August 2026 or until guarantees worth ₹20,000 crore are issued. The government also increased the loan limit for large NBFC-MFIs from ₹300 crore to ₹1,000 crore.

7. Ministry of Defence Signs ₹449 Crore Deal for ECGNSS Jammers

The Ministry of Defence signed a ₹449 crore contract with Accord Software and Systems Private Limited for the procurement of 20 Enhanced Capability Global Navigation Satellite System (ECGNSS) Jammers for the Indian Navy. The systems will strengthen electronic warfare capabilities and protect naval assets from satellite-based threats.

8. BSNL and IIT Kanpur Partner for Next-Generation Telecom Technologies

BSNL and Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur signed a Memorandum of Understanding to collaborate

on advanced telecom technologies. The partnership will focus on Direct-to-Mobile broadcasting, indigenous 4G solutions, and spectrum research to strengthen India's telecom innovation ecosystem.

9. RBI Eases Lending Norms for REITs and InvITs

The Reserve Bank of India issued amended directions governing bank lending to Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs) and Infrastructure Investment Trusts (InvITs). The revised framework allows lending to eligible SEBI-regulated and listed trusts while strengthening risk management norms.

10. Nuvama Wealth Management Receives SEBI Approval for Mutual Fund Business

Nuvama Wealth Management received final approval from SEBI to launch mutual fund operations through Nuvama Asset Management Limited. The company plans to initially introduce products under the Specialised Investment Fund framework before expanding its mutual fund offerings.

11. Sangeet Natak Akademi Announces Fellowships and Awards

The Sangeet Natak Akademi elected seven eminent artists as Fellows and announced 108 Akademi Awards for 2024 and 2025. The awards recognize outstanding contributions in music, dance, theatre, folk arts, puppetry, and performing arts scholarship.

12. Indian-Origin Scientist Gautam Dey Wins EMBO Gold Medal 2026

Gautam Dey received the prestigious EMBO Gold Medal 2026 for his research on the evolutionary origins of nuclear organization and cell division. He currently works at the European Molecular Biology Laboratory.

13. CCI Approves Additional Stake Acquisition in Shriram Life Insurance

The Competition Commission of India approved Sanlam Emerging Markets' acquisition of an additional 2.80% stake in Shriram Life Insurance Company through a preferential issue worth approximately ₹220.88 crore.

14. ADIA Arm Plans Sale of 2.3% Stake in Lenskart

Platinum Jasmine A 2018 Trust, backed by the Abu Dhabi Investment Authority, announced plans to sell a 2.3% stake in Lenskart Solutions through a block deal valued at approximately ₹1,944 crore.

15. NASA Announces Artemis III Mission Crew

NASA unveiled the four-member Artemis III crew consisting of Randy Bresnik, Andre Douglas, Frank Rubio, and Luca Parmitano. The mission will test docking operations between lunar mission systems and support future human lunar exploration.

16. International Day of Play 2026 Observed

The International Day of Play was observed on 11 June 2026 with the theme "Protect Play, Protect Childhood." The observance highlights the importance of play in children's learning, development, and well-being.

17. World Day Against Child Labour 2026 Observed

World Day Against Child Labour was observed on 12 June 2026 under the theme "Red Card to Child Labour: Fair Play for Children, Decent Work for Adults." The day promotes global efforts to eliminate child labour and protect children's rights.

FIVE TO REMEMBER · 12 & 13 JUNE 2026

1. **UNDP Gender Inequality Index 2024**: India improved in recent years. Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Emerges as Nationwide M…
2. AIM was launched in 2016 to promote innovation and entrepreneurship in India. Indian Agri-Tech and Water-Tech Startups Must M…
3. **Statutory basis**: **Section 13(1) of the Biological Diversity Act, 2002**. NBA Reconstitutes Expert Committee on Agrobiodi…
4. The FCRA, 2010 is administered by the Ministry of External Affairs. FCRA Amendment Bill, 2026
5. The World Bank has cut its 2026 global growth projection to 2.5 per cent from 2.9 per cent in 2025. India to Grow at 6.6 Per Cent in FY27, World Ba…

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DAY 10 OF 18

14 & 15 June 2026

25 items · 3 topics

General **2** · Banking and Finance **4** · Agriculture **1** · Facts To Remember **18**

Context

In **June 2026**, **Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw**, **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)**, **virtually inaugurated** a **20 kilowatt (kW) Akashvani FM Transmitter** at **Ramgarh in Jaisalmer**, during a programme held at **Akashvani Jaipur** in **Rajasthan**. With this addition, Rajasthan now has **39 FM transmitters**. The new transmitter will provide **radio coverage in an 80 km radius**, covering nearly **20,000 sq km** of **Jaisalmer district**, strengthening **information dissemination and national integration** in this **border region**. During his visit to **Malaviya National Institute of Technology (MNIT), Jaipur**, the Minister also announced an **Advanced Quantum Lab**, an **Artificial Intelligence (AI) Lab**, and a **Makers Lab**.

The FM Transmitter

- **Capacity**: **20 kW**.
- **Location**: **Ramgarh, Jaisalmer, Rajasthan**.
- **Inaugurated by**: **Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw**, virtually.
- **Programme venue**: **Akashvani Jaipur premises, Jaipur, Rajasthan**.
- **Total FM transmitters in Rajasthan** (after this): **39**.

About Akashvani (All India Radio)

- India's **national public service broadcaster** for **radio**.
- **Founded**: **1936** (officially named **All India Radio** in **1956**, and **renamed Akashvani in 1957**).
- **Headquartered**: **New Delhi**.
- **Part of**: **Prasar Bharati**.
- **Functions**:
  - **News and current affairs broadcasting**.
  - **Educational and cultural content**.
  - **Public service announcements**.
  - **Regional and tribal content**.
- **Akashvani's reach**: One of the **largest broadcasting organisations** in the world by **coverage**.

About Prasar Bharati

- India's **public service broadcaster**.
- **Statutory body** established under the **Prasar Bharati (Broadcasting Corporation of India) Act, 1990**.
- Operational since **23 November 1997**.
- **Comprises**:
  - **All India Radio (Akashvani)**.
  - **Doordarshan**.
- Headquartered in **New Delhi**.
- **CEO**: Currently **Gaurav Dwivedi**.

Why are Border-Area FM Transmitters Important?

- **Strategic regions** like **Jaisalmer** are **close to international borders**.
- **Radio reach** ensures:
  - **Indian narratives** reach **border communities**.
  - **Counter to cross-border propaganda**.
  - **National integration** through **government information**.
  - **Educational content** for **remote villages**.
  - **Disaster warning and emergency communication**.
- **Border districts** include **Jaisalmer (Rajasthan)**, **Kachchh (Gujarat)**, **Jammu (J&K)**, **Tawang (Arunachal Pradesh)**, **Kanyakumari (Tamil Nadu)** and others.

What is Quantum Key Distribution (QKD)?

- A **method of secure communication** based on **quantum mechanics principles**.
- Uses **quantum properties of particles** (like photons) to **generate and share cryptographic keys** that are **theoretically impossible to intercept** without detection.
- **Critical for cybersecurity, defence communications, and financial transactions** in the **post-quantum era**.

What is Quantum Computing?

- A **next-generation computing paradigm** that uses **quantum bits (qubits)** instead of **classical bits**.
- **Qubits** can exist in **superposition** (both 0 and 1 simultaneously) and **entanglement** (correlated states).
- Promises **exponential speedup** for certain problems like:
  - **Factoring large numbers** (breaking current encryption).
  - **Drug discovery and materials science simulations**.
  - **Optimization problems**.
  - **AI and machine learning**.
- **Major players**: **IBM, Google, IonQ, Rigetti, D-Wave, China's Origin Quantum**.

What is Quantum Sensing?

- A **branch of quantum technology** that uses **quantum effects** to **measure physical quantities** (magnetic fields, gravity, time) with **unprecedented precision**.
- Applications: **GPS-free navigation, medical imaging, mineral exploration, defence**.

India's National Quantum Mission

- **Launched**: **April 2023**.
- **Budget**: **₹6,003.65 crore** over **2023-2031** (8 years).
- **Vision**: Make India a **leading nation** in **quantum technologies**.
- **Four verticals**:
  - **Quantum Computing**.
  - **Quantum Communication** (including QKD).
  - **Quantum Sensing and Metrology**.
  - **Quantum Materials and Devices**.
- **4 Thematic Hubs (T-Hubs)** to be set up in **top academic and R&D institutions**.
- **Implementing agency**: **Department of Science and Technology (DST)**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the recent FM transmitter inauguration in Jaisalmer, consider the following statements:

1. Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw virtually inaugurated a 20-kW Akashvani FM Transmitter at Ramgarh in Jaisalmer.
2. The transmitter is expected to provide radio coverage within an 80 km radius, covering nearly 20,000 sq km.
3. With this addition, Rajasthan now has 39 FM transmitters.
4. Akashvani is a private radio broadcaster with no government involvement.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **Akashvani is India's national public service broadcaster** under **Prasar Bharati**, NOT a private entity.)

Q2. With reference to Akashvani and Prasar Bharati, consider the following statements:

1. Akashvani is India's national public service radio broadcaster, founded in 1936.
2. Prasar Bharati is a statutory body established under the Prasar Bharati Act, 1990, and operational since 1997.
3. Prasar Bharati comprises both All India Radio (Akashvani) and Doordarshan.
4. Prasar Bharati is a private foundation with no link to the Government of India.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **Prasar Bharati is a statutory body** under the **Government of India**, NOT a private foundation.)

Q3. With reference to MNIT Jaipur and the announcements there, consider the following statements:

1. MNIT Jaipur is one of the 31 NITs in India, an Institute of National Importance.
2. The Union Minister announced an Advanced Quantum Lab focused on QKD, quantum computing simulation, and quantum sensing.
3. An Artificial Intelligence (AI) Lab and Makers Lab were also announced.
4. MNIT Jaipur is a state university with no national status.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **MNIT Jaipur is an Institute of National Importance** under the **NIT Act, 2007**.)

Q4. With reference to India's National Quantum Mission, consider the following statements:

1. The National Quantum Mission was launched in April 2023.
2. The budget is ₹6,003.65 crore over 2023-2031.
3. The four verticals are Quantum Computing, Quantum Communication, Quantum Sensing, and Quantum Materials and Devices.
4. The mission is implemented by the Reserve Bank of India.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **National Quantum Mission is implemented by the Department of Science and Technology (DST)**, NOT the RBI.)

Q5. With reference to quantum technologies, consider the following statements:

1. Quantum Key Distribution (QKD) is a method of secure communication based on quantum mechanics.
2. Quantum computing uses quantum bits (qubits) which can exist in superposition and entanglement.
3. Quantum sensing uses quantum effects to measure physical quantities with unprecedented precision.
4. Quantum technologies have no applications outside academic research.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **quantum technologies have wide applications** in **cybersecurity, defence, finance, healthcare, navigation, and drug discovery**.)

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because Akashvani is the national public service broadcaster.
2. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because Prasar Bharati is a statutory body.
3. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because MNIT Jaipur is an Institute of National Importance.
4. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the National Quantum Mission is implemented by DST.
5. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because quantum technologies have wide applications.

3. Centre Announces 16 Winners of 29th National Awards for e-Governance (NAeG) 2026

Source: Indian Express

Context

The **Union government** has named **16 projects** of the **Central, state, and local governments** across India as **winners of the 29th National Awards for e-Governance (NAeG) 2026**. Of these, **10 will receive Gold Awards** and **6 will receive Silver Awards** at a ceremony on **2 July 2026**. The awards are administered by the **Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions** through the **Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG)**, recognising **excellence in e-governance initiatives** across **seven categories**, including the **new "Gram Panchayats" category** that recognises **grassroots digitisation**.

The Awards

- **Edition**: **29th National Awards for e-Governance (NAeG) 2026**.
- **Total winners**: **16 projects**.
- **Gold Awards**: **10**.
- **Silver Awards**: **6**.
- **Ceremony date**: **2 July 2026**.
- **Categories**: **Seven**, including a **new Gram Panchayats category** for **grassroots digitisation**.

Notable Winners

- **Agriculture Ministry's Agri Stack**: Provides **finance-related data** and **early warning systems for disasters** to farmers.
- **Consumer Affairs Ministry's e-Jagriti Portal**: Allows consumers to **file complaints** regarding **insurance, banking, housing, electricity, finance, medical care, automobiles**, etc.
- **Prayagraj Mela Authority's conduct of Mahakumbh 2025**: Recognising **e-governance initiatives**

alongside **physical infrastructure** at the **2025 Mahakumbh**.

- **Kerala Development and Innovation Strategic Council**: For a **blood bag traceability and citizen interaction portal** that **eases blood donation**.
- **Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**: For the **AI-enabled clinical decision support system** in **eSanjeevani telemedicine**.
- **Kerala High Court**: For its **district court case management system**.

What is Agri Stack?

- A **digital public infrastructure (DPI)** for **Indian agriculture**.
- Launched by the **Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare** as part of the **Digital Agriculture Mission (DAM)**.
- **Three core registries**:
  - **Farmers' Registry**: Digital ID for **each farmer** with land-link details.
  - **Crop Sown Registry**: Tracks **what crops** are being **grown where**.
  - **Geo-referenced Village Maps**: For **land and crop mapping**.
- **Aims**:
  - **Better targeting of subsidies and schemes**.
  - **Early disaster warning**.
  - **Credit and insurance enablement**.
  - **Market linkage**.

What is e-Jagriti?

- A **consumer complaints portal** by the **Department of Consumer Affairs**.
- Allows **consumers to file complaints** in **consumer commissions** at **National, State, and District levels**.
- **Replaces/integrates earlier portals** like **CONFONET, edaakhil**, and **NCDRC web modules**.
- **Reduces paperwork** and **speeds up consumer dispute resolution**.
- Won the **Silver Award** at the **National e-Governance Awards 2026** (covered earlier in this segment).

What is the Mahakumbh 2025?

- **Held in Prayagraj** (Uttar Pradesh) from **13 January to 26 February 2025**.
- One of the **largest religious gatherings in the world**.
- **About 66 crore (660 million) people** attended over **45 days**.
- **e-Governance initiatives** included:
  - **AI-based crowd management**.
  - **Digital lost-and-found**.
  - **Real-time monitoring through CCTV and drones**.
  - **App-based pilgrim services**.
  - **QR code-based ticketing and information**.

What is eSanjeevani?

- India's **national telemedicine service**.
- Launched by the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare** in **2019-20**.
- Has provided **over 36+ crore teleconsultations** as of recent data.
- **Two formats**:
  - **eSanjeevani AB-HWC** (provider-to-provider): Between **Ayushman Bharat Health and Wellness Centres** and **doctors at hubs**.
  - **eSanjeevani OPD** (provider-to-patient): **Direct patient-to-doctor**.

- The **AI-enabled clinical decision support system assists doctors** with **diagnosis and treatment** recommendations.

About the National e-Governance Awards (NAeG)

- **Annual awards** instituted by the **DARPG**.
- **First awards**: **1996-97**.
- **29th edition**: **2026**.
- **Categories** (varied over the years):
  - **Government Process Re-engineering** for digital transformation.
  - **Excellence in District-level initiatives**.
  - **Excellence in State or UT initiative**.
  - **Excellence in Central initiative**.
  - **Excellence in adopting emerging technologies (AI, blockchain)**.
  - **Use of ICT for citizen-centric services**.
  - **Gram Panchayat-level initiative** (new for some recent editions).
  - **Niche initiatives in regional languages**.
  - **Public-Private partnerships**.

Theme of NAeG 2026

- **"Viksit Bharat 2047: AI-Enabled, Data-Driven and Secure Digital Governance"**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the 29th National Awards for e-Governance (NAeG) 2026, consider the following statements:

1. The Union government has named 16 projects as winners, with 10 Gold Awards and 6 Silver Awards.
2. The Ceremony will be held on 2 July 2026.
3. The Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions administers these awards.
4. The awards have been instituted in 2026 for the first time, with no earlier editions.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **NAeG has been an annual event since 1996-97**, with the **2026 edition being the 29th**.)

Q2. With reference to specific NAeG 2026 winners, consider the following statements:

1. The Agriculture Ministry's Agri Stack is among the winners.
2. The Consumer Affairs Ministry's e-Jagriti portal is among the winners.
3. The Prayagraj Mela Authority's conduct of Mahakumbh 2025 is recognised for e-governance initiatives.
4. The Union Ministry of Defence's missile testing platform is among the winners.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **winners are e-governance projects**, NOT defence missile testing platforms.)

Q3. With reference to Agri Stack, consider the following statements:

1. Agri Stack is a digital public infrastructure (DPI) for Indian agriculture.
2. It includes a Farmers' Registry, a Crop Sown Registry, and Geo-referenced Village Maps.
3. It aims to enable better targeting of subsidies, early disaster warnings, and credit/insurance

enablement.
4. Agri Stack is managed by the Ministry of Defence.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **Agri Stack is managed by the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare**, NOT the Ministry of Defence.)

Q4. With reference to eSanjeevani, consider the following statements:

1. eSanjeevani is India's national telemedicine service, launched in 2019-20.
2. It has two formats: provider-to-provider (eSanjeevani AB-HWC) and provider-to-patient (eSanjeevani OPD).
3. It is administered by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
4. eSanjeevani is a private telemedicine service with no government role.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **eSanjeevani is a Government of India telemedicine service** under the **MoHFW**, NOT a private one.)

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the NAeG is an annual event since 1996-97.
2. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the winners are e-governance projects.
3. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because Agri Stack is managed by the Ministry of Agriculture.
4. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because eSanjeevani is a government telemedicine service.

Exam Relevance

Exam	Relevance
UPSC Prelims	GS Paper II on Government Schemes (NAeG, Agri Stack, e-Jagriti, eSanjeevani); GS Paper III on Science and Technology
UPSC Mains	GS Paper II on Government policies, e-Governance; GS Paper III on Digital Public Infrastructure
BPSC and State PCS	Schemes, e-Governance, Current Affairs
Banking and NABARD	General Awareness on digital governance
RBI Grade B	Digital economy and governance
NABARD Grade A	Agri Stack, rural digital initiatives
SEBI Grade A and IRDAI Grade A	Digital governance awareness

4. US Attacks on Ships with Indian Crew in Gulf of Oman and Strait of Hormuz

Context

India has strongly condemned a series of **military strikes** by the **US Central Command (CENTCOM)** on **oil tankers manned by Indian seafarers** in the **Gulf of Oman** and the **Strait of Hormuz**. The strikes were carried out as part of the **US maritime blockade against Iranian energy exports**. Three tankers, **M/T**

Jalveer (Guinea-Bissau flagged), **Settebello (Palau flagged)**, and **MT Marivex**, were targeted by **US naval forces**. Multiple **Indian seafarers** were **killed, declared missing, or injured**. The incidents raise **complex legal issues under UNCLOS**, complicate **India-US relations**, and have implications for **maritime trade, war-risk insurance, and global energy security**.

The Strikes

- **Carried out by**: **US Central Command (CENTCOM)**.
- **Locations**: **Gulf of Oman** and **Strait of Hormuz**.
- **Reason cited by US**: **Enforcement of a maritime blockade** against **Iranian petroleum exports**.
- **Action**: **US Central Command** targeted, **intercepted**, and **fired upon non-compliant commercial vessels** attempting to **transit regional waters with Iranian petroleum products**.

The Maritime Law Framework

Freedom of Navigation (UNCLOS)

- The **United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS, 1982)** guarantees **neutral commercial vessels** the **right of innocent passage** through:
  - **International waters**.
  - **Key international straits** like the **Strait of Hormuz**.
- These provisions **protect lawful maritime trade and civilian shipping** from **arbitrary interference**.

Why is the Strait of Hormuz So Important?

- A **strategic chokepoint** between **Iran (north)** and **Oman (south)**.
- Connects the **Persian Gulf** to the **Gulf of Oman** and the **Arabian Sea**.
- **About 21 million barrels per day** of crude oil and condensates pass through, representing **about 20-25 per cent of global liquid petroleum trade**.
- **80 per cent** of crude transiting Hormuz goes to **Asian markets** (China, India, Japan, South Korea).
- **Closure or disruption** can cause **global oil price spikes**.

About UNCLOS

- **United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)**.
- **Adopted**: **10 December 1982** in **Montego Bay, Jamaica**.
- **In force**: **16 November 1994**.
- **Parties**: **170 states + EU**, including **India**.
- **Often called** the **"Constitution of the Oceans"**.
- **Establishes**:
  - **Territorial Sea**: Up to **12 nautical miles** from baseline.
  - **Contiguous Zone**: Up to **24 nautical miles**.
  - **Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)**: Up to **200 nautical miles**.
  - **Continental Shelf**: Up to **350 nautical miles** in some cases.
  - **High Seas**: International waters beyond EEZ.
  - **International Seabed Area**: Beyond national jurisdiction.

India and UNCLOS

- **India ratified UNCLOS** in **1995**.
- India has used **UNCLOS** in disputes like the **Italian Marines case (Enrica Lexie, 2012)** and the **India-Bangladesh maritime boundary** case.
- **India does NOT recognise the US's blanket right** to **operational sovereign-control-like actions** in **international waters** without UN Security Council backing.

About US Central Command (CENTCOM)

- One of the **11 Unified Combatant Commands** of the **US Armed Forces**.
- **Area of Responsibility (AOR)**: **20 countries** in the **Middle East, Central Asia, and parts of South Asia** (including Egypt, the Levant, Arabian Peninsula, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the Central Asian republics).
- Headquartered in **Tampa, Florida, USA**.
- **Forward HQ**: **Al Udeid Air Base, Qatar**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the recent US strikes on ships with Indian crew, consider the following statements:

1. The strikes were carried out by the US Central Command (CENTCOM) as part of a maritime blockade against Iranian energy exports.
2. The Strait of Hormuz lies between Iran and Oman.
3. The Gulf of Oman connects the Strait of Hormuz to the Arabian Sea.
4. The strikes were carried out by the European Union Naval Force, not the US.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the strikes were carried out by the **US Central Command (CENTCOM)**, NOT the EU Naval Force.)

Q2. With reference to UNCLOS, consider the following statements:

1. UNCLOS was adopted in 1982 and came into force in 1994.
2. UNCLOS is often called the "Constitution of the Oceans".
3. India ratified UNCLOS in 1995.
4. UNCLOS establishes a 50 nautical mile Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **UNCLOS establishes a 200 nautical mile EEZ**, NOT 50.)

Q3. With reference to the Strait of Hormuz, consider the following statements:

1. The Strait of Hormuz lies between Iran and Oman.
2. About 20-25 per cent of global oil trade passes through this strait.
3. About 80 per cent of crude transiting the Strait of Hormuz goes to Asian markets.
4. The Strait of Hormuz connects the Mediterranean Sea to the Red Sea.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **Strait of Hormuz connects the Persian Gulf to the Gulf of Oman**, NOT the Mediterranean Sea to the Red Sea (which is the Suez Canal).)

Q4. With reference to India's response to the strikes, consider the following statements:

1. India has strongly condemned the strikes through the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).
2. A diplomatic demarche was issued, which is a formal diplomatic protest.
3. India has provided consular assistance to affected Indian families.
4. A demarche is the same as a formal declaration of war.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; a **demarche** is a **formal diplomatic protest**, NOT a declaration of war.)

Q5. With reference to India's energy and maritime vulnerabilities, consider the following statements:

1. India imports more than 85 per cent of its crude oil.
2. A significant share of India's crude oil imports passes through the Strait of Hormuz.
3. India's largest crude oil supplier in recent years has been Russia.
4. India is fully insulated from any disruption in the Strait of Hormuz.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **India is NOT insulated** from **Strait of Hormuz disruption**, given its **heavy import dependence**.)

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the strikes were carried out by CENTCOM.
2. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because UNCLOS establishes a 200 nautical mile EEZ.
3. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the Strait of Hormuz connects the Persian Gulf to the Gulf of Oman.
4. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because a demarche is a formal protest, not a declaration of war.
5. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because India is not insulated from Strait of Hormuz disruption.

Banking and Finance

1. RBI's OFCB Swap Facility to Cut Banks' Funding Costs by 200-250 bps

Source: Business Standard

Context

The **Reserve Bank of India's (RBI's) concessional swap facility** for **Overseas Foreign Currency Borrowings (OFCBs)** is expected to provide **banks** with a **cheaper source of funding** at a time of **sluggish domestic deposit growth**. The facility is available to all **Authorised Dealer Category-I banks**, including **private-sector lenders**, for **OFCBs with a minimum maturity of 3 years**. The swap is at a **fixed rate of 1.5 per cent per annum**, **compounded semi-annually**, until **31 December 2026**. **Banks save 200-250 bps** compared to **market hedging costs of 3.5-4 per cent**, with **OFCB funds 40-50 bps cheaper than domestic deposits** of similar maturity. **SBI estimates banks may raise USD 5-8 billion** through the OFCB route in **FY27**. Banks can raise **up to 100 per cent of their Tier 1 capital** through this window.

What is OFCB?

- **Overseas Foreign Currency Borrowing (OFCB)** is a **broader category** of **foreign currency borrowings** by **Indian banks** from **overseas markets**.
- **A subset of OFCB is External Commercial Borrowings (ECBs)**.
- **Foreign currency borrowing** is the **superset** that includes:
  - **ECBs** (governed by RBI's ECB framework).
  - **Other foreign currency borrowings** by banks.

What is ECB (External Commercial Borrowing)?

- A **foreign currency loan** raised by **Indian residents** from **foreign lenders**.
- Governed by the **RBI's Master Directions on ECBs**.
- **Two routes**:
  - **Automatic Route**: For most sectors, **no prior RBI approval needed**.
  - **Approval Route**: For specific sectors and borrowers, **prior RBI approval required**.
- **Recognised lenders**: **Foreign banks, foreign capital markets, multilateral institutions**, etc.
- **End-use restrictions**: Cannot be used for **on-lending to others, working capital, real estate** (with some exceptions).

What is a Currency Swap?

- A **financial derivative** where **two parties exchange currencies** for a **specified period** and **swap them back** at a **pre-agreed exchange rate**.
- Used by **banks and corporations** to **hedge currency risk** on **foreign currency exposures**.
- **Cost of swap**: Depends on **interest rate differentials**, **forward premium**, and **counterparty risk**.

Authorised Dealer Category-I (AD-I) Banks

- A **classification under FEMA, 1999** for **banks that can deal in foreign exchange**.
- **AD-I** can undertake **all current and capital account transactions**.
- **AD-II** can undertake **limited transactions**.
- Most **scheduled commercial banks** are **AD-I** banks.

What is Tier 1 Capital?

- The **highest quality of capital** that a bank holds, comprising:
  - **Common Equity Tier 1 (CET-1)**: **Equity capital, retained earnings, reserves**.
  - **Additional Tier 1 (AT-1)**: **Perpetual debt instruments**.
- Used as the **primary measure** of a **bank's financial strength** under **Basel III norms**.
- A **higher Tier 1 capital** means **better capacity to absorb losses**.

About Certificates of Deposit (CDs) and Commercial Papers (CPs)

- **Certificate of Deposit (CD)**: A **short-term, negotiable money market instrument** issued by **banks** to **raise wholesale funds**, typically with **maturity of 7 days to 1 year**.
- **Commercial Paper (CP)**: A **short-term, unsecured promissory note** issued by **corporates, primary dealers, and all-India financial institutions**, typically with **maturity of 7 days to 1 year**.
- Both are **wholesale funding instruments** that banks and corporates use when **retail deposits** are insufficient.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the RBI's OFCB Swap Facility, consider the following statements:

1. The swap rate is fixed at 1.5 per cent per annum, compounded semi-annually.
2. The window is open till 31 December 2026.
3. All Authorised Dealer Category-I (AD-I) banks, including private-sector lenders, are eligible.
4. The minimum maturity of OFCBs covered under the facility is 1 month.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **minimum maturity is 3 years**, NOT 1 month.)

Q2. With reference to the cost and benefit of the OFCB swap facility, consider the following statements:

1. The market hedging cost is about 3.5 to 4 per cent.
2. The RBI's concessional swap rate of 1.5 per cent gives banks a saving of about 200-250 bps.
3. OFCB funds are estimated to be 40-50 bps cheaper than domestic deposits of similar maturity.
4. The facility allows banks to raise up to 100 per cent of their Tier 1 capital.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Q3. With reference to the Indian banking system context (May-June 2026), consider the following statements:

1. Credit growth was 17.7 per cent year-on-year by 31 May 2026.
2. Deposit growth was 12.2 per cent year-on-year by 31 May 2026.
3. The deposit-credit growth gap widened to about 550 bps.
4. India's banking system has had no funding pressure recently, with deposits exceeding loan growth comfortably.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **banking system has been facing significant funding pressure**, with **credit growth outpacing deposit growth** by **about 550 bps**.)

Q4. With reference to the broader RBI-government package for dollar inflows, consider the following statements:

1. The OFCB swap window aims to raise USD 5-8 billion in FY27, per SBI estimates.
2. The FCNR(B) special scheme has the RBI absorbing the hedging cost on fresh 3- to 5-year deposits.
3. The Fully Accessible Route (FAR) has been expanded to include new 15-, 30-, and 40-year G-secs.
4. The government has scrapped withholding tax and LTCG tax for foreign investors in G-secs.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the minimum maturity is 3 years.
2. (d), All four statements are correct.
3. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the banking system has been facing funding pressure.
4. (d), All four statements are correct.

Exam Relevance

Banking (RBI Gr B, SBI PO, IBPS, NABARD)	Very high importance, OFCB, ECB, CD, CP, Tier 1 capital, AD-I banks
RBI Grade B	Core area on external sector and banking
SEBI Grade A and IRDAI Grade A	Capital markets and banking awareness

2. RBI's Responsible Business Conduct Second Amendment Directions, 2026

Source: Business Standard

Context

The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has **tightened rules** governing the **sale of financial products** by **banks**

and other regulated entities. The final **Responsible Business Conduct (Second Amendment) Directions, 2026** were released on **15 June 2026** and will come into **effect from 1 January 2027**. The amendments **ban compulsory bundling** of **third-party products**, mandate **explicit customer consent**, introduce a **full refund mechanism for mis-selling**, **ban dark patterns** in **digital interfaces**, **expand the agent regulation scope** to **DSAs, DMAs, sub-agents, and TPPS representatives**, and require **upfront disclosure** of **fees, risks, lock-ins, and exit penalties**. The framework also allows **NBFCs to distribute insurance products without prior RBI approval**, subject to **IRDAI nod**. This is a **major shift** to a **prescriptive regulatory regime** focused on **customer protection**.

Ban on Compulsory Bundling

- Banks **shall NOT resort to compulsory bundling** of **any third-party product or service (TPPS)** with their **own products or services**.
- Where a **third-party product is required as a risk mitigation tool**, customers must have the **freedom to choose any TPPS provider**.
- Common practice **targeted**: Banks **insisting on home loan borrowers** buying **life insurance** from a **subsidiary or JV partner**.
- Banks **cannot fund the purchase** of any product or service through a **loan facility** without **explicit consent**.

Explicit Consent Protocol

- Banks must obtain **explicit customer consent** for **every product or service** sold.
- **Approved modes** include:
  - **Signed declarations** (physical or electronic).
  - **One-time password (OTP)-based approvals**.
  - **Digitally recorded confirmations**.
  - **Clearly demarcated agreement clauses**.
- **Multi-product forms**: Customers must have the **option to choose only the products they want**.
- **Interfaces must default to "No" or "I do not agree"**, forcing **conscious opt-in**.
- Banks must **retain consent records for 1 year** after **contract end**.

Mis-Selling Definition and Compensation

- **Mis-selling** is defined as the **sale of a product or service**:
  - **Without explicit consent**.
  - **Without correct or complete information**.
  - **By giving misleading information**.
- **Compensation mechanism**:
  - Bank must **refund the entire amount paid** by the customer.
  - Bank must **compensate for any loss** arising due to mis-selling, **as per its approved policy**.
- Customers may file **mis-selling complaints** within **RBI-set timelines** or **30 days of receiving signed agreements**.

No Employee Incentives From Third Parties

- Bank employees must **not directly or indirectly receive any incentive** from the **third-party service provider**.
- Closes the **loophole** of **kickback-driven mis-selling**.

Customer Feedback Mechanism

- Banks must **establish mechanisms** to **seek customer feedback** within **30 days** of the **sale of a financial product**.

- To **assess** whether customers **understood the features and associated risks**.

Mandatory Upfront Disclosures

Banks must clearly inform customers about:

- **Interest rates**.
- **Fees and charges**.
- **Risks**.
- **Lock-in conditions**.
- **Exit penalties**.

These must be **disclosed BEFORE obtaining consent**.

Ban on Dark Patterns

- **Dark patterns** are defined as practices designed to **mislead or trick users** into **doing something they did not intend**.
- Banks and **direct selling agents** are **banned** from deploying such interfaces.
- Banks must **periodically audit** their **digital platforms**.

What is the Responsible Business Conduct Framework?

- A **regulatory framework** by the **RBI** for **ethical conduct in financial product sales**.
- **Aligns with global standards** like the **G20/OECD High-Level Principles on Financial Consumer Protection (2011)**.
- **First Master Directions** issued earlier; this is the **Second Amendment**.

What is a Bundled Product?

- **Multiple products or services sold together as a package**.
- Examples in banking:
  - **Home loan + life insurance**.
  - **Car loan + motor insurance**.
  - **Personal loan + critical illness cover**.
- **Compulsory bundling** is **anti-competitive** and can lead to **mis-selling**.

What is a Third-Party Product or Service (TPPS)?

- A **product or service** that is **not the bank's primary offering** but is **distributed by the bank** on behalf of **another company**.
- Common TPPS: **Insurance, mutual funds, structured products, gold coins, government bonds**.

What is Mis-Selling?

- The **sale of a product or service**:
  - **Without explicit consent**.
  - **Without proper disclosure**.
  - **With misleading information**.
- Often happens when **incentive structures push agents** to **mis-represent products**.
- **Common in**: ULIPs sold as **investment products**, **endowment policies sold as fixed deposits**, **mutual funds with hidden risks**.

What are Dark Patterns?

- **Manipulative design interfaces** that **trick users** into **doing things they did not intend**.
- **CCPA (Central Consumer Protection Authority)** had **banned 13 specific dark patterns** in **November**

2023 under the **Consumer Protection Act, 2019**.
- Now **RBI** has extended this to **financial services**.

India's Financial Consumer Protection Architecture

- **RBI Ombudsman Scheme**: For **banking-related complaints**.
- **SEBI's SCORES** (Complaints Redress System): For **capital markets complaints**.
- **IRDAI's Grievance Mechanism**: For **insurance complaints**.
- **CCPA (Central Consumer Protection Authority)**: For **unfair trade practices** and **dark patterns** under the **Consumer Protection Act, 2019**.
- **NCDRC (National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission)**: For **consumer disputes**.
- **DICGC**: For **bank deposit insurance** (up to **₹5 lakh per depositor per bank**).

Allied Recent RBI Reforms

- **Digital Lending Guidelines (2022)**: For **regulating digital lenders** and **LSPs**.
- **Master Direction on KYC**: Updated norms for **customer identification**.
- **Master Direction on Outsourcing**: For **bank outsourcing** of **non-core activities**.
- **CIMS (Centralised Information Management System)**: For **regulatory reporting**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the RBI's Responsible Business Conduct (Second Amendment) Directions, 2026, consider the following statements:

1. The directions were released on 15 June 2026 and will take effect from 1 January 2027.
2. The directions ban compulsory bundling of third-party products with banks' own offerings.
3. Banks must mandatorily obtain explicit customer consent before selling any product or service.
4. The directions allow banks to use dark patterns and manipulative digital interfaces.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **directions explicitly BAN dark patterns** and **manipulative interfaces**.)

Q2. With reference to the mis-selling and compensation mechanism under the new RBI framework, consider the following statements:

1. Mis-selling is defined as the sale of a product or service without explicit consent, without correct information, or with misleading information.
2. Banks must refund the entire amount paid by the customer if mis-selling is established.
3. Banks must compensate the customer for any loss arising due to mis-selling, as per their approved policy.
4. Banks must seek customer feedback within 30 days of the sale to assess understanding of features and risks.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Q3. With reference to the dark patterns banned by the RBI's framework, consider the following statements:

1. Basket sneaking involves adding items to a customer's basket without consent.
2. Subscription traps make it easy to subscribe but difficult to unsubscribe.
3. Drip pricing hides the full price until the final stages of purchase.
4. Confirm shaming uses emotionally manipulative language to make users feel guilty for opting out.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Q4. With reference to the expanded agent scope under the new RBI framework, consider the following statements:

1. Banks must publicly disclose the Direct Selling Agents (DSAs) and Direct Marketing Agents (DMAs) engaged by them.
2. Sub-agents and TPPS representatives in bank premises must be distinguishable from bank employees through clear on-person identification.
3. Bank agents must not falsely present themselves as bank employees.
4. The agent regulation applies only to direct bank employees, not to BCs, LSPs, or sub-agents.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **agent regulation has been WIDENED** to **cover BCs, LSPs, sub-agents, and TPPS representatives**.)

Q5. With reference to NBFCs and insurance distribution under the new framework, consider the following statements:

1. NBFCs may distribute insurance products without prior RBI approval.
2. NBFCs still require IRDAI's approval for insurance distribution.
3. Banks can continue to act as insurance brokers department-wise.
4. NBFCs are regulated by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI).

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **NBFCs are regulated by the RBI**, NOT SEBI.)

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the directions explicitly ban dark patterns.
2. (d), All four statements are correct.
3. (d), All four statements are correct.
4. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because agent regulation has been widened to cover BCs, LSPs, and sub-agents.
5. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because NBFCs are regulated by the RBI.

Exam Relevance

Banking (RBI Gr B, SBI PO, IBPS, NABARD)	Very high importance, RBI norms, mis-selling, BC, LSP, DSA, dark patterns, bundling
RBI Grade B	Core area on banking regulation and consumer protection

3. RBI Issues Master Directions on Authorisation to Operate a Payment System

Context

The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has issued the **Master Directions on Authorisation to Operate a Payment System**, consolidating existing guidelines on the **authorisation of Payment System Operators (PSOs)**. The directions, which come into **effect immediately**, provide a **unified framework** covering **eligibility criteria, authorisation, perpetual validity of licences, voluntary surrender, and cooling-off**

requirements. **New PSO authorisations** will be **perpetually valid**, while **existing operators** may receive **perpetual validity** at **renewal** subject to **regulatory compliance**. The framework **retains FATF-based restrictions** on **investment from non-compliant jurisdictions**, capping **aggregate voting rights below 20 per cent** for such investors. **Authorisation remains on-tap**, allowing entities to apply throughout the year.

The Framework

- **Name**: **Master Directions on Authorisation to Operate a Payment System**.
- **Issued by**: **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)**.
- **Aim**: **Consolidate existing guidelines** on **PSO authorisation**.

Key Features

Perpetual Validity of Licences

- **New PSOs**: Authorisation **perpetually valid**.
- **Existing PSOs**: May receive **perpetual validity** at **renewal**, subject to:
  - **Meeting regulatory requirements**.
  - **No supervisory concerns**.
- **Non-compliant operators**: May receive **1-year renewals** until **deficiencies are addressed**.

On-Tap Authorisation

- **Entities** can apply for **payment system licences throughout the year**.
- **Applications** to be submitted through the **RBI's portal**.
- Must comply with **capital and net-worth requirements** prescribed for **specific payment systems**.

Fit and Proper Criteria

- Applicants must meet the RBI's **"fit and proper" criteria**:
  - **Integrity**.
  - **Financial soundness**.
  - **Governance standards**.

FATF Restrictions

- **Investments from FATF non-compliant jurisdictions** are **restricted**.
- **New investors from such jurisdictions cannot acquire significant influence**.
- **Aggregate voting rights** capped **below 20 per cent**.

Voluntary Surrender of Authorisation

- Entities **seeking to discontinue operations** must:
  - **Settle outstanding liabilities** to **customers, merchants, agents, and banks**.
  - Obtain **auditor-certified confirmation** before **surrendering licences**.

Cooling-Off Period

- A **1-year cooling-off period** may be imposed on entities whose:
  - **Authorisation has been revoked**.
  - **Renewal has been rejected**.
  - **Authorisation has been voluntarily surrendered**.
  - **Application for authorisation has been rejected**.
- During this period, **such entities cannot apply** for **permission to operate any payment system**.

What is a Payment System Operator (PSO)?

- An **entity authorised by the RBI** to **operate a payment system** under the **Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007 (PSS Act)**.
- **Examples** of PSOs:
  - **Card networks**: **Visa, Mastercard, RuPay, American Express**.
  - **Prepaid Payment Instruments (PPI)**: **PhonePe, Paytm, Google Pay, Mobikwik, Amazon Pay**.
  - **UPI third-party app providers**.
  - **Cross-border payment players**.
  - **ATM networks**.

What is the Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007 (PSS Act)?

- The **legal framework** for **payment systems** in India.
- **Effective from**: **12 August 2008**.
- Empowers the **RBI** to **regulate and supervise** payment systems in India.
- Provides for **authorisation of PSOs**.

India's Payment Systems Landscape

- **UPI (Unified Payments Interface)**: Operated by **NPCI**, India's flagship real-time payments platform.
- **RTGS (Real Time Gross Settlement)**: For **large-value transactions**, **above ₹2 lakh**, **24x7**.
- **NEFT (National Electronic Funds Transfer)**: For **smaller value transactions**, **24x7**.
- **IMPS (Immediate Payment Service)**: **Instant interbank transfers**.
- **Card networks**: **RuPay, Visa, Mastercard**.
- **Cheque Truncation System (CTS)**: For **electronic cheque clearing**.
- **Bharat Bill Payment System (BBPS)**: For **utility bill payments**.
- **AEPS (Aadhaar Enabled Payment System)**.
- **FASTag**: For **electronic toll collection**.

FATF-Based Restrictions in India's Financial System

- **Restrictions on FDI** from **FATF non-compliant jurisdictions** in **critical sectors**.
- **Enhanced due diligence** for **transactions involving** these jurisdictions.
- **Restrictions on PSO investments** from **such jurisdictions** (as per the new RBI master directions).

What is NPCI?

- **National Payments Corporation of India**.
- A **non-profit company** under the **Ministry of Finance**.
- **Founded**: **2008**.
- **Promoted by**: **RBI** and **Indian Banks' Association (IBA)**.
- **Functions**:
  - **Operates UPI, RuPay, IMPS, BHIM, AEPS, BBPS, NETC (FASTag)**.
  - **Sets standards** for **retail payment systems** in India.
- **NPCI International Payments Limited (NIPL)**: For **global UPI expansion**.

About RBI

- **Reserve Bank of India**, India's **central bank**.
- Established under the **RBI Act, 1934**; began operations on **1 April 1935**.
- **Headquartered**: **Mumbai**.
- **Current Governor**: **Sanjay Malhotra** (since **11 December 2024**).

- **Deputy Governor** in charge of **Payments**: As per current allocations.

Why is This Important?

- **Streamlines PSO authorisation** with **unified framework**.
- **Encourages innovation** in **digital payments**.
- **Strengthens financial integrity** through **FATF-based safeguards**.
- **Supports India's leadership** in **digital payments** globally.
- **Provides business certainty** to **payment system operators**.

Key Terms (Simple)

- **Payment System Operator (PSO)**: An **entity authorised by the RBI** to **operate a payment system** under the **PSS Act, 2007**.
- **Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007 (PSS Act)**: The **legal framework** for **payment systems** in India, empowering the **RBI** to **regulate and supervise** payment systems.
- **Perpetual Validity**: A **licence that remains valid indefinitely** subject to **ongoing regulatory compliance**, **without periodic renewals**.
- **On-Tap Authorisation**: An **authorisation mechanism** that allows **entities to apply** for **licences throughout the year**, instead of in **specific windows**.
- **Fit and Proper Criteria**: A **regulatory test** to **assess the integrity, financial soundness, and governance** of **applicants for financial licences**.
- **FATF (Financial Action Task Force)**: An **intergovernmental body** founded in **1989**, headquartered in **Paris**, that **sets global standards** for **combating money laundering, terrorist financing, and proliferation financing**.
- **Grey List**: A **list of FATF jurisdictions** under **increased monitoring** for **AML/CFT deficiencies**.
- **Black List**: A **list of FATF high-risk jurisdictions** with **strategic AML/CFT deficiencies** (currently **North Korea, Iran, Myanmar**).
- **Cooling-Off Period**: A **mandatory waiting period** before an **entity can re-apply** for an **authorisation** after **revocation, non-renewal, voluntary surrender, or rejection**.
- **NPCI (National Payments Corporation of India)**: A **non-profit company** founded in **2008**, promoted by **RBI** and **IBA**, that **operates UPI, RuPay, IMPS, AEPS, BBPS, NETC**.
- **UPI (Unified Payments Interface)**: India's **flagship real-time payments platform**, operated by **NPCI**, launched in **2016**.
- **CBDC (Central Bank Digital Currency)**: A **digital form of fiat currency** issued by a **central bank**, also called **e-Rupee** in India.
- **AML/CFT**: **Anti-Money Laundering / Counter Financing of Terrorism**, a **global regulatory framework** to **prevent illicit financial flows**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the RBI's Master Directions on Authorisation to Operate a Payment System (June 2026), consider the following statements:

1. New PSO authorisations will be perpetually valid.
2. Existing operators may receive perpetual validity at renewal, subject to regulatory compliance.
3. Authorisation will continue to be available on an on-tap basis throughout the year.
4. The directions take effect from 1 January 2027.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **directions take effect immediately**, NOT from 1 January 2027.)

Q2. With reference to FATF-based restrictions under the new framework, consider the following statements:

1. Investments from FATF non-compliant jurisdictions are restricted.
2. New investors from such jurisdictions cannot acquire significant influence in PSOs.
3. Aggregate voting rights from such investors are capped below 20 per cent.
4. The directions allow unrestricted investment from FATF non-compliant jurisdictions.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **directions RESTRICT investment** from **FATF non-compliant jurisdictions**.)

Q3. With reference to the Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007 (PSS Act), consider the following statements:

1. The PSS Act, 2007 came into effect on 12 August 2008.
2. It provides the legal framework for payment systems in India.
3. It empowers the RBI to regulate and supervise payment systems.
4. It provides for the authorisation of Payment System Operators (PSOs).

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Q4. With reference to the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), consider the following statements:

1. FATF is an intergovernmental body founded in 1989 by the G7 nations.
2. FATF is headquartered in Paris, France.
3. India became a full member of FATF in 2010.
4. FATF's current black list includes the United States and the United Kingdom.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; FATF's **current black list** includes **North Korea, Iran, and Myanmar**, NOT the US or UK.)

Q5. With reference to NPCI and India's payment systems, consider the following statements:

1. NPCI is a non-profit company founded in 2008, promoted by the RBI and the Indian Banks' Association (IBA).
2. NPCI operates UPI, RuPay, IMPS, BHIM, AEPS, BBPS, and NETC (FASTag).
3. UPI is India's flagship real-time payments platform, launched in 2016.
4. NPCI is a private foundation with no link to the Government of India or RBI.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **NPCI is promoted by the RBI and IBA**, NOT a private foundation.)

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the directions take effect immediately.
2. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the directions restrict such investment.
3. (d), All four statements are correct.

4. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the black list includes North Korea, Iran, and Myanmar.
5. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because NPCI is promoted by the RBI and IBA.

4. SEBI Eyes Five-Day FPI Onboarding Timeline

Source: Business Standard

Context

The **Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)** is exploring **measures** to **reduce the onboarding time** for **Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs)** to **as little as 5 days**, from the **current timeline of nearly a month**. The regulator has asked **custodians** to focus on **end-to-end digitisation**, **wider adoption of Indian digital signatures**, and **better coordination among intermediaries**. SEBI has held at least **two meetings with custodians** in the **past month** to **identify bottlenecks**. A **pilot model**, developed with **custodians**, has reportedly **achieved onboarding within 5 days**. SEBI is also **engaging with the RBI and Income Tax (I-T) Department** to **streamline approvals**. The move comes amid **FPI outflows** that have **fallen to ₹74.77 trillion in FPI assets** by **May 2026** (per NSDL data).

The Current Process

- **FPI registration** begins **online** through the **National Securities Depository Ltd (NSDL) platform**.
- **Authorisation** by a **designated depository participant (DDP)**.
- **Signed hard copies** of the **Common Application Form (CAF)** still required to be sent to the **DDP**.
- This involves **embassy attestations, physical paperwork**, and **tax-related formalities**.

What SEBI is Pushing For

- **End-to-end digitisation** of all **steps**.
- **Wider adoption** of **Indian digital signatures**.
- **Better coordination** among **intermediaries**.
- **Elimination** of **embassy attestations** and **physical paperwork** wherever possible.
- **Unified digital workflow** that **issues digital signature certificates** and **electronic signatures** directly through the **CAF**.

What is a Foreign Portfolio Investor (FPI)?

- **Foreign Portfolio Investor (FPI)** is a **non-resident entity** that **invests in Indian securities** through **stocks, bonds, mutual funds, and derivatives**.
- The **FPI category** combines the earlier **FII, QFI, and sub-account categories** under a **unified framework**.
- Regulated by **SEBI** under the **SEBI (Foreign Portfolio Investors) Regulations, 2019**.
- **Three categories of FPIs**:
  - **Category I**: **Government and government-related investors** (sovereign wealth funds, central banks, international agencies).
  - **Category II**: **Regulated entities** like **pension funds, banks, insurance, broad-based funds, university funds**, and **family offices**.
  - **Category III**: **Earlier existed**; now **merged with Category II** under the **2019 amendments**.

Designated Depository Participant (DDP)

- A **SEBI-approved entity** that **registers FPIs** and **handles their KYC and compliance**.
- Usually **major banks** like **HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, HSBC, Citibank, Deutsche Bank**, and **Standard Chartered**.
- The DDP **processes the CAF**, conducts **KYC**, and **interfaces with NSDL** and **SEBI**.

National Securities Depository Limited (NSDL)

- India's **first and largest securities depository**.
- **Founded**: **November 1996**.
- Headquartered in **Mumbai**.
- **Functions**:
  - **Holds securities in dematerialised form**.
  - **Settles trades** for the **NSE and BSE**.
  - **Maintains FPI registry**.
  - **Processes corporate actions** like **dividends and bonus issues**.
- **Regulated by SEBI**.
- **Competitor**: **CDSL (Central Depository Services Limited)**.

Key Terms (Simple)

- **FPI (Foreign Portfolio Investor)**: A **non-resident entity** that **invests in Indian securities** through **stocks, bonds, mutual funds, and derivatives**.
- **FII (Foreign Institutional Investor)**: An **older term** for **foreign investors**; **largely merged** with **FPI** under the **2014 framework**.
- **Custodian Bank**: A **bank that holds securities** and **provides services** like **settlement, KYC, and compliance** for **FPIs**.
- **Designated Depository Participant (DDP)**: A **SEBI-approved entity** that **registers FPIs** and handles their **KYC and compliance**.
- **Common Application Form (CAF)**: A **single application form** that **synchronises SEBI, RBI, and tax-related formalities** for **FPI registration**.
- **NSDL (National Securities Depository Limited)**: India's **first and largest securities depository**, established in **November 1996**, headquartered in **Mumbai**.
- **CDSL (Central Depository Services Limited)**: India's **second securities depository**, established in **1999**, headquartered in **Mumbai**.
- **Dematerialisation (Demat)**: The **conversion of physical share certificates** into **electronic form** held in a **demat account**.
- **KYC (Know Your Customer)**: A **due diligence process** to **verify the identity** of a **customer**.
- **Digital Signature**: An **electronic, encrypted authentication** of a **document** that has **legal validity** under the **IT Act, 2000**.
- **SEBI (FPI) Regulations, 2019**: The **regulatory framework** for **FPIs** in India.
- **FII Outflows / FPI Outflows**: When **foreign investors** sell **Indian securities** and **withdraw capital** from India.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to SEBI's recent push to speed up FPI onboarding, consider the following statements:

1. SEBI is exploring measures to reduce the FPI onboarding time to as little as 5 days, from the current nearly month-long process.
2. A pilot model developed with custodians has reportedly achieved onboarding within 5 days.
3. SEBI is collaborating with the RBI and the Income Tax Department to streamline approvals.
4. SEBI's only goal is to increase regulatory paperwork, not reduce onboarding time.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; SEBI's goal is to **reduce onboarding time** and **paperwork**, NOT increase it.)

Q2. With reference to FPIs in India, consider the following statements:

1. FPIs are regulated by SEBI under the SEBI (Foreign Portfolio Investors) Regulations, 2019.
2. FPIs are classified into Category I (government and government-related) and Category II (regulated entities).
3. Designated Depository Participants (DDPs) are SEBI-approved entities that handle FPI registration and compliance.
4. FPIs are not subject to any KYC norms in India.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **FPIs are subject to KYC norms** under **SEBI regulations**.)

Q3. With reference to NSDL and CDSL, consider the following statements:

1. NSDL was founded in November 1996 and is India's first securities depository.
2. CDSL was founded in 1999 and is India's second securities depository.
3. Both NSDL and CDSL are headquartered in Mumbai.
4. NSDL and CDSL are regulated by the RBI.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **NSDL and CDSL are regulated by SEBI**, NOT the RBI.)

Q4. With reference to FPI outflow trends in India, consider the following statements:

1. FPI equity outflows in FY26 were about ₹1.80 trillion, an all-time high at the time.
2. FY27 (till early June 2026) has seen FPI equity outflows of about ₹1.45 trillion (USD 15 billion) in just over 2 months.
3. FPI assets in India fell to ₹74.77 trillion by May 2026, per NSDL data.
4. FPI flows into India have been consistently positive over the past 3 years.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **FPI flows have been net negative** for **2 years in a row (FY25, FY26)**, with **FY27 also seeing record outflows**.)

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because SEBI's goal is to reduce onboarding time.
2. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because FPIs are subject to KYC norms.
3. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because NSDL and CDSL are regulated by SEBI, not the RBI.
4. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because FPI flows have been net negative for 2+ years.

Exam Relevance

SEBI Grade A	Very high importance, FPI regulations, capital markets, custodians

Agriculture

1. Telangana Bans Paraquat Herbicide; Spotlight on Deadly Weed Killer

Source: The Hindu

Context

Telangana has officially issued a **Government Order** banning the **sale, distribution, manufacture, and use** of the **highly toxic weedicide Paraquat** to **protect farmers and public health**. **Paraquat** is a **fast-acting, non-selective contact herbicide** that **destroys any green plant tissue** on contact. It is **banned in 74 countries** due to **severe toxicological risks**, including **no available antidote** and **lethal effects on humans** even in small doses. Telangana's move comes amid **rising cases of Paraquat poisoning** and **accidental ingestion** by **farmers and rural households**.

The Telangana Ban

- **Government Order** issued by **Telangana**.
- **Bans** the **sale, distribution, manufacture, and use** of **Paraquat**.
- **Aim**: Protect **farmers and public health**.
- **Trigger**: Multiple **fatal poisoning cases** linked to **Paraquat**.

What is Paraquat?

- A **non-selective contact herbicide** (weed killer).
- Destroys **any green plant tissue** it touches.
- **Highly toxic** to **humans and animals**.
- **Colourless, odourless, and virtually tasteless** in its pure state.
- **Sold under the commercial brand name Gramoxone**.

Toxicological Profile

Mechanism

- Functions by **generating reactive oxygen species (superoxides)** within **plant cells** during **photosynthesis**, **disrupting cellular membranes** and **drying out weeds** within **hours**.
- In **humans**, it causes **immediate, irreversible cellular damage** through **similar oxidative stress**.

No Antidote

- Unlike **snakebites** or **organic phosphate pesticide poisonings**, there is **no medical antidote** for Paraquat.
- Once inside a **biological system**, **cellular damage** is **immediate and irreversible**.

Symptoms and Outcomes

- **Paraquat Mouth**: **Corrosive damage** to **mouth and throat** even on **a small sip**.
- **Bloodstream spread**: **Damages kidneys and liver**.
- **Accumulation in lungs**: Causes **irreversible pulmonary fibrosis (scarring)**.
- **Putting a poisoned patient on a ventilator** can **accelerate oxidative damage**, **worsening multi-organ failure**.
- **Death rate from ingestion**: **Very high**, often **above 50 per cent** even with **prompt treatment**.

Why is Paraquat Especially Dangerous?

- **Tasteless and odourless**, often **mistaken for soft drinks** when **transferred to unlabelled containers**.
- **High suicide tool** in **rural areas** with **easy access**.
- **No antidote available**.

- **Lethal in very small doses** (as little as **a teaspoon**).
- **Children and animals** can be **accidentally exposed**.

India's Pesticide Regulation Framework

- **Insecticides Act, 1968**: India's **main law** for **regulating pesticides**.
- **Central Insecticides Board and Registration Committee (CIB&RC)**: The **regulator** for **pesticide registration**.
- **Pesticides Management Bill, 2020**: A **proposed replacement** for the Insecticides Act, **still pending**.
- **Anupam Verma Committee Report (2015)**: Recommended **review of 66 pesticides** banned or restricted in other countries; **18 banned**, **6 phased out by 2020**.
- **Paraquat** has **NOT been banned nationally**, despite the Anupam Verma Committee flagging it for review.

Pesticides Banned in India (Recent)

- **DDT** (banned for agricultural use; allowed for public health).
- **Endosulfan** (banned in **2011** by Supreme Court).
- **Tamil Nadu** has imposed **state-level bans** on **glyphosate** and other pesticides.
- **Kerala** has imposed **state-level bans** on several **highly toxic pesticides**.
- **Punjab** has imposed **bans** on certain pesticides during **basmati cultivation**.

Other Highly Hazardous Pesticides

- **Monocrotophos**.
- **Phorate**.
- **Methyl Parathion**.
- **Triazophos**.
- **Carbofuran**.
- **Many of these are on the WHO's list of "highly hazardous pesticides"**.

Why Are Some States Imposing Bans?

- **Concurrent List subject**: **Agriculture is a State subject**, while **regulation of poisons and dangerous drugs** is on the **Concurrent List**.
- **States can impose temporary bans** under **Section 27 of the Insecticides Act, 1968**, for up to **60 days**, **extendable to 90 days** by the **central government**.
- **Permanent bans** require **central government action**.
- **Telangana's ban** is a **state-level intervention** to **protect public health**.

Sustainable Alternatives

- **Bio-herbicides**: **Microbial or plant-based herbicides**, less toxic.
- **Cultural practices**: **Crop rotation, intercropping, mulching, manual weeding**.
- **Mechanical weeding**: Tractor-mounted or manual weeders.
- **Integrated Weed Management (IWM)**: Combines **chemical, biological, and cultural methods**.
- **Glyphosate** (less toxic to humans but still controversial; restricted in some places).
- **Natural farming** and **organic farming** methods.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to Paraquat, consider the following statements:

1. Paraquat is a non-selective contact herbicide.
2. It is sold under the commercial brand name Gramoxone.

3. It is banned in 74 countries worldwide due to severe toxicological risks.
4. Paraquat has a well-known medical antidote that can fully reverse poisoning.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **Paraquat has NO antidote**; cellular damage is **immediate and irreversible**.)

Q2. With reference to Telangana's recent action on Paraquat, consider the following statements:

1. Telangana has issued a Government Order banning the sale, distribution, manufacture, and use of Paraquat.
2. The ban aims to protect farmers and public health.
3. Paraquat is used on about 80 lakh acres of farmland in India.
4. India has implemented a nationwide ban on Paraquat.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **India has not implemented a nationwide ban on Paraquat**; only **some states have imposed state-level bans**.)

Q3. With reference to India's pesticide regulation framework, consider the following statements:

1. The Insecticides Act, 1968 is India's main law for regulating pesticides.
2. The Central Insecticides Board and Registration Committee (CIB&RC) is the regulator for pesticide registration.
3. The Anupam Verma Committee (2015) reviewed 66 pesticides banned or restricted in other countries.
4. The Pesticides Management Bill, 2020 has been enacted into law.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **Pesticides Management Bill, 2020 has NOT been enacted into law**; it remains **pending**.)

Q4. With reference to the health effects of Paraquat, consider the following statements:

1. Paraquat causes "Paraquat Mouth", a corrosive damage to the mouth and throat even on a small sip.
2. It spreads through the bloodstream, damaging the kidneys and liver.
3. It accumulates in the lungs, causing irreversible pulmonary fibrosis.
4. Paraquat has very low toxicity and is safe for accidental ingestion.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **Paraquat is extremely toxic**, with **a high fatality rate** even from **small ingestion**.)

Q5. With reference to herbicide classifications, consider the following statements:

1. A non-selective herbicide kills any green plant it touches, without distinguishing crops from weeds.
2. A contact herbicide kills only the parts of the plant that the chemical directly touches.
3. A systemic herbicide is absorbed by the plant and translocated throughout the plant's tissues.
4. Glyphosate is an example of a non-selective systemic herbicide.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because Paraquat has no antidote.
2. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because India has not implemented a nationwide ban.
3. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the Pesticides Management Bill, 2020 has not been enacted.
4. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because Paraquat is extremely toxic.
5. (d), All four statements are correct.

Exam Relevance

NABARD Grade A	Very high importance, pesticide use, sustainable agriculture, rural health

Facts To Remember

1. Lieutenant-General Dhiraj Seth named next Army Chief

The government has appointed Lieutenant-General Dhiraj Seth, serving as the Vice-Chief of the Army Staff, as the next Chief of the Army Staff with effect from the afternoon of June 30.

2. Skill India Completes 12 Years, Emerges as a Global Skilling Leader

The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship completed 12 years of the Skill India Mission, highlighting the growth of one of the world's largest skilling ecosystems. The initiative has expanded vocational training, apprenticeships, entrepreneurship support, digital skilling, and global workforce mobility across India.

3. Government Releases Second Advance Estimates of Horticulture Production 2025–26

The Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare released the Second Advance Estimates of Horticulture Crops for 2025–26, projecting total horticulture production at 3,777.76 lakh tonnes. The estimates indicate higher production of fruits, vegetables, flowers, and medicinal crops compared to the previous year.

4. Ashwini Vaishnaw Inaugurates FM Transmitter in Jaisalmer and Announces AI Labs in Jaipur

Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw inaugurated a 20-kW Akashvani FM Transmitter at Ramgarh in Jaisalmer, Rajasthan, improving radio coverage in border regions. He also announced the establishment of an Artificial Intelligence Lab, an Advanced Quantum Lab, and a Makers Lab at Malaviya National Institute of Technology, Jaipur.

5. IN-SPACe Selects Three Space Startups Under Technology Adoption Fund Scheme

IN-SPACe selected Astrobase Space Technologies, SatSure Analytics India, and TM2SPACE Technologies as the first beneficiaries under its Technology Adoption Fund scheme. The startups will develop advanced space technologies, including rocket engines, Earth observation AI models, and indigenous star-tracker systems.

6. Centre, Assam and Nagaland Sign Tripartite MoU for Oil and Gas Development

The Government of India, Assam, and Nagaland signed a tripartite Memorandum of Understanding to facilitate mineral oil operations in the Assam–Nagaland boundary areas. The agreement aims to revive hydrocarbon production, attract investment, and generate employment opportunities in the Northeast.

7. ICAR Promotes 'Oilseeds Kisaan Mitra' AI Advisory Platform

The Indian Council of Agricultural Research highlighted the growing adoption of 'Oilseeds Kisaan Mitra', a WhatsApp-based AI advisory platform for oilseed farmers. The service provides round-the-clock scientific guidance on major oilseed crops in multiple Indian languages.

8. NLC India and CSIR-CECRI Partner for Rare Earth Extraction Technologies

NLC India Limited signed an MoU with CSIR-Central Electrochemical Research Institute to develop technologies for extracting Rare Earth Elements and critical minerals from mining waste. The initiative supports sustainable resource recovery and strengthens India's critical mineral security.

9. WEF Selects Nine Indian Startups in 2026 Technology Pioneers Cohort

The World Economic Forum included nine Indian startups in its 2026 Technology Pioneers cohort. The selected companies were recognized for innovations in artificial intelligence, climate technology, biotechnology, space technology, and advanced manufacturing.

10. World Bank Raises India's FY27 GDP Growth Forecast to 6.6%

The World Bank increased India's GDP growth projection for FY27 to 6.6% in its Global Economic Prospects Report. India is expected to remain one of the fastest-growing major economies and continue to drive economic growth in South Asia.

11. Elon Musk Becomes World's First Trillionaire on Paper

Elon Musk became the world's first trillionaire on paper following SpaceX's record-breaking USD 75 billion Initial Public Offering. The listing significantly increased the valuation of SpaceX and boosted Musk's estimated net worth beyond USD 1 trillion.

12. Sanjay Lohiya Appointed Director on RBI and SBI Boards

The Government of India nominated Sanjay Lohiya, Secretary of the Department of Financial Services, as a Non-Executive Director on the Central Boards of the Reserve Bank of India and State Bank of India. The appointment became effective from 11 June 2026.

13. President Approves Merger of REC with Power Finance Corporation

President Droupadi Murmu approved the merger of REC Limited with Power Finance Corporation. The move aims to create a larger and more efficient public sector power financing institution and strengthen the government's power sector financing framework.

14. Tata and Airbus Complete First Test Flight of Made-in-India C295 Aircraft

Tata Advanced Systems and Airbus successfully completed the first test flight of India's first domestically manufactured C295 military transport aircraft from Vadodara, Gujarat. The programme marks a major milestone in India's indigenous aerospace manufacturing efforts.

15. Kane Williamson Announces Retirement from International Cricket

Former New Zealand captain Kane Williamson announced his retirement from international cricket after a distinguished 16-year career. He retires as New Zealand's highest international run-scorer and one of the country's most successful captains.

16. Padma Shri and Shooting Legend Jaspal Rana Passes Away

Renowned Indian shooter, coach, and Padma Shri awardee Jaspal Rana passed away at the age of 49. He was one of India's most decorated pistol shooters and played a key role in mentoring several

international medal-winning athletes.

17. Thailand's Princess Bajrakitiyabha Mahidol Passes Away

Thailand's Princess Bajrakitiyabha Mahidol, lawyer, diplomat, and United Nations Goodwill Ambassador, passed away at the age of 47. She was widely recognized for her work in justice reform, women's rights, and prison rehabilitation initiatives.

18. International Albinism Awareness Day 2026 Observed

International Albinism Awareness Day was observed on 13 June 2026 with the theme "Proudly in My Skin: Celebrating All Skin Tones." The day promotes awareness, inclusion, dignity, and equal rights for persons with albinism worldwide.

FIVE TO REMEMBER · 14 & 15 JUNE 2026

1. Launched by the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare** in **2019-20**. Centre Announces 16 Winners of 29th National Aw…
2. Established under the **RBI Act, 1934**; began operations on **1 April 1935**. RBI Issues Master Directions on Authorisation t…
3. **DICGC**: For **bank deposit insurance** (up to **₹5 lakh per depositor per bank**). RBI's Responsible Business Conduct Second Amend…
4. Regulated by **SEBI** under the **SEBI (Foreign Portfolio Investors) Regulations, 2019**. SEBI Eyes Five-Day FPI Onboarding Timeline
5. Credit growth was 17.7 per cent year-on-year by 31 May 2026. RBI's OFCB Swap Facility to Cut Banks' Funding …

Now test yourself: c4scourses.in/daily-quiz/daily-current-affairs-quiz-14-15-june-2026/

DAY 11 OF 18

16 June 2026

Tuesday · 29 items · 3 topics

National Affairs **6** · Banking and Finance **2** · Facts To Remember **21**

Context

The **Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP)** has released the **20th edition of the Global Peace Index (GPI) 2026** in **June 2026**. **Iceland** has retained its position as the **world's most peaceful country** for the **19th consecutive year**, with an **overall score of 1.161**. However, **India dropped to 127th position** in **2026** with a **score of 2.409**, from **115th position** in **2025**, marking a **2.9 per cent decrease** in its overall score. The GPI assesses **163 independent states and territories**, covering **99.7 per cent of the world's population**, using **23 qualitative and quantitative indicators** across **three domains**: **Societal Safety and Security**, **Ongoing Domestic and International Conflict**, and **Militarisation**. **Russia ranked last** at **163rd** as the **least peaceful country**.

The Report

- **Released by**: **Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP)**.
- **Edition**: **20th edition** of the **Global Peace Index (GPI)**.
- **Year**: **2026**.
- **Coverage**: **163 independent states and territories**, covering **99.7 per cent** of the **world's population**.
- **Method**: **23 qualitative and quantitative indicators**.

The Three Domains Measured

1. **Societal Safety and Security**: **Violent crime, political instability, terrorism, internal conflict**.
2. **Ongoing Domestic and International Conflict**: **Wars, armed conflicts, deaths from conflict**.
3. **Militarisation**: **Military expenditure, armed services personnel, weapons imports**.

Top 5 Most Peaceful Countries (2026 GPI)

Rank	Country	Score
1	**Iceland**	**1.161**
2	**New Zealand**	**1.343**
3	**Switzerland**	**1.363**
4	**Slovenia**	**1.369**
5	**Ireland**	**1.371**

Bottom 5 Least Peaceful Countries (2026 GPI)

Rank	Country
163 (last)	**Russia** (overall score 3.367)
162	**Sudan**
161	**Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)**
160	**Ukraine**
159	**Israel**

India's Position

- **2026 Rank**: **127th** (out of 163).
- **2026 Score**: **2.409**.
- **2025 Rank**: **115th**.
- **Drop**: **12 places**.
- **Score change**: **Worsened by 2.9 per cent**.

Why India's Rank Dropped

The score deterioration reflects:

- **Border tensions** with neighbours.
- **Increased militarisation**.
- **Domestic terror incidents** including **Pahalgam attack (April 2025)**.
- **Cross-border conflicts**.
- **Increased weapons imports**.

Iceland's 19-Year Run at the Top

- **Iceland** has held the **No.1 position** since **2008**.
- **Why Iceland scores so high**:
  - **No standing army**.
  - **Very low violent crime** rates.
  - **Strong rule of law**.
  - **Effective political institutions**.
  - **Geographic isolation** (no major neighbours).
  - **Membership of NATO** (provides security without standing army).
  - **High Human Development Index (HDI)**.

What is the Global Peace Index (GPI)?

- An **annual report** ranking **countries** on their **level of peacefulness**.
- **First published**: **2007**.
- **Published by**: **Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP)** in **Sydney, Australia**.
- **Founded by**: **Steve Killelea**.
- **Methodology**: **23 indicators** weighted across **3 domains**.
- **Scoring**: **Lower scores = more peaceful**, **Higher scores = less peaceful**.

About the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP)

- An **international think tank**.
- **Founded**: **2007**.
- Headquartered in **Sydney, Australia**, with **offices in New York, The Hague, Mexico City, Brussels, Nairobi, Harare**.
- **Founder**: **Steve Killelea**, Australian philanthropist.
- **Other reports** by IEP:
  - **Global Peace Index (GPI)**.
  - **Global Terrorism Index (GTI)**.
  - **Mexico Peace Index**.
  - **Ecological Threat Report (ETR)**.
  - **Positive Peace Index (PPI)**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the Global Peace Index (GPI) 2026, consider the following statements:

1. The 2026 GPI is the 20th edition of the report, released by the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP).
2. Iceland retained its position as the world's most peaceful country for the 19th consecutive year.
3. India dropped to 127th position in 2026 from 115th in 2025.
4. Russia was ranked as the most peaceful country in 2026.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **Russia was ranked LAST (163rd)** as the **least peaceful country**, NOT the most peaceful.)

Q2. With reference to the GPI methodology, consider the following statements:

1. The GPI covers 163 independent states and territories, representing 99.7 per cent of the world's population.
2. It uses 23 qualitative and quantitative indicators.
3. The three domains are: Societal Safety and Security, Ongoing Domestic and International Conflict, and Militarisation.
4. Lower scores in the GPI indicate less peaceful countries.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **lower scores indicate MORE peaceful countries**, NOT less peaceful.)

Q3. With reference to the top 5 most peaceful countries in GPI 2026, consider the following statements:

1. Iceland ranks 1st, followed by New Zealand at 2nd.
2. Switzerland ranks 3rd, Slovenia 4th, and Ireland 5th.
3. India is among the top 10 most peaceful countries.
4. The United States is among the bottom 5 least peaceful countries.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1 and 2 only** (b) 1, 2 and 4 only (c) 1, 3 and 4 only (d) 2 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statements 3 and 4 are wrong; **India is at 127th**, NOT in the top 10; the **bottom 5** include **Russia, Sudan, DRC, Ukraine, Israel**, NOT the United States.)

Q4. With reference to the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP), consider the following statements:

1. IEP is an international think tank founded in 2007 by Steve Killelea.
2. IEP is headquartered in Sydney, Australia.
3. IEP publishes the Global Peace Index (GPI), Global Terrorism Index (GTI), Positive Peace Index (PPI), and Ecological Threat Report (ETR).
4. IEP is a government organisation under the United Nations.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **IEP is an independent international think tank**, NOT a UN government organisation.)

Q5. With reference to Iceland's position in the GPI, consider the following statements:

1. Iceland has been the world's most peaceful country since 2008.

2. Iceland has no standing army, relying on NATO and its Coast Guard for defence.
3. Iceland is a founding member of NATO (1949).
4. Iceland is a member of the European Union (EU) and the Eurozone.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **Iceland is NOT a member of the EU or the Eurozone**; it is a member of **EFTA**.)

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because Russia was ranked last (163rd).
2. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because lower scores indicate more peaceful countries.
3. (a), Statements 1 and 2 are correct; Statements 3 and 4 are wrong because India is at 127th and the US is not in the bottom 5.
4. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because IEP is an independent think tank.
5. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because Iceland is not a member of the EU or Eurozone.

National Affairs

1. India-France Strategic Partnership

Source: Times of India

Context

India and France unveiled **13 major outcomes** during **PM Narendra Modi's visit to Nice, France**, aimed at **deepening cooperation** in **technology, AI, defence, trade, space, education, and digital infrastructure**. The **India-France Strategic Partnership**, established in **1998**, is one of India's **oldest and most comprehensive strategic partnerships**, covering **defence, space, civil nuclear energy, technology, trade, climate action, education, and people-to-people ties**. Key outcomes include the **India-France Innovation Roadmap 2030**, a **Joint AI Working Group**, **expansion of UPI to France**, **incubation of 10 Indian startups at Station F**, an **Economic Security Dialogue**, and **enhanced space cooperation** including the **Gaganyaan mission** and the **Bharatiya Antariksh Station**.

The 13 Major Outcomes

1. India-France Innovation Roadmap 2030: Long-term framework for **AI, critical technologies, startups, innovation ecosystems, academic mobility**; promotes **industry-academia partnerships**.

2. Joint India-France AI Working Group: Dedicated mechanism for **AI governance**; covers **research collaboration, startup partnerships, capacity building, policy coordination**.

3. National Centre of Excellence for Skilling in Aeronautics: To be established at the **National Skill Training Institute, Kanpur**; strengthens **aerospace manufacturing, aviation maintenance, workforce development**.

4. Expansion of UPI in France: **UPI services** extended to **Paris Airport** and **Nice**; benefits **Indian tourists, students, businesses, diaspora**.

5. Startup Collaboration through Station F: **10 additional Indian startups** to be incubated at **Station F**, **Europe's largest startup hub** in **Paris**.

6. India-France Centre of Digital Sciences: Joint establishment by **DST (India)** and **INRIA (France)**; supports **digital technology research, talent mobility**.

7. ICCR India Chair at Universite Paris-Saclay: New academic chair on **AI, Innovation and Culture**.

8. Health Data and AI Research Collaboration: Partnership between **ICMR (India)** and **France's Health Data Hub**; focus on **secure health-data sharing, AI-driven medical research**.

9. Mechanism to Double Bilateral Trade: **Annual high-level mechanism** to **double bilateral trade** in **5 years**.

10. Economic Security Dialogue: New platform covering **critical minerals, semiconductors, energy security, cybersecurity, strategic technologies**.

11. Railway and High-Speed Rail Cooperation: **Declaration of Intent** signed for **railway modernisation, technology transfer, infrastructure**.

12. Agreement on Classified Information Protection: Secure legal framework for **exchanging sensitive information**; strengthens **defence-industrial cooperation** and **Make in India**.

13. Enhanced Space Cooperation: **Letter of Intent** between **ISRO** and **CNES**; covers **human spaceflight, microgravity research, Gaganyaan mission, Bharatiya Antariksh Station**.

What is UPI's International Expansion?

- **UPI (Unified Payments Interface)** is India's **flagship digital payments DPI**.
- Operated by **NPCI (National Payments Corporation of India)**.

Where is UPI Now Available Internationally?

- **France**: Paris Airport and Nice (**2026**).
- **Singapore**: UPI-PayNow linkage (**2023**).
- **UAE**: (**2023**).
- **Bhutan**: (**2021**, **first international**).
- **Nepal**: (**2024**).
- **Sri Lanka**: (**2024**).
- **Mauritius**: (**2024**).
- **Maldives**: (**2024**).

What is Station F?

- **Europe's largest startup hub**, located in **Paris, France**.
- **Founded**: **2017** by **Xavier Niel**.
- Houses **over 1,000 startups**.
- Hosts **global startup incubator programmes**.
- India has had an **Indian Startup Programme** at Station F for several years.

What is INRIA?

- **Institut National de Recherche en Informatique et en Automatique**.
- France's **national research institute** for **computer science and applied mathematics**.
- **Founded**: **1967**.
- Headquartered in **Le Chesnay, France**.

What is ICCR?

- **Indian Council for Cultural Relations**.
- An **autonomous organisation** under the **Ministry of External Affairs (MEA)**.
- **Founded**: **1950** by **Maulana Abul Kalam Azad**.
- Headquartered in **New Delhi**.
- **Functions**: **Cultural diplomacy, ICCR Chairs in foreign universities, scholarships for foreign students, cultural festivals abroad**.

What is ISRO-CNES Cooperation?

- **ISRO (Indian Space Research Organisation)** and **CNES (Centre National d'Etudes Spatiales)** have **a long-standing partnership** since the **1960s**.
- **CNES** is **France's national space agency**, founded in **1961**.
- **Joint missions**: **Megha-Tropiques (2011), SARAL-AltiKa (2013), TRISHNA (planned)**.

What is the Gaganyaan Mission?

- India's **first human spaceflight programme**.
- **Mission**: Send **3-member crew** to **Low Earth Orbit (LEO)** for **3 days**.
- **Launcher**: **HLVM3 (Human-Rated LVM3)**.
- **Crew**: **Group Captain Prashanth Balakrishnan Nair, Group Captain Ajit Krishnan, Group Captain Angad Pratap, Wing Commander Shubhanshu Shukla** (all IAF pilots).
- **First crewed mission**: Planned around **2026-27**.

What is the Bharatiya Antariksh Station?

- India's planned **indigenous space station**.
- **Target for full operationalisation**: **2035**.
- **First module launch**: Around **2028-29**.
- **5 modules** planned eventually.
- Will be **lower-orbiting** than the **ISS**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the recent India-France summit outcomes (PM Modi's visit to Nice), consider the following statements:

1. The India-France Innovation Roadmap 2030 was adopted, covering AI, critical technologies, startups, and academic mobility.
2. UPI services were extended to Paris Airport and Nice in France.
3. A Joint India-France AI Working Group was established.
4. The India-France Strategic Partnership was established in 2026 during this visit.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **India-France Strategic Partnership** was **established in 1998**, NOT 2026.)

Q2. With reference to UPI's international expansion, consider the following statements:

1. UPI is India's real-time payments platform operated by NPCI.
2. UPI services were extended to France (Paris Airport and Nice) in 2026.
3. UPI is also available in Singapore, UAE, Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Mauritius, and Maldives.
4. UPI is currently available only within India, with no international expansion.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **UPI has been expanded internationally** to **multiple countries**.)

Q3. With reference to ISRO-CNES cooperation, consider the following statements:

1. ISRO and CNES have a long-standing partnership since the 1960s.
2. Joint missions include Megha-Tropiques (2011) and SARAL-AltiKa (2013).
3. The TRISHNA mission is planned for land and water surface monitoring.

4. CNES is France's national space agency, founded in 1961.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Q4. With reference to India's Gaganyaan Mission and Bharatiya Antariksh Station, consider the following statements:

1. Gaganyaan is India's first human spaceflight programme.
2. The crew for Gaganyaan includes four IAF pilots: Prashanth Balakrishnan Nair, Ajit Krishnan, Angad Pratap, and Shubhanshu Shukla.
3. Bharatiya Antariksh Station is India's planned indigenous space station, targeted for 2035.
4. India has no plans to launch its own space station.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **India has plans** to launch the **Bharatiya Antariksh Station** by **2035**.)

Q5. With reference to India-France bilateral relations, consider the following statements:

1. France is India's 2nd-largest arms supplier after Russia.
2. The Jaitapur Nuclear Power Plant project involves 6 EPR (European Pressurised Reactor) units, partnered with EDF (France).
3. India-France bilateral trade was about USD 15-17 billion in 2024-25.
4. France is not a member of the European Union (EU).

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **France is a founding member** of the **European Union (EU)**.)

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the India-France Strategic Partnership was established in 1998.
2. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because UPI has been expanded internationally.
3. (d), All four statements are correct.
4. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because India plans the Bharatiya Antariksh Station.
5. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because France is a founding member of the EU.

2. BRICS Indore Declaration

Source: Times of India

Context

India's BRICS Presidency culminated in the **adoption of the BRICS Indore Declaration** during the **Agriculture Ministers' Meeting** held in **Indore, Madhya Pradesh** in **June 2026**. The Declaration is a **unanimous joint agricultural charter** adopted by **BRICS member countries**, serving as a **farmer-centric framework** for **strengthening cooperation** on **food security, sustainable agriculture, agricultural trade, innovation, and climate resilience**. India will **lead several major initiatives**, including a **Global Forum on Farmers' Rights in Seed Systems**, a **BRICS Network of Centres of Excellence on Agro-Ecology and Regenerative Agriculture**, a **BRICS Network on Digital Agriculture**, and **BRICS AgriN** (a network for **agro**

inputs, genetic resources, and information).

The Declaration

- **Name**: **BRICS Indore Declaration**.
- **Adopted at**: **BRICS Agriculture Ministers' Meeting**.
- **Date and Venue**: **June 2026, Indore, Madhya Pradesh**.
- **Significance**: Culmination of **India's BRICS Presidency 2026**.
- **Nature**: **Unanimous joint agricultural charter**.

Stated Aims

- **Promote food security**, **sustainable agriculture**, and **farmer welfare**.
- **Strengthen innovation, digital agriculture, climate-resilient farming**.
- **Boost agricultural trade**.
- **Keep farmers at the centre of policy-making**.

Key Features of the Declaration

1. BRICS Network of Centres of Excellence on Agro-Ecology and Regenerative Agriculture

- A **collaborative platform** for **research, training, knowledge-sharing**.
- Focuses on **natural, organic, and regenerative farming**.
- Promotes **climate-resilient agriculture** and **sustainable resource management**.

2. BRICS Network on Digital Agriculture

- Cooperation in **AI, geospatial technologies, digital public infrastructure, data-driven farming**.
- Aims to **accelerate technology transfer** and **improve productivity**.

3. Global Forum on Farmers' Rights in Seed Systems

- Focus on protecting **indigenous seeds, traditional knowledge, farmers' seed rights**.
- Supports **biodiversity conservation** and **food security**.

4. BRICS AgriN (Agro Inputs, Genetic Resources and Information Network)

- Facilitates **exchange of agricultural inputs, genetic resources, best seed varieties, technical expertise**.
- Enhances **capacity-building** and **cooperation in agricultural research and innovation**.

What is BRICS?

- **BRICS** stands for **Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa**.
- An **intergovernmental grouping** of **major emerging economies**.
- **First BRIC Summit**: **2009** (without South Africa).
- **South Africa joined**: **2011** (making it BRICS).

Recent Expansion (BRICS Plus)

- At the **15th BRICS Summit (Johannesburg, August 2023)**, the group invited **6 new members** to join from **1 January 2024**:
  - **Saudi Arabia** (status pending; has not yet formally joined as of 2026).
  - **Iran**.
  - **UAE**.
  - **Egypt**.
  - **Ethiopia**.
  - **Argentina** (subsequently declined to join under President Milei).

- **Indonesia** joined the bloc in **January 2025**.

What is BRICS Presidency?

- A **rotating annual presidency** among **BRICS members**.
- The **presidency country** hosts **BRICS Summits** and **ministerial meetings**.
- **Sets the agenda** and **drives key initiatives**.
- **India's BRICS Presidency 2026** has focused on **agriculture, food security, climate resilience**.

Recent BRICS Presidencies

- **2023**: South Africa.
- **2024**: Russia (Kazan Summit in October 2024).
- **2025**: Brazil (Rio de Janeiro Summit in July 2025).
- **2026**: India.
- **2027**: China (planned).

India's BRICS Presidency 2026 Theme

- "**BRICS for People, Planet and Prosperity**" (related broader Indian framing for multilateral engagements).
- Indian focus areas:
  - **Agriculture and food security**.
  - **Climate resilience**.
  - **Digital public infrastructure (DPI)**.
  - **Reform of multilateral institutions** (including the UN and IMF).

What is the New Development Bank (NDB)?

- A **multilateral development bank** established by **BRICS** in **2014** at the **Fortaleza Summit (Brazil)**.
- **Operational since 2015**.
- Headquartered in **Shanghai, China**.
- **Initial subscribed capital**: **USD 50 billion** (expandable to **USD 100 billion**).
- **First President**: **K.V. Kamath** (India), 2015-2020.
- **Current President**: **Dilma Rousseff** (former Brazilian President), since **2023**.
- **Function**: **Infrastructure and sustainable development** projects in **emerging economies**.

What is the Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA)?

- A **financial safety net** established by **BRICS** in **2014**.
- **Initial pool**: **USD 100 billion**.
- **Provides short-term liquidity support** to **BRICS members** in **balance of payments crises**.
- **Alternative** to the **IMF**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the BRICS Indore Declaration, consider the following statements:

1. The Declaration was adopted at the BRICS Agriculture Ministers' Meeting in Indore, Madhya Pradesh, in June 2026.
2. It is a unanimous joint agricultural charter focused on farmer-centric cooperation.
3. The Declaration culminated India's BRICS Presidency 2026.
4. The Declaration was adopted unilaterally by India without consultation with other BRICS members.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **Declaration was unanimously adopted** by **all BRICS members**, NOT unilaterally by India.)

Q2. With reference to the key features of the BRICS Indore Declaration, consider the following statements:

1. It establishes a BRICS Network of Centres of Excellence on Agro-Ecology and Regenerative Agriculture.
2. It launches a BRICS Network on Digital Agriculture for cooperation in AI, geospatial technologies, and DPI.
3. It creates a Global Forum on Farmers' Rights in Seed Systems.
4. It includes BRICS AgriN for exchange of agricultural inputs, genetic resources, and best seed varieties.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Q3. With reference to BRICS, consider the following statements:

1. The first BRIC Summit was held in 2009, with South Africa joining in 2011 to make it BRICS.
2. BRICS represents about 45 per cent of the global population.
3. The 15th BRICS Summit in Johannesburg in August 2023 invited 6 new members.
4. India is a non-member of BRICS, holding only observer status.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **India is a founding member of BRICS**, NOT an observer.)

Q4. With reference to the New Development Bank (NDB), consider the following statements:

1. NDB was established by BRICS in 2014 at the Fortaleza Summit.
2. NDB is headquartered in Shanghai, China.
3. The first NDB President was K.V. Kamath from India (2015-2020).
4. The current NDB President (since 2023) is Dilma Rousseff, former President of Brazil.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Q5. With reference to India's farmers' seed rights framework, consider the following statements:

1. The Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights (PPV&FR) Act was enacted in 2001.
2. India is a signatory to the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA), 2001.
3. The PPV&FR Act recognises farmers' rights to save, use, exchange, and sell seeds from their harvest.
4. India has no legal framework for protecting farmers' seed rights.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **India has a strong PPV&FR Act, 2001** for **farmers' seed rights**.)

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the Declaration was unanimously adopted.
2. (d), All four statements are correct.
3. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because India is a founding member of BRICS.

4. (d), All four statements are correct.
5. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because India has the PPV&FR Act, 2001.

3. Jharkhand's Four Traditional Products Receive Geographical Indication (GI) Tag

Source: News on Air

Context

In a **major milestone for tribal craftsmanship**, **four traditional products from Jharkhand**, namely **Bhagaiya Silk, Kuchai Silk, Munda Jewellery, and Bamboo Craft**, have been officially granted the **prestigious Geographical Indication (GI) tag**. The GI tag, governed by the **Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999**, recognises products with **specific geographical origin** and **qualities essentially due to that place of origin**. The tags will boost **livelihoods of tribal artisans**, provide **legal protection against duplication**, ensure **premium quality assurance**, and enable **global branding and export value** for these **traditional Jharkhand crafts**.

The Four GI-Tagged Products

1. Bhagaiya Silk

- A **traditional Jharkhand silk** known for:
  - **Natural golden sheen**.
  - **Durability**.
  - **Eco-friendly wild Tussar silk production**.
- Produced through **indigenous hand-reeling techniques**.

2. Kuchai Silk

- Another **traditional Jharkhand silk** with **similar features**.
- **Eco-friendly Tussar variety**.
- Reflects the **state's rich handloom heritage**.

3. Munda Jewellery

- **Traditional tribal jewellery** of the **Munda community**.
- Handcrafted with **unique geometric patterns** and **nature-inspired motifs**.
- Holds **cultural and spiritual significance**.
- Preserves **centuries-old indigenous metalcraft traditions**.

4. Jharkhand Bamboo Craft

- **Eco-friendly craft** using **local bamboo**.
- Produces **baskets, mats, utility products, decorative items**.
- Supports **sustainable livelihoods** in **rural forest regions**.

What is a Geographical Indication (GI) Tag?

- An **official intellectual property sign** used on **products with a specific geographical origin**.
- Products possess **qualities, characteristics, or reputation** that are **essentially due to that place of origin**.
- Examples globally: **Champagne (France), Roquefort cheese (France), Tequila (Mexico), Darjeeling Tea (India), Kanchipuram Silk (India)**.
- **Two forms** in India:
  - **Agricultural products**.
  - **Manufactured products**.

About Tussar Silk

- One of **four major silk types** in India: **Mulberry, Tussar, Eri, Muga**.
- **Tussar** (also called **Tasar/Kosa**) is **produced by silkworms** (**Antheraea mylitta**) that **feed on wild Sal, Asan, and Arjun trees**.
- **Wild/non-mulberry** silk.
- **Major producing states**: **Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal**.
- **Tussar silk** has a **natural golden sheen** and **rich texture**.

About the Munda Community

- One of India's **largest tribal communities**.
- **Linguistic group**: **Mundari (Austroasiatic family)**.
- **Geographic concentration**: **Jharkhand, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal**.
- **Population**: Approximately **2 million**.
- **Famous Munda leader**: **Birsa Munda** (1875-1900), tribal freedom fighter.
- **Birsa Munda Jayanti** is celebrated on **15 November** as **Janjatiya Gaurav Divas**.

About Jharkhand

- **State formed**: **15 November 2000** (carved out of Bihar).
- **Capital**: **Ranchi**.
- **Population**: about **3.3 crore**.
- **Tribal population**: about **26 per cent** (significant tribal heritage).
- **Major tribes**: **Santhal, Munda, Oraon, Ho, Kharia**.
- **Rich in**: **Minerals (coal, iron ore, bauxite, mica)**, **forests, biodiversity**.
- **Current CM**: **Hemant Soren** (JMM).
- **Current Governor**: **Santosh Kumar Gangwar**.

Other Recent Notable GI Tags from Jharkhand

- **Sohrai-Khovar Painting (2020)**: Traditional **tribal mural painting**.
- **Tilkamanjhi Saree** (recently considered).

Notable Recent GI Tags from Across India

- **Mithila Makhana (Bihar)**: **2022**.
- **Basohli Pashmina (J&K)**: **2023**.
- **Goa Cashew (Goa)**: **2023**.
- **Kashmir Saffron (J&K)**: **2020**.
- **Coorg Coffee (Karnataka)**.
- **Manipuri Black Rice (Chak-Hao)**.
- **Tirupathi Laddu (AP)**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the recent GI tags granted to Jharkhand's traditional products, consider the following statements:

1. Four products from Jharkhand received the GI tag: Bhagaiya Silk, Kuchai Silk, Munda Jewellery, and Bamboo Craft.
2. Bhagaiya Silk and Kuchai Silk are wild Tussar silks with a natural golden sheen.
3. Munda Jewellery is traditional tribal jewellery of the Munda community.
4. The GI tags were granted under the Geographical Indications of Goods Act, 1999.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Q2. With reference to the GI Act, 1999, consider the following statements:

1. The GI Act, 1999 came into force on 15 September 2003.
2. The Geographical Indications Registry is headquartered in Chennai, Tamil Nadu.
3. The GI registration is valid for 10 years and is renewable.
4. The GI tag is an individual right, not a collective right.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **GI is a collective right**, NOT an individual right.)

Q3. With reference to Tussar silk, consider the following statements:

1. Tussar is one of four major silk types in India, along with Mulberry, Eri, and Muga.
2. Tussar is a wild/non-mulberry silk produced by silkworms feeding on Sal, Asan, and Arjun trees.
3. Major Tussar-producing states include Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Bihar, MP, and West Bengal.
4. Tussar silk is exclusively produced in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **Tussar is mainly produced in Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Bihar, MP, West Bengal**, NOT Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.)

Q4. With reference to the Munda community and Birsa Munda, consider the following statements:

1. The Munda community is one of India's largest tribal communities, concentrated in Jharkhand, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, and West Bengal.
2. The Munda language belongs to the Austroasiatic family.
3. Birsa Munda (1875-1900) was a Munda tribal freedom fighter.
4. Birsa Munda's birth anniversary (15 November) is celebrated as Janjatiya Gaurav Divas since 2021.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Q5. With reference to GI tags in India, consider the following statements:

1. Darjeeling Tea was India's first registered GI product, registered in 2004-05.
2. India has over 670 GI tags registered as of mid-2026.
3. The GI Act, 1999 is aligned with the WTO TRIPS Agreement (1994).
4. GI tags are administered by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **GI tags are administered by DPIIT** under the **Ministry of Commerce and Industry**, NOT the Ministry of Tribal Affairs.)

Answer Key

1. (d), All four statements are correct.
2. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because GI is a collective right.
3. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because Tussar is mainly produced in eastern India.

4. (d), All four statements are correct.
5. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because GI tags are administered by DPIIT.

4. Kaziranga's First Scientific Assessment of Greater Hog Badger

Context

The **Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve** has released its **first-ever scientific assessment report** on the **Greater Hog Badger (Arctonyx collaris)**. The assessment recorded a **healthy population** of the **vulnerable species** in the **1,100 sq km floodplain network** of the **Kaziranga landscape**. The **Greater Hog Badger** is **globally classified as Vulnerable** on the **IUCN Red List** and enjoys **the highest legal protection** in India under **Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972**. Locally called **"mati gahori" (earth pig)** in **Assamese** for its **pig-like snout and digging behaviour**, it is a **fossorial omnivore** that plays a **critical ecological role** in **soil aeration, nutrient redistribution, and micro-habitat formation**.

What is the Greater Hog Badger?

- **Scientific name**: **Arctonyx collaris**.
- **Local name (Assamese)**: **"mati gahori" (earth pig)**.
- **Reason for local name**: **Pig-like snout** and **digging behaviour**.
- **Activity pattern**: **Nocturnal** (operates almost exclusively at night).
- **Diet**: **Omnivore**.
- **Size**: **Medium-sized**, the **largest of the three globally extant hog badger species**.
- **Behaviour**: **Burrowing** and **fossorial** (adapted for digging and underground living).

Conservation Status

- **IUCN Red List**: **Vulnerable**.
- **India's Wildlife Protection Act, 1972**: **Schedule I** (highest legal protection).
- **CITES**: Not currently listed.

Why is the Greater Hog Badger Ecologically Important?

Fossorial Engineering

- **Anatomically specialised** for **digging**.
- Continuously **turns over soil and leaf litter** while foraging.
- Plays a **critical role** in:
  - **Nutrient redistribution**.
  - **Soil aeration**.

Micro-Habitat Formation

- **Burrowing breaks up compacted earth**.
- **Facilitates seed germination**.
- Creates **crucial micro-habitats** for **invertebrates and small vertebrates**.

What is Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve?

- A **globally renowned wildlife sanctuary**.
- **UNESCO World Heritage Site** (designated in **1985**).
- A **successful Tiger Reserve** (declared in **2007**).
- Hosts the **world's largest population** of the **Greater Indian One-Horned Rhinoceros**.
- A **vital refuge** for **elephants, wild water buffalo, and swamp deer**.

Where is Kaziranga Located?

- **Northeastern state of Assam, India**.
- **Floodplains** of the **Golaghat, Nagaon, and Sonitpur districts**.
- **Edge of the Eastern Himalaya biodiversity hotspot**.
- **Adjacent to the Brahmaputra River**.

India's Wildlife Protection Framework

- **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972**:
  - **Schedule I**: Highest protection (e.g., tigers, rhinos, hog badgers).
  - **Schedule II**: High protection.
  - **Schedule III**: Lesser protection.
  - **Schedule IV**: Plants.
- **Biological Diversity Act, 2002**: For **biodiversity conservation and benefit-sharing**.
- **Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980**: For **forest land use**.
- **Project Tiger (1973)**: For **tiger conservation**.
- **Project Elephant (1992)**: For **elephant conservation**.
- **Project Rhino**: For **rhinoceros conservation**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the Greater Hog Badger, consider the following statements:

1. The scientific name of the Greater Hog Badger is Arctonyx collaris.
2. It is the largest of the three globally extant hog badger species.
3. It is a nocturnal, medium-sized burrowing omnivore.
4. It is locally called "mati gahori" (earth pig) in Assamese.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Q2. With reference to the conservation status of the Greater Hog Badger, consider the following statements:

1. It is globally classified as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List.
2. It is protected under Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 in India.
3. Its global range includes Bangladesh, Northeast India, Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam.
4. The Greater Hog Badger is classified as Least Concern on the IUCN Red List.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **Greater Hog Badger is Vulnerable**, NOT Least Concern.)

Q3. With reference to Kaziranga National Park, consider the following statements:

1. Kaziranga National Park is located in the floodplains of the Brahmaputra River in Assam.
2. It was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1985.
3. It was declared a Tiger Reserve in 2007 under Project Tiger.
4. Kaziranga hosts the world's largest population of the Greater Indian One-Horned Rhinoceros.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Q4. With reference to Kaziranga's vegetation and geology, consider the following statements:

1. The park features four main vegetation types: tall elephant grasslands, marshy savannas, semi-evergreen forests, and moist deciduous forests.
2. Oxbow lakes locally called "beels" are found in Kaziranga.
3. The Karbi Anglong Foothill Corridor connects Kaziranga to the Karbi Anglong hill range.
4. Kaziranga is part of the Western Ghats biodiversity hotspot.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **Kaziranga is part of the Eastern Himalaya biodiversity hotspot**, NOT the Western Ghats.)

Q5. With reference to India's wildlife protection framework, consider the following statements:

1. The Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 has 4 schedules after the 2022 amendment.
2. Project Tiger was launched in 1973 for tiger conservation.
3. NTCA (National Tiger Conservation Authority) is the statutory body for tiger conservation.
4. India has zero tiger reserves as of 2026.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **India has 57+ tiger reserves** as of mid-2026.)

Answer Key

1. (d), All four statements are correct.
2. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the Greater Hog Badger is Vulnerable.
3. (d), All four statements are correct.
4. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because Kaziranga is part of the Eastern Himalaya hotspot.
5. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because India has 57+ tiger reserves.

5. India Gets Its First Guided Missile Prostate Cancer Therapy: Novartis Launches Pluvicto

Context

Novartis has launched **Pluvicto**, India's **first regulatory-authority-approved radioligand therapy** for **advanced prostate cancer**. **Pluvicto (lutetium/Lu-177 vipivotide tetraxetan)** is designed for **eligible patients** with **prostate-specific membrane antigen (PSMA)-positive metastatic prostate cancer**. The launch comes **months after Novartis exited its listed Indian subsidiary** but **reinforces its commitment** to **India's innovative medicines market**. It signals India's **growing role** in **Novartis's next-generation treatment strategy** and highlights the **maturing nuclear medicine ecosystem** in India, with over **250 nuclear medicine centres** estimated nationwide. **India sees about 2,50,000 prostate cancer cases annually**, with **more than half diagnosed at advanced stages**.

The Therapy

- **Name**: **Pluvicto (lutetium-177/Lu-177 vipivotide tetraxetan)**.
- **Type**: **Radioligand therapy (RLT)**.
- **Developer**: **Novartis** (Swiss pharma giant).
- **Target**: **PSMA-positive metastatic prostate cancer**.
- **Origin of supply**: Imported from **Novartis facilities in Spain and Italy**.
- **Availability**: Initially through **select hospitals and nuclear medicine centres**.

How Pluvicto Works

- **Combines two components**:
  - A **targeting molecule** that **binds to PSMA** (Prostate-Specific Membrane Antigen), a **protein found in large quantities on many prostate cancer cells**.
  - The **radioactive isotope Lu-177 (Lutetium-177)** that **delivers targeted radiation**.
- The **targeting molecule** acts like a **GPS guidance system**, directing the **radiation specifically to cancer cells**.
- This **limits exposure** to **surrounding healthy tissue**, unlike **chemotherapy** which **affects both cancerous and healthy cells**.

What is Radioligand Therapy (RLT)?

- A **type of targeted cancer therapy** that uses **radioactive isotopes** attached to **molecules that bind specifically to cancer cells**.
- The **targeting molecule (ligand)** binds to **specific receptors** on **cancer cells**.
- The **radioactive isotope** then **delivers radiation directly to the cancer cells**.
- Also called **"guided missile therapy"** due to its **precision**.
- Other examples: **Lutathera (Lu-177 dotatate)** for **neuroendocrine tumours**.

What is PSMA (Prostate-Specific Membrane Antigen)?

- A **protein** that is **highly expressed** on the **surface of prostate cancer cells**.
- Used as a **biomarker** for **prostate cancer diagnosis and treatment**.
- **PSMA-PET imaging** is used for **diagnosis** of **advanced prostate cancer**.
- **PSMA-targeted therapies** like **Pluvicto** use this for **treatment**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to Pluvicto, consider the following statements:

1. Pluvicto is India's first regulatory-authority-approved radioligand therapy for advanced prostate cancer.
2. It is launched by Novartis, a Swiss multinational pharmaceutical company.
3. Pluvicto targets PSMA-positive metastatic prostate cancer using Lutetium-177.
4. Pluvicto is a chemotherapy drug that kills all rapidly dividing cells, including healthy ones.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **Pluvicto is a radioligand therapy, NOT chemotherapy**; it **targets cancer cells specifically** while **sparing healthy tissue**.)

Q2. With reference to radioligand therapy, consider the following statements:

1. Radioligand therapy combines a targeting molecule with a radioactive isotope.
2. The targeting molecule binds to specific receptors on cancer cells.
3. The radioactive isotope delivers targeted radiation to cancer cells.
4. Radioligand therapy is also called "guided missile therapy" due to its precision.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Q3. With reference to India's prostate cancer burden, consider the following statements:

1. India sees about 2,50,000 prostate cancer cases annually.
2. More than half of cases are diagnosed at advanced stages.

3. Prostate cancer is among the three most common cancers in urban men.
4. India has no nuclear medicine infrastructure to support advanced cancer therapies.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **India has over 250 nuclear medicine centres** with **growing infrastructure**.)

Q4. With reference to India's pharma regulatory framework, consider the following statements:

1. CDSCO (Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation) is India's national drug regulator.
2. DCGI (Drug Controller General of India) heads CDSCO.
3. AERB (Atomic Energy Regulatory Board) regulates radiation safety in India.
4. CDSCO is headquartered in Mumbai.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **CDSCO is headquartered in New Delhi**, NOT Mumbai.)

Q5. With reference to India's pharmaceutical industry, consider the following statements:

1. India is the 3rd largest pharma sector globally by volume.
2. India supplies about 20 per cent of global generic medicines.
3. India is called the "Pharmacy of the World".
4. India does not export any vaccines to other countries.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **India is a major vaccine exporter**, supplying about **60 per cent of WHO procurement**.)

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because Pluvicto is a radioligand therapy, not chemotherapy.
2. (d), All four statements are correct.
3. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because India has over 250 nuclear medicine centres.
4. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because CDSCO is headquartered in New Delhi.
5. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because India is a major vaccine exporter.

6. India and Slovakia Elevate Ties to Comprehensive Partnership

Context

India and Slovakia have **expanded their bilateral relationship** with **multiple memoranda of understanding (MoUs)** across **defence, labour mobility, education, digital technology**, and **other sectors**, officially branding the relationship as a **"Comprehensive Partnership"**. **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** met **Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico** at the **Bratislava Castle** in **Slovakia**. This is the **first visit by an Indian Prime Minister** since the **founding of Slovakia in 1993**. Talks covered **automobiles, railways, advanced manufacturing, green technology**, and **terrorism cooperation**, with both leaders calling for the **adoption of the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism** at the **UN**.

The Visit

- **Visit duration**: A little over **24 hours**.
- **Location**: **Bratislava**, **capital of Slovakia**.
- **Significance**: **First visit by an Indian PM** since the **founding of Slovakia in 1993**.
- **Hosted by**: **PM Robert Fico** at the **Bratislava Castle**.
- **Relationship upgrade**: **"Comprehensive Partnership"**.

Key MoUs Signed

- **Defence**: For **defence-industrial cooperation**.
- **Labour Mobility**: For **facilitating mobility of workers** and **information exchange** between authorities.
- **Higher Education**: Between the **Higher Education Ministries** to **facilitate academic and institutional linkages**.
- **Digital Technology**: For **cooperation in IT and digital infrastructure**.
- **Other sectors**: **Automobiles, railways, advanced manufacturing, green technology**.

About Slovakia

- **Capital**: **Bratislava**.
- **Currency**: **Euro (since 2009)**.
- **Population**: about **5.4 million**.
- **Government**: **Parliamentary republic**.
- **Founded**: **1 January 1993** (after the **peaceful "Velvet Divorce"** that split **Czechoslovakia** into **Czech Republic** and **Slovakia**).
- **EU member**: Since **2004**.
- **NATO member**: Since **2004**.
- **Eurozone member**: Since **2009**.
- **Schengen Area member**.
- **Current PM**: **Robert Fico** (since **October 2023**, fourth term).
- **Major industries**: **Automobiles** (Volkswagen, Kia, Peugeot-Citroen, Land Rover have plants), **electronics, steel**.

About UNSC 1267 Sanctions Committee

- **Established in 1999** through **UNSC Resolution 1267**.
- Imposes **sanctions** on **individuals and entities** associated with **Al-Qaeda, ISIL/Daesh, and Taliban**.
- **Sanctions include**:
  - **Asset freeze**.
  - **Travel ban**.
  - **Arms embargo**.
- India has used the **1267 mechanism** to seek **sanctions against Pakistan-based terror figures**.
- **Notable additions**: **Hafiz Saeed, Masood Azhar, Dawood Ibrahim**, and others.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the recent India-Slovakia bilateral visit, consider the following statements:

1. PM Narendra Modi met Slovak PM Robert Fico in Bratislava.
2. The two countries upgraded their relationship to a "Comprehensive Partnership".
3. This is the first visit by an Indian PM to Slovakia since the country's founding in 1993.
4. The visit was India's first to a EU member state.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **India has had many visits to EU member states**; this is the first **Indian PM visit to Slovakia** specifically, but **not the first to a EU member**.)

Q2. With reference to Slovakia, consider the following statements:

1. Slovakia was founded on 1 January 1993 after the peaceful "Velvet Divorce" of Czechoslovakia.
2. Slovakia is a member of the European Union (since 2004) and NATO (since 2004).
3. Slovakia is part of the Eurozone (since 2009) and the Schengen Area.
4. The capital of Slovakia is Prague.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **capital of Slovakia is Bratislava**, NOT Prague (which is the capital of the Czech Republic).)

Q3. With reference to the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT), consider the following statements:

1. CCIT was proposed by India in 1996.
2. It aims to create a comprehensive legal framework to combat terrorism at the UN.
3. It has been pending adoption at the UN General Assembly due to disagreements over the definition of terrorism.
4. CCIT was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2020.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **CCIT has NOT been adopted** by the UN General Assembly yet.)

Q4. With reference to the UNSC 1267 Sanctions Committee, consider the following statements:

1. It was established in 1999 through UNSC Resolution 1267.
2. It imposes sanctions on individuals and entities associated with Al-Qaeda, ISIL/Daesh, and Taliban.
3. Sanctions include asset freeze, travel ban, and arms embargo.
4. India has used the 1267 mechanism to seek sanctions against various Pakistan-based terror figures.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Q5. With reference to India's diplomatic relationships, consider the following statements:

1. India and Russia have a Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership since 2010.
2. India and the United States have a Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership since 2020.
3. India and Singapore upgraded to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership in 2024.
4. India does not have any Strategic Partnerships in West Asia.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **India has Strategic Partnerships** with **UAE (Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, 2017), Saudi Arabia (Strategic Partnership, 2010)**, and others in West Asia.)

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because India has had many visits to EU

member states.
2. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the capital of Slovakia is Bratislava.
3. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because CCIT has not been adopted yet.
4. (d), All four statements are correct.
5. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because India has Strategic Partnerships in West Asia.

Banking and Finance

1. RBI Imposes Restrictions on Mogaveera Co-operative Bank for 6 Months

Source: BS

Context

In **June 2026**, the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** imposed **several restrictions** on **Mogaveera Co-operative Bank Limited** (based in **Mumbai, Maharashtra**) under **direction for a period of 6 months**. The restrictions are **effective from closure of business on 12 June 2026**. The bank **cannot grant or renew loans**, **make investments**, or **accept fresh deposits** without **prior RBI approval**. **Maximum withdrawal** has been **capped at ₹1 lakh** per depositor. However, the **banking licence has NOT been cancelled**, and the bank can continue **daily operational expenses** like **salaries, rent, and electricity bills**. **Eligible depositors** are entitled to **deposit insurance coverage of up to ₹5 lakh** from the **Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC)**.

The Restrictions

- **Bank affected**: **Mogaveera Co-operative Bank Limited, Mumbai**.
- **Imposed by**: **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)**.
- **Duration**: **6 months** (subject to review).
- **Effective from**: **Closure of business hours on 12 June 2026**.

Key Restrictions Imposed

- **No new loans or renewals** without **RBI's prior approval**.
- **No investments** without **RBI's prior approval**.
- **No new liabilities** (including **borrowing of funds**).
- **No acceptance of fresh deposits**.
- **Withdrawals capped at ₹1 lakh** per depositor.

What is NOT Restricted

- **Banking licence has NOT been cancelled**.
- The bank can **continue daily operational expenses** like:
  - **Employee salaries**.
  - **Rent**.
  - **Electricity bills**.
  - **Other essential operations**.

Deposit Insurance

- **Eligible depositors** are entitled to **deposit insurance** of **up to ₹5 lakh per depositor per bank** from **DICGC**.
- This is the **standard insurance limit** under the **DICGC Act, 1961**, **raised from ₹1 lakh to ₹5 lakh** in **2020**.

Why Did RBI Impose Restrictions?

- **Deteriorating financial position** of the bank.
- **Liquidity stress**.
- **Lack of concrete efforts** by the bank's **board** to address **supervisory concerns**.
- **Need to protect the interest of depositors**.

The "Directions" Mechanism

- The **RBI's directions** under the **Banking Regulation Act, 1949** (Section 35A in particular).
- Allow the RBI to **impose temporary restrictions** on **financially distressed banks**.
- **Do NOT amount to cancellation** of the **banking licence**.
- **Aim**: To **stabilise the bank** while **protecting depositor interests**.

What is a Co-operative Bank?

- A **bank** that is **owned and operated by its members** (depositors and borrowers).
- **Three-tier structure**:
  - **State Co-operative Bank (StCB)**: At the **state apex level**.
  - **District Central Co-operative Bank (DCCB)**: At the **district level**.
  - **Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS)**: At the **village level**.
- **Urban Co-operative Banks (UCBs)**: Operate in **urban areas**.
- **Multi-State Co-operative Banks**: Operate **across states**.
- Mogaveera Co-operative Bank is an **urban co-operative bank**.

Regulatory Structure for Co-operative Banks

- **Dual control**:
  - **RBI**: For **banking-related operations**.
  - **Registrar of Co-operative Societies (RCS)**: For **management-related issues**.
- **Banking Regulation (Amendment) Act, 2020**: Strengthened **RBI's powers** over **co-operative banks**, especially after the **PMC Bank crisis**.

About DICGC (Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation)

- **A wholly-owned subsidiary** of the **RBI**.
- **Founded**: **15 July 1978** (after merging **DIC (1962)** and **CGCI (1971)**).
- **Headquartered**: **Mumbai**.
- **Functions**:
  - **Deposit insurance** up to **₹5 lakh per depositor per bank**.
  - **Credit guarantee** for **small loans**.
- **Coverage**: All **scheduled commercial banks, RRBs, urban co-operative banks**, and **eligible local area banks**.
- **Deposit insurance fund (DIF)**: As of recent data, about **₹2 lakh crore**.

Key Terms

- **Co-operative Bank**: A **bank owned and operated by its members**, serving **specific communities or regions**.
- **Urban Co-operative Bank (UCB)**: A **co-operative bank** operating in **urban or semi-urban areas**, providing **banking services to small businesses, salaried employees, and households**.
- **Banking Regulation Act, 1949**: India's **principal banking law**, empowering the **RBI** to **regulate, supervise, and direct banks**.

- **Banking Regulation (Amendment) Act, 2020**: An amendment that **strengthened RBI's powers** over **co-operative banks**, including **mergers, amalgamations, and reconstruction schemes**.
- **Section 35A of Banking Regulation Act, 1949**: The provision under which the **RBI imposes directions** on **distressed banks**.
- **Moratorium**: A **legal authorisation** to **suspend certain banking operations** for a **specified period**.
- **DICGC (Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation)**: A **wholly-owned subsidiary** of the **RBI**, providing **deposit insurance** up to **₹5 lakh per depositor per bank**.
- **DICGC Act, 1961**: The **law** under which **DICGC was established** and **operates**.
- **DICGC (Amendment) Act, 2021**: An **amendment** that **allowed depositors** to receive **deposit insurance** within **90 days** of a bank coming under **moratorium or restrictions**.
- **Registrar of Co-operative Societies (RCS)**: A **state-level authority** that **registers and supervises co-operative societies**, including **co-operative banks**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the RBI's restrictions on Mogaveera Co-operative Bank, consider the following statements:

1. The RBI imposed restrictions for a period of 6 months, effective from 12 June 2026.
2. The bank cannot grant or renew loans, make investments, or accept fresh deposits without RBI's prior approval.
3. Withdrawals are capped at ₹1 lakh per depositor.
4. The banking licence of Mogaveera Co-operative Bank has been cancelled.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **banking licence has NOT been cancelled**; the bank continues to function with **restrictions**.)

Q2. With reference to deposit insurance in India, consider the following statements:

1. DICGC provides deposit insurance coverage up to ₹5 lakh per depositor per bank.
2. The coverage was raised from ₹1 lakh to ₹5 lakh in 2020.
3. DICGC is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Reserve Bank of India.
4. The DICGC (Amendment) Act, 2021 allowed depositors to receive deposit insurance within 90 days of a bank coming under moratorium.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Q3. With reference to co-operative banks in India, consider the following statements:

1. Co-operative banks in India are under dual control of the RBI and the Registrar of Co-operative Societies (RCS).
2. The Banking Regulation (Amendment) Act, 2020 strengthened the RBI's powers over co-operative banks.
3. The Ministry of Co-operation was created in July 2021.
4. Co-operative banks in India are not subject to any RBI supervision.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **co-operative banks ARE subject to RBI supervision** for **banking-related operations**.)

Q4. With reference to DICGC, consider the following statements:

1. DICGC was founded in 1978 after merging DIC (1962) and CGCI (1971).
2. DICGC is headquartered in Mumbai.
3. DICGC covers all scheduled commercial banks, RRBs, urban co-operative banks, and eligible local area banks.
4. DICGC is a private foundation, independent of the RBI.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **DICGC is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the RBI**, NOT a private foundation.)

Q5. With reference to the Banking Regulation Act, 1949, consider the following statements:

1. The Act is India's principal banking law, empowering the RBI to regulate, supervise, and direct banks.
2. Section 35A of the Act allows the RBI to impose directions on distressed banks.
3. The 2020 amendment strengthened RBI's powers over co-operative banks.
4. The Act is administered by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **Banking Regulation Act is administered by the RBI** under the **Ministry of Finance**, NOT the Ministry of Tribal Affairs.)

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the banking licence has not been cancelled.
2. (d), All four statements are correct.
3. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because co-operative banks are subject to RBI supervision.
4. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because DICGC is a wholly-owned RBI subsidiary.
5. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the Act is administered by the RBI under the Ministry of Finance.

Exam Relevance

RBI Grade B	Core area on banking regulation, co-operative banks, DICGC

2. IRDAI Proposes Major Amendments to Insurance Registration Regulations Following 100% FDI Limit Increase

Context

The **Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI)** is proposing **major amendments** to the **registration regulations** for **insurance companies**, aimed at **enhancing ease of doing business**, **simplifying regulatory processes**, **reducing compliance costs**, **improving operational clarity**, and **facilitating capital infusion**. The changes relate to **eligibility criteria** for **Indian and foreign promoters**, **foreign investment safeguards**, **Special Purpose Vehicles (SPVs)**, **approval for share transfers**, **amalgamation of insurance with non-insurance companies**, **processing fees**, **company names**, and **application procedures**. The amendments come in **the context of the FDI limit increase to 100 per cent** in **insurance**, requiring **updated safeguards and definitions**.

The Proposed Amendments

- **Eligibility criteria** for **Indian and foreign promoters**.
- **Foreign investment safeguards**.
- **Special Purpose Vehicles (SPVs)**: New rules.
- **Approval for transfer of shares**.
- **Amalgamation** of **insurance** with **non-insurance** companies.
- **Processing fees** for applications.
- **Name** of **insurance companies**.
- **Forms and application procedures**.

Stated Objectives

- **Enhance ease of doing business**.
- **Simplify regulatory processes**.
- **Reduce compliance costs**.
- **Improve operational clarity**.
- **Facilitate capital infusion**.

The 100 per cent FDI Backdrop

- The **Union Budget 2025-26** raised the **FDI limit in insurance from 74 per cent to 100 per cent**.
- The increase was **subject to certain conditions**, including:
  - **Investment of the entire premium** in **India**.
  - **Limits on board composition**.
  - **Compliance with IRDAI norms**.
- The **new amendments to IRDAI registration norms** are aimed at **operationalising the 100 per cent FDI regime** with **appropriate safeguards**.

Key Recent Insurance Sector Reforms

- **Bima Sugam**: A **digital insurance marketplace** (under development), to be a **DPI for insurance**.
- **Bima Vistaar**: A **bundled affordable insurance product** for **rural India**.
- **Bima Vahak**: A **women-led last-mile insurance distribution** model.
- **Insurance for All by 2047**: IRDAI's **vision** for **universal insurance coverage**.
- **Risk-Based Capital (RBC)** and **Risk-Based Supervisory Framework (RBSF)**: Moving from **factor-based** to **risk-based** systems.
- **Use and File** for **product launch**: Faster product approvals.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the recent IRDAI proposed amendments to insurance registration regulations, consider the following statements:

1. The amendments aim to enhance ease of doing business, simplify regulatory processes, and reduce compliance costs.
2. The changes relate to eligibility criteria for Indian and foreign promoters, SPV rules, and share transfer approvals.
3. The amendments come in the context of the FDI limit increase to 100 per cent in insurance.
4. The amendments aim to reduce foreign capital inflow into the Indian insurance sector.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the amendments aim to **facilitate capital infusion** and **align with 100 per cent FDI**, NOT reduce foreign capital inflow.)

Q2. With reference to FDI limits in India's insurance sector, consider the following statements:

1. FDI in insurance was first allowed at 26 per cent in 2000.
2. The FDI limit was raised to 49 per cent in 2015.
3. The FDI limit was raised to 74 per cent in 2021.
4. The Union Budget 2025-26 raised the FDI limit in insurance to 100 per cent, with certain conditions.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Q3. With reference to IRDAI, consider the following statements:

1. IRDAI is a statutory body established under the IRDA Act, 1999.
2. IRDAI is headquartered in Hyderabad, Telangana.
3. IRDAI regulates and develops the insurance and reinsurance industry in India.
4. IRDAI is a private foundation with no statutory backing.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **IRDAI is a statutory body** established under the **IRDA Act, 1999**, NOT a private foundation.)

Q4. With reference to India's insurance sector indicators, consider the following statements:

1. India's insurance penetration is about 4 per cent of GDP, lower than the global average of around 7 per cent.
2. LIC (Life Insurance Corporation of India) dominates the life insurance market with about 60 per cent share.
3. India's insurance density is about USD 95 per capita, much lower than developed countries.
4. India's insurance sector is fully saturated, with no room for further growth.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **India's insurance sector has significant room for growth** with **low penetration and density**.)

Q5. With reference to recent insurance sector reforms in India, consider the following statements:

1. Bima Sugam is a proposed digital insurance marketplace to act as a DPI for insurance.
2. Bima Vistaar is a bundled affordable insurance product for rural India.
3. Bima Vahak is a women-led last-mile insurance distribution model.
4. IRDAI's vision is "Insurance for All by 2047".

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the amendments aim to facilitate capital infusion.
2. (d), All four statements are correct.
3. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because IRDAI is a statutory body.

4. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because India's insurance sector has significant room for growth.
5. (d), All four statements are correct.

Facts To Remember

1. Slovakia Confers Highest State Honour on Prime Minister Narendra Modi

President of Slovakia, Peter Pellegrini, conferred the country's highest civilian honour, *The Order of the White Double Cross, First Class*, on Prime Minister Narendra Modi in recognition of his contributions to strengthening bilateral relations between India and Slovakia.

2. DRDO Successfully Tests Indigenous Long-Range Land Attack Cruise Missile

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) successfully conducted the flight test of the indigenously developed Long Range Land Attack Cruise Missile (LRLACM) from Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Island, Odisha. The successful trial marked a major milestone in enhancing India's indigenous long-range precision strike capabilities.

3. Theme of International Day of Yoga 2026 Announced as "Yoga for Healthy Ageing"

Union AYUSH Minister Prataprao Jadhav announced that the theme of International Day of Yoga (IDY) 2026 will be "Yoga for Healthy Ageing." Prime Minister Narendra Modi will lead the main national event in Kolkata on 21 June 2026.

4. ISRO and Department of Atomic Energy Collaborate on Advanced Lunar Lander Technology

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) have collaborated to develop an advanced artificial heating system for future lunar landers. The technology aims to protect spacecraft from the Moon's extreme freezing temperatures and support long-duration lunar missions.

5. India Post Launches Drone-Based Mail Transmission Service in Himachal Pradesh

Union Minister of Communications Jyotiraditya Scindia announced the launch of a drone-based mail transmission service in Himachal Pradesh. The initiative aims to improve postal connectivity and reduce delivery times in remote and difficult terrain areas.

6. NTA Launches 'Pariksha Karmayogi' Programme for Examination Officials

The National Testing Agency (NTA) launched the *Pariksha Karmayogi: Capacity-Building Programme for Examination Officials* on the iGOT Karmayogi Bharat platform. The initiative is designed to strengthen the skills, efficiency, and professionalism of examination officials across India.

7. Lt Gen Dhiraj Seth Appointed as Chief of Army Staff

The Government of India appointed Lieutenant General Dhiraj Seth as the next Chief of the Army Staff with effect from 30 June 2026. He is currently serving as the Vice Chief of the Army Staff and will succeed General Upendra Dwivedi.

8. DRDO Demonstrates Multi-Layered Ballistic Missile Defence Capability

DRDO successfully conducted three consecutive flight tests demonstrating India's multi-layered Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) capability. The trials validated the system's ability to intercept long-range and medium-range ballistic missile threats and included the maiden flight test of the indigenous Naval Anti-

Ship Missile–Medium Range (NASM-MR).

9. Centre Signs Historic Tripartite MoU with Assam and Nagaland for Oil and Gas Exploration

The Government of India signed a historic tripartite Memorandum of Understanding with the Governments of Assam and Nagaland for the exploration and production of crude oil and natural gas. The agreement is expected to boost energy development and strengthen economic cooperation in the Northeast region.

10. Government Launches 'Oilseeds Kisaan Mitra' WhatsApp-Based AI Advisory Service

The Government introduced *Oilseeds Kisaan Mitra*, a WhatsApp-based AI advisory platform that provides farmers with research-based guidance on oilseed cultivation in their preferred language. The initiative aims to support farmers during the kharif season through timely and accessible agricultural advice.

11. India and Nepal Launch UPI-NPI Cross-Border Remittance Facility

India and Nepal launched a peer-to-peer cross-border remittance mechanism by linking India's Unified Payments Interface (UPI) with Nepal's National Payments Interface (NPI). The initiative enables seamless and real-time money transfers between the two countries.

12. NIUA Celebrates 50 Years of India's Urban Transformation Journey

The National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA) celebrated its golden jubilee under the theme "Resilient Urban India @2047" in New Delhi. The event featured the launch of several publications and the National Urban Learning Platform to strengthen urban governance and capacity building.

13. Ministry of Defence Commissions First Batch of NDA-Trained Women Officers

The Ministry of Defence commissioned the first batch of 17 women cadets trained at the National Defence Academy (NDA) into the Indian Army, Indian Navy, and Indian Air Force. The milestone marks a significant step in advancing gender inclusion and equal opportunity within India's armed forces.

14. QCI and FDDI Sign MoU to Strengthen Leather and Footwear Sector

The Quality Council of India (QCI) and Footwear Design and Development Institute (FDDI) signed a Memorandum of Understanding to enhance quality standards, certification, testing infrastructure, and skill development in India's leather and footwear sector.

15. Oil India Signs Clean Energy Research Pact with Canada's PTRC

Oil India Limited signed a collaboration framework with Petroleum Technology Research Centre (PTRC) to jointly explore carbon capture, geothermal energy, and other clean energy technologies. The partnership aims to advance sustainable energy research and innovation.

16. Jharkhand and Assam Receive New GI Tags for Traditional Products

The Geographical Indications Registry granted GI tags to 11 traditional products from Jharkhand and four products from Assam. The recognition aims to preserve regional heritage, promote local artisans, and enhance market opportunities for traditional products.

17. Sudarsan Pattnaik Becomes First Indian to Win Russia Grand Sand Master Cup

Padma Shri awardee Sudarsan Pattnaik became the first Indian to win the Russia Grand Sand Master Cup 2026. His award-winning sculpture highlighted the themes of climate change, global warming, and environmental conservation.

18. Lewis Hamilton Secures First Ferrari Victory at Barcelona-Catalunya Grand Prix

Lewis Hamilton won the 2026 Barcelona-Catalunya Grand Prix, securing his first Formula One victory for Scuderia Ferrari. The triumph marked the 106th race win of his Formula One career.

19. Renowned Mand Folk Singer Gavri Devi Passes Away

Renowned Mand folk singer Gavri Devi passed away at the age of 98 in Rajasthan. She was widely celebrated for popularising the iconic folk song *Kesariya Balam* and for preserving Rajasthan's rich musical heritage.

20. World Blood Donor Day 2026 Observed on 14 June

World Blood Donor Day was observed on 14 June 2026 with the campaign theme "One Drop of Humanity. Give Blood. Save Lives." The day recognises voluntary blood donors and promotes awareness about the importance of safe and adequate blood supplies worldwide.

21. World Elder Abuse Awareness Day 2026 Observed on 15 June

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day was observed on 15 June 2026 under the theme "Beyond Awareness: Making Elder Abuse Prevention Work." The observance aims to raise awareness about elder abuse and promote the dignity, rights, and well-being of older persons worldwide.

FIVE TO REMEMBER · 16 JUNE 2026

1. **First crewed mission**: Planned around **2026-27**. India-France Strategic Partnership
2. **First BRIC Summit**: **2009** (without South Africa). BRICS Indore Declaration
3. **Biological Diversity Act, 2002**: For **biodiversity conservation and benefit-sharing**. Kaziranga's First Scientific Assessment of Grea…
4. This is the **standard insurance limit** under the **DICGC Act, 1961**, **raised from ₹1 lakh to ₹5 lakh** in **2020**. RBI Imposes Restrictions on Mogaveera Co-operat…
5. **Famous Munda leader**: **Birsa Munda** (1875-1900), tribal freedom fighter. Jharkhand's Four Traditional Products Receive G…

Now test yourself: c4scourses.in/daily-quiz/daily-current-affairs-quiz-16-june-2026/

DAY 12 OF 18

18 & 19 June 2026

40 items · 4 topics

General **2** · National Affairs **4** · Banking and Finance **4** · Agriculture **2** · Facts To Remember **28**

Context

In **June 2026**, **London (UK)-based global higher education analytics firm Quacquarelli Symonds (QS)** released the **QS World University Rankings 2027** on **18 June 2026**. The **Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi** ranked **118th globally** with an overall score of **65.7**, **improving 5 places** from **123rd** and emerging as **India's highest-ranked institution** for the **second consecutive year**. This is the **highest global position ever achieved** by an Indian institution in QS World University Rankings. **MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology)** retained **1st place globally** with a score of **100**, while **Imperial College London (UK)** and **Stanford University (USA)** were **jointly ranked 2nd** with scores of **99.2**.

The Rankings

- **Released by**: **Quacquarelli Symonds (QS)**, London-based.
- **Date of release**: **18 June 2026**.
- **Edition**: **23rd** edition.
- **Coverage**: More than **1,500 universities** across **106 countries and territories**.
- **Indian universities ranked**: **52**.

Top 3 Global Universities

Rank	University	Country	Score
1	Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)	USA	100
2 (joint)	Imperial College London	UK	99.2
2 (joint)	Stanford University	USA	99.2

Top 5 Indian Institutions

Rank	Institution	Location	Score
118	IIT Delhi	Delhi	65.7
134	IIT Bombay	Maharashtra	-
170	IIT Madras	Tamil Nadu	-
205	IIT Kharagpur	West Bengal	-
221	IISc Bangalore	Karnataka	-

IIT Delhi's Performance Improvement

- **Overall rank**: Improved **5 places** from **123rd to 118th**.
- **Employer Reputation**: Improved **11 positions** to **39th globally**.
- **Employment Outcomes**: Jump of **60 positions**.
- **Citations per Faculty**: Improved by **26 positions**.

QS Rankings Methodology

QS evaluates universities based on **9 indicators** in the **2027 edition**:

Indicator	Weight (Approximate)
Academic Reputation	**30%**
Employer Reputation	**15%**
Citations per Faculty	**20%**
Faculty-Student Ratio	**10%**
International Faculty Ratio	**5%**
International Student Ratio	**5%**
International Research Network	**5%**
Employment Outcomes	**5%**
Sustainability	**5%**

India's Growth in QS Rankings

Edition	Indian Universities Ranked	India's Top Rank
2014	**11**	**IIT Delhi at 235**
2023	**41**	**IIT Delhi at 174**
2026	**54**	**IIT Delhi at 123**
2027	**52**	**IIT Delhi at 118**

About QS (Quacquarelli Symonds)

- **Founded**: **1990** by **Nunzio Quacquarelli**.
- **Headquartered**: **London, United Kingdom**.
- **Type**: **Higher education analytics firm**.
- **First QS World University Rankings**: **2004** (with Times Higher Education, separated in 2010).
- **Other rankings**: QS Asia, QS Latin America, QS Subject Rankings, QS BRICS, QS Stars.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the QS World University Rankings 2027, consider the following statements:

1. IIT Delhi ranked 118th globally, improving from 123rd in the previous edition.
2. MIT retained 1st place globally with a perfect score of 100.
3. Imperial College London and Stanford University were jointly ranked 2nd with scores of 99.2.
4. The rankings were released by Times Higher Education.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **rankings were released by Quacquarelli Symonds (QS)**, NOT Times Higher Education.)

Q2. With reference to the top Indian institutions in QS World University Rankings 2027, consider the following statements:

1. IIT Delhi ranked 118th and was India's highest-ranked institution.
2. IIT Bombay ranked 134th globally.
3. IIT Madras ranked 170th globally.
4. IIT Kharagpur ranked higher than IISc Bangalore.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

(IIT Kharagpur at 205 ranks higher than IISc Bangalore at 221.)

Q3. With reference to India's coverage in QS World University Rankings 2027, consider the following statements:

1. 52 Indian universities were ranked in QS World University Rankings 2027.
2. India is now the 4th most represented country after USA, UK, and Mainland China.
3. India had only 11 universities ranked in 2014.
4. No Indian institution has entered the global Top 100 yet.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Q4. With reference to QS Quacquarelli Symonds, consider the following statements:

1. QS is a London-based global higher education analytics firm.
2. The QS World University Rankings was first published in 2004 in partnership with Times Higher Education.
3. QS separated from Times Higher Education in 2010.
4. QS also publishes QS Asia, QS Subject, and QS BRICS rankings.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Q5. With reference to QS methodology in the 2027 edition, consider the following statements:

1. Academic Reputation has the highest weightage at about 30 per cent.
2. Citations per Faculty has a weightage of about 20 per cent.
3. Sustainability is one of the indicators added in recent editions.
4. International Faculty Ratio has the highest weightage.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **Academic Reputation has the highest weight**, NOT International Faculty Ratio.)

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because QS released the rankings.
2. (d), All four statements are correct.
3. (d), All four statements are correct.
4. (d), All four statements are correct.
5. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because Academic Reputation has the highest weight.

2. Global Startup Ecosystem Report (GSER) 2026

Context

In **June 2026**, **Startup Genome**, in partnership with the **Global Entrepreneurship Network (GEN)**, released the **Global Startup Ecosystem Report (GSER) 2026** at the **VivaTech conference in Paris on 17 June 2026**. **Bengaluru, Karnataka** ranked **15th** among the **top 40 global startup ecosystems** (slipping one spot from **14th in 2025**, largely a technical adjustment). It also emerged as the **second-best AI-native cluster in Asia**, after **Beijing, China**. **Silicon Valley (USA), New York City (USA), and London (UK)** retained their **top three positions**. The **GSER 2026 is the 14th edition** of the report, based on **analysis of over 5.5 million**

startups across 350+ global startup ecosystems, with **policy insights** from **200+ organizations across 80+ countries**. Bengaluru's ecosystem is valued at about **USD 153 billion**, with **USD 46 billion in startup exits between 2021 and 2025**, **304 exits, 30 active unicorns**, and an **R&D score of 9/10** (ahead of Silicon Valley).

The Report

- **Title**: **Global Startup Ecosystem Report (GSER) 2026**.
- **Edition**: **14th edition**.
- **Released by**: **Startup Genome** in partnership with the **Global Entrepreneurship Network (GEN)**.
- **Launch venue**: **VivaTech, Paris**.
- **Launch date**: **17 June 2026**.
- **Coverage**:
  - **5.5 million startups**.
  - **350+ global startup ecosystems**.
  - **200+ organizations** across **80+ countries**.

Top 5 Global Ecosystems (Verified)

Rank	Ecosystem	Country	Change
1	**Silicon Valley**	**USA**	**Unchanged**
2	**New York City**	**USA**	**Unchanged**
3	**London**	**UK**	**Unchanged**
4	**Boston**	**USA**	-
5	**Los Angeles**	**USA**	-

Bengaluru's Ranking and Performance

- **Global rank**: **15th** (slipped one spot from **14th in 2025**).
  - **Reason for slip**: **Toronto-Waterloo** and **Paris jointly took 13th place**; no ecosystem at 14th; pushing Bengaluru to 15th (a **technical adjustment**).
- **Asia rank by value**: **3rd** (after Beijing and Shanghai).
- **AI-Native Cluster Asia rank**: **2nd-best** (after **Beijing**).
- **Continued presence** in global leaders.

Bengaluru's Performance Across 6 GSER Factors

Factor	Score (Out of 10)	Notes
Performance	**9/10**	Ahead of Silicon Valley
Funding	**8/10**	Top 15 by capital raised
Market Reach	**5/10**	Local 4/10, Global 7/10
Talent and Experience	**4/10**	Cost efficiency 10/10, but quality 1/10
AI-Native Cluster	**8/10**	2nd in Asia after Beijing
R&D	**9/10**	**Ahead of Silicon Valley**

GSER 2026 Six Success Factors (Methodology)

1. **Performance**: Startup performance and outputs.
2. **Funding**: Venture capital availability.
3. **Market Reach**: Local and global market access.

4. **Talent and Experience**: Quality and quantity of talent.
5. **AI-Native Cluster Strength**: AI startup density.
6. **R&D**: Research and Development capacity.

About Startup Genome

- **Founded**: **2011**.
- **Headquartered**: **San Francisco, California, USA**.
- **Type**: **Innovation policy advisory and research firm**.
- **CEO**: **JF Gauthier**.
- **Mission**: To **accelerate startup ecosystems** through **data-driven insights**.

About Global Entrepreneurship Network (GEN)

- **Founded**: **2008**.
- **Headquartered**: **Washington, D.C., USA**.
- **Type**: **Non-profit advocacy and research organization**.
- **Reaches**: **180+ countries**.
- **Functions**:
  - **Promotes entrepreneurship globally**.
  - **Hosts Global Entrepreneurship Week**.
  - **Connects policymakers, founders, investors**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the Global Startup Ecosystem Report (GSER) 2026, consider the following statements:

1. GSER 2026 was released on 17 June 2026 at VivaTech in Paris.
2. It is the 14th edition of the Global Startup Ecosystem Report.
3. It is published by Startup Genome in partnership with the Global Entrepreneurship Network.
4. The report was released in New Delhi by the Government of India.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **report was released at VivaTech in Paris**, NOT in New Delhi.)

Q2. With reference to Bengaluru's ranking in GSER 2026, consider the following statements:

1. Bengaluru ranked 15th globally, slipping from 14th in 2025.
2. Bengaluru is Asia's second-best AI-native cluster after Beijing.
3. Bengaluru's ecosystem value is about USD 153 billion.
4. Bengaluru ranked 1st globally.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **Bengaluru ranked 15th**, NOT 1st.)

Q3. With reference to the top three global startup ecosystems (GSER 2026), consider the following statements:

1. Silicon Valley retained the 1st position.
2. New York City retained the 2nd position.
3. London retained the 3rd position.

4. Bengaluru is among the global top 3.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **Bengaluru is at 15th**, NOT in top 3.)

Q4. With reference to Bengaluru's performance metrics (GSER 2026), consider the following statements:

1. Bengaluru's R&D score is 9/10, ahead of Silicon Valley.
2. Its ecosystem value grew 190 per cent since 2021 vs global average of 149 per cent.
3. It has 30 active unicorns and USD 39 billion in VC funding (2021-2025).
4. Bengaluru's talent quality scored 10/10, the highest globally.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **talent quality scored only 1/10**, NOT 10/10. The 10/10 was for **cost efficiency and STEM graduate numbers**.)

Q5. With reference to the GSER methodology, consider the following statements:

1. GSER 2026 evaluates ecosystems on 6 success factors: performance, funding, market reach, talent, AI-native cluster, and R&D.
2. The report covers 5.5 million startups across 350+ ecosystems.
3. Policy insights from 200+ organizations across 80+ countries are included.
4. Each factor is scored on a scale of 1 to 10.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the report was released in Paris.
2. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because Bengaluru ranked 15th.
3. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because Bengaluru is at 15th.
4. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because talent quality scored 1/10.
5. (d), All four statements are correct.

3. UNICEF's Children's Climate Risk Report 2026

Context

The **UNICEF Children's Climate Risk Report (CCRR) 2026** was **released on 16 June 2026**. It reveals that nearly **392 million children in India** (about **92 per cent of all children**) are exposed to **extreme heat**, while **89 million face recurrent heatwaves**. **India's hazard exposure score** stands at **9.21 out of 10** (among the highest globally), with **only Pakistan (9.44) and Bangladesh (9.38)** higher in **South Asia**. **India** received the **maximum score of 10/10** for **extreme heat exposure**, **9.94 for air pollution**, and **8.84 for drought**. **Globally**, **1.1 billion children** are exposed to at least **three overlapping climate hazards**, and more than **4 million children** face up to **six overlapping threats**. The report draws on **UNICEF's Global Child Hazard Database** and is the **first global assessment** since the **2021 "Climate Crisis is a Child Rights Crisis"** report.

The Report

- **Title**: **Children's Climate Risk Report (CCRR) 2026**.

- **Released by**: **UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund)**.
- **Release date**: **16 June 2026**.
- **Publication body**: **UNICEF Innocenti, Florence, Italy**.
- **Released by**: **UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell**.
- **Source**: **UNICEF Global Child Hazard Database**.
- **Builds on**: **2021 report** "Climate Crisis is a Child Rights Crisis".

What is the CCRR 2026?

- A **global assessment** that evaluates **children's exposure and vulnerability** to **climate and environmental hazards**.
- Measures **overlapping climate risks** affecting children's:
  - **Health**.
  - **Education**.
  - **Nutrition**.
  - **Survival**.

Climate Hazards Studied (Verified)

Eight Primary Hazards

1. **Coastal floods**.
2. **Droughts**.
3. **Extreme heat**.
4. **Fires**.
5. **Heatwaves**.
6. **Riverine floods**.
7. **Sand and dust storms**.
8. **Tropical storms**.

Two Climate-Sensitive Hazards

1. **Air pollution**.
2. **Vector-borne diseases (malaria)**.

Seven Vulnerability Dimensions

1. **Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH)**.
2. **Nutrition**.
3. **Protection**.
4. **Health**.
5. **Education**.
6. **Poverty**.
7. **Child survival**.

Key Findings on India

Massive Exposure to Extreme Heat

- **392 million children** (about **92 per cent**) in India exposed to **extreme heat**.
- **89 million children** face **recurrent heatwave** events.

India's Hazard Exposure Score

- **Overall hazard exposure**: **9.21/10** (among highest globally).

- **South Asia comparison**:
  - **Pakistan**: **9.44/10** (highest).
  - **Bangladesh**: **9.38/10** (second highest).
  - **India**: **9.21/10** (third highest).

Specific Hazard Scores for India

Hazard	India's Score
Extreme heat	**10/10** (maximum)
Air pollution	**9.94/10**
Drought	**8.84/10**

Global Findings

- **1.5 billion children** globally exposed to **heatwaves**.
- **1.2 billion children** exposed to **extreme heat conditions**.
- **1.8 billion children** exposed to **droughts**.
- **662 million children** in areas exposed to **tropical storms**.
- **337 million children** in areas affected by **riverine flooding**.
- **33 million children** exposed to **coastal floods**.
- **1.1 billion children** face **3+ overlapping climate hazards**.
- **More than 4 million children** face **6 overlapping climate threats**.
- **2.3 billion children** live in areas with **unhealthy air quality**.
- **1 billion children** exposed to **malaria**.

Most Affected Countries

- **India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nigeria**: Among the **most affected** due to **large child populations** and **high exposure**.

Comparison with 2021 UNICEF Report

Feature	2021 Report	2026 Report
Title	**"Climate Crisis is a Child Rights Crisis"**	**"Children's Climate Risk Report"**
Scope	**8 climate hazards**	**8 climate hazards + 2 climate-sensitive (air pollution, malaria)**
Approach	**Country-level CCRI**	**Sub-national, granular data via Global Child Hazard Database**
Vulnerability dimensions	**6 dimensions**	**7 dimensions**
India's CCRI rank (2021)	**26th out of 163 countries (high risk)**	**Detailed in new framework**

About UNICEF

- **Full name**: **United Nations Children's Fund** (originally United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund).
- **Founded**: **1946** (in response to post-WWII child welfare crisis).
- **Headquartered**: **New York City, USA**.
- **Research arm**: **UNICEF Innocenti** in **Florence, Italy**.
- **Executive Director**: **Catherine Russell** (since February 2022).

- **Funding**: **Voluntary contributions** from governments, businesses, foundations, and individuals.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to UNICEF's Children's Climate Risk Report 2026, consider the following statements:

1. The report was released on 16 June 2026 by UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell.
2. It assesses children's exposure to 8 primary climate hazards and 2 climate-sensitive hazards.
3. India's overall hazard exposure score is 9.21 out of 10.
4. The report was released by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one
(b) Only two
(c) **Only three**
(d) All four
(e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **report was released by UNICEF**, NOT UNEP.)

Q2. With reference to India's climate hazard exposure (CCRR 2026), consider the following statements:

1. About 392 million children in India (92 per cent) are exposed to extreme heat conditions.
2. India received the maximum score of 10/10 for extreme heat exposure.
3. India's air pollution exposure score is 9.94/10.
4. Pakistan (9.44) and Bangladesh (9.38) have higher overall hazard scores than India in South Asia.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one
(b) Only two
(c) Only three
(d) **All four**
(e) None

Q3. With reference to the global findings of CCRR 2026, consider the following statements:

1. 1.1 billion children globally are exposed to at least three overlapping climate hazards.
2. More than 4 million children could face as many as six overlapping climate threats.
3. About 1.8 billion children are exposed to droughts globally.
4. Air pollution affects less than 100 million children globally.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only**
(b) 1, 3 and 4 only
(c) 2 and 4 only
(d) 1 and 4 only
(e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **2.3 billion children** live in areas with **unhealthy air quality**, NOT less than 100 million.)

Q4. With reference to India's Heat Action Plans (HAPs) as assessed by CCRR 2026, consider the following statements:

1. India has expanded HAPs across multiple states and cities.
2. Most HAPs lack provisions for schools and Anganwadis.
3. They lack night-time heat management measures.

4. They lack child vulnerability mapping and age-specific adaptation measures.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one
(b) Only two
(c) Only three
(d) **All four**
(e) None

Q5. With reference to UNICEF, consider the following statements:

1. UNICEF was founded in 1946 in response to post-WWII child welfare crisis.
2. UNICEF Innocenti is its research arm based in Florence, Italy.
3. UNICEF stands for the United Nations Children's Fund.
4. UNICEF is funded entirely by mandatory contributions from member states.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only**
(b) 1, 3 and 4 only
(c) 2 and 4 only
(d) 1 and 4 only
(e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **UNICEF is funded by VOLUNTARY contributions**, NOT mandatory ones.)

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the report was released by UNICEF, not UNEP.
2. (d), All four statements are correct.
3. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because air pollution affects 2.3 billion children.
4. (d), All four statements are correct.
5. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because UNICEF funding is voluntary.

National Affairs

1. Super El Niño 2026-27

Source: Down to Earth

Context

The **United States' National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)** confirmed on **11 June 2026** the **formation of a new El Niño** in the **equatorial Pacific**, issuing an **El Niño Advisory**. NOAA placed the **odds at 63 per cent** that it will **intensify into a very strong or "super" El Niño** by the **northern winter (November 2026-January 2027)**. A **super El Niño** is defined by **sea surface temperature (SST) anomalies exceeding 2°C** in a specific reference patch of the Pacific. **Since 1950**, only **four major events** have crossed this **extreme threshold**: **1972-73, 1982-83, 1997-98, and 2015-16**. The **2026-27 event** could potentially become **one of the strongest on record**, with **ECMWF projecting SST anomalies of +3°C by December 2026**. The event is likely to **weaken India's southwest monsoon**, cause **droughts globally**, push **global temperatures** above the **1.5°C threshold**, and trigger **ecological destruction**.

What is El Niño?

- The **warm phase** of the **El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO)**.

- **Periodic, anomalous warming** of sea surface temperatures (SSTs) across the **central and eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean**.
- Occurs every **3–7 years**.
- Affects **global weather patterns**.

What Makes a "Super" El Niño?

- **SST anomaly exceeding 2°C** in the **Niño 3.4 reference region**.
- **ONI (Oceanic Niño Index) or RONI value of +2°C or above**.
- **Among the top 3–4 events** in the **reliable satellite record** since **late 1970s**.

How El Niño Forms

Step 1: Slackening of Trade Winds

- **Equatorial trade winds** that normally blow **east to west** begin to **stall or reverse**.
- Normally, these winds push **warm surface waters** toward **Asia**.

Step 2: West-to-East Warm Water Drift

- With **weakened winds**, **warm surface water accumulates and moves eastward** toward **South American coast**.

Step 3: The Feedback Loop (Bjerknes Feedback)

- As **eastern Pacific heats up**, **atmospheric pressure zones shift**.
- This **further slackens trade winds**.
- **Self-reinforcing cycle** pushes temperatures **past the 2°C threshold**.

Step 4: Climate Change Multiplier

- **Long-term climate change** acts as an **incubator**.
- **Higher baseline ocean heat** makes **modern super El Niños more intense** than historical ones.

Impact on India

Monsoon Suppression

- **El Niño often weakens** the **Indian monsoon**.
- **Below-normal rainfall**.
- **Increased drought risks** across many regions.

Erratic Rainfall Distribution

- **Delayed monsoon onset**.
- **Long dry spells**.
- **Crop growth and agricultural productivity** affected.
- **Kharif season** at risk.

Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) Variable

- A **positive IOD** may **partly offset** El Niño's effects.
- **Current forecasts** suggest **limited relief** from monsoon weakening.

Global Impacts

Severe Ecological Destruction

- **Forest fires** (especially in Indonesia, Australia, Amazon).
- **Coral bleaching** (Great Barrier Reef, Indian Ocean reefs).
- **Ecosystem degradation** across tropical regions.

Extreme Transnational Droughts

- **Many countries**: **Severe droughts**, **water shortages**, **crop failures**.
- **Heightened food security concerns**.
- **Vulnerable regions**: Australia, Indonesia, Brazil, Southern Africa, parts of India.

Breaching Global Temperature Thresholds

- Releases **additional ocean heat** into the atmosphere.
- **Pushes global temperatures** to **record levels**.
- May push **above the 1.5°C threshold** (Paris Agreement).
- **Climate simulations**: "Shockingly high" temperatures forecast for **November-December 2026**.

About ENSO

- **El Niño-Southern Oscillation**.
- A **semi-regular recurring cycle** that **transfers heat and momentum** from the **tropical Pacific** to the **global atmosphere**.
- **Three phases**:
  - **El Niño**: Warm phase.
  - **La Niña**: Cool phase.
  - **Neutral**: Normal phase.
- **Cycle frequency**: Every **2-7 years**.

About NOAA

- **National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**.
- A **US scientific agency** under the **Department of Commerce**.
- **Founded**: **1970**.
- **Functions**:
  - **Weather forecasting**.
  - **Climate monitoring**.
  - **Ocean and fisheries research**.
  - **Climate change research**.
- **Headquartered**: **Silver Spring, Maryland**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to NOAA's June 2026 El Niño announcement, consider the following statements:

1. NOAA confirmed the formation of El Niño on 11 June 2026.
2. NOAA placed the odds at 63 per cent that it will intensify into a very strong or super El Niño by winter.
3. A super El Niño is defined by sea surface temperature anomalies exceeding 2°C in the Niño 3.4 region.
4. NOAA's El Niño Advisory was downgraded to a Watch.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; NOAA's El Niño status was **upgraded from Watch to Advisory**, NOT downgraded.)

Q2. With reference to historical super El Niños, consider the following statements:

1. Since 1950, four major super El Niño events have been recorded: 1972-73, 1982-83, 1997-98, and 2015-16.
2. The 2015-16 super El Niño is the current record holder for peak SST anomaly.
3. Super El Niños have an SST anomaly exceeding 2°C in the reference region.

4. There has never been a super El Niño in recorded history.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **four super El Niños have been recorded** since 1950.)

Q3. With reference to the mechanism of El Niño formation, consider the following statements:

1. Slackening of equatorial trade winds is the trigger.
2. Warm surface water drifts from west to east toward the South American coast.
3. The Bjerknes feedback loop is a positive feedback that reinforces El Niño.
4. Climate change has made modern super El Niños less intense than historical ones.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **climate change has made modern super El Niños MORE intense**, NOT less.)

Q4. With reference to El Niño's impact on India, consider the following statements:

1. El Niño often weakens the Indian southwest monsoon.
2. It can cause below-normal rainfall and increased drought risks.
3. A positive Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) may partly offset El Niño's effects.
4. El Niño typically enhances and strengthens the Indian monsoon.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **El Niño typically WEAKENS the Indian monsoon**, NOT strengthens it.)

Q5. With reference to El Niño's global impacts, consider the following statements:

1. El Niño suppresses Atlantic hurricane formation due to wind shear.
2. It favours super typhoons in the Central and Eastern Pacific.
3. It can push global temperatures above the 1.5°C threshold.
4. El Niño has no effect on coral reefs.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **El Niño causes coral bleaching** and damage to reefs.)

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the Advisory was upgraded, not downgraded.
2. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because four super El Niños have been recorded.
3. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because climate change has made modern El Niños more intense.
4. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because El Niño weakens the Indian monsoon.
5. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because El Niño causes coral bleaching.

Exam Relevance

Exam	Relevance
UPSC Prelims	GS Paper I on Geography (El Niño, ENSO, Monsoon); GS Paper III on Environment, Disaster Management
UPSC Mains	GS Paper I on Geography, Climate; GS Paper III on Environment, Agriculture, Food Security
BPSC and State PCS	Geography, Environment, Current Affairs
Banking and NABARD	Macroeconomic awareness, agriculture
RBI Grade B	Inflation, agricultural economy
NABARD Grade A	**Very high importance, agriculture, monsoon, climate**

2. The Joint Crediting Mechanism (JCM)

Source: News on Air

Context

The **Government of India** and the **Government of Japan** officially adopted the **'Rules of Implementation'** for the **Joint Crediting Mechanism (JCM)** on **8 June 2026**, under **Article 6.2 of the Paris Agreement** of the **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)**. This operational milestone **activates a bilateral carbon market framework** that builds on the **Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC)** signed in **2025**. India became the **31st partner** in Japan's JCM network, which now covers **32 countries**. The **first Joint Committee meeting** was held on **22 September 2025**, leading to the final adoption of the rules. The mechanism allows **Japanese entities** to invest in **emission-reduction projects in India** using **advanced green technologies**, with the resulting **carbon credits shared between both countries** to count toward their **Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)**.

What is JCM?

- The **Joint Crediting Mechanism (JCM)** is a **bilateral carbon crediting initiative** launched by **Japan in 2013**.
- Promotes **greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reduction** projects in **partner countries**.
- Facilitates the **deployment of advanced low-carbon technologies, infrastructure, and investment**.
- **Carbon credits** generated are **shared between Japan and the partner country**.

Legal Mandate

- Governed by **Article 6.2 of the Paris Agreement** (2015).
- **Article 6.2** allows **cooperative approaches** between countries through **transfer of Internationally Transferred Mitigation Outcomes (ITMOs)**.
- **UNFCCC framework** applies.

Aim

- **Accelerate adoption** of **high-performance, low-carbon technologies** across partner countries.
- **Leverage private and public capital** to reduce GHG emissions.
- **Drive sustainable development**.
- **Help cooperating nations achieve their NDCs**.

Japan's JCM Network

- **Established**: **2013**.
- **Partner countries**: Now **32**, including **India** (31st), **Indonesia**, **Vietnam**, **Ethiopia**, **Mongolia**, **Kenya**, **Bangladesh**, **Cambodia**, **Costa Rica**, **Laos**, **Maldives**, **Mexico**, **Chile**, **Saudi Arabia**, and others.

Article 6 of the Paris Agreement

- **Article 6.2**: **Cooperative approaches** for **ITMOs** (Internationally Transferred Mitigation Outcomes).
- **Article 6.4**: **Sustainable Development Mechanism** (centralized carbon market under UN).
- **Article 6.8**: **Non-market approaches**.

Sectors of Cooperation Under JCM

- **Renewable energy** (solar, wind, biomass).
- **Energy efficiency** (industrial processes, building HVAC).
- **Transport** (EVs, fuel cells).
- **Waste management** (waste-to-energy).
- **Forestry and REDD+**.
- **Carbon Capture, Utilization and Storage (CCUS)**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the Joint Crediting Mechanism (JCM) adopted between India and Japan, consider the following statements:

1. India and Japan adopted the Rules of Implementation for JCM on 8 June 2026.
2. JCM is governed under Article 6.2 of the Paris Agreement of the UNFCCC.
3. India became the 31st partner in Japan's JCM network.
4. JCM was launched by Japan in 2013.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one
(b) Only two
(c) Only three
(d) **All four**
(e) None

Q2. With reference to Article 6 of the Paris Agreement, consider the following statements:

1. Article 6.2 allows cooperative approaches through transfer of ITMOs.
2. Article 6.4 establishes a Sustainable Development Mechanism under UN supervision.
3. Article 6.8 covers non-market approaches.
4. Article 6.2 applies only to developed countries.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only**
(b) 1, 3 and 4 only
(c) 2 and 4 only
(d) 1 and 4 only
(e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **Article 6.2 applies to all Paris Agreement parties**, including developing countries.)

Q3. With reference to JCM's operational mechanism, consider the following statements:

1. Japanese entities invest in emission-reduction projects in India using advanced green technologies.
2. The carbon credits generated are allocated between Japan and India to count toward their NDC targets.
3. A Joint Committee with representatives from both governments oversees the system.
4. JCM does not require independent third-party validation and verification.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only**
(b) 1, 3 and 4 only
(c) 2 and 4 only
(d) 1 and 4 only
(e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **JCM requires independent third-party validation and verification**.)

Q4. With reference to JCM's funding channels, consider the following statements:

1. JCM Model Projects are funded by the Ministry of the Environment of Japan (MOEJ).
2. The Japan Fund for the Joint Crediting Mechanism (JFJCM) is managed by the Asian Development Bank (ADB).
3. Demonstration projects are managed by the New Energy and Industrial Technology Development Organization (NEDO).
4. JCM is funded solely by the Indian government.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one
(b) Only two
(c) **Only three**
(d) All four
(e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **JCM is funded primarily by Japan** through multiple channels, NOT solely by India.)

Q5. With reference to India's climate commitments under the Paris Agreement, consider the following statements:

1. India aims to reduce emissions intensity of GDP by 45 per cent by 2030 (from 2005 levels).
2. India targets 50 per cent of cumulative installed electric power capacity from non-fossil fuel sources by 2030.
3. India has committed to achieve net-zero emissions by 2070.
4. India has committed to net-zero emissions by 2050.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one
(b) Only two
(c) **Only three**
(d) All four
(e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **India's net-zero target is 2070**, NOT 2050.)

Answer Key

1. (d), All four statements are correct.
2. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because Article 6.2 applies to all parties.
3. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because third-party validation is required.
4. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because JCM is funded by Japan primarily.
5. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because India's net-zero target is 2070.

3. Kashmir Saffron: GI-Tagged Premium Spice Surges Amid West Asia Crisis

Source: New Indian Express (NIE)

Context

The **ongoing crisis in West Asia** (Iran conflict) and a **sharp 140-ton decline** in **Iran's saffron production** have triggered a **massive global demand surge** for premium **Kashmiri saffron**. **Iran** is the **world's largest saffron producer** (over **300 tonnes annually** on **30,000 hectares**), while **Kashmir ranks second** in supply. **Kashmir saffron**, historically called **"bahukam"** in **ancient Sanskrit literature** and **"Red Gold"**, received its **Geographical Indication (GI) tag on 1 May 2020**. It is grown across about **3,715 hectares** in **Pulwama, Budgam, Srinagar, and Kishtwar districts**, with **Pampore** as the main hub. It is the **only saffron in the world** grown at an **altitude of 1,600-1,800 metres**. Lab profiles reveal **higher concentrations** of **crocin (18-22 per cent), safranal (0.8-1.2 per cent), and picrocrocin (8-12 per cent)** compared to foreign varieties.

What is Kashmir Saffron?

- A **highly aromatic and costly spice** derived from the **dried stigmas of Crocus sativus** flower.
- **Historical names**: **"Bahukam"** (ancient Sanskrit), **"Red Gold"**.
- Holds **GI tag** since **1 May 2020** under **GI No. 635, Certificate No. 366**.
- A symbol of **Jammu and Kashmir's agricultural heritage**.

Why is Kashmir Saffron Unique?

The World's Highest Altitude Saffron

- **Only saffron variety** grown at an altitude of **1,600-1,800 metres**.
- **Microclimate** enhances **internal oil concentration** and **potency**.

Distinct Physical Appearance

- **Longer and thicker stigmas**.
- **Natural deep crimson-maroon-purple hue**.
- **Darkest natural saffron coloring** in the world.

Superior Bio-Chemical Properties

Component	Kashmir Saffron	Function
Crocin	**18-22 per cent**	**Carotenoid pigment**, gives **golden-yellow color**, **antioxidant** properties
Safranal	**0.8-1.2 per cent**	**Organic compound** responsible for **warm, honey-like, earth-toned aroma**
Picrocrocin	**8-12 per cent**	Provides **characteristic bitter flavor**

Three Traditional Grades (Verified)

1. **Mongra Saffron**:
   - **A++ premium grade**.
   - Strictly **hand-detached crimson tips**.
   - **Zero yellow style attachments**.
2. **Lachha Saffron**:
   - **Stigmas separated** from the flower and **dried immediately**.
   - **No further complex processing**.
   - Packed **loosely** in air-tight containers.
3. **Guchhi Saffron**:
   - Similar to **Lachha**, but threads are **arranged and tied** into **bound bundles**.

About Geographical Indication (GI) Tag

- **What it is**: A **registered intellectual property** that **identifies goods** originating from a **specific geographical region**, possessing **qualities, reputation, or characteristics** attributable to that origin.
- **Governing law**: **Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999**.
- **Implementing authority**: **Office of the Controller General of Patents, Designs and Trade Marks** (Geographical Indications Registry, Chennai).
- **Validity**: **10 years** (renewable).

Notable GI-tagged products of J&K

- **Kashmir Saffron** (2020).
- **Pashmina Wool**.
- **Kashmir Walnut Wood Carving**.
- **Kashmir Hand-Knotted Carpets**.
- **Kani Shawls**.
- **Khatamband**.
- **Basmati Rice (UT-wide)**.

Why is GI Tag Significant for Kashmir Saffron?

- **Prevents adulteration** by other varieties.
- **Better international price realization**.
- **Protects authenticity** in global markets.
- **Enables legal action** against misuse.
- **Boosts farmer income**.
- **Cultural and heritage protection**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to Kashmir saffron, consider the following statements:

1. Kashmir saffron received its GI tag in May 2020.
2. It is the only saffron variety in the world grown at an altitude of 1,600-1,800 metres above mean sea level.
3. Pampore in Pulwama district is the main hub of Kashmir saffron cultivation.
4. Kashmir is the world's largest producer of saffron.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one
(b) Only two
(c) **Only three**
(d) All four
(e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **Iran is the world's largest saffron producer**, NOT Kashmir.)

Q2. With reference to the cultivation of Kashmir saffron, consider the following statements:

1. It is grown across about 3,715 hectares in Jammu and Kashmir.
2. The crop grows exclusively in Karewa soils (alluvial lake-bed deposits).
3. It is cultivated in Pulwama, Budgam, Srinagar, and Kishtwar districts.
4. The scientific name of the saffron crocus is Crocus sativus.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one
(b) Only two
(c) Only three
(d) **All four**
(e) None

Q3. With reference to the chemical composition of Kashmir saffron, consider the following statements:

1. Crocin (18-22 per cent) gives saffron its golden-yellow color and antioxidant properties.
2. Safranal (0.8-1.2 per cent) produces the warm, honey-like aroma.
3. Picrocrocin (8-12 per cent) provides the characteristic bitter flavor.
4. Kashmir saffron has lower concentrations of these compounds than Iranian saffron.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only**
(b) 1, 3 and 4 only
(c) 2 and 4 only
(d) 1 and 4 only
(e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **Kashmir saffron has HIGHER concentrations** of these compounds than Iranian saffron.)

Q4. With reference to the grades of Kashmir saffron, consider the following statements:

1. Mongra is the premium A++ grade with only hand-detached crimson tips.
2. Lachha consists of stigmas dried immediately without further processing.
3. Guchhi has threads tied together in bundles.
4. All three grades have identical chemical composition.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only**
(b) 1, 3 and 4 only
(c) 2 and 4 only
(d) 1 and 4 only
(e) All four

(Statement 4 is partially wrong; the **grades differ in processing and purity**, not just chemical composition.)

Q5. With reference to the Geographical Indication (GI) Tag system in India, consider the following statements:

1. GI Tags are governed by the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999.
2. The GI Registry is based in Chennai.
3. GI Tag validity is 10 years, renewable.
4. Kashmir Saffron's GI registration date is 1 May 2020.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one
(b) Only two
(c) Only three
(d) **All four**
(e) None

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because Iran is the largest producer.
2. (d), All four statements are correct.
3. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because Kashmir has higher concentrations.
4. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because grades differ.
5. (d), All four statements are correct.

4. The Kishau Multi-Purpose Dam

Source: News on Air

Context

Union Home Minister Amit Shah chaired a **crucial meeting in New Delhi on 16-17 June 2026**, where a **historic consensus** was reached among **six stakeholder states** (Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Haryana, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan) to implement the **long-pending Kishau Multi-Purpose Dam Project**, breaking an **eight-year deadlock**. The six states agreed to sign a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** for the **hydroelectric and water storage project** on the **Tons River** (a tributary of the Yamuna). The **236-metre concrete gravity dam** (estimated cost: **₹11,500-15,000 crore**) will create a **reservoir of 1,324 MCM**, generate **660 MW of hydropower** (1,379 MU annually), and irrigate **97,076 hectares**. Under the new agreement, the **Central Government** will fund **90 per cent** of the **water component** as a **central assistance grant**, while the **six states** will share **10 per cent**. A unique **water swap** allows **Himachal Pradesh's water share** to be supplied to **Delhi and Rajasthan** in lieu of sharing **HP's power component cost (about ₹2,000 crore)**. The project was **initially approved** by the **Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) in 2018**, and the **MoU** will now be placed before the **Union Cabinet for approval**.

Stakeholder States

1. **Himachal Pradesh**.
2. **Uttarakhand**.
3. **Haryana**.
4. **Delhi**.
5. **Uttar Pradesh**.
6. **Rajasthan**.

Location

- **River**: **Tons River** (a primary tributary of the **Yamuna**).
- **Site**: About **39 km north of Dakpathar**, **upstream of Ichari Dam**.
- **Border**: Straddles **Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand**.
- **Specifically**: Between **Dehradun (Uttarakhand)** and **Sirmour (Himachal Pradesh)**.
- **Coordinates**: about **30.75°N, 77.70°E**.

Aim

- **Build extensive water resource management network**.
- **Secure downstream drinking water**.
- **Expand agricultural irrigation** across northern India.
- **Generate peak-load hydroelectric power**.
- **Increase minimum ecological flow** of the **Yamuna River** for **environmental recovery**.
- **Rejuvenate Yamuna River**.

The 90:10 Agreement

- **Centre**: **90 per cent** of water component cost as **central assistance grant**.
- **Six states**: Share **remaining 10 per cent**.

About the Yamuna River

- **Origin**: **Yamunotri Glacier**, **Uttarkashi district, Uttarakhand** at an elevation of **6,387 m**.
- **Length**: About **1,376 km**.
- **Major tributaries**: **Tons, Giri, Chambal, Sind, Betwa, Ken, Hindon**.
- **Joins Ganga**: At **Triveni Sangam, Prayagraj (Uttar Pradesh)**.
- **Drainage basin**: about **366,223 sq km**.
- **States**: Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the Kishau Multi-Purpose Dam Project, consider the following statements:

1. The dam is being constructed on the Tons River, a tributary of the Yamuna.
2. It straddles the border between Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand.
3. The dam is 236 metres high with an estimated cost of ₹11,500 crore.
4. The Kishau dam is located on the Ganga River in Uttar Pradesh.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one
(b) Only two
(c) **Only three**
(d) All four
(e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **Kishau dam is on the Tons River**, NOT the Ganga.)

Q2. With reference to the funding framework agreed in June 2026, consider the following statements:

1. The Central Government will bear 90 per cent of the cost of the water component.
2. The remaining 10 per cent will be shared by the six stakeholder states.
3. Himachal Pradesh's water share will be supplied to Delhi and Rajasthan in lieu of HP's power component cost (about ₹2,000 crore).
4. The Centre will bear 100 per cent of both water and power components.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one
(b) Only two
(c) **Only three**
(d) All four
(e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **Centre bears 90 per cent of water component**, NOT 100 per cent of both components.)

Q3. With reference to the six stakeholder states of the Kishau project, consider the following statements:

1. The six states are Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Haryana, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan.
2. The meeting was chaired by Union Home Minister Amit Shah in June 2026.
3. The Ministry of Environment and Forests had initially approved the project in 2018.

4. The eight-year deadlock was over inter-state water and cost-sharing issues.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one
(b) Only two
(c) Only three
(d) **All four**
(e) None

Q4. With reference to the project's technical features, consider the following statements:

1. The reservoir will have a live storage capacity of 1,324 MCM.
2. The hydropower plant will be rated at 660 MW with 1,379 MU annual generation.
3. The dam will support irrigation of 97,076 hectares.
4. The dam will not have any hydropower component.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only**
(b) 1, 3 and 4 only
(c) 2 and 4 only
(d) 1 and 4 only
(e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **dam will have a 660 MW hydropower plant**.)

Q5. With reference to the broader Yamuna basin storage projects, consider the following statements:

1. The Lakhwar project is on the Yamuna River in Uttarakhand.
2. The Renukaji project is on the Giri River, a tributary of the Yamuna, in Himachal Pradesh.
3. The Kishau project is on the Tons River, a tributary of the Yamuna.
4. All three projects are part of the Upper Yamuna basin storage initiative.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one
(b) Only two
(c) Only three
(d) **All four**
(e) None

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the Kishau dam is on the Tons River, not the Ganga.
2. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the Centre bears only 90 per cent of water component.
3. (d), All four statements are correct.
4. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the dam includes a 660 MW hydropower plant.
5. (d), All four statements are correct.

Banking and Finance

1. NPCI Unveils Drunix

Source: Business Standard

Context

The **National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)** has rolled out **Drunix**, an **open-source, enterprise-grade blockchain platform** designed to help organisations **build and scale tokenisation platforms, digital asset ecosystems, and multi-organisation networks**. Drunix has been developed as an enhanced fork of Hyperledger Fabric and is intended to address the growing demand for scalable and secure distributed ledger solutions. It is **engineered for enterprise and public infrastructure adoption** and enables **blockchain deployment at scale** without compromising **privacy, governance, or interoperability**. Drunix marks NPCI's second major open-source contribution in the blockchain and tokenization space, following Falcon, which focused on **production-grade blockchain network management and orchestration**. **NPCI's Chief Technology Officer Vishal Kanvaty** said the platform aims to **accelerate blockchain readiness** with **foundational technologies** for **experimentation, interoperability, and real-world adoption**.

Purpose of Drunix

To help organisations build and scale:

- **Tokenisation platforms**.
- **Digital asset ecosystems**.
- **Multi-organisation networks**.
- **Public infrastructure adoption**.

Key Features

- **High-performance distributed ledger platform**.
- **Enhanced throughput, scalability, and operational efficiency**.
- **Compatibility** with **existing Hyperledger Fabric ecosystems**.
- **Privacy, governance, and interoperability** preserved.
- **Enterprise-grade architecture**.

NPCI's Open-Source Blockchain and AI Initiatives

Initiative	Purpose
Falcon	**Production-grade blockchain network management and orchestration** (NPCI's 1st blockchain open-source contribution)
Drunix	**Core blockchain runtime and transaction processing layer** (NPCI's 2nd open-source contribution in blockchain)
FiMi	NPCI's open-source initiative
Vigil-AI	NPCI's AI-based initiative

What is Blockchain Technology?

- A **distributed ledger technology (DLT)** where **data is stored in blocks** that are **chained cryptographically**.
- **Key features**:
  - **Decentralisation**: No single point of control.
  - **Immutability**: Once recorded, data cannot be altered.
  - **Transparency**: All participants can verify transactions.
  - **Consensus mechanisms**: For validating transactions (PoW, PoS, PBFT, etc.).
- **Applications**:

- **Cryptocurrencies**: Bitcoin, Ethereum.
- **Smart contracts**.
- **Supply chain tracking**.
- **Digital identity**.
- **Tokenisation of assets**.
- **Cross-border payments**.

What is Hyperledger Fabric?

- An **open-source enterprise-grade blockchain platform**.
- **Hosted by**: **Linux Foundation**.
- **Released**: **2016**.
- **Key features**:
  - **Permissioned blockchain**.
  - **Modular architecture**.
  - **Privacy through channels and private data collections**.
  - **Smart contracts (chaincode)** in **Go, Node.js, Java**.
- **Widely used by**: **Enterprises, banks, governments**.

What is Tokenisation?

- The **process** of **converting rights to an asset** into a **digital token** on a **blockchain**.
- **Examples**:
  - **Real estate tokenisation**: Fractional ownership of property.
  - **Asset-backed tokens**: Gold, silver-backed tokens.
  - **Equity tokens**: Digital representation of company shares.
  - **Stablecoins**: Tokens pegged to fiat currencies.
  - **NFT (Non-Fungible Tokens)**: Unique digital assets.
- **Benefits**: **Fractional ownership, faster settlement, lower costs, increased liquidity**.

About NPCI

- **National Payments Corporation of India**.
- **A non-profit company** under the **Ministry of Finance**.
- **Founded**: **2008**.
- **Promoted by**: **RBI** and **Indian Banks' Association (IBA)**.
- **Headquartered**: **Mumbai**.
- **Functions**:
  - **Operates UPI, RuPay, IMPS, BHIM, AEPS, BBPS, NETC (FASTag)**.
  - **Sets standards** for **retail payment systems**.
- **NPCI International Payments Limited (NIPL)**: For **global UPI expansion**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to NPCI's Drunix, consider the following statements:

1. Drunix is an open-source, enterprise-grade blockchain platform released by NPCI in June 2026.
2. It is built as an enhanced fork of Hyperledger Fabric.
3. Drunix is NPCI's second major open-source contribution in the blockchain space, following Falcon.
4. Drunix is a closed-source proprietary platform.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **Drunix is open-source**, NOT closed-source.)

Q2. With reference to Hyperledger Fabric, consider the following statements:

1. Hyperledger Fabric is an open-source enterprise-grade blockchain platform.
2. It is hosted by the Linux Foundation.
3. Hyperledger Fabric is a permissioned blockchain.
4. Drunix maintains compatibility with existing Hyperledger Fabric ecosystems.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Q3. With reference to NPCI, consider the following statements:

1. NPCI is a non-profit company promoted by the RBI and the Indian Banks' Association (IBA).
2. NPCI was founded in 2008 and is headquartered in Mumbai.
3. NPCI operates UPI, RuPay, IMPS, BHIM, AEPS, BBPS, and NETC (FASTag).
4. NPCI is a foreign company headquartered in Singapore.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **NPCI is an Indian non-profit company** headquartered in **Mumbai**.)

Q4. With reference to blockchain technology, consider the following statements:

1. Blockchain is a distributed ledger technology (DLT) where data is stored in cryptographically linked blocks.
2. Key features include decentralisation, immutability, and transparency.
3. Tokenisation is the process of converting rights to an asset into a digital token on a blockchain.
4. Public blockchains are restricted to authorised users only.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **PRIVATE/PERMISSIONED blockchains are restricted** to authorised users; **public blockchains** are **open to all**.)

Q5. With reference to India's CBDC (e-Rupee), consider the following statements:

1. The e-Rupee is India's Central Bank Digital Currency, launched by the RBI.
2. The wholesale e-Rupee pilot was launched in November 2022.
3. The retail e-Rupee pilot was launched in December 2022.
4. CBDC is built on blockchain technology.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because Drunix is open-source.
2. (d), All four statements are correct.
3. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because NPCI is Indian, headquartered in Mumbai.
4. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because private blockchains are restricted, not public.

5. (d), All four statements are correct.

2. RBI Temporarily Withdraws Interest Rate Ceilings on FCNR(B) and NRE Deposits to Attract NRI Funds

Source: ET

Context

The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** on **17 June 2026 temporarily withdrew the interest rate ceiling** on **fresh Foreign Currency Non-Resident (Bank) [FCNR(B)] deposits** with **maturities of 3 years and above up to 5 years**, **until 30 September 2026**. Separately, the RBI also **temporarily removed restrictions** on **interest rates** for **fresh Non-Resident External (NRE) deposits of 3 years and above**, including **deposits renewed on maturity**, **until 30 September 2026**. The amendment was issued under **Section 35A of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949**, modifying the **Commercial Banks Interest Rate on Deposits Directions, 2025**. This move builds on the **earlier FCNR(B) swap facility** (announced **8 June 2026**) under which the RBI **bears the full hedging cost** for banks. Following these moves, banks like **AU Small Finance Bank (7.10 per cent)**, **Karur Vysya Bank (7 per cent)**, **CSB Bank (6.95 per cent)**, and **Yes Bank (6.6 per cent)** have raised FCNR(B) rates. **SBI Research** estimates **USD 40-45 billion** inflows via the **FCNR(B) route alone**, with combined inflows of **USD 55-65 billion** likely in **FY27**.

On NRE Deposits

- **Restrictions removed** on **interest rates** for **fresh NRE deposits of 3 years and above**.
- **Banks no longer bound** by the **requirement** that rates **must not exceed** those on **comparable domestic rupee term deposits**.
- **Same validity**: **Until 30 September 2026**.

Important Exception

- **Transfers from NRO accounts to NRE accounts** will **NOT qualify** for the **exemption**.

Legal Basis

- **Section 35A of Banking Regulation Act, 1949**.
- **Modifies**: **Commercial Banks Interest Rate on Deposits Directions, 2025**.

Prior Ceilings (Before Relaxation)

Maturity	Previous Ceiling
3-5 years	**Overnight ARR/swap rate + 350 bps**
1 year to less than 3 years	**Overnight ARR/swap rate + 250 bps** (still applicable)

FCNR(B) Swap Facility

- **Window for fresh FCNR(B) deposits** with **3-5 year maturity**.
- **Deposits must be opened**: Between **8 June and 30 September 2026**.
- **Banks can access RBI swap until**: **16 October 2026**.
- **1-year lock-in** from deposit opening date.
- **Exempt from CRR and SLR** maintenance for these deposits.
- **RBI absorbs the full hedging cost** (about **3-3.5 per cent** annually).
- **Swaps cannot be cancelled** once executed with RBI.

What is FCNR(B)?

- **Foreign Currency Non-Resident (Bank) deposit**.
- A **term deposit account** for **Non-Resident Indians (NRIs)** and **Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs)**.

- **Held in foreign currency**: **USD, GBP, EUR, JPY, CAD, AUD**, etc.
- **Tenure**: **1 to 5 years**.
- **Key features**:
  - **No exchange rate risk** for depositor (currency same throughout tenure).
  - **Interest is tax-free** in India.
  - **Funds and interest** are **fully repatriable**.

What is NRE Deposit?

- **Non-Resident External (NRE) Account**.
- A **rupee-denominated account** for **NRIs and PIOs**.
- **Funds sourced from foreign income**.
- **Key features**:
  - **Interest is tax-free** in India.
  - **Funds and interest** are **fully repatriable**.
  - **Exchange rate risk** for depositor (since denominated in INR).
- **Can be**: **Savings, Current, or Term Deposit**.

What is NRO Deposit?

- **Non-Resident Ordinary (NRO) Account**.
- A **rupee-denominated account** for **NRIs**.
- **Funds sourced from Indian income** (rent, dividends, etc.).
- **Interest is taxable** in India.
- **Repatriation restricted**: USD 1 million per year limit.

FCNR(B) vs NRE vs NRO

Feature	FCNR(B)	NRE	NRO
Currency	**Foreign** (USD, GBP, etc.)	**Rupee**	**Rupee**
Source of funds	**Foreign earnings**	**Foreign earnings**	**Indian income**
Interest taxable	**No (tax-free)**	**No (tax-free)**	**Yes**
Repatriation	**Fully repatriable**	**Fully repatriable**	**Restricted (USD 1 mn/yr)**
Exchange rate risk	**No**	**Yes**	**N/A (domestic income)**

What is the FCNR(B) Swap Facility?

- **Announced**: **8 June 2026** (some sources cite 5 June).
- **Mechanism**: **RBI takes on the hedging cost** (3-3.5 per cent annually) for **banks** on **eligible FCNR(B) deposits**.
- **Effect**: Banks can offer **higher rates** (5.5-7.1 per cent) on **USD FCNR(B) deposits**.
- **Benefits to banks**: **No CRR/SLR maintenance**; **lower hedging cost**.

What is the OFCB Swap Facility?

- **Overseas Foreign Currency Borrowing**.
- **Fixed rate of 1.5 per cent per annum** for:
  - **PSUs raising ECBs**.
  - **Banks' overseas borrowings**.
- This is **different from** the **FCNR(B) Swap Facility** (where RBI bears the full hedging cost, not at 1.5 per cent).

About Alternative Reference Rates (ARRs)

- The **replacement** for **LIBOR (London Interbank Offered Rate)**, which was **phased out by 30 June 2023**.
- **Key ARRs**:
  - **SOFR (Secured Overnight Financing Rate)**: For **USD** (replaced USD LIBOR on 30 June 2023).
  - **SONIA (Sterling Overnight Index Average)**: For **GBP** (LIBOR ceased 31 December 2021).
  - **TONA (Tokyo Overnight Average Rate)**: For **JPY**.
  - **€STR (Euro Short-Term Rate)**: For **EUR**.
  - **SARON (Swiss Average Rate Overnight)**: For **CHF**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the RBI's 17 June 2026 move on FCNR(B) and NRE deposits, consider the following statements:

1. The interest rate ceiling on FCNR(B) deposits with 3-5 year maturity has been temporarily withdrawn till 30 September 2026.
2. Restrictions on interest rates for NRE deposits of 3 years and above have also been removed till 30 September 2026.
3. The amendment was issued under Section 35A of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949.
4. Transfers from NRO accounts to NRE accounts will also qualify for the exemption.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **NRO-to-NRE transfers will NOT qualify** for the exemption.)

Q2. With reference to the FCNR(B) Swap Facility announced on 8 June 2026, consider the following statements:

1. The RBI bears the full hedging cost (3-3.5 per cent annually) for banks on eligible FCNR(B) deposits.
2. Banks can access the RBI swap facility until 16 October 2026.
3. Deposits mobilised under this scheme are exempt from CRR and SLR maintenance.
4. The FCNR(B) Swap Facility uses a fixed rate of 1.5 per cent per annum charged to banks.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **1.5 per cent fixed rate** is for the **OFCB Swap Facility for PSUs and banks' overseas borrowings**, NOT the FCNR(B) Swap Facility. Under FCNR(B), **RBI bears the full hedging cost**.)

Q3. With reference to India's NRI deposits position (June 2025 data), consider the following statements:

1. Total outstanding NRI deposits were USD 168.32 billion in June 2025.
2. NRE deposits outstanding were USD 102.75 billion.
3. FCNR(B) deposits outstanding were USD 33.58 billion.
4. India had no outstanding NRI deposits as of June 2025.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **India had USD 168.32 billion** in outstanding NRI deposits.)

Q4. With reference to FCNR(B), NRE, and NRO deposits, consider the following statements:

1. FCNR(B) deposits are held in foreign currency without exchange rate risk for the depositor.
2. NRE deposits are rupee-denominated with tax-free interest and full repatriation.

3. NRO deposits are rupee-denominated for NRIs' Indian income, with taxable interest and restricted repatriation (USD 1 million per year).
4. All three deposit types have unrestricted repatriation.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **NRO repatriation is restricted** to USD 1 million per year.)

Q5. With reference to SBI Research estimates and forex reserves, consider the following statements:

1. SBI Research expects USD 40-45 billion inflows via the FCNR(B) route alone.
2. Combined inflows from all RBI measures could be USD 55-65 billion in FY27.
3. India's forex reserves were USD 681.61 billion at the end of the week ending 5 June 2026.
4. India has never had forex reserves above USD 700 billion.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **India's highest-ever forex reserves were USD 728.49 billion**; reserves recovered above USD 700 billion in June 2026.)

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because NRO-to-NRE transfers don't qualify.
2. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the 1.5 per cent is for OFCB, not FCNR(B) swap facility.
3. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because India had USD 168.32 billion NRI deposits.
4. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because NRO repatriation is restricted.
5. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because India's reserves have crossed USD 700 billion.

3. RBI Master Directions on Authorisation to Operate a Payment System (PSO)

Source: BS

Context

In **June 2026**, the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** issued the **Master Directions on Authorisation to Operate a Payment System** to **consolidate** the **existing guidelines** for entities seeking to operate payment systems under the **Payment and Settlement Systems (PSS) Act, 2007**. The directions, which **come into effect immediately**, provide a **unified framework** covering **eligibility criteria, authorisation, perpetual validity of licences, voluntary surrender, and cooling-off requirements** for **Payment System Operators (PSOs)**.

What is a Payment System Operator (PSO)?

- An **entity authorised by the RBI** to **operate a payment system**.
- A **payment system** enables **clearing, payment, or settlement of funds** between participants.
- **No entity**, other than RBI, can operate a payment system **without prior RBI authorisation** (Section 4, PSS Act 2007).

Why was the Framework Consolidated?

- **Multiple existing guidelines** had been issued over time.
- **Need for unified clarity** for fintech and payment industry.
- **Aligns with global standards** (BIS Principles, FATF).
- **Brings regulatory certainty** to **fintech ecosystem**.

- **Strengthens systemic risk management**.
- **Enhances customer protection**.

Key Features of the Master Directions

1. Perpetual Validity of Licences

- **Authorisation to new PSOs**: **Perpetually valid**.
- **Existing operators**: May receive perpetual validity **on renewal**, provided:
  - **Regulatory requirements** are met.
  - **No supervisory concern**.
- **Non-compliant existing operators**: Get **one-year renewals** until **deficiencies addressed**.
- **Significance**: Removes burden of **periodic re-authorisation**; provides stability.

2. On-Tap Availability

- **Authorisation** to operate payment systems will continue to be available on an **on-tap basis**.
- **No fixed window**: Applications can be submitted **at any time**.
- **Process**: Through the **RBI's portal**.
- **Useful for**: **Innovative and niche PSOs**, **fintech entrants**.

3. FATF Safeguards

- **Investment restrictions** retained for **non-compliant FATF jurisdictions**.
- **New investors** from **FATF non-compliant jurisdictions**:
  - **Cannot acquire significant influence** in PSOs.
  - **Aggregate voting rights capped below 20 per cent**.
- **Purpose**: **AML/CFT compliance**.

4. "Fit and Proper" Criteria

Applicants must meet criteria relating to:

- **Integrity**.
- **Financial soundness**.
- **Governance standards**.

5. Capital and Net-Worth Requirements

- Applicants must comply with **capital** and **net-worth** requirements **prescribed for specific payment systems**.
- **Varies by PSO type**:
  - **PPI issuers**: about **₹100 crore minimum net worth**.
  - **Card networks**: Higher requirements.
  - **Specialised PSOs**: Tailored requirements.

6. Voluntary Surrender Process

Entities seeking to **discontinue operations** must:

- **Settle outstanding liabilities** to:
  - **Customers**.
  - **Merchants**.
  - **Agents**.
  - **Banks**.
- **Obtain auditor-certified confirmation**.

- **Notify RBI**.
- **Submit wind-up plan**.

7. Cooling-Off Period

A **1-year cooling-off period** may be imposed on entities whose authorisation has been:

Category	Cooling-Off Period
Revoked by RBI	**1 year**
Not renewed	**1 year**
Voluntarily surrendered	**1 year**
Application rejected	**1 year**

During the **cooling-off**, such entities **cannot apply** for permission to operate **any payment system**.

Three-Tier PSO Classification

Tier	PSO Type	Examples
Tier 1	**Systemic Authorised Payment Systems** (large national)	**NPCI (RTGS, NEFT, UPI), Card networks, ATM networks**
Tier 2	**Specialised PSOs** (specific functions)	**PPI issuers, Cross-border money transfer operators, BBPS, TReDS**
Tier 3	**Niche/innovation PSOs**	**Account aggregators, payment intermediaries, FinTechs**

About Payment and Settlement Systems (PSS) Act, 2007

- **Enacted**: **2007**.
- **Effective**: **2008**.
- **Purpose**: Provide **regulation and supervision** of **payment systems in India**.
- **Key provisions**:
  - **Section 4**: **RBI authorisation required** for operating payment systems.
  - **Section 7**: **Issuance of authorisation**.
  - **Section 8**: **Revocation of authorisation**.
  - **Section 17**: **Power to call for returns and documents**.
  - **Section 18**: **Power to issue directions**.
- **Designated authority**: **Board for Regulation and Supervision of Payment and Settlement Systems (BPSS)** under RBI.

Major PSOs in India (Examples)

PSO	Function
NPCI (National Payments Corporation of India)	**Operates RTGS, NEFT, UPI, IMPS, Bharat BillPay (BBPS), FASTag, RuPay**
CCIL (Clearing Corporation of India Ltd)	**Settles money market, government securities, forex transactions**
Card networks: Visa, Mastercard, RuPay, American Express	**Operate card payment networks**
PPI issuers: PhonePe, Paytm, Mobikwik	**Prepaid Payment Instruments**
Cross-border money transfer operators: Wise, Remitly	**International remittances**
TReDS platforms: Receivables Exchange of India Ltd	**MSME receivables discounting**

Key Terms

- **Payment System Operator (PSO)**: An **entity authorised by RBI** under **Section 4 of PSS Act, 2007** to **operate a payment system** that enables **clearing, payment, or settlement of funds** between participants.
- **Master Directions**: A **consolidated set of regulatory guidelines** issued by **RBI** that **brings together multiple individual circulars** on a topic into a **single, comprehensive document**.
- **Payment and Settlement Systems (PSS) Act, 2007**: The **primary legislation** governing **payment systems in India**, providing **RBI** with **regulatory and supervisory powers**.
- **Perpetual Validity**: A **licence** that **does not expire** unless **revoked or surrendered**, removing the need for **periodic re-authorisation**.
- **On-Tap**: An **application window** that is **continuously open** throughout the year, **not restricted** to specific periods.
- **Cooling-Off Period**: A **specified time** during which an **entity** is **prevented from applying** for a **new authorisation** after its **previous one was revoked, surrendered, or rejected**.
- **FATF (Financial Action Task Force)**: An **intergovernmental body** that sets **global standards** for **Anti-Money Laundering (AML)** and **Counter-Terror Financing (CFT)**.
- **FATF Non-Compliant Jurisdictions**: **Countries** that **do not adequately comply** with **FATF's 40 Recommendations**, placed on **FATF's "grey" or "black" lists**.
- **"Fit and Proper" Criteria**: **Standards** that **applicants** must meet on **integrity, financial soundness, and governance** to be authorised.
- **Voluntary Surrender**: A **process** by which a **PSO** can **discontinue operations** by **settling outstanding liabilities** and **notifying RBI**.
- **Voting Rights Cap**: A **regulatory limit** on **how much voting control** an **investor** can have, used to **prevent undue influence**.
- **AML/CFT**: **Anti-Money Laundering / Counter-Terror Financing**, **global regulatory standards** to **prevent financial crimes**.
- **NPCI**: **National Payments Corporation of India**, an **umbrella organisation** that **operates** several **major payment systems** (UPI, RTGS, NEFT, IMPS, RuPay).
- **PPI (Prepaid Payment Instrument)**: A **payment instrument** like **digital wallets** that **store value** for **future use**.
- **BPSS**: **Board for Regulation and Supervision of Payment and Settlement Systems**, the **designated authority** under RBI for **PSS oversight**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the RBI's Master Directions on Authorisation to Operate a Payment System (June 2026), consider the following statements:

1. The Master Directions consolidate existing guidelines on authorisation of Payment System Operators (PSOs).
2. They provide a unified framework covering eligibility criteria, authorisation, perpetual validity, voluntary surrender, and cooling-off requirements.
3. The directions are issued under Section 4 of the Payment and Settlement Systems (PSS) Act, 2007.
4. Authorisation granted to new PSOs is valid for only 5 years.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one
(b) Only two
(c) **Only three**
(d) All four

(e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **new PSOs receive PERPETUAL validity**, NOT 5-year validity.)

Q2. With reference to the validity provisions of the Master Directions, consider the following statements:

1. New PSOs receive perpetual validity of authorisation.
2. Existing operators may receive perpetual validity on renewal if regulatory requirements are met and there is no supervisory concern.
3. Non-compliant existing operators receive one-year renewals until deficiencies are addressed.
4. Authorisation cannot be revoked once granted.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one
(b) Only two
(c) **Only three**
(d) All four
(e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **RBI retains revocation powers** under **Section 8 of PSS Act 2007**.)

Q3. With reference to FATF safeguards in the Master Directions, consider the following statements:

1. Investment restrictions are retained for jurisdictions identified as non-compliant by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF).
2. New investors from such non-compliant jurisdictions cannot acquire significant influence in PSOs.
3. Aggregate voting rights for such investors are capped below 20 per cent.
4. FATF is a body that sets standards for Anti-Money Laundering (AML) and Counter-Terror Financing (CFT).

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one
(b) Only two
(c) Only three
(d) **All four**
(e) None

Q4. With reference to the application process and cooling-off period, consider the following statements:

1. Authorisation is available on an on-tap basis through the RBI's portal.
2. Applicants must meet "fit and proper" criteria relating to integrity, financial soundness, and governance.
3. The RBI may impose a 1-year cooling-off period on entities whose authorisation has been revoked, not renewed, voluntarily surrendered, or whose application has been rejected.
4. The cooling-off period is only 30 days.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one
(b) Only two
(c) **Only three**
(d) All four
(e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **the cooling-off period is 1 year**, NOT 30 days.)

Q5. With reference to the voluntary surrender process, consider the following statements:

1. Entities seeking to discontinue operations must settle outstanding liabilities to customers, merchants, agents, and banks.
2. They must obtain auditor-certified confirmation of settlement before surrendering their licences.
3. The Payment and Settlement Systems (PSS) Act, 2007 is the legal basis for PSO regulation.
4. NPCI is one of the major PSOs operating in India, running UPI, RTGS, NEFT, and IMPS.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one
(b) Only two
(c) Only three
(d) **All four**
(e) None

Q6. With reference to the three-tier classification of PSOs, consider the following statements:

1. Tier 1 includes systemic authorised payment systems like NPCI's RTGS, NEFT, UPI.
2. Tier 2 includes specialised PSOs like PPI issuers, BBPS, TReDS, and cross-border money transfer operators.
3. Tier 3 includes niche/innovation PSOs like account aggregators and payment intermediaries.
4. All PSOs require the same minimum net worth, regardless of tier.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one
(b) Only two
(c) **Only three**
(d) All four
(e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **minimum net worth varies by PSO type** (e.g., **₹100 crore for PPI issuers**, higher for card networks).)

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because new PSOs receive perpetual validity.
2. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because RBI retains revocation powers.
3. (d), All four statements are correct.
4. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the cooling-off period is 1 year.
5. (d), All four statements are correct.
6. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because net worth requirements vary by PSO type.

4. RBI Reelathon 2026

Context

In **June 2026**, the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** launched **'RBI Reelathon 2026'**, a **state-wide cyber financial fraud awareness campaign** across approximately **150 colleges in Kerala**. The initiative promotes **financial literacy, cyber hygiene, safe digital banking, smart borrowing**, and vigilance against **emerging online financial threats** through **student engagement** and a **reel-making competition**. It was **inaugurated on 16 June 2026** at the **RBI Office, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala**, by **Kerala Director General of Police (DGP) Ravada Chandrasekhar**. The campaign is implemented through a **three-phase programme**: **awareness sessions**, **reel-making competitions**, and a **grand finale**. The

top three winners will receive cash prizes of **₹75,000, ₹50,000, and ₹25,000**.

The Three Phases

Phase 1: Awareness Sessions

- **Financial literacy** education.
- **Safe digital practices**.
- **Smart borrowing practices**.
- **Conducted in about 150 colleges**.

Phase 2: Reel-Making Competition

- **Students create short videos** on:
  - **Illegal loan applications**.
  - **Mule accounts**.
  - **Cyber financial frauds**.
  - **Cyber hygiene**.
- **Multiple rounds** of evaluation.

Phase 3: Grand Finale

- **Held later in 2026**.
- **Best entries** showcased on **official social media platforms**.
- **Disseminated through**: RBI, Kerala Police, banks, colleges, partner institutions.

Rewards (Verified)

Rank	Prize Amount
1st	**₹75,000**
2nd	**₹50,000**
3rd	**₹25,000**

Types of Cyber Financial Frauds Addressed

1. **Investment Scams**: Fraudulent investment schemes promising high returns.
2. **Digital Arrest Scams**: Impersonating law enforcement to extort money.
3. **Illegal Loan Applications**: Predatory lending through fake apps.
4. **Fake Job Offers**: Phishing for personal/financial details.
5. **Phishing Attacks**: Deceptive emails/messages stealing credentials.
6. **Mule Account Networks**: Bank accounts used to transfer/conceal illicit proceeds.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to RBI Reelathon 2026, consider the following statements:

1. The campaign was launched in Kerala on 16 June 2026.
2. It targets approximately 150 colleges across Kerala.
3. The top three winners will receive cash prizes of ₹75,000, ₹50,000, and ₹25,000.
4. The campaign was launched by the SEBI.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **campaign was launched by RBI**, NOT SEBI.)

Q2. With reference to the cyber financial frauds addressed by Reelathon, consider the following

statements:

1. Investment scams, digital arrest scams, and illegal loan applications are key targets.
2. Mule accounts are used by cybercriminals to transfer or conceal illicit proceeds.
3. The "Golden Hour" is the earliest possible time to report cyber fraud for fund recovery.
4. Cyber hygiene includes practices like strong passwords and two-factor authentication.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Q3. With reference to the three-phase implementation of Reelathon, consider the following statements:

1. Phase 1 involves awareness programmes on smart borrowing and safe digital banking.
2. Phase 2 involves reel-making competitions on cyber fraud themes.
3. The grand finale is scheduled later in 2026.
4. The campaign was inaugurated by the Kerala Chief Minister.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **campaign was inaugurated by Kerala DGP Ravada Chandrasekhar**, NOT the Chief Minister.)

Q4. With reference to cyber fraud prevention infrastructure in India, consider the following statements:

1. The National Cybercrime Reporting Portal is at cybercrime.gov.in.
2. The cyber fraud helpline number is 1930.
3. The Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) operates under the Ministry of Home Affairs.
4. CERT-In stands for Computer Emergency Response Team - India.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because RBI (not SEBI) launched the campaign.
2. (d), All four statements are correct.
3. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because Kerala DGP (not CM) inaugurated.
4. (d), All four statements are correct.

Agriculture

1. Watershed Development Component of Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (WDC-PMKSY 2.0)

Source: Press Information Bureau (PIB)

Context

The **World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought (WDCDD)** was celebrated on **17 June 2026** across **813 project areas** under the **Watershed Development Component of Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (WDC-PMKSY 2.0)** throughout the country. The **Watershed Management Division** of the **Department of Land Resources, Ministry of Rural Development**, is implementing **WDC-PMKSY 2.0**

(approved on **15 December 2021** for the period **2021-2026**) to promote **soil and water conservation**, restore degraded lands, and enhance resilience of **rainfed agriculture**. Activities included **Bhoomi Poojan of 1,444 new watershed development works**, **Lokarpan (inauguration) of 8,341 completed assets**, plantation of **51,299 saplings** under **"Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam"**, and a public pledge on the theme **"For a Developed India, Let Us Build a Drought-Free India.**

About WDC-PMKSY 2.0

- **Approved on**: **15 December 2021**.
- **Project period**: **2021-2026** (5 years).
- **Implementing ministry**: **Ministry of Rural Development**.
- **Implementing department**: **Department of Land Resources**.
- **Predecessor schemes**:
  - **Integrated Watershed Management Programme (IWMP)**: Launched **2009-10**.
  - **Merged with PMKSY** as **WDC-PMKSY**: **2015-16**.

Unit Cost Revisions Under WDC-PMKSY 2.0

Area Type	Old Unit Cost	New Unit Cost
Plain areas	**₹12,000/ha**	**₹22,000/ha**
Difficult/LWE areas	**₹15,000/ha**	**₹28,000/ha**

Key Features of WDC-PMKSY 2.0

- **Saturation-based approach**: Treats entire watersheds comprehensively.
- **Springshed Rejuvenation**: New component on NITI Aayog's recommendation.
- **Livelihood focus**: **15 per cent** of project cost for **landless/assetless** households.
- **GIS and Remote Sensing**: For better planning of projects.
- **Convergence**: With other Central and State schemes.
- **Activities**: **Check dams, percolation tanks, farm ponds, contour bunding, gully plugs, springshed rejuvenation, plantations**.

About "Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam" Campaign

- **Launched**: **5 June 2024** by **PM Narendra Modi** on **World Environment Day**.
- **Meaning**: "One Tree in the Name of Mother".
- **Aim**: **Plant trees** in honour of **mothers** and **environment**.
- **Target**: **140 crore trees** by **March 2027**.
- **Coverage**: All states and UTs.
- **Convergence**: With MGNREGA, CAMPA, Green India Mission.

About Desertification in India

- **India's land degradation**: **97.85 million hectares** = **29.77 per cent** of **total geographical area (TGA)**.
- **Source**: **Desertification and Land Degradation Atlas of India, 2021** by **Space Applications Centre (SAC), ISRO**.
- **Major drivers**:
  - **Vegetation degradation** (about 28 per cent).
  - **Water erosion** (10.98 per cent).
  - **Wind erosion** (5.55 per cent).
  - **Salinity**.
- **Worst-affected states**: **Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana**.

India's International Commitments

UNCCD (1994)

- **United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification**.
- **Adopted**: **1994**.
- **Effective**: **December 1996**.
- **Sole legally binding international agreement** linking **environment and development** to **sustainable land management**.
- **India ratified**: **December 1996**.

LDN Target (Land Degradation Neutrality)

- India committed to **restoring 26 million hectares of degraded land** by **2030** (announced at **UNCCD COP14**, **September 2019**, **New Delhi**).

Bonn Challenge

- India aims to restore **21 million hectares** of degraded land by **2030**.

About PMKSY (Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana)

- **Launched**: **2015**.
- **Tagline**: **"Har Khet Ko Pani"** (Water for Every Field).
- **Aim**: **Expanding cultivable area under irrigation**, **improving water use efficiency**, and **adopting sustainable water conservation practices**.
- **Components**:
  1. **Accelerated Irrigation Benefit Programme (AIBP)** by Ministry of Jal Shakti.
  2. **Har Khet Ko Pani (HKKP)** by Ministry of Jal Shakti.
  3. **Watershed Development Component (WDC)** by Ministry of Rural Development.
  4. **Per Drop More Crop** by Ministry of Agriculture.

About UNCCD

- **Full name**: **United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification**.
- **Adopted**: **17 June 1994** (Paris).
- **Effective**: **26 December 1996**.
- **Headquartered**: **Bonn, Germany**.
- **Secretariat**: **UNCCD Secretariat**.
- **Executive Secretary**: **Ibrahim Thiaw** (since 2019).
- **Parties**: **197 countries + EU**.
- **One of the 3 Rio Conventions** (along with **UNFCCC** and **CBD**).

SDGs Linked to This Day

- **SDG 1**: No Poverty.
- **SDG 2**: Zero Hunger.
- **SDG 5**: Gender Equality.
- **SDG 6**: Clean Water and Sanitation.
- **SDG 8**: Decent Work.
- **SDG 13**: Climate Action.
- **SDG 15**: Life on Land (with target **15.3** on **Land Degradation Neutrality** by **2030**).

Other Indian Initiatives Related to Land Restoration

- **Green India Mission (GIM)**: Under **National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC)**.
- **National Afforestation Programme (NAP)**: Forest restoration.
- **National Mission on Sustainable Agriculture**.
- **Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA)**.
- **National Watershed Development Project for Rainfed Areas (NWDPRA)**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought 2026, consider the following statements:

1. The day was observed on 17 June 2026 across 813 WDC-PMKSY 2.0 project areas in India.
2. It is observed annually as per UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/49/115 of 1994.
3. The 2026 day is themed "Rangelands: Recognize. Respect. Restore." reflecting the UN International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists.
4. The day is led by the Secretariat of the UNFCCC.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the day is led by the **Secretariat of UNCCD**, NOT UNFCCC.)

Q2. With reference to WDC-PMKSY 2.0, consider the following statements:

1. It was approved on 15 December 2021 for the period 2021-2026.
2. The physical target is 49.50 lakh hectares with a central financial outlay of ₹8,134 crore.
3. The Integrated Watershed Management Programme (IWMP) was launched in 2009-10 and merged with PMKSY in 2015-16.
4. It is implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **WDC-PMKSY 2.0 is implemented by the Ministry of Rural Development**, NOT Agriculture.)

Q3. With reference to land degradation in India, consider the following statements:

1. Approximately 97.85 million hectares (29.77 per cent of total geographical area) of India's land is degraded.
2. The data comes from the Desertification and Land Degradation Atlas of India, 2021 by ISRO's Space Applications Centre.
3. Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Gujarat, and Karnataka are among the most affected states.
4. Vegetation degradation is a minor driver of land degradation in India.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **vegetation degradation is a major driver** (about 28 per cent), NOT minor.)

Q4. With reference to UNCCD and India's commitments, consider the following statements:

1. UNCCD was adopted in 1994 and is headquartered in Bonn, Germany.
2. India has committed to restore 26 million hectares of degraded land by 2030.
3. The commitment was announced at UNCCD COP14 in New Delhi in September 2019.

4. UNCCD has only 50 country parties.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **UNCCD has 197 country parties + EU**, NOT 50.)

Q5. With reference to PMKSY (Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana), consider the following statements:

1. PMKSY was launched in 2015 with the tagline "Har Khet Ko Pani".
2. Its components include Accelerated Irrigation Benefit Programme (AIBP), Har Khet Ko Pani, Watershed Development, and Per Drop More Crop.
3. The Watershed Development Component is implemented by the Ministry of Rural Development.
4. PMKSY is implemented exclusively by the Ministry of Agriculture.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **PMKSY is implemented by multiple ministries** (Jal Shakti, Rural Development, Agriculture), NOT exclusively by Agriculture.)

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because UNCCD (not UNFCCC) leads the day.
2. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because Ministry of Rural Development implements WDC-PMKSY 2.0.
3. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because vegetation degradation is a major driver.
4. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because UNCCD has 197 country parties + EU.
5. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because PMKSY is implemented by multiple ministries.

Exam Relevance

NABARD Grade A	**Very high importance, watershed development, rural credit**

2. Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY)

Source: PIB

Context

The **Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY)** is India's **flagship umbrella scheme** for **irrigation development**, launched on **1 July 2015**. It aims to **enhance access to water for farming**, **expand cultivable area under assured irrigation**, **improve water use efficiency**, and **promote sustainable water conservation practices**. PMKSY is a **Centrally Sponsored Scheme (Core Scheme)** with **Centre-State sharing of 75:25** for **general states** and **90:10** for **North-Eastern and Hilly states**. The scheme is **implemented by three ministries**: **Ministry of Jal Shakti, Ministry of Rural Development, and Ministry of Agriculture**. The initial **2015-2020 outlay** was **₹50,000 crore**; the **continuation for 2021-2026** has an outlay of about **₹93,068 crore**. The scheme follows the **motto "Har Khet Ko Paani"** (Water for Every Field) and **"Per Drop More Crop"**. To date, **53 projects have been completed under PMKSY-AIBP**, generating an additional **irrigation potential of 25.14 lakh hectares**.

The Scheme

- **Full name**: **Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY)**.
- **Launched**: **1 July 2015**.

- **Type**: **Centrally Sponsored Scheme (Core Scheme)**.
- **Initial outlay (2015-2020)**: **₹50,000 crore** (5 years).
- **Mottos**: **"Har Khet Ko Paani"** + **"Per Drop More Crop"**.

Funding Pattern

Region	Centre	State
General states	**75%**	**25%**
North-Eastern + Hilly states	**90%**	**10%**

Implementing Ministries

Component	Ministry
AIBP, HKKP	**Ministry of Jal Shakti**
Watershed Development (WDC)	**Ministry of Rural Development (Department of Land Resources)**
Per Drop More Crop (PDMC)	**Ministry of Agriculture (Department of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare)**

Objectives

- **Convergence of investments** in irrigation at the field level (District/Sub-district Irrigation Plans).
- **Enhance physical access of water** on farm (**Har Khet Ko Paani**).
- **Integration** of water source, distribution, and efficient use.
- **Improve on-farm water use efficiency** to reduce wastage.
- **Adoption of precision irrigation** and water-saving technologies (**More Crop Per Drop**).
- **Enhance recharge of aquifers**.
- **Integrated development of rainfed areas** through watershed approach.
- **Promote extension activities** on water harvesting, management, crop alignment.
- **Explore reuse of treated municipal wastewater** for peri-urban agriculture.

Components of PMKSY

1. Accelerated Irrigation Benefit Programme (AIBP)

- **Launched**: **1996**.
- **Subsumed under PMKSY**: **2015**.
- **Aim**: **Accelerate implementation** of **major and medium irrigation projects** that **exceed state resource capabilities**.
- **Achievement**: **53 projects completed** under PMKSY-AIBP, generating **25.14 lakh hectares** additional irrigation potential.
- **Implementing ministry**: **Ministry of Jal Shakti**.

2. Har Khet Ko Pani (HKKP)

- **Aim**: **Create new water sources** through Minor Irrigation; **repair, restoration, and renovation** of water bodies.
- **Sub-components**:
  1. **Command Area Development & Water Management (CAD&WM)**: Pari passu with AIBP from 2016. 85 ongoing projects target 30.23 lakh hectares (2021-2026).
  2. **Surface Minor Irrigation (SMI)**: New surface minor irrigation works.
  3. **Repair, Renovation and Restoration (RRR) of Water Bodies**: Traditional water bodies.
  4. **Ground Water (GW) Development**: Approval **only till 2021-22**; thereafter only ongoing works.
- **Implementing ministry**: **Ministry of Jal Shakti**.

3. Watershed Development (WDC)

- **Aim**: Effective **management of runoff water**, **soil and moisture conservation** activities such as:
  - **Ridge area treatment**.
  - **Drainage line treatment**.
  - **Rain water harvesting**.
  - **In-situ moisture conservation**.
  - **Other allied activities** on watershed basis.
- **Implementing ministry**: **Ministry of Rural Development (Department of Land Resources)**.
- **Current avatar**: **WDC-PMKSY 2.0** (2021-2026) with **₹8,134 crore** outlay and **49.50 lakh hectares** target.

4. Per Drop More Crop (PDMC)

- **Aim**: Promote **micro-irrigation** (**drip and sprinkler systems**).
- **Components**:
  - Subsidies for micro-irrigation systems.
  - Capacity building.
- **Implementing ministry**: **Ministry of Agriculture**.
- **Note**: From **2022-23**, **PDMC** was **transferred** to the **Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY)** as **RKVY-Cafeteria**.

Amalgamation of Earlier Schemes

PMKSY was formed by **merging the following earlier schemes**:

Predecessor Scheme	Original Ministry
Accelerated Irrigation Benefit Programme (AIBP)	**Ministry of Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation** (now Ministry of Jal Shakti)
Integrated Watershed Management Programme (IWMP)	**Department of Land Resources, Ministry of Rural Development**
On-Farm Water Management (OFWM)	**Department of Agriculture and Cooperation**

About Accelerated Irrigation Benefit Programme (AIBP)

- **Launched**: **1996** by **Ministry of Water Resources**.
- **Aim**: Provide **Central Loan Assistance (CLA)** for **major and medium irrigation projects** beyond state resources.
- **Today**: Subsumed under PMKSY as **PMKSY-AIBP**.
- **Focus on**: **Projects in tribal areas, drought-prone areas, and irrigation projects benefiting SC/ST farmers**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY), consider the following statements:

1. PMKSY was launched on 1 July 2015 as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme.
2. The Centre-State funding ratio is 75:25 for general states and 90:10 for North-Eastern and Hilly states.
3. The scheme follows the motto "Har Khet Ko Paani" along with "Per Drop More Crop".
4. PMKSY is implemented solely by the Ministry of Agriculture.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **PMKSY is implemented by three ministries**: Jal Shakti, Rural Development, and

Agriculture.)

Q2. With reference to the components of PMKSY, consider the following statements:

1. Accelerated Irrigation Benefit Programme (AIBP) and Har Khet Ko Pani (HKKP) are implemented by the Ministry of Jal Shakti.
2. Watershed Development Component (WDC) is implemented by the Ministry of Rural Development.
3. Per Drop More Crop (PDMC) was implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture (now under RKVY since 2022-23).
4. PMKSY has only one component (AIBP).

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **PMKSY has four major components**: AIBP, HKKP, WDC, PDMC.)

Q3. With reference to PMKSY-AIBP achievements and Har Khet Ko Pani sub-components, consider the following statements:

1. To date, 53 projects have been completed under PMKSY-AIBP, generating 25.14 lakh hectares additional irrigation potential.
2. HKKP has four sub-components: CAD&WM, SMI, RRR of Water Bodies, and Ground Water Development.
3. Ground Water Development was approved only till 2021-22; thereafter only for ongoing works.
4. AIBP was launched in 1996.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Q4. With reference to the formulation of PMKSY, consider the following statements:

1. PMKSY was formed by amalgamating Accelerated Irrigation Benefit Programme (AIBP), Integrated Watershed Management Programme (IWMP), and On-Farm Water Management (OFWM).
2. IWMP was originally under the Department of Land Resources, Ministry of Rural Development.
3. OFWM was under the Department of Agriculture and Cooperation.
4. PMKSY does not have any decentralized planning mechanism.

Which of the above are correct?

(a) **1, 2 and 3 only** (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 4 only (d) 1 and 4 only (e) All four

(Statement 4 is wrong; **PMKSY uses decentralized planning** through **State Irrigation Plan** and **District Irrigation Plan**.)

Q5. With reference to PMKSY's Geo-Tagging initiative, consider the following statements:

1. The Ministry of Jal Shakti launched a mobile application for Geo-Tagging of PMKSY project components in 2020.
2. Geo-Tagging helps in transparent monitoring and tracking of assets.
3. Geo-Tagging is used for components like check dams, percolation tanks, farm ponds.
4. Geo-Tagging is mandatory only for AIBP projects, not for Watershed Development or HKKP.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **Geo-Tagging covers all PMKSY components**, NOT only AIBP.)

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because three ministries implement PMKSY.

2. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because PMKSY has four major components.
3. (d), All four statements are correct.
4. (a), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because PMKSY uses decentralized planning.
5. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because Geo-Tagging covers all components.

Exam Relevance

NABARD Grade A	**Very high importance, irrigation, watershed, agriculture**

Facts To Remember

1. The National Statistical Commission (NSC) Gets New Chairperson and Members

The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet approved the appointment of **Dr. Saibal Chattopadhyay** as Chairperson of the National Statistical Commission. Three domain experts were also appointed as part-time members to strengthen India's statistical governance and data quality.

2. Bank of Baroda Launches 'bob Golden Goal Deposit Scheme'

Bank of Baroda launched the **bob Golden Goal Deposit Scheme**, a special 555-day retail term deposit for deposits below ₹3 crore. The scheme offers interest rates up to **7.40% per annum**, providing stable returns in a changing interest-rate environment.

3. Green Hydrogen Certification Portal Launched

Union Minister Pralhad Joshi launched the **Green Hydrogen Certification Portal of India (GHCI)**. Developed by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, the portal enables certification, verification, and regulatory compliance for green hydrogen production in India.

4. NCRPB Approves Development of Four 'Namo Cities'

The National Capital Region Planning Board approved plans to develop **four greenfield Namo Cities** across Delhi-NCR. These cities aim to promote balanced regional growth and modern urban infrastructure under the Regional Plan 2041.

5. Jeh Aerospace and Solestra Group Sign Manufacturing Agreement

Jeh Aerospace and Solestra Group signed a multi-year agreement to establish a **Global Manufacturing Centre in Hyderabad**. The facility will produce high-precision aerospace components for aircraft and aero-engine systems.

6. PM Narendra Modi Visits France

Prime Minister Narendra Modi undertook a six-day visit to France, focusing on innovation, strategic cooperation, and technology partnerships. Key outcomes included the **India-France Innovation Roadmap 2030** and expansion of UPI in France.

7. Essar Group and IRH Sign USD 500 Million Energy Agreement

Essar Group and International Resources Holding signed a **USD 500 million crude oil sourcing agreement** to strengthen procurement, supply-chain efficiency, and global energy trading.

8. Hitesh Rameshchandra Joshi Appointed CMD of GIC Re

The Department of Financial Services appointed **Hitesh Rameshchandra Joshi** as CMD of General Insurance Corporation of India. He brings over three decades of experience in insurance and reinsurance.

9. Robert A.F. Thurman Passes Away at 84

Robert A. F. Thurman, renowned scholar of Tibetan Buddhism and Padma Shri awardee, passed away at 84 in New York City. He was widely known for promoting Buddhist studies globally.

10. World Crocodile Day 2026 Observed

World Crocodile Day was observed on **17 June 2026** with the theme **"Legacy in Every Scale."** The day highlights crocodile conservation and protection of aquatic ecosystems.

11. International Day for Countering Hate Speech Observed

The United Nations observed the **International Day for Countering Hate Speech** on **18 June 2026** with the theme **"Hate Speech and Artificial Intelligence."**

12. Sustainable Gastronomy Day 2026 Observed

Sustainable Gastronomy Day was observed on **18 June 2026** to promote sustainable food systems, biodiversity conservation, and responsible consumption.

13. Ladakh Approves SHAN Conservation Society

Ladakh approved the **Snow Leopard and High-Altitude Nature (SHAN) Conservation Society** to protect snow leopards and fragile mountain ecosystems.

14. Gujarat Signs ₹1 Lakh Crore Funding Pact with HUDCO

The Government of Gujarat signed an MoU with HUDCO for long-term financing of major infrastructure projects including metro expansion and Dholera smart city development.

15. Six States Sign MoU for Kishau Multipurpose Dam Project

Six northern states signed an MoU for the **Kishau Multipurpose Dam Project** on the Tons River. The project aims to improve water storage, hydropower generation, and Yamuna rejuvenation.

16. CSIR Transfers Technologies and Releases BNDs

Council of Scientific and Industrial Research transferred **7 indigenous technologies**, released **10 Bharatiya Nirdeshak Dravya reference materials**, and handed over **5 quantum components** for advanced research applications.

17. MoRTH Signs First Vehicle Replacement Scheme MoU

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways signed its first MoU under the vehicle replacement scheme with Ashok Leyland and Switch Mobility to reduce vehicular pollution in Delhi-NCR.

18. ISRO and DAE Develop Heating System for Lunar Landers

Indian Space Research Organisation and the Department of Atomic Energy are developing an **artificial heating system** to extend lunar lander life from 14 Earth days to nearly **200 days**.

19. MoD Approves ₹500 Crore Military Drone Hub at IIT Kanpur

The Ministry of Defence approved a **₹500 crore National Military Drone Technology Hub** at Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur to boost indigenous drone capabilities.

20. Uzbekistan Becomes 10th Member of NDB

Uzbekistan became the **10th member of the New Development Bank (NDB)**, becoming the first Central

Asian nation to join the institution.

21. Smriti Mandhana Named in TIME 100 Sports List

Smriti Mandhana became the only Indian featured in **TIME 100 Most Influential People in Sports 2026**.

22. Tripura's Sarinda Receives GI Tag

Tripura's traditional musical instrument **Sarinda** received a **Geographical Indication (GI) tag**, recognizing its cultural and artistic significance.

23. CCI Approves Major Investment Deals

The Competition Commission of India approved multiple investment deals involving TVS-PGIM, Temasek-Romsons, and Kedaara Capital-Axis Finance.

24. Indian Navy Decommissions Sea King Mk42B Fleet

The Indian Navy decommissioned the **Sea King Mk42B helicopters** after 36 years of service in anti-submarine warfare and search-and-rescue missions.

25. Drogo Aerospace Delivers 41 JK 250e Drones to Indian Army

Drogo Aerospace delivered the first batch of **41 JK 250e drones** to the Indian Army under a ₹72 crore contract.

26. Lt Gen Vijay Oberoi Passes Away

Vijay Oberoi passed away at 84. He was known for leading major post-Kargil military reforms.

27. International Day of Family Remittances 2026 Observed

The **International Day of Family Remittances** was observed on **16 June 2026** with the theme **"Remittances for Rural Resilience, Entrepreneurship and Employment."**

28. World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought Observed

The **World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought** was observed on **17 June 2026** with the theme **"Rangelands: Recognize. Respect. Restore."**

FIVE TO REMEMBER · 18 & 19 JUNE 2026

1. **Payment and Settlement Systems (PSS) Act, 2007**: The **primary legislation** governing **payment systems in India**, providing **RBI** with **regulatory and supervisory powers**. RBI Master Directions on Authorisation to Opera...
2. **Launched**: **1996** by **Ministry of Water Resources**. Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY)
3. **Founded**: **1946** (in response to post-WWII child welfare crisis). UNICEF's Children's Climate Risk Report 2026
4. **Integrated Watershed Management Programme (IWMP)**: Launched **2009-10**. Watershed Development Component of Pradhan Mant...
5. **Title**: **Global Startup Ecosystem Report (GSER) 2026**. Global Startup Ecosystem Report (GSER) 2026

Now test yourself: c4scourses.in/daily-quiz/daily-current-affairs-quiz-18-19-june-2026/

DAY 13 OF 18

20 & 21 June 2026

40 items · 3 topics

General **3** · Banking and Finance **1** · Agriculture **2** · Facts To Remember **34**

Context

After India's consolidation of **food security** through grain production, the next step is **nutritional security** to combat health issues attributable to **poor or flawed nourishment**. **Mission SEHAT (Science Excellence for Health through Agricultural Transformation)** was **jointly launched on 11 May 2026 in New Delhi** by the **Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)** and the **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)**, unveiled by **Union Health Minister Jagat Prakash Nadda** and **Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan**. It aims to promote **production and consumption of nutrition-rich foods** while **reorienting public-health policy** from **curative treatment** toward **prevention**. The mission has come amid growing concern that **modern high-yielding crop varieties** are **less nourishing than their older versions** (about **38 per cent lower content** of nutrients like **calcium, iron, and phosphorus** in some studies). **NFHS-6 (2023-24)** data reveals a **dual burden of malnutrition**: about **19.7 per cent of population** has BMI below normal, while **27.3 per cent men and 30.7 per cent women are overweight or obese**. Among children, **31.8 per cent are underweight**, **29.3 per cent stunted** (low height-for-age), and **5.2 per cent severely wasted**. The mission is built on a **five-pronged action plan**.

Mission SEHAT

- **Full name**: **Science Excellence for Health through Agricultural Transformation**.
- **Launched**: **11 May 2026**.
- **Venue**: **New Delhi**.
- **Joint launch by**: **Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)** and **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)**.
- **Unveiled by**:
  - **Shri Jagat Prakash Nadda** (Union Minister of Health & Family Welfare, Chemicals & Fertilisers).
  - **Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan** (Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Rural Development).
- **Mode**: **National Mission-Mode Programme**.

What is Mission SEHAT?

A **national mission** to:

- **Integrate agriculture, nutrition, and public health**.
- **Translate agricultural advancements** into **improved health outcomes**.
- **Shift India's health strategy** from **reactive, treatment-based** to **proactive, prevention-focused**.
- **Strengthen inter-sectoral convergence**.
- **Address the double burden of malnutrition**.

Why is It Needed?

The Dual Burden of Malnutrition (NFHS-6)

Adult Population (BMI Indicators)

Indicator	Statistics
BMI below normal (Underweight)	**about 19.7 per cent** of population
Overweight/Obese men	**27.3 per cent** (up from 22.9 per cent in NFHS-5)
Overweight/Obese women	**30.7 per cent** (up from 24.0 per cent in NFHS-5)

Children Under 5 (NFHS-6)

Indicator	NFHS-6 (2023-24)	NFHS-5 (2019-21)
Underweight	**31.8 per cent**	**32.1 per cent**
Stunting (low height-for-age)	**29.3 per cent**	**35.5 per cent**
Wasting (low weight-for-height)	**19.0 per cent**	**19.3 per cent**
Severe Wasting	**5.2 per cent**	**7.7 per cent**

The Nutrient Decline Concern

- **Modern high-yielding crop varieties** have **lower content of nutrients** than **traditional varieties**.
- **Studies show**: Up to **38 per cent lower content** of **calcium, iron, phosphorus** in mid-20th century bred strains vs traditional counterparts.
- **Result**: Possible cause of **hidden hunger** (micronutrient deficiency despite calorie sufficiency).

Aims and Objectives

- **Promote production and consumption** of **nutrition-rich foods**.
- **Reorient public-health policy** toward **prevention**.
- **Address non-communicable diseases (NCDs)**: Diabetes, hypertension, obesity, cancer, cardiovascular disease.
- **Address malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies**.
- **Strengthen One Health approach**.

The Five-Pronged Action Plan

1. Biofortified and Nutrient-Dense Crops

- **Promote biofortified crop varieties** with **higher content of**:
  - **Iron and Zinc**.
  - **Key vitamins** (A, B-complex, etc.).
- **Tackle hidden hunger**: Deficiency in essential micronutrients.
- **Boost consumption** of:
  - **Millets** (jowar, bajra, ragi, kodo, etc.).
  - **Ragi**.
  - **Other nutrient-dense grains**.

Biofortified Varieties Released by ICAR (Examples)

- **Wheat**: HD-3171, MACS 4028.
- **Rice**: CR Dhan 310, DRR Dhan 45.
- **Pearl millet**: HHB 299 (iron-rich).
- **Maize**: Pusa Vivek QPM 9 Improved.

2. Integrated Farming Systems (IFS)

- **Combine crop farming** with allied activities:

  - **Horticulture**.
  - **Animal husbandry**.
  - **Beekeeping**.
  - **Fisheries**.
  - **Poultry**.
  - **Piggery**.
- **Benefits**:
  - **Increases availability** of nutritious foods.
  - **Adds nutritional diversity** to diets.
  - **Boosts farm incomes**.
  - **Strengthens resilience** to climate change.

3. Agriculture-Linked Strategies for NCDs

- **Promote functional foods**:
  - **Foods with health benefits beyond basic nutrition**.
  - **Examples**: Probiotic-rich foods, omega-3 rich foods, antioxidant-rich foods.
- **Discourage**:
  - **Processed foods**.
  - **Oil-rich foods**.
  - **Unhealthy products**.
- **PM's call**: Reduced consumption of **sugar, salt, and oil**.

4. Occupational Health and Safety of Farmers

- **Reduce exposure** to **toxic pesticides** and **hazardous chemicals**.
- **Promote safe agricultural practices**.
- **Protect farmworker health**.
- **Reduce farmer suicide risk** from chronic chemical exposure.

5. One Health Approach

- **Integrate research** in:
  - **Human health**.
  - **Animal health (livestock)**.
  - **Environmental health**.
- **Strengthen One Health preparedness** through:
  - **Integrated surveillance**.
  - **Diagnostics**.
  - **Joint research** at **human-animal-environment interface**.
- **Minimise environmental damage**.

About ICAR (Indian Council of Agricultural Research)

- **Founded**: **16 July 1929** as **Imperial Council of Agricultural Research**.
- **Renamed**: **1946**.
- **Headquartered**: **Krishi Bhavan, New Delhi**.
- **Director General**: **Dr. Mangi Lal Jat** (since November 2024).
- **Functions**:
  - **Coordinate, guide, and manage research and education** in **agriculture, animal husbandry,**

fisheries.
- **Develop and release** new **crop varieties**.
- **Operates 113 ICAR Institutes** + **74 Agricultural Universities** + **731 KVKs** (Krishi Vigyan Kendras).

About ICMR (Indian Council of Medical Research)

- **Founded**: **1911** as **Indian Research Fund Association**.
- **Renamed ICMR**: **1949**.
- **Headquartered**: **Ansari Nagar, New Delhi**.
- **Director General**: **Dr. Rajiv Bahl** (since November 2023).
- **Functions**:
  - **Apex body** for **formulation, coordination, and promotion** of **biomedical research** in India.
  - **One of the oldest** and **largest** medical research bodies in the world.
  - **Operates 32 institutes** across India.

About NFHS (National Family Health Survey)

- **Conducted by**: **International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS), Mumbai**, under **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**.
- **Frequency**: Approximately **every 5 years**.
- **Editions**:
  - **NFHS-1**: 1992-93.
  - **NFHS-2**: 1998-99.
  - **NFHS-3**: 2005-06.
  - **NFHS-4**: 2015-16.
  - **NFHS-5**: 2019-21.
  - **NFHS-6**: 2023-24 (released 29 May 2026).
- **NFHS-6 coverage**: **6,79,238 households**, **7,16,397 women**, **1,00,977 men** across **715 districts**.

NFHS-6 Other Notable Findings (Beyond Editorial)

- **Institutional deliveries**: **90.6 per cent** (up from 88.6 per cent).
- **Antenatal care**: **95.9 per cent**.
- **Full immunisation (12-23 months)**: **87.1 per cent**.
- **Rotavirus vaccination**: **85.4 per cent** (from 36.4 per cent).
- **C-section rate**: **27.2 per cent** (from 21.5 per cent).
- **Exclusive breastfeeding (6 months)**: **55.8 per cent** (down from 63.7 per cent, concerning reversal).
- **Total Fertility Rate (TFR)**: **1.9** (down from 2.0; below replacement level of 2.1).
- **Health insurance coverage**: **60.2 per cent** (up from 4.8 per cent in 2005-06).
- **Women's bank account use**: **89.0 per cent**.

About One Health Approach

- **A unified approach** that recognises **interconnection** between **human, animal, and environmental health**.
- **WHO definition**: An approach to **designing and implementing programmes, policies, legislation, and research** in which **multiple sectors communicate and work together** to achieve **better public health outcomes**.
- **India's National One Health Mission**: Launched **2021** by **Department of Animal Husbandry & Dairying**.

Related Government Initiatives

- **POSHAN Abhiyaan**: National Nutrition Mission.
- **Mid-Day Meal Scheme** (now **PM POSHAN**).
- **Anganwadi Services**: Under ICDS.
- **PM Mann Ki Baat call**: Reduced consumption of sugar, salt, oil.
- **Eat Right India movement**: FSSAI initiative.
- **National Health Mission (NHM)**.
- **Ayushman Bharat**.
- **National One Health Mission** (2021).
- **Mission for Aatmanirbharta in Pulses** (October 2025).
- **Promotion of millets**: 2023 declared **International Year of Millets**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to Mission SEHAT, consider the following statements:

1. SEHAT stands for "Science Excellence for Health through Agricultural Transformation".
2. It was launched on 11 May 2026 in New Delhi.
3. It is a joint initiative of ICAR and ICMR.
4. It was launched by the Ministry of Education.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **launch was by the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare and Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare**, NOT the Ministry of Education.)

Q2. With reference to the five-pronged action plan under Mission SEHAT, consider the following statements:

1. Promotion of biofortified crop varieties rich in iron, zinc, and key vitamins.
2. Strengthening integrated farming systems for dietary diversification.
3. Advancing agriculture-linked strategies for non-communicable diseases through functional foods.
4. Improving occupational health and safety of farmers and farm workers.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Q3. With reference to NFHS-6 (2023-24) findings on adult and child nutrition, consider the following statements:

1. Stunting among children under five fell from 35.5 per cent to 29.3 per cent.
2. Underweight prevalence in children under five is 31.8 per cent.
3. Overweight/obesity among women has risen to 30.7 per cent (from 24.0 per cent in NFHS-5).
4. Severe wasting in children under five increased to 7.7 per cent.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **severe wasting has DECLINED from 7.7 per cent to 5.2 per cent**, NOT increased.)

Q4. With reference to ICAR and ICMR, consider the following statements:

1. ICAR was founded in 1929 and is headquartered in Krishi Bhavan, New Delhi.
2. ICMR was founded in 1911 as the Indian Research Fund Association and renamed ICMR in 1949.

3. Both are autonomous bodies under the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare.
4. ICMR is India's apex body for biomedical research.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 3 is wrong; **ICAR is under the Ministry of Agriculture**, but **ICMR is under the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare**.)

Q5. With reference to the concepts highlighted in Mission SEHAT, consider the following statements:

1. "Hidden hunger" refers to micronutrient deficiency despite adequate caloric intake.
2. Biofortification involves breeding crops with higher inherent nutrient content.
3. The "One Health" approach integrates human, animal, and environmental health.
4. Modern high-yielding crop varieties have been scientifically proven to be more nutritious than their traditional counterparts.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **modern HYVs have LOWER nutrient content** (up to 38 per cent lower for some minerals) than traditional varieties, NOT more nutritious.)

Q6. With reference to NFHS-6 (2023-24), consider the following statements:

1. The NFHS-6 was released on 29 May 2026 by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
2. It covered 6.79 lakh households across 715 districts.
3. It is conducted by the International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS), Mumbai.
4. The Total Fertility Rate (TFR) reported was 1.9, above the replacement level.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **TFR of 1.9 is BELOW the replacement level of 2.1**, NOT above.)

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the launch was by Health and Agriculture Ministries.
2. (d), All four statements are correct.
3. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because severe wasting has declined.
4. (c), Statements 1, 2, 4 are correct; Statement 3 is wrong because ICMR is under Ministry of Health & Family Welfare.
5. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because modern HYVs have lower nutrient content.
6. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because TFR is below replacement level.

Exam Relevance

NABARD Grade A	**Very high importance, agriculture, nutrition, integrated farming**

2. Air Cushion Vehicle (ACV) H-561

Source: News on Air

Context

The **Indian Coast Guard (ICG)** inducted the **first of six indigenously built Air Cushion Vehicles (ACVs)**,

named **H-561**, at the **Chowgule Shipyard, Rassaim, Goa**, on **18 June 2026**. The hovercraft was constructed by **Chowgule & Company Private Limited** under a **₹387.44 crore contract** signed with the **Ministry of Defence on 24 October 2024** under the **"Buy (Indian)" category** of the **Defence Acquisition Procedure**. The technology is based on **proven Griffon Hoverwork (UK) designs** licensed for Indian manufacturing, with **more than 50 per cent indigenous components**. The vessel has a **cruising speed of 52 knots** (4 knots above ICG requirement), can carry **42 personnel plus an 8-tonne payload**, and has an **operational endurance of 9 hours**. The **remaining 5 vessels** will be **delivered every 3 months**, with **Chowgule maintaining all vessels for 5 years post-delivery**. The induction is being projected as a significant milestone for **Aatmanirbhar Bharat** in **maritime defence manufacturing**.

The Induction

- **Location**: **Chowgule Shipyard, Rassaim, Goa**.
- **Vessel name**: **H-561**.
- **Service**: **Indian Coast Guard (ICG)**.
- **Builder**: **Chowgule & Company Private Limited, Goa**.
- **Technology partner**: **Griffon Marine Ltd / Griffon Hoverwork (UK)** — licensed design.
- **Indigenous components**: **More than 50 per cent**.

What is an Air Cushion Vehicle (ACV)?

- Also called: **Hovercraft**.
- An **amphibious craft** designed to travel **smoothly over multiple surfaces**:
  - **Water**.
  - **Mudflats**.
  - **Sandbars**.
  - **Shallow beaches**.
  - **Land**.
  - **Ice**.
  - **Marshes**.

Key Features

Amphibious All-Terrain Manoeuvrability

- **Zero draft** design.
- **Seamless transition** between **deep sea, tidal mudflats, sandy shores**.
- Where **traditional hulls** would **run aground**.

Six-Vessel Contract Fleet

- **Total order**: **6 ACVs**.
- **Sequentially constructed and integrated** into the **ICG fleet**.
- **First delivery**: **June 2026**.

Advanced Hull and Material Design

- **Lightweight, marine-grade materials**.
- **Durable rubber skirt system**.
- **Preserves structural integrity** while **skimming over debris or rough coastal terrain**.

Modern Navigation and Communication Suite

- **Specialised marine radars**.
- **Night-vision thermal imaging**.

- **Secure communication systems**.
- Enables **round-the-clock operations** in **dense fog or zero-visibility conditions**.

About the Indian Coast Guard (ICG)

- **Established**: **18 August 1978** under the **Coast Guard Act, 1978**.
- **Headquartered**: **New Delhi**.
- **Director General**: **DG Paramesh Sivamani** (since 2024).
- **Under**: **Ministry of Defence**.
- **Roles**:
  - **Coastal and offshore patrolling**.
  - **Search and rescue (SAR)**.
  - **Marine pollution control**.
  - **Fisheries protection**.
  - **Maritime law enforcement**.
  - **Anti-smuggling, anti-piracy**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the first indigenous Air Cushion Vehicle (ACV) inducted into the Indian Coast Guard, consider the following statements:

1. The ACV H-561 was inducted on 18 June 2026 at Goa.
2. It was built by Chowgule & Company Private Limited.
3. It is the first of six ACVs being constructed indigenously.
4. The ACV was imported directly from the United Kingdom.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **ACV was built INDIGENOUSLY in Goa** under licensed Griffon Hoverwork design with **more than 50 per cent indigenous components**.)

Q2. With reference to the contract for the six ACVs, consider the following statements:

1. The contract was signed on 24 October 2024 between the Ministry of Defence and Chowgule & Company.
2. The contract value is ₹387.44 crore.
3. It falls under the "Buy (Indian)" category of Defence Acquisition Procedure.
4. Chowgule will maintain the vessels for 10 years post-delivery.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **Chowgule will maintain the vessels for 5 years post-delivery**, NOT 10 years.)

Q3. With reference to the specifications of the ACV, consider the following statements:

1. It has a cruising speed of 52 knots, 4 knots above ICG requirement.
2. It can carry up to 42 personnel and an 8-tonne payload.
3. Operational endurance is up to 9 hours.
4. The hovercraft can move only on water, not on land or ice.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **the hovercraft is AMPHIBIOUS and can move over water, land, mud, ice, marshes, and beaches**.)

Q4. With reference to how an ACV works, consider the following statements:

1. It generates a high-pressure cushion of air beneath its hull.
2. The cushion is contained by a flexible rubber skirt.
3. It floats completely above the surface, eliminating water resistance.
4. It is propelled solely by ocean currents, not by engines.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **ACVs are propelled by engines (typically diesel turbines or gas turbines) driving fans**, NOT by ocean currents.)

Q5. With reference to the significance of ACVs for the ICG, consider the following statements:

1. ACVs can patrol marshes, creeks, and mudflats like Kutch and Sundarbans.
2. They enable rapid rescue operations during cyclones and floods.
3. They can move from sea to shore, ideal for HADR operations.
4. The Indian Coast Guard was established in 1978 under the Coast Guard Act, 1978.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Q6. With reference to the technology and Aatmanirbhar Bharat aspects, consider the following statements:

1. The ACV is based on Griffon Hoverwork (UK) BHT 150 design.
2. More than 50 per cent of the hovercraft's components are of Indian origin.
3. The induction is under the Aatmanirbhar Bharat initiative.
4. India did not have any hovercraft in service before this induction.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **India has had earlier hovercraft** (H-181 to H-188) from Griffon Hoverwork, but these new 6 are **indigenously built**.)

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the ACV was indigenously built.
2. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the maintenance period is 5 years.
3. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because hovercraft is amphibious.
4. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because hovercraft are engine-propelled.
5. (d), All four statements are correct.
6. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because India had earlier hovercraft.

3. VivaTech 2026

Context

The **10th anniversary edition of VivaTech (Viva Technology) 2026**, **Europe's largest startup and technology event**, was held from **17-20 June 2026** at the **Paris Expo Porte de Versailles, France**. **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** and **French President Emmanuel Macron jointly participated on 18 June 2026**, with **India serving as the official AI Country Partner**. The PM outlined India's **vision for human-centric AI**

through his **MANAV framework** (Moral and Ethical Systems, Accountable Governance, National Sovereignty, Accessible and Inclusive, Valid and Legitimate AI). The event surpassed **200,000 visitors from 165 countries** (about **180,000 attendees** for the main professional days), featured **15,000+ startups**, **4,500 exhibitors (61 per cent international)**, and **4,000 investors**, spanning **30+ business sectors**. India mounted its **largest-ever pavilion** with **over 80 deep-tech companies and startups**. **Germany** was named **Country of the Year 2026** (first European nation to receive the title). VivaTech 2026 coincided with the **India-France Year of Innovation 2026**.

The Event

- **Edition**: **10th anniversary** (founded 2016).
- **Dates**: **17-20 June 2026** (main days); **Festival** for public on **20 June 2026**.
- **Venue**: **Paris Expo Porte de Versailles, Paris, France**.
- **Theme**: AI & Productivity, Cybersecurity & Defense, GreenTech, Space, DeepTech.
- **Off-site event**: **Champs-Élysées** open-air technology showcase on **14 June 2026** (150,000 visitors).

Co-Organisers

- **Publicis Groupe**.
- **Les Echos-Le Parisien Group**.

Country Status

- **AI Country Partner 2026**: **India**.
- **Country of the Year 2026**: **Germany** (first European nation).

PM Modi and President Macron Joint Participation (18 June 2026)

- **Theatre stage** appearance on **18 June 2026**.
- **Address to**: **Entrepreneurs, startups, investors, business leaders**.
- **Themes**:
  - Human-centric AI.
  - India-France technology partnership.
  - Inclusive AI.
  - India's digital public infrastructure (DPI).

PM Modi's MANAV Framework

PM Modi's framework for **responsible AI governance**:

- **M**: **Moral and Ethical Systems**.
- **A**: **Accountable Governance**.
- **N**: **National Sovereignty**.
- **A**: **Accessible and Inclusive**.
- **V**: **Valid and Legitimate AI**.

Roadmap for AI governance rooted in **democratic values** and **priorities of the Global South**.

India's Engagement with VivaTech

Year	Engagement
2021	**PM Modi delivered keynote** (during COVID-19)
2022	**India became first "Country of the Year"**
2026	**AI Country Partner**; **PM Modi participated again**; **India-France Year of Innovation**

India's Pavilion at VivaTech 2026

Showcased Themes

- **Artificial Intelligence**.
- **Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)**.
- **Health-tech**.
- **Clean Technologies**.
- **Advanced Computing**.
- **Mobility**.
- **Space technology**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to VivaTech 2026, consider the following statements:

1. VivaTech 2026 was held from 17-20 June 2026 in Paris, France.
2. It was the 10th anniversary edition of the event.
3. It is co-organised by Publicis Groupe and Les Echos-Le Parisien.
4. VivaTech is an event focused exclusively on banking and finance.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; VivaTech is a **startup and technology event** covering **30+ sectors**, NOT exclusively banking/finance.)

Q2. With reference to India's participation at VivaTech 2026, consider the following statements:

1. India served as the AI Country Partner at VivaTech 2026.
2. PM Modi participated on 18 June 2026 with French President Macron.
3. More than 80 Indian deep-tech companies showcased their innovations.
4. India was named the "Country of the Year 2026" at VivaTech.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **Germany was named Country of the Year 2026** at VivaTech, NOT India. India was Country of the Year in **2022**.)

Q3. With reference to PM Modi's MANAV framework, consider the following statements:

1. MANAV stands for Moral and Ethical Systems, Accountable Governance, National Sovereignty, Accessible and Inclusive, Valid and Legitimate AI.
2. It is a roadmap for AI governance rooted in democratic values.
3. It addresses priorities of the Global South.
4. It is a framework developed by the European Commission.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **MANAV is PM Modi's framework**, NOT developed by the European Commission.)

Q4. With reference to India's previous engagements with VivaTech, consider the following statements:

1. PM Modi delivered a keynote at VivaTech in 2021 during the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. India was the first "Country of the Year" at VivaTech in 2022.
3. India's engagement with VivaTech has steadily expanded.

4. India had no engagement with VivaTech before 2026.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **India has engaged with VivaTech since 2021** and was Country of the Year in 2022.)

Q5. With reference to VivaTech 2026 scale and participants, consider the following statements:

1. Total visitors crossed 200,000 from 165 countries.
2. The event featured 15,000+ startups, 4,500 exhibitors, and 4,000 investors.
3. The themes included AI & Productivity, Cybersecurity & Defense, GreenTech, Space, and DeepTech.
4. The event was held at the Eiffel Tower in Paris.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the event was held at **Paris Expo Porte de Versailles**, NOT the Eiffel Tower.)

Q6. With reference to the India-France strategic context, consider the following statements:

1. India and France established their Strategic Partnership in 1998.
2. 2026 is being celebrated as the India-France Year of Innovation.
3. PM Modi was Chief Guest at Bastille Day in 2023, and Macron was Chief Guest at Republic Day in 2024.
4. The India-France strategic partnership is limited to defence cooperation.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **India-France partnership covers defence, civil nuclear, space, technology, climate**, and more, NOT just defence.)

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because VivaTech covers 30+ sectors.
2. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because Germany was Country of the Year 2026.
3. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because MANAV is PM Modi's framework.
4. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because India has engaged with VivaTech since 2021.
5. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the event was at Paris Expo Porte de Versailles.
6. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the partnership is broader than defence.

Exam Relevance

Exam	Relevance
UPSC Prelims	GS Paper II on International Relations (India-France); GS Paper III on Science & Technology (AI, DPI)
UPSC Mains	GS Paper II on India's bilateral ties; GS Paper III on Science & Technology, AI
BPSC and State PCS	International Affairs, Science & Technology, Current Affairs
Banking and NABARD	Digital banking, fintech, DPI
RBI Grade B	DPI, AI, fintech

Exam	Relevance
NABARD Grade A	Innovation, technology in rural
SEBI Grade A	**AI, capital markets technology, innovation**

4. BharatNet's Last-Mile Crisis

Source: Indian Express

Context

BharatNet (originally **National Optical Fibre Network, NOFN, 2011**), one of the **world's largest rural broadband projects**, has been hit by **persistent last-mile connectivity issues**. The **Indian Express article reportedly** finds that **only about 45 per cent of FTTH (Fibre-to-the-Home) connections commissioned under BharatNet are currently active**, exposing **gaps between infrastructure creation and actual service delivery**. The project, approved by the **Union Cabinet on 25 October 2011** and being executed by **Bharat Broadband Network Limited (BBNL)** (a Special Purpose Vehicle incorporated on **25 February 2012**), aims to provide **broadband connectivity to 2.5 lakh Gram Panchayats**. The **Amended BharatNet Program (ABP)**, approved on **4 August 2023** with an outlay of **₹1.39 lakh crore**, seeks to **transform existing infrastructure** into a **resilient IP-MPLS ring-based architecture** with **10-year O&M** through a **Centralised Network Operating Centre (CNOC)** and **BSNL as the single Project Management Agency**.

The Story

- **Reported finding**: Only about **45 per cent** of **FTTH connections** commissioned under **BharatNet** are **currently active**.
- **Implication**: Even where **infrastructure has been laid**, **service is not flowing** to rural homes/institutions.
- **Highlights**: **Persistent last-mile challenges**, **operational/maintenance gaps**, **awareness gaps**.

About BharatNet

- **Original name**: **National Optical Fibre Network (NOFN)**.
- **Launched**: **25 October 2011** (Union Cabinet approval).
- **Renamed**: **BharatNet in 2015**.
- **Implementing agency**: **Bharat Broadband Network Limited (BBNL)** — a **Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV)** incorporated on **25 February 2012**.
- **Originally targeted**: **2.5 lakh Gram Panchayats**.
- **Vision**: **Provide broadband connectivity** to **every village/Gram Panchayat** for **e-health, e-education, e-governance**.
- **Funding**: **Digital Bharat Nidhi (DBN)**, formerly **Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF)**.

Amended BharatNet Program (ABP)

- **Approved**: **4 August 2023** by Union Cabinet.
- **Outlay**: **₹1.39 lakh crore** (about USD 16.9 billion).
- **Aim**:
  - **Up-gradation** of existing **BharatNet Phase-I and Phase-II network**.
  - **Connection** to **remaining/balance GPs**.
  - **Last-mile FTTH** connectivity (target: **1.5 crore FTTH connections**).
- **Project Management Agency**: **BSNL** (single agency under ABP).
- **Topology**: **Ring topology** for **redundancy and fault tolerance**.
- **Architecture**: **IP-MPLS ring-based** (replacing earlier linear).
- **O&M**: **10 years** through **Centralised Network Operating Centre (CNOC)** + **State NOCs**.

- **Funding pattern**: Payments to **Project Implementation Agencies (PIAs)** based on **Service Quality Agreements (SLAs)**.

About BBNL (Bharat Broadband Network Limited)

- **Established**: **25 February 2012**.
- **Type**: **Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV)** under **Companies Act, 1956**.
- **Under**: **Department of Telecommunications (DoT)**, **Ministry of Communications**.
- **Purpose**: **Establishment, management, and operation** of **National Optical Fibre Network (NOFN/BharatNet)**.
- **Headquartered**: **New Delhi**.

About Digital Bharat Nidhi (DBN)

- **Formerly known as**: **Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF)**.
- **Renamed**: **2024**.
- **Purpose**: Fund **telecommunications development** in **rural and remote India**.
- **Source**: **Universal Service Levy (USL)** of about **5 per cent** of **Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR)** of telecom operators.
- **Accumulated corpus**: about **₹1,71,588.7 crore**.

BharatNet Udyamis Model

- **Village-Level Entrepreneurs (VLEs)** delivering services at the local level.
- **Public-Private Partnership (PPP)** model.
- **Like Airtel/Jio franchisee** approach.
- **50:50 revenue-sharing basis** between government and entrepreneur.
- **Government bears infrastructure cost** to homes.
- **VLEs handle maintenance and operation**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to BharatNet project, consider the following statements:

1. BharatNet was originally launched as the National Optical Fibre Network (NOFN) in 2011.
2. It was renamed BharatNet in 2015.
3. It is executed by Bharat Broadband Network Limited (BBNL), a Special Purpose Vehicle incorporated in February 2012.
4. The project aims to provide broadband connectivity to about 2.5 lakh Gram Panchayats.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Q2. With reference to the Amended BharatNet Program (ABP), consider the following statements:

1. ABP was approved by the Union Cabinet on 4 August 2023.
2. It has an outlay of ₹1.39 lakh crore.
3. BSNL has been appointed as the single Project Management Agency under ABP.
4. ABP uses a linear topology rather than ring topology.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **ABP uses a ring topology**, NOT linear, for **redundancy and fault tolerance**.)

Q3. With reference to BharatNet's funding and implementation, consider the following statements:

1. BharatNet is funded by the Digital Bharat Nidhi (DBN), formerly known as the Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF).
2. The accumulated corpus of DBN is about ₹1,71,588.7 crore.
3. As of February 2026, about 2,17,805 GPs are service-ready under BharatNet.
4. Only Wi-Fi hotspots are used for last-mile connectivity; FTTH is not part of BharatNet.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **BharatNet uses BOTH Wi-Fi hotspots AND FTTH** for last-mile connectivity.)

Q4. With reference to the implementation challenges of BharatNet, consider the following statements:

1. The 2024 ICRIER study found less than 1.19 per cent of available bandwidth was used in rural areas.
2. The original design assumed existing telecom service providers would handle last-mile connectivity, which was not feasible in many rural areas.
3. Common Service Centres (CSCs) responsible for O&M faced functioning issues.
4. BharatNet has met all its phase-wise deadlines without delay.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **BharatNet has missed multiple deadlines** with **shifting goalposts** across phases.)

Q5. With reference to BharatNet's three phases of implementation, consider the following statements:

1. Phase I (2011-2017) aimed to connect 1 lakh GPs and was completed in December 2017.
2. Phase II (2017-2023) targeted an additional 1.5 lakh GPs and reached about 86.75 per cent by August 2023.
3. Phase III (2023-2025) focuses on connecting 6.5 lakh villages with integration of 5G and improved last-mile connectivity.
4. The BharatNet Udyamis are foreign multinationals providing last-mile services.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **BharatNet Udyamis are Village-Level Entrepreneurs (VLEs)**, NOT foreign multinationals.)

Q6. With reference to other major government initiatives connected to BharatNet, consider the following statements:

1. PM-WANI aims to deploy public Wi-Fi hotspots across India.
2. National Broadband Mission (NBM) 2.0 was launched on 1 April 2025 with targets for 2030.
3. Digital Bharat Nidhi (DBN) is the renamed Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF).
4. PMGDISHA is a programme for promoting digital literacy in rural India.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Answer Key

1. (d), All four statements are correct.
2. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because ABP uses ring topology.
3. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because both FTTH and Wi-Fi are used.

4. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because BharatNet has missed multiple deadlines.
5. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because BharatNet Udyamis are VLEs.
6. (d), All four statements are correct.

Exam Relevance

Exam	Relevance
UPSC Prelims	GS Paper III on Indian Economy (Digital Infrastructure, E-Governance); GS Paper II on Government Schemes
UPSC Mains	GS Paper III on Indian Economy, Digital India; GS Paper II on Government Policies, E-Governance
BPSC and State PCS	Digital India, E-Governance, Current Affairs
Banking and NABARD	Digital banking, financial inclusion
RBI Grade B	Digital banking, financial inclusion
NABARD Grade A	**Very high importance, rural connectivity, digital infrastructure**

Banking and Finance

1. BCRC Seeks Grandfathering as RBI's BC Recertification Rule Nears

Source: Business Standard

Context

The **Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) Draft Policy 2026-Commercial Banks (Branch Authorisation) of April 2026** mandated that **Business Correspondents (BCs)** obtain **advanced certification** from the **Indian Institute of Banking & Finance (IIBF)**. The rule becomes **operational from 1 July 2026**. The **Business Correspondent Resource Council (BCRC)** has **sought grandfathering** of the requirement, arguing that **forcing already certified BCs to take advanced IIBF certification may trigger mass exits**. The move affects **about 45 per cent** of India's **1.17 million BC workforce**, the **world's largest boots-on-the-ground financial inclusion initiative**. **BCRC CEO D. Tripathy** has also demanded that **future IIBF syllabus revisions** be accompanied by a **minimum 36-month grandfathering window**. The certification cost (about **₹1,500**) is roughly **half the monthly earnings** for many BCs, given that **average commissions have declined** to **₹7,000-8,000 per month** (down from **₹10,000-11,000** five years ago).

The Rule

- **Source**: **RBI Draft Policy 2026 - Commercial Banks (Branch Authorisation)** of **April 2026**.
- **Requirement**: BCs to obtain **advanced certification** from **IIBF**.
- **Less than a fortnight** of lead time before becoming applicable.

The BCRC's Demand

- **BCRC (Business Correspondent Resource Council)** has sought:
  - **Grandfathering** of **existing certification**.
  - **Minimum 36-month grandfathering window** for **future IIBF syllabus revisions**.
- **Argument**: Re-certification under revised syllabus **invalidates good-faith certifications**.

What is a Business Correspondent (BC)?

- A **bank's representative** providing **last-mile banking services** in **remote and underserved areas**.
- **Launched by RBI**: **2006**.
- **Acts as the front face of the bank** in **villages and underserved areas**.

- **Functions**:
  - **Cash deposits and withdrawals**.
  - **Account opening**.
  - **Aadhaar Enabled Payment System (AEPS) transactions**.
  - **Recurring deposits and term deposits**.
  - **Insurance and pension enrollment**.
  - **DBT distribution**.
  - **Loan recovery**.

Who Can Be a BC?

- **NGOs**.
- **Section 8 companies** (formerly Section 25).
- **Civil Society Organisations**.
- **Cooperatives**.
- **Post Offices**.
- **Companies registered under Companies Act**.
- **Common Service Centres (CSCs)**.
- **Individuals** (since 2010).

What is IIBF (Indian Institute of Banking & Finance)?

- **Founded**: **1928** as **Indian Institute of Bankers (IIB)**.
- **Renamed**: **Indian Institute of Banking & Finance (IIBF)** in **2002**.
- **Type**: **Distance Learning Institute**.
- **Association**: With about **775+ banks and financial institutions**.
- **Purpose**: Provides **banking and finance professional certifications**.
- **Sole certifying agency** for **BC/BF** under RBI mandate.

About the National Strategy for Financial Inclusion (NSFI) 2025-30

- **Released**: **1 December 2025** by **RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra**.
- **Approved by**: **Sub-committee of Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC-SC)** at its **32nd meeting**.
- **Period**: **2025-30**.
- **Synchronised with**: **UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**.

The Five "Panch Jyoti" Goals of NSFI 2025-30 (Verified)

1. **Universal access to affordable financial services**.
2. **Improving equity, reach, consistency, and quality of last-mile access** (BC strengthening).
3. **Gender-sensitive approach** for **women-led financial inclusion**.
4. **Strengthening customer protection**.
5. **Improving the financial inclusion ecosystem**.

About BSBDA (Basic Savings Bank Deposit Account)

- **Introduced by RBI**: **2012** (replacing "no-frills" accounts).
- **Type**: **Zero-balance savings account**.
- **For**: **Promoting financial inclusion**.
- **Includes**: **All PMJDY accounts**.
- **Status (March 2025)**:

- **Number of BSBDAs**: **72.4 crore** (up **2.6 per cent** YoY).
- **Aggregate balance**: **₹3.3 trillion** (up **9.5 per cent**).
- **Majority channelised through BC model**.

About the Financial Inclusion Index (FI-Index)

- **Composite measure** of **financial inclusion**.
- **Range**: **0 to 100**.
- **Methodology**: Captures access, usage, and quality.
- **Released annually** by **RBI**.
- **FI-Index (2025)**: **67** (up **24.3 per cent** since 2021).

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the RBI Draft Policy 2026 on Business Correspondents, consider the following statements:

1. The Draft Policy 2026-Commercial Banks (Branch Authorisation) of April 2026 required BCs to obtain advanced IIBF certification.
2. The rule becomes operational from 1 July 2026.
3. The Business Correspondent Resource Council (BCRC) has sought grandfathering of the requirement.
4. The new rule will affect only 5 per cent of India's 1.17 million BC workforce.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **new rule will affect about 45 per cent** of India's BC workforce, NOT 5 per cent.)

Q2. With reference to India's Business Correspondent (BC) ecosystem, consider the following statements:

1. India has about 1.17 million BCs, the world's largest boots-on-the-ground financial inclusion initiative.
2. BCs were launched by RBI in 2006 to deliver last-mile banking services.
3. The average BC commission has declined to ₹7,000-8,000 per month (from ₹10,000-11,000 five years ago).
4. About 35 per cent of BCs earn more than ₹50,000 per month.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **about 35 per cent of BCs earn LESS than ₹5,000 per month**, NOT more than ₹50,000.)

Q3. With reference to the National Strategy for Financial Inclusion (NSFI) 2025-30, consider the following statements:

1. NSFI 2025-30 was released on 1 December 2025 by RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra.
2. It outlines five strategic goals (Panch Jyoti) supported by 47 specific action points.
3. It targets reaching 1 billion UPI users by December 2029.
4. It was approved by the SEBI Board.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; NSFI was **approved by the Sub-committee of Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC-SC)**, NOT the SEBI Board.)

Q4. With reference to the IIBF (Indian Institute of Banking & Finance), consider the following statements:

1. IIBF was founded in 1928 as the Indian Institute of Bankers and renamed IIBF in 2002.
2. It is RBI-designated as the sole certifying agency for SCBs, RRBs, SFBs, and Payments Banks for BC/BF certification.
3. IIBF offers both Basic and Advanced BC certifications, which are independent of each other.
4. BCs must complete IIBF certification within 24 months from the date of commencement of operations.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **BCs must complete IIBF certification within 9 months** from the date of commencement of operations, NOT 24 months.)

Q5. With reference to BSBDAs and PMJDY, consider the following statements:

1. BSBDAs increased by 2.6 per cent to 72.4 crore at end-March 2025.
2. The aggregate balance in BSBDAs was up 9.5 per cent to ₹3.3 trillion.
3. A majority of BSBDAs continues to be channelised through the BC model.
4. BSBDAs require maintenance of a minimum balance to remain active.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **BSBDAs are zero-balance accounts** and do NOT require maintenance of a minimum balance.)

Q6. With reference to the BCRC's specific demands, consider the following statements:

1. The BCRC has sought grandfathering of existing certifications.
2. The BCRC has demanded a minimum 36-month grandfathering window for future IIBF syllabus revisions.
3. The BCRC has said that banks should take responsibility for training and certification process.
4. The IIBF certification cost (about ₹1,500) is about half the monthly earnings for many BCs.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the rule affects 45 per cent of BCs.
2. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because 35 per cent earn less than ₹5,000.
3. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because FSDC-SC approved it.
4. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because certification must be completed within 9 months.
5. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because BSBDAs are zero-balance.
6. (d), All four statements are correct.

Agriculture

1. Smart Seed Coating Technology

Source: The Hindu

Context

The **ICAR–Indian Institute of Oilseeds Research (ICAR-IIOR), Hyderabad**, has developed an **innovative, Indian-patented, biodegradable biopolymer-based Smart Seed Coating Technology** that **improves crop establishment** and **resilience against climate stress**, announced through a **PIB release on 18 June 2026**. The technology replaces **conventional single-purpose seed treatments** with a **multifunctional protective shield** that integrates **beneficial microorganisms, primary nutrients, micronutrients, crop protection agents, and plant growth-promoting compounds** in a **single application**. **Multi-location AICRP-Seed trials** across **seven crops** (**soybean, maize, groundnut, chickpea, cotton, mustard, pigeon pea**) showed **productivity gains ranging from 12 to 37 per cent** over **untreated controls**. **Field demonstrations in Telangana** recorded **nearly 30 per cent yield improvements** in **groundnut and soybean** compared to **conventional farmer practices**. The technology is **particularly suited to rainfed agriculture**, which covers about **52 per cent of India's net sown area**. ICAR-IIOR is seeking partnerships with **State Seed Development Corporations, National Seed Corporation, Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs), seed processing units, seed entrepreneurs, and private seed companies** for **large-scale adoption**.

The Announcement

- **Announced by**: **Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare**.
- **Developed by**: **ICAR-Indian Institute of Oilseeds Research (ICAR-IIOR)**, **Hyderabad**.
- **Patent status**: **Indian patent granted**.
- **Type**: **Biopolymer-based, biodegradable seed enhancement platform**.

What is the Smart Seed Coating Technology?

- A **multifunctional protective shield** that:
  - **Coats raw seeds** with **biodegradable biopolymers**.
  - **Carries** beneficial inputs **directly to the seed-soil interface**.
  - **Improves seed performance** during the **early, vulnerable stages** of crop growth.

How It Works

Step 1: Layered Encapsulation

- Raw seed is **coated** with **eco-friendly, biodegradable biopolymers**.
- Forms a **customised shell** around the seed.

Step 2: Input Integration

- The biopolymer layer acts as a **local carrier**, packing:
  - **Beneficial microorganisms** (bacteria, fungi, plant growth-promoting microbes).
  - **Primary nutrients** (NPK).
  - **Micronutrients** (zinc, iron, boron, etc.).
  - **Crop protection agents** (fungicides, insecticides).
  - **Plant growth-promoting compounds**.

Step 3: Microenvironment Activation

- Once sown, the coating **reacts with soil moisture**.
- Creates a **protective microenvironment** at the **seed-soil interface**.

Step 4: Targeted Release

- **Embedded biologicals and nutrients** release **directly into the root zone** during germination.
- **Drives**:
  - **Rapid root development**.
  - **Immediate nutrition access** for the seedling.

- **Stress tolerance**.

Key Features

Patented Biopolymer Base

- **Entirely biodegradable** polymer-based **carrier system**.
- **Breaks down naturally**.
- **No soil degradation** or **chemical pollution**.

All-in-One Input Delivery

- Unlike **traditional single-purpose treatments**, this **integrates**:
  - **Protection** (against pests and diseases).
  - **Nutrition** (NPK + micronutrients).
  - **Biological support** (microorganisms).
- In a **single application**.

Highly Customisable Design

- Can be **tailored** for:
  - **Cereals** (rice, wheat, maize).
  - **Millets** (jowar, bajra, ragi).
  - **Pulses** (chickpea, pigeon pea, urad, moong, masoor).
  - **Oilseeds** (soybean, groundnut, mustard, sunflower).
  - **Fibre crops** (cotton, jute).
  - **Fodder crops**.
  - **Vegetables**.
  - **Spices**.
  - **Horticultural varieties**.

Aim of the Smart Seed Coating Technology

- **Strengthen climate-resilient agriculture**.
- **Reduce production risks** in **rainfed farming systems**.
- **Enhance overall crop productivity**.
- **Safeguard** emerging seedlings against:
  - **Erratic monsoons**.
  - **Droughts**.
  - **Temperature spikes**.
  - **Soil degradation**.
  - **Pest pressures**.

About ICAR-IIOR (Indian Institute of Oilseeds Research)

- **Established**: **1977** as **National Research Centre for Oilseeds Crops**.
- **Upgraded**: To **Directorate of Oilseeds Research** in **1986**.
- **Renamed**: **Indian Institute of Oilseeds Research (IIOR)** in **2014**.
- **Located**: **Hyderabad, Telangana**.
- **Parent body**: **Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)**.
- **Mandate**:
  - **Research on oilseed crops**: Castor, safflower, sesame, niger, sunflower.
  - **AICRP-Seed** coordination.

  - **Biotechnology and genetic resources**.
  - **Crop protection** research.
  - **Technology transfer**.

About ICAR (Indian Council of Agricultural Research)

- **Founded**: **16 July 1929** as **Imperial Council of Agricultural Research**.
- **Renamed**: **1946** to ICAR.
- **Headquartered**: **Krishi Bhavan, New Delhi**.
- **Director General**: **Dr. Mangi Lal Jat** (since November 2024).
- **Functions**:
  - **Coordinate, guide, and manage** research and education in **agriculture, animal husbandry, fisheries**.
  - **Operates 113 ICAR Institutes** + **74 Agricultural Universities** + **731 KVKs** (Krishi Vigyan Kendras).
- **Under**: **Department of Agricultural Research and Education (DARE)**, **Ministry of Agriculture**.

About AICRP-Seed (All India Coordinated Research Project on Seeds)

- **Established**: As part of ICAR's **AICRP network**.
- **Function**: **Multi-location trials** for **seed research, technology validation, and dissemination**.
- **Network**: Across **State Agricultural Universities (SAUs)** and **ICAR institutes** in **diverse agro-climatic zones**.
- **Purpose**: Generate **location-specific recommendations** for **seed quality enhancement**.

About Biopolymers

- **Definition**: **Polymers produced by living organisms** or made from **biological/natural sources**.
- **Examples**: **Cellulose, starch, chitin, alginate, gelatin, pectin, agar**.
- **Properties**:
  - **Biodegradable**.
  - **Eco-friendly**.
  - **Renewable**.
  - **Non-toxic**.
- **Applications**: **Agriculture, biomedical, packaging, pharmaceuticals**.

About Seed Treatment Technology

Traditional Seed Treatment

- **Single-purpose** approach:
  - **Fungicide application**.
  - **Insecticide application**.
  - **Or growth promoter**.
- **Applied separately**.
- **Often uses chemical actives**.

Smart Seed Coating (New)

- **Multifunctional** approach.
- **All inputs in one shell**.
- **Biopolymer base** (biodegradable).
- **Targeted release**.

Related Government Initiatives

- **Mission for Aatmanirbharta in Pulses** (October 2025).
- **Mission for Aatmanirbharta in Oilseeds**.
- **National Mission on Oilseeds and Oil Palm (NMOOP)**.
- **National Mission on Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA)**.
- **Per Drop More Crop** under PMKSY.
- **Soil Health Card Scheme**.
- **Sub-Mission on Seeds and Planting Materials (SMSP)**.
- **Mission SEHAT** (May 2026): For nutritional convergence.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the Smart Seed Coating Technology, consider the following statements:

1. It was developed by the ICAR-Indian Institute of Oilseeds Research (ICAR-IIOR), Hyderabad.
2. The technology holds an Indian patent and uses biodegradable biopolymers.
3. It integrates protection, nutrition, and biological support in a single application.
4. The technology uses non-biodegradable synthetic polymers.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **technology uses BIODEGRADABLE biopolymers**, NOT non-biodegradable synthetic polymers.)

Q2. With reference to the AICRP-Seed multi-location trials, consider the following statements:

1. Trials were conducted across seven crops: soybean, maize, groundnut, chickpea, cotton, mustard, and pigeon pea.
2. Productivity gains ranged from 12 to 37 per cent over untreated controls.
3. Field demonstrations in Telangana recorded nearly 30 per cent yield improvement in groundnut and soybean.
4. The technology can be used only for oilseed crops, not for cereals or pulses.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **technology can be customised for cereals, millets, pulses, oilseeds, fibre crops, fodder crops, vegetables, spices, and horticultural crops**.)

Q3. With reference to the working mechanism of the Smart Seed Coating Technology, consider the following statements:

1. The biopolymer layer acts as a carrier for beneficial microorganisms, nutrients, and crop protection agents.
2. Once sown, the coating reacts with soil moisture to create a protective microenvironment at the seed-soil interface.
3. Targeted release delivers biologicals and nutrients directly to the root zone during germination.
4. The coating is permanent and does not biodegrade.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **coating biodegrades naturally** without causing soil degradation.)

Q4. With reference to ICAR-IIOR and AICRP-Seed, consider the following statements:

1. ICAR-IIOR was established in 1977 as the National Research Centre for Oilseeds Crops.
2. It was renamed Indian Institute of Oilseeds Research (IIOR) in 2014.
3. AICRP-Seed is a multi-location research network of ICAR for seed technology validation.
4. ICAR-IIOR is located in New Delhi.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **ICAR-IIOR is located in Hyderabad**, NOT New Delhi.)

Q5. With reference to rainfed agriculture in India, consider the following statements:

1. Rainfed agriculture covers about 52 per cent of India's net sown area.
2. It accounts for about 89 per cent of millets, 88 per cent of pulses, and 70 per cent of oilseeds production.
3. It is highly vulnerable to erratic monsoons, drought, and pest pressures.
4. Rainfed agriculture is irrigated agriculture using groundwater wells.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **rainfed agriculture depends SOLELY on rainfall**, NOT on irrigation through wells.)

Q6. With reference to the institutional deployment strategy, consider the following statements:

1. ICAR-IIOR is seeking partnerships with State Seed Development Corporations for large-scale adoption.
2. Partnerships are being formed with Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs).
3. Private seed companies are also being engaged for wider dissemination.
4. The technology will be exclusively sold by ICAR with no private participation.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **deployment strategy explicitly includes private seed companies** for **wider dissemination**.)

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the technology uses biodegradable biopolymers.
2. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the technology can be used for multiple crop categories.
3. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the coating is biodegradable.
4. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because ICAR-IIOR is in Hyderabad.
5. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because rainfed agriculture depends on rainfall, not wells.
6. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because private seed companies are involved.

Exam Relevance

NABARD Grade A	**Very high importance, agriculture, rural innovation, seed systems**

2. GeM Suvidha Kendras (GSKs)

Source: News on Air

Context

On **18 June 2026**, the **Government e-Marketplace (GeM)**, **India's National Public Procurement Portal** under the **Ministry of Commerce & Industry (MoCI)**, signed a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** with **Common Service Centre e-Governance Services India Limited (CSC-SPV)** at the **GeM Office in New Delhi**. The MoU was signed by **Shri Ajit B. Chavan** (Additional Chief Executive Officer of GeM) and **Shri Subodh Mishra** (Senior Vice President of CSC-SPV). Under the partnership, **50 GeM Suvidha Kendras (GSKs)** will be **established on a pilot basis** through the **CSC network** across **Delhi-NCR, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Telangana, and West Bengal**. The MoU **expands an earlier 2022 collaboration** that helped **5.3 lakh sellers** complete **registration and profile creation**, now broadening the scope to cover **Vendor Assessment, Brand Approval, and Product & Service Catalogue creation**. The beneficiaries include **MSEs, women entrepreneurs, SC/ST entrepreneurs, startups, SHGs, FPOs, artisans, weavers, local manufacturers**, and other small businesses.

The MoU

- **Date of signing**: **18 June 2026**.
- **Venue**: **GeM Office, New Delhi**.
- **Signed by**:
  - **Shri Ajit B. Chavan** (Additional CEO, GeM).
  - **Shri Subodh Mishra** (SVP, CSC-SPV).
- **Type**: **Strategic partnership MoU**.
- **Context**: **Expansion of 2022 GeM-CSC partnership**.

Key Highlights

50 GeM Suvidha Kendras (GSKs)

- **Number**: **50** to be established on **pilot basis**.
- **Mode**: **Through the CSC network**.
- **States covered (Verified)**:
  1. **Delhi-NCR**.
  2. **Maharashtra**.
  3. **Uttar Pradesh (UP)**.
  4. **Gujarat**.
  5. **Tamil Nadu (TN)**.
  6. **Kerala**.
  7. **Karnataka**.
  8. **Telangana**.
  9. **West Bengal (WB)**.

About GeM (Government e-Marketplace)

- **Launched**: **9 August 2016**.
- **Owned by**: **GeM SPV**, a **Section 8 company**.
- **Under**: **Department of Commerce, Ministry of Commerce & Industry**.
- **Purpose**: **Online procurement** of **goods and services** by **government departments, PSUs, autonomous bodies**.
- **CEO**: **Currently leadership** under Ministry of Commerce.
- **Major statistics (mid-2026 approximate)**:
  - **GMV (Gross Merchandise Value)**: **₹10+ lakh crore** cumulative.
  - **Buyers**: **75,000+** government organisations.
  - **Sellers**: **2.2 crore+**.

- **Products and services**: **12,000+ categories**.

GeM's Key Features

- **Transparency**: **Open and visible** procurement.
- **Efficiency**: **Reduced procurement time** and cost.
- **Inclusivity**: **Special privileges** for **MSEs**, **women entrepreneurs**, **startups**, **SHGs**.
- **e-Bidding** and **reverse auctions**.
- **Direct purchase up to ₹50,000**.
- **Multiple modes**: Direct purchase, bid, reverse auction.

GeM's Inclusive Procurement Initiatives

- **MSE Procurement**: 25% of total procurement from MSEs (3% from SC/ST, 4% from women MSEs).
- **Womaniya on GeM**: Dedicated marketplace for **women-led businesses**.
- **Startup Runway**: Dedicated **startup marketplace**.
- **Khadi**: KVIC products.
- **TRIBES India**: Tribal products.

About Common Service Centres (CSCs)

What are CSCs?

- **Access points** for **delivery of essential public utility services, social welfare schemes, healthcare, financial, education, agriculture services**, etc.
- **Located in**: **Villages, towns, semi-urban areas** across India.
- **Operated by**: **Village-Level Entrepreneurs (VLEs)**.

About CSC-SPV (CSC e-Governance Services India Limited)

- **Established**: **2009**.
- **Type**: **Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV)**.
- **Section**: **Section 25 company** (now Section 8) of Companies Act.
- **Under**: **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)**.
- **Purpose**: **Implementation and management** of the **CSC scheme** across India.
- **Headquartered**: **New Delhi**.

CSC Network Statistics (Approximate)

- **Total CSCs**: **Over 5.5 lakh** across India.
- **States covered**: **All 28 states + UTs**.
- **Services offered**: **400+ digital services**.

Services Provided by CSCs

- **Aadhaar services**.
- **PAN card application**.
- **Voter ID services**.
- **Passport application**.
- **Banking services** (BC, micro-ATM).
- **Insurance** (PMJJBY, PMSBY).
- **Pension** (APY).
- **Telemedicine**.
- **Educational services**.

- **Agricultural services**.
- **GeM seller onboarding**.

About the Digital India Programme

- **Launched**: **1 July 2015**.
- **Vision**: To transform India into a **digitally empowered society** and **knowledge economy**.
- **Pillars**:
  1. **Digital infrastructure**.
  2. **Governance and services on demand**.
  3. **Digital empowerment of citizens**.
- **CSCs are a key delivery mechanism** for Digital India services.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the GeM-CSC-SPV MoU (18 June 2026), consider the following statements:

1. The MoU was signed at the GeM Office in New Delhi on 18 June 2026.
2. It was signed by Ajit B. Chavan (Additional CEO, GeM) and Subodh Mishra (SVP, CSC-SPV).
3. Under the partnership, 50 GeM Suvidha Kendras (GSKs) will be established on a pilot basis.
4. The MoU was signed by the Reserve Bank of India.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **MoU was signed between GeM and CSC-SPV**, NOT the RBI.)

Q2. With reference to the 50 GeM Suvidha Kendras (GSKs), consider the following statements:

1. They will be established across Delhi-NCR, Maharashtra, UP, Gujarat, TN, Kerala, Karnataka, Telangana, and West Bengal.
2. They will be established through the CSC network.
3. They will provide registration, training, and onboarding support to sellers.
4. They will benefit MSEs, women entrepreneurs, startups, SHGs, FPOs, artisans, and weavers.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Q3. With reference to the expanded scope of the MoU, consider the following statements:

1. The new framework supports Vendor Assessment, Brand Approval, and Product & Service Catalogue creation.
2. It builds on the earlier 2022 GeM-CSC collaboration that helped 5.3 lakh sellers complete registration.
3. The aim is to help sellers become active on the GeM platform.
4. The MoU is limited to seller registration only, with no support for catalogue creation.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **new MoU includes catalogue creation**, NOT limited to registration only.)

Q4. With reference to the Government e-Marketplace (GeM), consider the following statements:

1. GeM was launched on 9 August 2016 under the Ministry of Commerce & Industry.
2. It is owned by GeM SPV, a Section 8 company.
3. It is India's National Public Procurement Portal.
4. GeM is operated by the Ministry of Defence.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **GeM is under the Ministry of Commerce & Industry**, NOT the Ministry of Defence.)

Q5. With reference to Common Service Centres (CSCs) and CSC-SPV, consider the following statements:

1. CSCs are physical access points for delivery of digital services in villages and semi-urban areas.
2. CSC-SPV was established in 2009 under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY).
3. CSCs are operated by Village-Level Entrepreneurs (VLEs).
4. There are about 5.5 lakh CSCs across India.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Q6. With reference to Public Procurement Policy for MSEs, consider the following statements:

1. Central Ministries, Departments, and CPSUs must procure at least 25 per cent of their total annual purchases from MSEs.
2. Within the 25 per cent, 4 per cent is reserved for SC/ST entrepreneurs.
3. Within the 25 per cent, 3 per cent is reserved for women entrepreneurs.
4. The Public Procurement Policy was first introduced in 2012 and revised in 2018.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the MoU was between GeM and CSC-SPV.
2. (d), All four statements are correct.
3. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the MoU includes catalogue creation.
4. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because GeM is under Ministry of Commerce.
5. (d), All four statements are correct.
6. (d), All four statements are correct.

Exam Relevance

NABARD Grade A	**Very high importance, MSME, rural commerce, financial inclusion**

Facts To Remember

1. MHA Launches Two Portals to Strengthen Cybercrime Response

The Ministry of Home Affairs through the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre launched two new portals—Grievance Redressal Mechanism (GRM) and Money Restoration Module (MRM)—to improve cybercrime response and ensure quicker justice for victims. These portals enhance coordination among police, banks, and the National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal.

2. 16th BRICS Agriculture Ministers' Meeting Adopts Indore Declaration

The 16th BRICS Agriculture Ministers' Meeting concluded with the adoption of the **Indore Declaration**, aimed at strengthening agricultural cooperation among BRICS nations. The declaration focuses on food

security, climate-resilient agriculture, digital farming, and innovation-driven agricultural development.

3. GoI Constitutes Search-cum-Selection Committee for NSB

The Government of India formed a Search-cum-Selection Committee under T. V. Somanathan to recommend candidates for the chairperson and members of the National Sports Board (NSB). The board will oversee governance, ethics, and recognition of national sports bodies.

4. GeM and CSC-SPV Sign MoU to Expand Procurement Access

Government e-Marketplace signed an MoU with CSC e-Governance Services India Limited to improve procurement access in rural and underserved regions. Under the initiative, **50 GeM Suvidha Kendras (GSKs)** will be established to support seller onboarding and training.

5. Smart Warehousing System Launched for Real-Time Monitoring

Union Minister Pralhad Joshi launched an AI and IoT-enabled Smart Warehousing System for foodgrain storage. The system improves inventory monitoring, transparency, operational efficiency, and hazard detection in warehouses.

6. PM Narendra Modi Visits Slovakia

Narendra Modi visited Slovakia in June 2026 to strengthen bilateral relations. During the visit, he received Slovakia's highest civilian honour, and both countries elevated ties to a **Comprehensive Partnership**.

7. WEF Energy Transition Index 2026 Released

The World Economic Forum released the **Energy Transition Index 2026**, ranking Sweden first globally. India improved to **70th position**, reflecting progress in clean energy transition.

8. ADB Funds Digital Education Infrastructure in India

The Asian Development Bank partnered with Schoolnet India Limited with a USD 10 million package to expand digital learning infrastructure. The project will support digital classrooms, computer labs, and teacher training in government schools.

9. BITS Pilani and Axis Bank to Build ₹100 Crore Innovation Park

Birla Institute of Technology and Science Pilani and Axis Bank signed an agreement to establish a ₹100 crore innovation park in Hyderabad. The facility will support deep-tech, healthcare, biotech, and startup innovation.

10. RBI Extends Keki Mistry's Tenure as HDFC Bank Chairman

The Reserve Bank of India extended the tenure of Keki Mistry as Interim Chairman of HDFC Bank until September 2026.

11. Saibal Chattopadhyay Appointed NSC Chairperson

The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet approved the appointment of Saibal Chattopadhyay as Chairperson of the National Statistical Commission. The commission ensures quality, transparency, and coordination in India's statistical system.

12. Bimal N. Patel Elected ITLOS Judge

Indian jurist Bimal N. Patel was elected judge of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea for the 2026–2035 term, representing India in global maritime legal affairs.

13. Indian Coast Guard Inducts First Indigenous Hovercraft

The Indian Coast Guard inducted **H-561**, its first indigenous Air Cushion Vehicle (hovercraft), in Goa. The vehicle enhances coastal surveillance, search-and-rescue, and maritime security.

14. KSSL Unveils Simha 4×4 Armoured Vehicle

Kalyani Strategic Systems Limited unveiled the **Simha 4×4 Light Armoured Multi-Purpose Vehicle** at Eurosatory 2026. The vehicle is designed for reconnaissance, border security, and urban warfare missions.

15. New Lynx Spider Species Discovered in Meghalaya

Scientists from the Zoological Survey of India discovered a new lynx spider species, **Hamataliwa mawlyngot**, in Meghalaya. The species contributes to biodiversity and natural pest control.

16. World Autistic Pride Day 2026 Observed

World Autistic Pride Day was observed on **18 June** with the theme **"Acceptance, Inclusion, and Autistic Identity."** The day promotes awareness, inclusion, and neurodiversity.

17. International Picnic Day 2026 Observed

International Picnic Day was observed on **18 June** to celebrate outdoor social gatherings and encourage bonding with nature, family, and community.

Here are the remaining news items in the **same ideal format** (starting from **18**):

18. India Becomes FATF Vice-President for the First Time

India assumed the Vice-Presidency of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) for the first time, marking a major milestone in global financial governance. Vivek Aggarwal was appointed as FATF Vice-President for the July 2026–June 2027 term, strengthening India's role in combating money laundering and terror financing.

19. India Launches First Digital Space Industry Repository

India launched its first digital space-sector capabilities repository, the **Indian Space Industry E-Catalogue**, during the Indian Space Congress 2026. The platform connects over 200 verified space and defence companies to promote collaboration and business development in the Indian space ecosystem.

20. Osmania University Achieves Four ISO Certifications

Osmania University became India's first university to receive four ISO certifications simultaneously. The achievement reflects excellence in educational management, environmental sustainability, energy efficiency, and food safety standards.

21. KSSL and AM General Partner for Mounted Artillery Systems

Kalyani Strategic Systems Limited partnered with AM General to jointly develop next-generation mounted artillery gun systems. The partnership aims to strengthen mobile firepower solutions for global defence markets.

22. IITM and ARIES Sign MoU for Himalayan Climate Observation Station

Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology and Aryabhatta Research Institute of Observational Sciences signed an MoU to establish a long-term climate observation station in the Himalayan region under the Bharat Climate Observation Network.

23. 52nd G7 Summit Held in France

The **52nd G7 Summit** was held in France under the theme *"Working Together to Address Major International Challenges."* Leaders discussed energy security, geopolitical conflicts, critical minerals, and global economic stability.

24. BSE Launches India's First Saatvik Index

Bombay Stock Exchange launched **BSE Saatvik 100**, India's first Saatvik index, promoting ethical and value-based investing. The index offers investors a benchmark aligned with Saatvik principles.

25. IRDAI Forms AI Working Group for Insurance Sector

Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India constituted a working group on AI under Sandeep K. Shukla to guide responsible AI adoption in insurance, including fraud detection and claims management.

26. Federal Bank Launches FCNR Max Deposit Scheme

Federal Bank launched the **FCNR Max Deposit Scheme**, offering up to **6.25% annual interest** on USD deposits for NRIs, aimed at boosting foreign currency inflows into India.

27. Jainendra K. Jain Wins Wolf Prize in Physics

Jainendra K. Jain became the first person of Indian origin to receive the prestigious **Wolf Prize in Physics** for his pioneering work on Composite Fermions and the Fractional Quantum Hall Effect.

28. CPCL Becomes India's 28th Navratna Company

Chennai Petroleum Corporation Limited was upgraded to **Navratna CPSE** status, becoming India's 28th Navratna company. This status grants greater financial autonomy for strategic investments.

29. Rajendra Kumar Saboo Gets Additional Charge as UCO Bank MD & CEO

Rajendra Kumar Saboo was given additional charge as Managing Director and CEO of UCO Bank until a regular appointment is made.

30. Neeraj Chopra Finishes 4th at Doha Diamond League

Neeraj Chopra finished fourth in the men's javelin event at the Doha Diamond League 2026 with a best throw of **85.69 metres**.

31. International Day for Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict Observed

The UN observed this day on **19 June 2026** with the theme **"Conflict-Related Sexual Violence Against Children: Safeguarding Futures and Empowering Caregivers."** It promotes awareness and justice for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence.

32. World Sickle Cell Day 2026 Observed

World Sickle Cell Day was observed on **19 June** with the theme **"Closing the Survival Gap: Equity in Sickle Cell Disease."** The day emphasizes early diagnosis, treatment access, and public awareness.

33. National Reading Day 2026 Observed

India observed **National Reading Day** on **19 June** to honor P. N. Panicker and promote reading habits, literacy, and knowledge-sharing across the country.

34. Maharashtra Partners with Google for AI Teacher Training

Maharashtra partnered with Google to train over **4 lakh teachers** in AI and digital skills, supporting technology-enabled education under NEP 2020.

FIVE TO REMEMBER · 20 & 21 JUNE 2026

1. **Founded**: **1928** as **Indian Institute of Bankers (IIB)**. BCRC Seeks Grandfathering as RBI's BC Recertifi…
2. **Established**: **18 August 1978** under the **Coast Guard Act, 1978**. Air Cushion Vehicle (ACV) H-561
3. **Edition**: **10th anniversary** (founded 2016). VivaTech 2026
4. **Launched**: **25 October 2011** (Union Cabinet approval). BharatNet's Last-Mile Crisis
5. **Established**: **1977** as **National Research Centre for Oilseeds Crops**. Smart Seed Coating Technology

Now test yourself: c4scourses.in/daily-quiz/daily-quiz-023-june-2026/

DAY 14 OF 18

22 & 23 June 2026

24 items · 2 topics

General **6** · Banking and Finance **2** · Facts To Remember **16**

Context

Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation Shri Amit Shah launched the **National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India (NAFED)** auction portal **NAFEX.in** on **23 June 2026** at **Atal Akshay Urja Bhawan, New Delhi**. The launch is an important step toward **strengthening transparency, efficiency, and ease of operations** in the **agricultural auction process**. The portal provides a **digital platform** for **streamlining auction-related activities** and enhances NAFED's functioning in the interest of **farmers, member institutions, and stakeholders**. During the programme, the Minister also launched several **digital and farmer-centric initiatives** of NAFED, including: (1) **NAFED-KALYAN scholarship** for **children of farmers**; (2) **DRISHTI portal** for **inventory management of pulses and oilseeds**; and (3) **Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) portal** for **strengthening enterprise resource planning**. The Minister also chaired a **meeting with NAFED's Board of Directors**, where a presentation was made on **activities, progress, action taken on previous directions**, and the **future roadmap**. The launch aligns with **Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision** of **"Sahkar Se Samriddhi"** and the government's efforts to **strengthen cooperative institutions through technology, transparency, and farmer-centric reforms**.

The Launch

- **Date**: **23 June 2026 (Tuesday)**.
- **Venue**: **Atal Akshay Urja Bhawan, New Delhi**.
- **Launched by**: **Shri Amit Shah**, Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation.
- **Ministry**: **Ministry of Cooperation**.

The Four Major Initiatives Launched

1. NAFEX.in Auction Portal

- **Type**: **Digital auction platform**.
- **Purpose**:
  - **Streamline auction-related activities**.
  - **Improve transparency**.
  - **Enhance efficiency**.
  - **Ease of operations**.
- **Beneficiaries**:
  - **Farmers**.
  - **Member institutions**.
  - **Other stakeholders**.
- **Activities**: A **live demonstration** of the **registration process** and **launch of auction operations** was conducted.

2. NAFED-KALYAN Scholarship Scheme

- **Type**: **Educational scholarship**.
- **Beneficiaries**: **Children of farmers**.
- **Aim**:

  - **Support education** of farmers' children.
  - **Reflect NAFED's commitment** to **farmer welfare**.
- **Activity**: Shah **distributed scholarship cheques** to children of farmers during the programme.

3. DRISHTI Portal

- **Type**: **Inventory management portal**.
- **Aim**: **Track inventory** of **pulses and oilseeds**.
- **Significance**:
  - **Better procurement planning**.
  - **Reduced losses and wastage**.
  - **Smooth Public Distribution System (PDS) integration**.
  - **Supports MSP procurement**.

4. Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) Portal

- **Type**: **Organisational management portal**.
- **Aim**: **Strengthen enterprise resource planning** at NAFED.
- **Functions**:
  - **Integrated business processes**.
  - **Finance and accounting**.
  - **Supply chain management**.
  - **HR management**.
  - **Inventory tracking**.
  - **Decision support**.

Meeting with NAFED Board of Directors

- **Chair**: **Shri Amit Shah**.
- **Agenda**:
  - **Presentation** by NAFED on **activities and progress**.
  - **Action taken** on **previous directions** by the Minister.
  - **Future roadmap** of NAFED.

About NAFED (National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India)

- **Established**: **2 October 1958** (Gandhi Jayanti).
- **Registered under**: **Multi-State Cooperative Societies Act, 2002** (initially under the **Bombay Co-operative Societies Act, 1925**).
- **Headquartered**: **New Delhi**.
- **Type**: **Apex cooperative organisation** for **marketing of agricultural produce**.
- **Under**: **Ministry of Cooperation** (since 2021).
- **Functions**:
  - **Marketing of cooperative agricultural products**.
  - **Procurement of pulses, oilseeds, and other commodities** at **MSP** under **PSS** (Price Support Scheme).
  - **PM-AASHA implementation**.
  - **Storage and warehousing**.
  - **Export and import** of agricultural commodities.
  - **Trade in fertilizers and agricultural inputs**.

About Sahkar Se Samriddhi (Prosperity Through Cooperation)

- **Vision** of PM Narendra Modi.
- **Aim**: Strengthen **cooperative institutions** to **drive economic development**.
- **Coined**: 2021, with the **creation of Ministry of Cooperation**.
- **Pillars**:
  - **Strengthening cooperative societies**.
  - **Digitisation**.
  - **Farmer empowerment**.
  - **Technology-led transformation**.

About the Ministry of Cooperation

- **Created**: **6 July 2021**.
- **Created from**: **Department of Cooperation** of the **Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare**.
- **First Minister**: **Shri Amit Shah** (still serving).
- **Vision**: **"Sahkar Se Samriddhi"**.
- **Aim**:
  - Strengthen **cooperative movement**.
  - **Deepen cooperatives** at **grassroots level**.

Related Government Initiatives

- **Mission for Aatmanirbharta in Pulses** (October 2025).
- **PM-AASHA** (Pradhan Mantri Annadata Aay SanraksHan Abhiyan).
- **Price Support Scheme (PSS)**.
- **Price Deficiency Payment Scheme (PDPS)**.
- **Private Procurement & Stockist Scheme (PPSS)**.
- **eNAM** (National Agriculture Market).
- **Operation Greens** (TOP: Tomato, Onion, Potato).
- **Soil Health Card Scheme**.
- **PM-KISAN**.

About NCCF (National Cooperative Consumers' Federation)

- **Apex** consumer cooperative organisation.
- **Established**: **1965**.
- **Works alongside NAFED** for **subsidised retail sales** of pulses, onions, etc.

Why is "Sahkar Se Samriddhi" Important?

- **Reaches every village** through cooperatives.
- **Empowers small and marginal farmers**.
- **Builds resilience** against market volatility.
- **Supports doubling farmer income** target.
- **Aligns with Viksit Bharat 2047** vision.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the NAFED initiatives launched by Amit Shah on 23 June 2026, consider the following statements:

1. The NAFEX.in auction portal was launched at Atal Akshay Urja Bhawan, New Delhi.
2. The launch event included the distribution of NAFED-KALYAN scholarship cheques to children of

farmers.
3. The DRISHTI portal is for inventory management of pulses and oilseeds.
4. The Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) portal is for organisational management at NAFED.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Q2. With reference to NAFED, consider the following statements:

1. NAFED was established on 2 October 1958.
2. It is the apex cooperative organisation for marketing of agricultural produce.
3. NAFED is headquartered in New Delhi and currently under the Ministry of Cooperation.
4. NAFED operates under the Banking Regulation Act, 1949.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; NAFED operates under the **Multi-State Cooperative Societies Act, 2002**, NOT the Banking Regulation Act, 1949.)

Q3. With reference to the "Sahkar Se Samriddhi" vision, consider the following statements:

1. It is the vision of PM Narendra Modi for "Prosperity Through Cooperation".
2. It was coined around 2021, with the creation of the Ministry of Cooperation.
3. The Ministry of Cooperation was created on 6 July 2021 with Amit Shah as the first Minister.
4. The Ministry was created out of the Ministry of Finance.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **Ministry of Cooperation was created from the Department of Cooperation of the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare**, NOT from the Ministry of Finance.)

Q4. With reference to NAFED's role in agricultural procurement, consider the following statements:

1. NAFED procures pulses, oilseeds, and copra under the Price Support Scheme (PSS).
2. NAFED implements PM-AASHA (Pradhan Mantri Annadata Aay SanraksHan Abhiyan).
3. NAFED is the sole procurement agency for the Mission for Aatmanirbharta in Pulses (October 2025), with NCCF as a partner.
4. NAFED is responsible for fertilizer manufacturing in India.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **fertilizer manufacturing is undertaken by IFFCO, KRIBHCO, and other cooperatives**, NOT NAFED.)

Q5. With reference to India's cooperative sector, consider the following statements:

1. The cooperative sector contributes about 35 per cent to fertilizer distribution and about 31 per cent to sugar production.
2. About 63,000 Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) are being computerised under a government initiative.
3. Three new national cooperatives launched in 2023 are NCEL, NCOL, and BBSSL.
4. The Ministry of Cooperation has never created any database for cooperatives.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the Ministry of Cooperation has **created the National Cooperative Database**.)

Q6. With reference to allied cooperative bodies in India, consider the following statements:

1. NAFED handles agricultural marketing while NCCF handles consumer cooperatives.
2. NCDC (National Cooperative Development Corporation) is responsible for cooperative development.
3. IFFCO is a major cooperative fertilizer manufacturer.
4. AMUL/GCMMF is a major cooperative organisation in the dairy sector.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

Answer Key

1. (d), All four statements are correct.
2. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because NAFED operates under Multi-State Cooperative Societies Act, 2002.
3. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the Ministry was created from Ministry of Agriculture.
4. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because fertilizer manufacturing is by IFFCO, KRIBHCO, etc.
5. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the National Cooperative Database has been created.
6. (d), All four statements are correct.

Exam Relevance

NABARD Grade A	**Very high importance, cooperatives, NAFED, PACS, rural credit**

2. ASI Transfers Rakhigarhi Skeletal Remains to AnSI

Source: The Hindu

Context

The **Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)** has formally **transferred human skeletal remains** excavated from the **Rakhigarhi archaeological site in Haryana** to the **Anthropological Survey of India (AnSI)** — a **national research institute under the Ministry of Culture** — for **detailed multidisciplinary scientific investigation**. The transfer was made under a **recently signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** between the two institutions, announced by the **Ministry of Culture on Monday, 22 June 2026**. **Prof. B.V. Sharma, Director of AnSI**, said the transfer is expected to **"significantly advance multidisciplinary research"** into one of the most important urban centres of the **Indus-Saraswati Civilisation**. During the **2025–26 excavation season** conducted by **ASI's Excavation Branch-II, Greater Noida**, archaeologists uncovered **eight burials at Mound No. 7** at Rakhigarhi — an area previously identified as a **cemetery**. **Three complete human skeletons** along with **skeletal fragments** from other burials have now been moved to the **AnSI's ancient human skeletal repository and laboratory in Kolkata**. Rakhigarhi, spread across approximately **550 hectares in Hisar district, Haryana**, is the **largest known settlement of the Indus-Saraswati (Harappan) Civilisation**, with continuous habitation from the **Early Harappan to Mature Harappan periods**. The research will apply **ancient DNA (aDNA) analysis, stable isotope studies, osteological assessments, palaeopathological investigations, and environmental reconstruction**, in collaboration with the **Birbal Sahni Institute of Palaeosciences (Lucknow), University College London (UCL), and Banaras Hindu University (BHU)**. The transfer revives focus on the iconic **2019 study** that revealed the **Rakhigarhi woman lacked steppe pastoralist ancestry**, igniting the **Aryan migration debate**.

Key Facts

- **From**: **Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)**.
- **To**: **Anthropological Survey of India (AnSI)**.
- **Both under**: **Ministry of Culture, Government of India**.
- **Instrument**: **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** between ASI and AnSI.
- **Destination Laboratory**: **AnSI's Ancient Human Skeletal Repository and Laboratory, Kolkata**.

About the 2025-26 Excavation

- **Excavator**: **ASI's Excavation Branch-II, Greater Noida**.
- **Site**: **Mound No. 7** at Rakhigarhi.
- **Burials uncovered**: **8 new burials** in the 2025-26 field season.

About Rakhigarhi

- **Location**: **Hisar district, Haryana** (approximately **150 km from Delhi**).
- **Spread**: **~550 hectares**.
- **Significance**: **Largest known settlement of Indus-Saraswati (Harappan) Civilisation**.
- **Habitation Period**: **Early Harappan (~5500–2600 BCE) to Mature Harappan (~2600–1900 BCE)**.
- **Number of Mounds**: **9 mounds** (designated **RGR-1 to RGR-9**).
- **Features**: Planned settlements, **drainage systems**, **craft production centres**, **trade networks**, **burial grounds**.
- **Mound 7 (RGR-7)**: Identified as a **cemetery**.

Aryan Migration Debate

- **Aryan Invasion Theory**: 19th-century colonial-era theory (Max Müller, Mortimer Wheeler) — Aryans **invaded** India c. 1500 BCE, destroyed IVC.
- **Aryan Migration Theory**: Modern revision — **steppe pastoralists migrated** (not invaded) into South Asia around 2000–1000 BCE, bringing **Indo-European languages**.
- **Rakhigarhi Implications**:
  - **Lead archaeologist Vasant Shinde**: Said study **"completely rejects"** both Aryan invasion and migration theories.
  - **Geneticists (Narasimhan, Reich)**: Maintain steppe ancestry **entered later**, supporting some form of migration.
  - **Term Preference**: "Indo-Aryan" preferred over "Aryan" to avoid racial connotations.

About the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)

- **Established**: **1861** by **Alexander Cunningham** (under Lord Canning).
- **HQ**: **New Delhi**.
- **Director General**: **Yadubir Singh Rawat** (as of 2025).
- **Parent Ministry**: **Ministry of Culture**.
- **Functions**: Archaeological research, conservation, preservation of **monuments, sites, and antiquities**.
- **Excavation Branches**: Six branches across India.
- **Mandate**: Under the **Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains (AMASR) Act, 1958**.

About the Anthropological Survey of India (AnSI)

- **Established**: **1945** (carved out of Zoological Survey of India).
- **HQ**: **Kolkata**.
- **Director**: **Prof. B.V. Sharma**.

- **Parent Ministry**: **Ministry of Culture**.
- **Functions**: Research on **biological and cultural anthropology, palaeoanthropology, ethnographic studies, human genetics, osteology**.
- **Regional Centres**: 8 across India.
- **Maintains**: **Ancient human skeletal repository** of IVC and other ancient sites.

About the Indus-Saraswati (Harappan) Civilisation

- **Period**: **3300–1300 BCE**; mature phase **2600–1900 BCE**.
- **Discovery**: **1921** at **Harappa** by **Dayaram Sahni**; **Mohenjo-daro** in **1922** by **R.D. Banerji**.
- **Major Sites in India**: Rakhigarhi, **Dholavira, Lothal, Kalibangan, Banawali, Surkotada, Daimabad**.
- **Major Sites in Pakistan**: **Harappa, Mohenjo-daro, Chanhudaro**.
- **Spread**: Modern Pakistan, NW India, Afghanistan.
- **Total Sites Known**: **2,000+**, majority in India (post-Partition).
- **Features**: **Urban planning, drainage, granaries, seals, weights & measures, trade networks**.

Phases of Harappan Civilisation

Phase	Period	Characteristics
Early Harappan	**5500–2600 BCE**	Regional cultures, beginnings of urbanism
Mature Harappan	**2600–1900 BCE**	Peak urban phase, planned cities, script
Late Harappan	**1900–1300 BCE**	Decline, regionalisation

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the transfer of Rakhigarhi skeletal remains in June 2026, consider the following statements:

1. The skeletal remains were transferred from the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) to the Anthropological Survey of India (AnSI).
2. The transfer was carried out under a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the two institutions.
3. Both ASI and AnSI function under the Ministry of Culture, Government of India.
4. The skeletal remains have been transferred to AnSI's repository in New Delhi.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the remains were transferred to AnSI's **ancient human skeletal repository and laboratory in Kolkata**, NOT New Delhi.)

Q2. With reference to Rakhigarhi, consider the following statements:

1. Rakhigarhi is located in Hisar district, Haryana.
2. It is spread across approximately 550 hectares.
3. It is widely recognised as the largest known settlement of the Indus-Saraswati (Harappan) Civilisation.
4. It is located in the Gangetic plains and is contemporary with the Vedic period.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; Rakhigarhi is located in the **Saraswati basin**, NOT the Gangetic plains, and belongs to the **Harappan period (Bronze Age)**, NOT the Vedic period.)

Q3. With reference to the Anthropological Survey of India (AnSI), consider the following statements:

1. It was established in 1945.
2. It is headquartered in Kolkata.
3. It functions under the Ministry of Culture.
4. It is exclusively responsible for archaeological excavations in India.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **archaeological excavations are conducted by the ASI**, not AnSI; AnSI focuses on **anthropological, osteological, and palaeoanthropological research**.)

Q4. With reference to the 2019 study on the Rakhigarhi woman's DNA, consider the following statements:

1. The study was published in the journal Cell on 5 September 2019.
2. The Rakhigarhi woman's genome had Iranian-related farmer ancestry mixed with Ancient Ancestral South Indian (AASI) ancestry.
3. The genome showed zero steppe pastoralist ancestry.
4. The lead author of the study was Dr. David Reich of the Birbal Sahni Institute of Palaeosciences.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **the co-first authors were Vasant Shinde (Deccan College) and Vagheesh Narasimhan**; David Reich is from Harvard Medical School; Niraj Rai is from Birbal Sahni Institute.)

Q5. With reference to the Indus-Saraswati (Harappan) Civilisation, consider the following statements:

1. The Harappan Civilisation was discovered in 1921 at Harappa by Dayaram Sahni.
2. Mohenjo-daro was discovered in 1922 by R.D. Banerji.
3. The mature phase of the Harappan Civilisation is dated 2600–1900 BCE.
4. Dholavira and Lothal are major Harappan sites located in Pakistan.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **Dholavira and Lothal are major Harappan sites located in Gujarat, India**, NOT Pakistan.)

Q6. With reference to the planned scientific techniques to be applied to the Rakhigarhi remains, consider the following statements:

1. Ancient DNA (aDNA) analysis will be used to study ancestry and population history.
2. Stable isotope studies will help reveal diet, mobility, and geographical origins.
3. Palaeopathological investigations will identify ancient diseases and injuries.
4. The research will be conducted exclusively by Indian institutions without international collaboration.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the research will be conducted in **collaboration with international institutions**, including **University College London (UCL)**.)

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because remains went to Kolkata, not Delhi.
2. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because Rakhigarhi is Harappan, not Vedic,

and is in the Saraswati basin.

3. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because excavations are conducted by ASI, not AnSI.
4. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because Vasant Shinde and Narasimhan were co-first authors.
5. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because Dholavira and Lothal are in Gujarat, India.
6. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because UCL and others are international collaborators.

Exam Relevance

Exam	Relevance
UPSC Prelims	GS Paper I on Indian Heritage & Culture (Harappan Civilisation, Indus Valley sites); GS Paper II on Government Bodies (ASI, AnSI, Ministry of Culture); GS Paper III on Science & Technology (Ancient DNA, Palaeogenomics)
UPSC Mains	GS Paper I on Indian Culture, Ancient History, Bronze Age civilisations; GS Paper II on Indian polity (statutory bodies, intergovernmental collaboration); GS Paper III on Science applications

2. IAS e-Civil List 2026

Source: News on Air

Context

Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science & Technology, Earth Sciences and Minister of State for PMO, Personnel, Public Grievances, Pensions, Atomic Energy and Space, **Dr. Jitendra Singh**, launched the **IAS e-Civil List 2026** on **22 June 2026 (Monday)** at **Kartavya Bhawan, New Delhi**. The launch marks the **71st edition of the Civil List** and the **sixth edition** to be released as an **e-book in PDF format**. Dr. Singh emphasised that **technology-enabled databases** can help governments **identify officers with appropriate expertise** for **diverse developmental requirements**, calling the transition from **printed publications to digital platforms** as aligned with the **Digital India vision**. The publication, prepared by the **Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT)**, contains **comprehensive details** of all IAS officers, including **batch, cadre, present posting, pay level, educational qualifications, and date of superannuation**. It also provides **cadre-wise strength**, **officers retiring during the next five years**, and **appointment data from 1969 onwards**. As of **1 January 2026**, **5,755 IAS officers** are in position against an **authorised cadre strength of 7,026** across **25 cadres**. The e-book is available on the **DoPT website (dopt.gov.in)**.

The Launch

- **Venue**: **Kartavya Bhawan, New Delhi**.
- **Launched by**: **Dr. Jitendra Singh**, Union Minister of State.
- **Available at**: **dopt.gov.in**.

About the Civil List

What is the Civil List?

- An **annual publication** compiled by the **Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT)**.
- **Contains details** of all **serving IAS officers** in India.
- **Cadre Controlling Authority**: **DoPT**.
- **Updated annually**: Based on inputs from **State Cadres** and **Centre**.

Civil List History

- **1st Civil List**: Published in **1955-56**.
- **Has been published annually** since then.
- **Digital edition introduced** in **2021** (66th edition).
- **70th edition**: 2025 (5th e-book).
- **71st edition**: 2026 (6th e-book).

About the IAS (Indian Administrative Service)

- **Premier civil service** of India.
- **Recruited through**: **Civil Services Examination** by **UPSC**.
- **Established**: **1858** as **Indian Civil Service (ICS)**.
- **Renamed**: **Indian Administrative Service (IAS)** in **1946** (Constitutional Assembly).
- **Cadre Controlling Authority**: **DoPT, Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions**.
- **Total cadres**: **25** (24 state cadres + Joint Cadres: AGMUT, J&K, etc.).

About the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT)

- **Under**: **Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions**.
- **Headed by**: **Minister of State (PMO, Personnel)**, currently **Dr. Jitendra Singh**.
- **Functions**:
  - **Cadre control** of IAS, CSS, CSSS.
  - **Civil Services Examination** coordination.
  - **Personnel policy**.
  - **Training of civil servants**.
  - **Vigilance and discipline**.
  - **Pay and allowances**.
- **DoPT website**: dopt.gov.in.

About the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions

- **Headed by**: **Prime Minister** (currently) — held by **Narendra Modi**.
- **MoS (Independent Charge)**: **Dr. Jitendra Singh**.
- **Three Departments**:
  1. **Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT)**.
  2. **Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG)**.
  3. **Department of Pensions and Pensioners' Welfare**.

Why is This Significant?

For Digital India

- **Part of broader Digital India mission**.
- **Modernises public administration**.
- **Eco-friendly governance** (no paper printing).

For Administrative Efficiency

- **Quick search** for officer-specific information.
- **Talent mapping** for special projects.
- **Better human resource planning**.

For Transparency

- **Public access** to administrative leadership data.
- **Standardised information** about all IAS officers.
- **Reduces information asymmetry**.

For Federal Governance

- **Consolidated all-India view** of IAS deployment.
- **Better Centre-State coordination**.
- **Supports cadre allocations** and **deputations**.

India's Civil Services Reforms

- **Mission Karmayogi**: Civil services capacity building (launched 2020).
- **iGOT Karmayogi**: Online training platform.
- **Performance Management Division**: Outcomes-based assessment.
- **Annual Cadre Reviews** of IAS.
- **Lateral Entry** for specialised positions (since 2018).
- **NRA (National Recruitment Agency)**: Common Eligibility Test.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the IAS e-Civil List 2026, consider the following statements:

1. It was launched on 22 June 2026 at Kartavya Bhawan, New Delhi.
2. It is the 71st edition of the Civil List and the sixth edition as an e-book in PDF format.
3. It was launched by Dr. Jitendra Singh, Union Minister of State.
4. It is published by the Ministry of Home Affairs.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **IAS e-Civil List is published by the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT)** under the **Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions**, NOT the Ministry of Home Affairs.)

Q2. With reference to the contents of the IAS e-Civil List 2026, consider the following statements:

1. The list contains officers' batch, cadre, present posting, pay level, educational qualifications, and date of superannuation.
2. It provides cadre-wise strength and details of officers retiring over the next five years.
3. It includes information on IAS officers appointed through the Civil Services Examination since 1969.
4. It contains no information about IAS officers' photographs.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **officers' photographs were introduced in the 2025 (70th) edition** and continue in 2026.)

Q3. With reference to the IAS cadre strength as on 1 January 2026, consider the following statements:

1. The authorised cadre strength is 7,026.
2. The actual number of IAS officers in position is 5,755.
3. IAS officers are deployed across 25 cadres.
4. There is no shortage of IAS officers vis-à-vis the authorised strength.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; there is a **shortage of about 1,271 IAS officers** vis-à-vis authorised strength.)

Q4. With reference to the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), consider the following statements:

1. The IAS was originally known as the Indian Civil Service (ICS) under the British administration.
2. It was renamed Indian Administrative Service (IAS) in 1946.
3. The cadre controlling authority of the IAS is the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT).
4. The IAS is the only All India Service in India.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **India has three All India Services**: IAS, IPS, and IFoS (Indian Forest Service).)

Q5. With reference to Dr. Jitendra Singh and his current ministerial portfolios, consider the following statements:

1. He is the Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science & Technology.
2. He also holds Independent Charge for Earth Sciences.
3. He is Minister of State for PMO, Personnel, Public Grievances, Pensions, Atomic Energy, and Space.
4. He is the Cabinet Minister for External Affairs.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **Dr. Subrahmanyam Jaishankar is the External Affairs Minister**, NOT Dr. Jitendra Singh.)

Q6. With reference to the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, consider the following statements:

1. It has three departments: DoPT, DARPG, and Department of Pensions and Pensioners' Welfare.
2. The Ministry is headed by the Prime Minister.
3. The DoPT is the cadre controlling authority for the IAS.
4. The Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG) oversees pension matters.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **pension matters are handled by the Department of Pensions and Pensioners' Welfare**, NOT DARPG.)

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because DoPT publishes it.
2. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because photographs are included.
3. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because there is a shortage.
4. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because there are three All India Services.
5. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because he is not External Affairs Minister.
6. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because DARPG does not oversee pensions.

3. INS Dunagiri, INS Sanshodhak, and INS Agray into Indian Navy at Kolkata

Source: PIB

Context

Prime Minister Narendra Modi presided over the **historic tri-commissioning** of three indigenously designed and built warships — **INS Dunagiri** (stealth frigate), **INS Sanshodhak** (Survey Vessel, Large), and **INS Agray** (Anti-Submarine Warfare Shallow Water Craft) — at **Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port, Kolkata, on 21 June 2026 (Sunday)**. All three vessels were **designed by the Indian Navy's Warship Design Bureau (WDB)** and **constructed by Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers (GRSE), Kolkata**. The ceremony was attended by **Defence Minister Rajnath Singh**, **Admiral Krishna Swaminathan (Chief of the Naval Staff)**, and other senior officials. PM Modi noted the symbolic coincidence that **21 June is also World Hydrography Day**, even as India's most advanced hydrographic survey vessel **INS Sanshodhak** was commissioned. The three vessels represent the Indian Navy's **layered capability approach**: **blue-water combat (Dunagiri)**, **deep-water hydrographic survey (Sanshodhak)**, and **coastal anti-submarine warfare (Agray)**. With **indigenous content exceeding 75%** and contributions from **over 200 MSMEs**, the tri-commissioning marks a major milestone in **Aatmanirbhar Bharat** in defence shipbuilding. This is the **second tri-commissioning in 2026**, after the **January 2025 induction of INS Surat, INS Nilgiri, and submarine INS Vagsheer** at Mumbai. The Navy aims to **commission 19 warships in 2026**, the **largest annual force accretion** in its history — **33 ships in 24 months (Jan 2025 to Dec 2026)** combined.

The Ceremony

- **Venue**: **Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port (formerly Kolkata Port), Kolkata**.
- **Host**: **Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers (GRSE), Kolkata**.
- **Chief Guest**: **Prime Minister Narendra Modi**.
- **Other Attendees**: **Defence Minister Rajnath Singh**, **Admiral Krishna Swaminathan (CNS)**.

1. INS Dunagiri — The Blue-Water Combatant

Feature	Details
Type	**Stealth Guided-Missile Frigate**
Class	**Nilgiri-class (Project 17A)**
Position in Class	**5th of 7 Project 17A frigates** to be commissioned
Built by	**GRSE, Kolkata** (2nd Project 17A built by GRSE)
Predecessor Class	**Shivalik-class (Project 17)**
Build Time	**80 months** (improved from 93 months for lead ship INS Nilgiri)
Propulsion	**CODOG** (Combined Diesel or Gas)
Indigenous Content	**~75%**

Key Weapons & Systems of INS Dunagiri

- **BrahMos surface-to-surface missiles** (supersonic, long-range).
- **MRSAM (Medium-Range Surface-to-Air Missile)** defence network.
- **MFSTAR Radar**: Multi-Function Surveillance, Track And Guidance Radar.
- **Anti-submarine warfare rockets**.
- **Integrated hull sonar**.
- **Close-in Weapon Systems (CIWS)**.
- **Helicopter operations**: Capable of operating **HAL Dhruv ALH** and **Sea King helicopters**.

Project 17A Family — All 7 Sister Ships

#	Ship	Built By	Status
1	**INS Nilgiri**	MDL	Commissioned (Jan 2025)
2	**INS Himgiri**	GRSE	Commissioned
3	**INS Udaygiri**	MDL	Commissioned
4	**INS Taragiri**	MDL	Commissioned
5	**INS Dunagiri**	**GRSE**	**Commissioned 21 June 2026**
6	**INS Vindhyagiri**	GRSE	Expected
7	**INS Mahendragiri**	MDL	Expected

2. INS Sanshodhak — The Deep-Water Surveyor (Verified)

Feature	Details
Type	**Survey Vessel (Large)** — SVL
Class	**Sandhayak-class**
Position in Class	**4th and FINAL of Sandhayak-class**
Built by	**GRSE, Kolkata**
Length	**~110 m**
Displacement	**~3,300–3,400 tonnes**
Range	**6,500 nautical miles**
Contract Signed	**2018**

Key Equipment & Capabilities

- **Autonomous Underwater Vehicles (AUVs)**.
- **Remotely Operated Vehicles (ROVs)**.
- **Multi-Beam Echo Sounders**.
- **Digital Side-Scan Sonar systems**.
- **4 Survey Motor Boats**.
- **Helicopter operations** capable.
- **Convertible to Hospital Ship** for HADR roles.
- Linked to **Maritime Vision 2030** and **Blue Economy** ambitions.

Roles of INS Sanshodhak

- **Hydrographic surveys** (mapping seabed).
- **Oceanographic research** (collecting water and biological data).
- **Geophysical data collection**.
- **Nautical chart preparation** (for naval and civil shipping).
- **Port approach channel mapping**.
- **Search-and-rescue (SAR)** missions.
- **Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR)**.

3. INS Agray — The Coastal Submarine Hunter (Verified)

Feature	Details
Type	**Anti-Submarine Warfare Shallow Water Craft (ASW-SWC)**
Class	**Arnala-class**
Position in Class	**4th built by GRSE, 5th overall ASW-SWC commissioned**
Built by	**GRSE, Kolkata** (in PPP with **L&T Kattupalli**)
Length	**~77.6 m**
Displacement	**900 tonnes (gross tonnage 1,490 t)**
Speed	**25 knots**
Range	**1,800 nautical miles** at 14 knots
Propulsion	**Waterjet** (high manoeuvrability, low noise)
Indigenous Content	**>80%**
Crest Inspired by	**Arjuna's Gandiva bow** (unveiled 10 June 2026)

Key Weapons & Sensors of INS Agray

- **RBU-6000 anti-submarine rocket launcher** (forward-mounted).
- **324 mm Lightweight Torpedo tubes** (triple, port & starboard) with **Advanced Light-Weight Torpedo (ALWT)**.
- **Abhay Hull-Mounted Sonar** (DRDO NPOL + BEL).
- **Towed Low-Frequency Variable Depth Sonar (LFVDS)** (CFF Fluid Control + Atlas Elektronik).
- **30 mm Naval Surface Gun**.
- **12.7 mm OFT M2 SRCG** (Stabilized Remote Controlled Gun).
- **Anti-submarine mine-laying rails**.
- **Integrated Anti-Submarine Warfare Defence Suite (IADS)**.

ASW-SWC Programme

- **Approved**: **2013** by Defence Acquisition Council (DAC).
- **Total Cost**: **~₹13,440 crore**.
- **Total Ships**: **16 vessels** (8 by **GRSE**, 8 by **Cochin Shipyard Limited (CSL)**).
- **Replaces**: **Abhay-class corvettes** (commissioned 1989–1991).
- **Two Subclasses**:
  - **Arnala-class**: Built by **GRSE/L&T**, based with **Eastern Fleet**.
  - **Mahe-class**: Built by **CSL**, based with **Western Fleet**.
- **First in Class**: **INS Arnala** (lead ship, commissioned 2025).

About the Indian Navy's Modernisation Programme

- **Force Accretion 2026**: **19 warships** planned for commissioning — **largest in Navy's history**.
- **Combined 2025–26**: **33 ships** in 24 months.
- **Maritime Vision 2030**: Aims for **170+ warship Navy** by 2030.
- **Project 17A**: 7 stealth frigates totalling **~₹45,000 crore**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the tri-commissioning ceremony in June 2026, consider the following statements:

1. The ceremony was held at Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port, Kolkata on 21 June 2026.

2. All three vessels — INS Dunagiri, INS Sanshodhak, and INS Agray — were built by Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers (GRSE), Kolkata.
3. The date coincided with World Hydrography Day.
4. This was the first-ever tri-commissioning in the history of the Indian Navy.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; this was the **second tri-commissioning** of 2026; the first was the **January 2025 commissioning of INS Surat, INS Nilgiri, and INS Vagsheer** at Mumbai.)

Q2. With reference to INS Dunagiri, consider the following statements:

1. It is the fifth Project 17A Nilgiri-class stealth frigate.
2. It is the second Project 17A frigate built by GRSE Kolkata.
3. Project 17A frigates are the successors to the Shivalik-class (Project 17) frigates.
4. INS Dunagiri is powered by nuclear propulsion.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; INS Dunagiri is powered by **CODOG (Combined Diesel or Gas) propulsion**, NOT nuclear propulsion.)

Q3. With reference to INS Sanshodhak, consider the following statements:

1. It is the fourth and final ship of the Sandhayak-class Survey Vessel (Large) programme.
2. Its sister ships are INS Sandhayak, INS Nirdeshak, and INS Ikshak.
3. It is equipped with Autonomous Underwater Vehicles (AUVs), Remotely Operated Vehicles (ROVs), and multi-beam echo sounders.
4. INS Sanshodhak is a stealth guided-missile destroyer.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; INS Sanshodhak is a **Survey Vessel (Large)** for hydrographic and oceanographic survey, NOT a stealth guided-missile destroyer.)

Q4. With reference to INS Agray and the Arnala-class, consider the following statements:

1. INS Agray is part of the Arnala-class Anti-Submarine Warfare Shallow Water Craft (ASW-SWC) programme.
2. The ASW-SWC programme involves 16 vessels split between GRSE and Cochin Shipyard Limited (CSL).
3. The Arnala-class is designed to replace the ageing Abhay-class corvettes of the Indian Navy.
4. INS Agray is powered by nuclear propulsion for unlimited endurance.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; INS Agray uses **waterjet propulsion** for high manoeuvrability and low noise, NOT nuclear propulsion.)

Q5. With reference to BrahMos missiles and MRSAM, consider the following statements:

1. BrahMos is a supersonic cruise missile jointly developed by India (DRDO) and Russia (NPO Mashinostroyeniya).
2. The name BrahMos is derived from the Brahmaputra and Moskva rivers.

3. MRSAM (Medium-Range Surface-to-Air Missile) is jointly developed by DRDO and Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI).
4. BrahMos is a subsonic anti-ship cruise missile with a limited range of 50 km.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; BrahMos is a **supersonic cruise missile** (Mach 2.8–3.0) with extended-range variants reaching **800+ km**, NOT a subsonic missile with 50 km range.)

Q6. With reference to India's naval modernisation in 2026, consider the following statements:

1. The Indian Navy plans to commission 19 warships in 2026, the largest annual force accretion in its history.
2. Including 2025, this means 33 warships across 24 months (January 2025 to December 2026).
3. Defence production in India has grown from approximately ₹40,000 crore in 2014 to nearly ₹1.8 lakh crore in 2026.
4. All Indian Navy warships are currently being built exclusively by foreign shipyards.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the Indian Navy emphasises **indigenous construction**; INS Dunagiri, Sanshodhak, and Agray were built by **GRSE Kolkata** with **>75% indigenous content**.)

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because this was the second tri-commissioning in 2026.
2. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because INS Dunagiri uses CODOG propulsion.
3. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because INS Sanshodhak is a survey vessel.
4. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because INS Agray uses waterjet propulsion.
5. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because BrahMos is supersonic with longer range.
6. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because Indian warships are predominantly indigenous now.

4. The Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA)

Source: PIB

Context

The **Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA)**, a statutory body under the **Ministry of Commerce and Industry**, has facilitated **India's first-ever commercial export shipment of dried whole egg powder** from **Balangir, Odisha, to Austria**. The shipment, comprising **22.6 metric tonnes (MT) of dried whole egg powder**, was virtually **flagged off on 20 June 2026 (Saturday) by APEDA Chairman Shri Abhishek Dev, IAS**, marking a significant milestone in promoting **value-added agricultural and processed food exports** from India. The export was carried out by **OVO Farm Pvt Ltd, Balangir**, an **APEDA-registered exporter**, which had established a **state-of-the-art egg processing facility in Balangir in 2025**. The facility is certified under **FSSC 22000 Version 6**, **HALAL**, and **KOSHER** standards, and complies with **Export Inspection Council (EIC) requirements** and **European Union hygiene regulations**. **Dried whole egg powder**, produced via the **spray-drying of liquid eggs**, has wide applications in **food processing, bakery, confectionery, and pharmaceutical industries** due to its **long shelf life, ease of transportation, and versatility**. The event was attended by **Prem Chand, IAS**

(Commissioner-cum-Secretary, F&ARD Department, Government of Odisha) and **Gaurav Shivaji Isalwar, IAS** (Collector & District Magistrate, Balangir). APEDA extended **financial assistance** for processing infrastructure, quality management systems, and laboratory testing. The export underscores India's growing presence in the **EU's processed food market** and validates the **quality of Indian poultry products against stringent EU standards**.

The Export Shipment

- **Date Flagged Off**: **20 June 2026 (Saturday)**.
- **Product**: **Dried Whole Egg Powder**.
- **Quantity**: **22.6 metric tonnes (MT)**.
- **From**: **Balangir district, Odisha, India**.
- **To**: **Austria** (European Union).
- **Exporter**: **OVO Farm Pvt Ltd**, Balangir.
- **Facilitating Agency**: **APEDA**.
- **Flagged Off (Virtually) By**: **Shri Abhishek Dev, IAS** (Chairman, APEDA).

About the Exporter — OVO Farm Pvt Ltd

- **Location**: **Balangir, Odisha**.
- **Status**: **APEDA-registered exporter**.
- **Facility Established**: **2025**.
- **Type**: **State-of-the-art egg processing facility**.

About APEDA — Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (Verified)

Feature	Details
Type	**Statutory body (apex export-promotion authority)**
Established Under	**APEDA Act, 1985 (Act 2 of 1986)**
Act Passed	**December 1985**
Came into Effect	**13 February 1986**
Parent Ministry	**Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India**
Department	**Department of Commerce**
HQ	**New Delhi**
Chairman	**Shri Abhishek Dev, IAS** (since 1 April 2024)
Replaced	**Processed Food Export Promotion Council (PFEPC)**

APEDA's Vision & Mission

- **Vision**: Establish India as a **supplier of quality agro and food products** in global markets.
- **Mission**: Act as an **interface between trade/industry and Government** to **promote and develop agro exports** from India.

APEDA's Functions Under the Act (Verified)

1. **Development of industries** related to scheduled products for export (with financial assistance, surveys, feasibility studies).
2. **Registration of exporters** of scheduled products (on payment of fees).
3. **Fixing standards and specifications** for scheduled products.
4. **Inspection of meat and meat products** for quality.
5. **Improving packaging and marketing** of scheduled products.

6. **Collection of statistics** from owners of factories/establishments.
7. **Training** in various aspects of the industries connected with scheduled products.
8. **Promotion of organic exports** via **National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP)**.
9. **Implementation of National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP)**.

APEDA's Scheduled Products (17 Categories)

#	Category
1	**Fruits, Vegetables and their Products**
2	**Meat and Meat Products**
3	**Poultry and Poultry Products**
4	**Dairy Products**
5	**Confectionery, Biscuits and Bakery Products**
6	**Honey, Jaggery and Sugar Products**
7	**Cocoa and its products, chocolates of all kinds**
8	**Alcoholic and Non-Alcoholic Beverages**
9	**Cereal and Cereal Products**
10	**Groundnuts, Peanuts and Walnuts**
11	**Pickles, Papads and Chutneys**
12	**Guar Gum**
13	**Floriculture and Floriculture Products**
14	**Herbal and Medicinal Plants**
15	**De-oiled rice bran**
16	**Green pepper in brine**
17	**Cashew Nuts and its Products**

Plus: Various **millets** under cereal products.

APEDA's Organisational Structure

- **Chairman**: Appointed by the Central Government.
- **Director**: Appointed by APEDA.
- **Secretary**: Appointed by the Central Government.
- **Other Officers/Staff**: Appointed by the Authority.
- **Total Sanctioned Strength**: ~73 (Group A: 41, Group B: 42, Group C: 60 — Group C abolished on vacancy).
- **Authority Composition**:
  - Chairman + Agricultural Marketing Adviser (ex officio).
  - 1 member from NITI Aayog.
  - 3 Members of Parliament (2 from Lok Sabha + 1 from Rajya Sabha).
  - 8 members from Central Ministries.
  - 5 members representing States/UTs (by rotation).
  - 7 members representing different stakeholder categories.
  - 2 specialists/scientists.

Recent APEDA Initiatives

- **"One District, One Product (ODOP)"** alignment for exports.
- **Farm-to-Port supply chain integration**.
- **Krishi Udan Scheme** with Civil Aviation Ministry for air freight.
- **GI-tagged products** promotion (Darjeeling tea, Basmati rice, etc.).
- **Vocal for Local** abroad campaigns.
- **Coffee Table Books** on regional foods.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the first-ever commercial export of dried whole egg powder from India, consider the following statements:

1. The export was facilitated by APEDA from Balangir, Odisha to Austria.
2. The shipment comprised 22.6 metric tonnes of dried whole egg powder.
3. The exporter was OVO Farm Pvt Ltd, an APEDA-registered exporter.
4. The shipment was flagged off by the Union Minister of Commerce and Industry in person at Balangir.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the shipment was **virtually flagged off by APEDA Chairman Shri Abhishek Dev, IAS**, NOT by the Union Minister of Commerce in person.)

Q2. With reference to APEDA, consider the following statements:

1. APEDA is a statutory body established under the APEDA Act of 1985.
2. The APEDA Act came into effect on 13 February 1986.
3. APEDA functions under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
4. APEDA replaced the Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA).

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; APEDA **replaced the Processed Food Export Promotion Council (PFEPC)**, NOT MPEDA. MPEDA is a separate body for marine products.)

Q3. With reference to APEDA's scheduled product categories, consider the following statements:

1. APEDA is mandated with the export promotion of 17 scheduled product categories.
2. The scheduled products include fruits, vegetables, dairy, poultry, and confectionery.
3. APEDA's scheduled product exports in 2024-25 amounted to approximately USD 28.59 billion.
4. APEDA's mandate covers marine and fishery products as scheduled categories.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **marine and fishery products are NOT under APEDA**; they fall under the **Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA)** under the same Ministry.)

Q4. With reference to the certifications held by OVO Farm Pvt Ltd, consider the following statements:

1. The facility is certified under FSSC 22000 Version 6.
2. It holds both HALAL and KOSHER certifications.
3. The facility complies with European Union hygiene regulations and EIC standards.
4. FSSC 22000 is a financial accounting standard for export-oriented companies.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **FSSC 22000 is a Food Safety System Certification scheme**, NOT a financial accounting standard.)

Q5. With reference to the dried whole egg powder, consider the following statements:

1. It is produced through the spray-drying of liquid eggs.
2. It has a longer shelf life than fresh eggs and is easier to transport and store.
3. It is widely used in the food processing, bakery, confectionery, and pharmaceutical industries.
4. India is currently the world's largest producer of eggs, ahead of China and the United States.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; India is the **3rd largest egg producer globally**, after **China (1st)** and the **United States (2nd)**.)

Q6. With reference to the institutional context of APEDA, consider the following statements:

1. The current Chairman of APEDA is Shri Abhishek Dev, IAS.
2. APEDA is headquartered in New Delhi and has 15 Regional Offices across India.
3. APEDA implements the National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP).
4. APEDA's Chairman is appointed by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; APEDA's **Chairman is appointed by the Central Government** (Section 4 of APEDA Act), NOT by the CAG.)

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the APEDA Chairman flagged off the shipment virtually.
2. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because APEDA replaced PFEPC, not MPEDA.
3. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because marine products fall under MPEDA, not APEDA.
4. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because FSSC 22000 is a food safety standard.
5. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because India is 3rd, not 1st.
6. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the Chairman is appointed by the Central Government.

Exam Relevance

Banking (RBI Gr B, SBI PO, IBPS, NABARD)	**Very high importance, Agri-exports, APEDA, Food processing**
NABARD Grade A	**Very high importance, Direct subject — Agriculture, Rural development, Agro-processing**
RBI Grade B	**ESI awareness, Agri-trade, External sector**
SIDBI Grade A	**MSME-led food processing, Rural enterprises**

5. India Becomes World's Top Ship Recycling Nation in 2025

Source: News on Air

Context

India has emerged as the world's leading ship recycling nation in 2025, with its share of **global ship recycling rising to 35.4 per cent**, up from **30.1 per cent in 2024**, according to the **latest report by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)**. The **Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MoPSW)** announced on **22 June 2026 (Monday)** that **ship recycling in India rose significantly to 2.99 million gross tonnes (GT) in 2025**, up **nearly 60 per cent** from **1.86 million GT in 2024**. With this achievement, the target set under the **Maritime India Vision (MIV) 2030** to become the world's leading ship recycling nation has been **achieved five years ahead of schedule**. **Union Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, Sarbananda Sonowal**, emphasised that this reflects the success of **sustained policy reforms, industry efforts, and adherence to international environmental and safety standards** under the leadership of **Prime Minister Narendra Modi**. He underlined that the achievement **reinforces India's position as a global hub for responsible and sustainable ship recycling**. According to the **Baltic and International Maritime Council (BIMCO)**, **more than 16,000 vessels are expected to be recycled globally over the next decade**, and with its current market share, India is well-positioned to recycle **500 to 600 vessels annually**.

The Announcement

- **Announced by**: **Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MoPSW)**.
- **Source Report**: **UNCTAD's Latest Report on Maritime Transport**.
- **Achievement**: **World's Top Ship Recycling Nation in 2025**.

About Sarbananda Sonowal

- **Position**: **Union Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways** (Cabinet Minister).
- **Also holds**: **Minister of AYUSH**.
- **Native State**: **Assam**.
- **Member of Parliament**: **Rajya Sabha (Assam)**.

Maritime India Vision (MIV) 2030

- **Launched**: **2021** by **Prime Minister Narendra Modi**.
- **Goal**: Comprehensive blueprint for **maritime sector development by 2030**.
- **Ship Recycling Target**: To become the **world's leading ship recycling nation by 2030**.
- **Achievement**: Target met in **2025**, **five years ahead of schedule**.

Hong Kong International Convention (HKC)

- **Full Name**: **Hong Kong International Convention for the Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships, 2009**.
- **Adopted**: **2009** in **Hong Kong**.
- **Entered into Force Globally**: **26 June 2025**.
- **Aim**: Ensure ships, when recycled, **do not pose risks to human health, safety, or the environment**.
- **Key Requirements**: Inventory of Hazardous Materials (IHM), Ship Recycling Plan, certifications.

About Alang-Sosiya Ship Recycling Yard (ASSRY)

- **Location**: **Bhavnagar district, Gujarat**, on the **Gulf of Khambhat**.
- **Established**: **1983** (first ship **MV Kota Tenjong**, beached on **13 February 1983**).
- **Stretches**: **10 km long beach**.
- **Geographical Advantages**:
  - **Tidal range**: **10–11 metres** (up to 36 feet at peak).
  - **Beach gradient**: **15 degrees**, ideal for beaching ships.
  - **Sheltered location** in Gulf of Khambhat.

- **Regulated by**: **Gujarat Maritime Board (GMB)**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to India becoming the world's top ship recycling nation in 2025, consider the following statements:

1. India's share of global ship recycling increased to 35.4% in 2025 from 30.1% in 2024.
2. The achievement was based on the latest report by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).
3. Ship recycling volume rose to 2.99 million gross tonnes in 2025, up nearly 60% from 2024.
4. The achievement was announced by the Ministry of External Affairs.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **achievement was announced by the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MoPSW)**, NOT the Ministry of External Affairs.)

Q2. With reference to the Maritime India Vision (MIV) 2030, consider the following statements:

1. It was launched in 2021 by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
2. It is a 10-year blueprint for comprehensive development of India's maritime sector.
3. The ship recycling target under MIV 2030 has been achieved five years ahead of schedule in 2025.
4. The vision is implemented by the Ministry of Defence.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; MIV 2030 is implemented by the **Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways**, NOT the Ministry of Defence.)

Q3. With reference to the Recycling of Ships Act, 2019, consider the following statements:

1. It received Presidential assent on 13 December 2019.
2. It aligns India's ship recycling ecosystem with the Hong Kong International Convention.
3. India acceded to the Hong Kong Convention on 28 November 2019.
4. The Act permits unrestricted use of hazardous materials on new ships.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the Act **restricts and prohibits the use of hazardous materials** on new ships from the date the legislation comes into force.)

Q4. With reference to the Hong Kong International Convention (HKC), consider the following statements:

1. It was adopted in 2009 in Hong Kong under the aegis of the International Maritime Organization (IMO).
2. It entered into force globally on 26 June 2025.
3. It aims to ensure safe and environmentally sound recycling of ships.
4. India is yet to ratify the HKC.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **India ratified/acceded to the HKC on 28 November 2019**.)

Q5. With reference to the Alang-Sosiya Ship Recycling Yard (ASSRY), consider the following

statements:

1. It is located in Bhavnagar district of Gujarat on the Gulf of Khambhat.
2. It accounts for approximately 98% of India's ship recycling and around 32% of global volume.
3. It is regulated by the Gujarat Maritime Board (GMB).
4. It was established in 2019 after the Recycling of Ships Act.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; Alang was **established in 1983**, with the first ship **MV Kota Tenjong** beached on **13 February 1983**, decades before the 2019 Act.)

Q6. With reference to the Ship-breaking Credit Note Scheme and BIMCO projections, consider the following statements:

1. Under the scheme, ship owners receive a credit note equivalent to 40% of the scrap value of a recycled ship.
2. The credit note can be used towards up to 5% of the value of a new vessel built at an Indian shipyard.
3. According to BIMCO, more than 16,000 vessels are expected to be recycled globally over the next decade.
4. BIMCO is a United Nations specialised agency for global shipping.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **BIMCO (Baltic and International Maritime Council)** is an **international shipping association based in Denmark**, NOT a UN specialised agency. The UN specialised agency for shipping is the **IMO (International Maritime Organization)**.)

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because MoPSW announced it, not MEA.
2. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because MoPSW (not Defence) implements MIV 2030.
3. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the Act restricts hazardous materials.
4. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because India acceded to HKC in November 2019.
5. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because Alang was established in 1983.
6. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because BIMCO is a private association, not a UN agency.

6. 16th BRICS National Security Advisers' Meeting Begins in New Delhi

Context

India is hosting the **16th BRICS National Security Advisers' (NSAs) Meeting** in **New Delhi** from **22 to 23 June 2026**, chaired by **National Security Adviser (NSA) Ajit Doval, KC**. The two-day gathering brings together **security chiefs and heads of delegation from all 11 BRICS member countries — Brazil, China, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Iran, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE)**. The deliberations focus on the theme **'Non-traditional Security Challenges Confronting the World Today'**, with sessions covering the **rapidly evolving nature of national security threats**, the **role of new technologies in emerging security risks**, **cybersecurity**, **digital vulnerabilities**, and **AI-driven threats**. Delegates will also review outcomes of the recently-held **BRICS Joint Working Groups on Counter-Terrorism** and on **Security in the Use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)**.

The meeting takes place as **India holds the BRICS Chairship for the fourth time in 2026** (after **2012, 2016, and 2021**), under the theme **'Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability' (BRICS)** — reflecting Prime Minister **Narendra Modi's people-centric and humanity-first vision** articulated at the **17th BRICS Summit in Rio de Janeiro (July 2025)**. Key attendees include **Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi**, **Russian Security Council Secretary Sergey Shoigu**, and **Iran's Deputy Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council Ghadir Nezamipour**.

The Meeting

- **Event**: **16th BRICS National Security Advisers' Meeting**.
- **Venue**: **New Delhi**.
- **Chair**: **NSA Ajit Doval, KC**.
- **Theme**: **'Non-traditional Security Challenges Confronting the World Today'**.
- **Organising body**: **Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), Government of India**.

11 BRICS Member Countries (Verified)

#	Country	Joined
1	**Brazil**	Founding (2006/2009)
2	**Russia**	Founding (2006/2009)
3	**India**	Founding (2006/2009)
4	**China**	Founding (2006/2009)
5	**South Africa**	**2010** (BRIC → BRICS)
6	**Egypt**	**1 January 2024**
7	**Ethiopia**	**1 January 2024**
8	**Iran**	**1 January 2024**
9	**United Arab Emirates (UAE)**	**1 January 2024**
10	**Indonesia**	**6 January 2025**
11	**Saudi Arabia**	**2025** (formally became member)

Discussion Themes

- **Rapidly evolving nature of national security threats**.
- **Role of new technologies in emerging security risks**.
- **Cybersecurity and digital vulnerabilities**.
- **Artificial Intelligence (AI)-driven threats**.
- **Counter-terrorism cooperation**.
- **Security in the use of ICTs**.
- **Climate-related security risks**.
- **Food and energy security**.

India's BRICS Chairship 2026

- **4th Chairship** (after **2012, 2016, 2021**).
- **Theme**: **"Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability" (BRICS acronym)**.
- **Vision**: **People-centric and humanity-first approach** by PM Modi articulated at **17th BRICS Summit, Rio de Janeiro (July 2025)**.
- **Logo**: **Lotus** (purity, resilience, progress) with **petals in colours of all BRICS members**.
- **18th BRICS Summit**: Scheduled for **12–13 September 2026** in **New Delhi**.

Three Core Pillars of BRICS Cooperation

1. **Political and Security Cooperation**.
2. **Economic and Financial Cooperation**.
3. **Cultural and People-to-People Exchanges**.

India's Previous BRICS Chairships

Year	Chairship	Summit	Venue
2012	1st	**4th BRICS Summit**	**New Delhi**
2016	2nd	**8th BRICS Summit**	**Goa**
2021	3rd	**13th BRICS Summit**	**Virtual**
2026	4th	**18th BRICS Summit**	**New Delhi** (12–13 Sept 2026)

What is BRICS?

- An **intergovernmental organisation** of **major emerging market economies**.
- **Acronym**: **B**razil, **R**ussia, **I**ndia, **C**hina, **S**outh Africa (later expanded).
- **Formed**: **2006** at **UN General Assembly (UNGA) sidelines** in **New York**.
- **1st Summit**: **Yekaterinburg, Russia, 2009**.
- **Not a treaty-based organisation**: Operates through **annual summits**, **rotating chair**, and **ministerial meetings**.
- **Economic Weight (2025–26)**: ~**40% of global GDP (PPP)**, ~**46% of world population**, ~**26% of international trade**.

BRICS History

- **2001**: Term **"BRIC"** coined by **Jim O'Neill**, Goldman Sachs economist.
- **2006**: 1st BRIC Foreign Ministers' meeting at **UNGA sidelines**, New York.
- **2009**: 1st BRIC Summit at **Yekaterinburg, Russia**.
- **2010**: **South Africa** invited to join.
- **2011**: **3rd Summit at Sanya, China** — first as **BRICS**.
- **2023**: **15th Summit, Johannesburg** — 6 countries invited.
- **2024**: **Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, UAE** joined (1 January).
- **2024**: **16th Summit at Kazan, Russia** — Partner country category created.
- **2025**: **Indonesia** joined (6 January); **Saudi Arabia** formalised membership.
- **2025**: **17th Summit at Rio de Janeiro, Brazil** (July).
- **2026**: **India holds Chairship**; **18th Summit at New Delhi** (12–13 Sept).

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the 16th BRICS National Security Advisers' Meeting held in New Delhi, consider the following statements:

1. The meeting was held on 22–23 June 2026 and chaired by National Security Adviser Ajit Doval.
2. The theme of the meeting was "Non-traditional Security Challenges Confronting the World Today".
3. The meeting included a review of outcomes from BRICS Joint Working Groups on Counter-Terrorism and Security in the Use of ICTs.
4. The meeting was attended by representatives from only the original 5 BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa).

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the meeting was attended by **all 11 BRICS member countries**, including the new members **Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, UAE, Indonesia, and Saudi Arabia**.)

Q2. With reference to BRICS membership in 2026, consider the following statements:

1. BRICS currently has 11 full member countries.
2. Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, and the UAE joined as full members on 1 January 2024.
3. Indonesia became a full member on 6 January 2025.
4. Argentina is currently a full member of BRICS.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **Argentina was invited in 2023 but withdrew its application** under President Javier Milei in December 2023; Argentina is **NOT a member of BRICS**.)

Q3. With reference to India's BRICS Chairship in 2026, consider the following statements:

1. India holds the BRICS Chairship for the fourth time in 2026, having previously chaired in 2012, 2016, and 2021.
2. India's BRICS Chairship is guided by the theme "Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability".
3. The theme reflects PM Narendra Modi's people-centric vision articulated at the 17th BRICS Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 2025.
4. The 18th BRICS Summit will be hosted by Brazil in 2026.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **18th BRICS Summit will be hosted by India in New Delhi on 12–13 September 2026**, NOT Brazil.)

Q4. With reference to the BRICS grouping, consider the following statements:

1. The term "BRIC" was coined by economist Jim O'Neill of Goldman Sachs in 2001.
2. The first BRIC Summit was held in Yekaterinburg, Russia, in 2009.
3. South Africa joined the bloc in 2010, transforming it from BRIC to BRICS.
4. BRICS is a treaty-based military alliance.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; BRICS is **NOT a treaty-based organisation** and **NOT a military alliance**; it operates through annual summits, rotating chair, and ministerial meetings.)

Q5. With reference to the three core pillars of BRICS cooperation, consider the following statements:

1. The pillars are: political and security cooperation; economic and financial cooperation; and cultural and people-to-people exchanges.
2. The agenda has expanded beyond the original economic focus to include counter-terrorism, climate change, and ICT security.
3. The New Development Bank (NDB) was established in 2014 and is headquartered in Shanghai.
4. The Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA) is a $50 billion liquidity backstop for BRICS members.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA) is a $100 billion liquidity backstop**, NOT $50 billion.)

Q6. With reference to NSA Ajit Doval's bilateral engagements on the sidelines of the 16th BRICS NSAs Meeting, consider the following statements:

1. He met Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in discussions described as "constructive and forward-looking".
2. He held talks with South Africa's Minister in the Presidency, Khumbudzo Ntshavheni.
3. He met Russian Security Council Secretary Sergey Shoigu, who arrived in New Delhi for the meeting.
4. He held bilateral talks with the US Secretary of State on the sidelines of the meeting.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **US is NOT a BRICS member**, so the US Secretary of State did **not attend** the BRICS NSAs meeting; NSA Doval's bilateral engagements were with BRICS counterparts only.)

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because all 11 BRICS members attended.
2. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because Argentina withdrew its application in December 2023.
3. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because India (not Brazil) hosts the 18th Summit.
4. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because BRICS is not a treaty-based military alliance.
5. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the CRA is $100 billion, not $50 billion.
6. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the US is not a BRICS member.

Banking and Finance

1. SEBI Approves Wider Use of Intraday Borrowing by Mutual Funds for Liquidity Management

Source: News on Air

Context

The **Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)**, India's **capital markets regulator**, has **approved amendments to the SEBI (Mutual Funds) Regulations, 2026** allowing **mutual funds to use intraday borrowing facilities for a wider range of liquidity management purposes**, beyond just **redemption and unitholder payouts**. This decision was approved at the **214th SEBI Board Meeting held in Mumbai on 19 June 2026**, following a **Consultation Paper issued on 13 May 2026** (with public comments invited till **3 June 2026**) and detailed discussions with the **Mutual Fund Advisory Committee (MFAC)**, the **Association of Mutual Funds in India (AMFI)**, and other stakeholders. The expanded framework allows **Asset Management Companies (AMCs)** to use **intraday borrowings** for: (a) **trade settlements** (pay-in/pay-out timing mismatches), (b) **foreign exchange (forex) obligations**, (c) **derivative-related Mark-to-Market (MTM) payments**, and (d) **repayment of existing borrowings**. Intraday borrowings can now also exceed the value of **guaranteed receivables** from the **Government of India, RBI, and clearing corporations**, provided they are **extinguished by end of day** or **converted into overnight borrowings within prescribed limits**. SEBI clarified that **intraday borrowings cannot be used as a source of leverage**, and the **cost or charges must be borne by the AMC**, not by investors. The decision was taken under the chairmanship of **SEBI Chairman Tuhin Kanta Pandey**.

The Decision

- **Venue**: **214th SEBI Board Meeting, Mumbai**.
- **Chair**: **Tuhin Kanta Pandey**, SEBI Chairman.
- **Amendments to**: **SEBI (Mutual Funds) Regulations, 2026**.

Existing Framework

- **SEBI (Mutual Funds) Regulations, 2026**: Came into effect on **1 April 2026**.
- **Original Provision**: Intraday borrowing **only for redemption/unitholder payouts**.
- **Restriction**: Borrowing **limited to guaranteed receivables** from **GoI, RBI, CCIL** and other clearing corporations.
- **Implementation Deferred**: Till **15 July 2026** due to operational challenges raised by AMFI/AMCs.

Why the Change?

- **AMFI Representations**: Highlighted that **narrow scope did not reflect actual industry usage**.
- **Real-world Practice**: Mutual funds use intraday borrowing for:
  - **Trade pay-in obligations**.
  - **Forex settlements**.
  - **Derivative margin requirements**.
  - **Repayment of existing borrowings**.

Revised Framework

Feature	Previous Framework	Revised Framework
Purposes Permitted	Redemption/unitholder payouts only	**Trade settlements, forex, MTM derivatives, repayment of borrowings, redemptions**
Receivable Basis	Only **guaranteed receivables** (GoI, RBI, CCIL)	**Expected inflows including non-guaranteed** (secondary market, maturity proceeds)
Borrowing Cap	Limited to guaranteed receivables	**Can exceed receivables** if repaid by end-of-day
Use as Leverage	Restricted	**Explicitly prohibited as leverage**
Cost Bearer	AMC	**AMC** (no change; investors protected)
Existing 20% Cap	Applies	**Continues to apply** for unitholder payouts

Existing Borrowing Limits (Verified — Regulation 42(1) of SEBI MF Regulations, 2026)

- **Maximum borrowing**: **Up to 20% of scheme's net assets**.
- **Maximum duration**: **6 months**.
- **Purposes**: **Temporary liquidity needs** for:
  - **Repurchase/redemption of units**.
  - **Payment of interest/IDCW payouts**.
  - **Trade settlement by equity index/ETFs on account of under-execution**.

Open Market Share Buybacks

- **Reintroduced** through **stock exchanges from 1 August 2026**.
- Amendments to **SEBI (Buy-back of Securities) Regulations, 2018**.
- **Timeline**: Must be completed within **66 working days**.
- **First half**: At least **40% of earmarked funds** to be deployed.
- **Routes**: In addition to existing **tender offer and book-building routes**.

GARUDA Mechanism for AIFs

- **GARUDA** = **G**reen-Channel: **A**IF **R**ollout **U**pon **D**ocument **A**cknowledgement.
- **New scheme launch timeline reduced** to **10 working days** for regular AIFs.
- **Accredited-investor-only schemes and angel funds**: Can launch **immediately upon registration**.
- **Aim**: Faster, more efficient capital deployment by **Alternative Investment Funds (AIFs)**.

What is a Mutual Fund?

- A **pooled investment vehicle** managed by an **Asset Management Company (AMC)**.
- Collects money from **multiple investors** and invests in **equity, debt, hybrid securities**, etc.
- **Regulated by**: **SEBI**, since **1996** through SEBI (Mutual Funds) Regulations.
- **Industry size**: **Average AUM ≈ ₹82 lakh crore** (as of April 2026).

About AMFI

- **Full Name**: **Association of Mutual Funds in India**.
- **Established**: **22 August 1995**.
- **HQ**: **Mumbai**.
- **Function**: **Industry body** for development of mutual fund industry, **self-regulation**, **investor education**.
- **Tagline**: "Mutual Funds Sahi Hai".

About SEBI

- **Full Name**: **Securities and Exchange Board of India**.
- **Established**: **12 April 1988** (non-statutory); statutory powers via **SEBI Act, 1992**.
- **HQ**: **Mumbai**.
- **Chairman**: **Tuhin Kanta Pandey** (since 1 March 2025).
- **Functions**: Regulator of **securities and commodity markets**.
- **Reports to**: **Ministry of Finance, Government of India**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the SEBI proposal/approval on intraday borrowing by mutual funds, consider the following statements:

1. The consultation paper was issued on 13 May 2026 and the proposal was approved at the 214th SEBI Board Meeting on 19 June 2026.
2. Mutual funds can now use intraday borrowing for trade settlements, forex obligations, and derivative-related payments.
3. Any cost or charges related to intraday borrowing must be borne by the Asset Management Company (AMC), not by investors.
4. Intraday borrowings can be used as a source of leverage to enhance investment exposure.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; SEBI **explicitly clarified that intraday borrowings cannot be used as a source of leverage**.)

Q2. With reference to the existing borrowing framework for mutual funds under Regulation 42(1) of SEBI (Mutual Funds) Regulations, 2026, consider the following statements:

1. Mutual funds cannot borrow more than 20% of a scheme's net assets.
2. Borrowings cannot extend beyond six months.

3. Borrowings can be used to meet temporary liquidity needs for redemption, interest payments, and IDCW payouts.
4. Mutual funds are permitted unlimited borrowing for any purpose at all times.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **borrowings are strictly capped at 20% of net assets** and restricted to **temporary liquidity needs**.)

Q3. With reference to the Association of Mutual Funds in India (AMFI), consider the following statements:

1. AMFI was established on 22 August 1995.
2. It is headquartered in Mumbai.
3. Its functions include industry development, investor education, and self-regulation.
4. AMFI is a statutory regulator of the mutual fund industry in India.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **AMFI is an industry body, NOT a statutory regulator**; the **statutory regulator of mutual funds is SEBI**.)

Q4. With reference to the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), consider the following statements:

1. SEBI was established as a non-statutory body on 12 April 1988.
2. It was granted statutory powers through the SEBI Act, 1992.
3. The current Chairman of SEBI is Tuhin Kanta Pandey, who took charge on 1 March 2025.
4. SEBI is headquartered in New Delhi.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; SEBI is **headquartered in Mumbai**, NOT New Delhi.)

Q5. With reference to other SEBI reforms approved at the 214th Board Meeting on 19 June 2026, consider the following statements:

1. Open market share buybacks through stock exchanges have been reintroduced from 1 August 2026.
2. Such buybacks must be completed within 66 working days.
3. The GARUDA mechanism reduces the AIF scheme launch timeline to 10 working days for regular AIFs.
4. GARUDA stands for "General Authority for Regulating Underwriting and Distribution Activities".

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **GARUDA stands for "Green-Channel: AIF Rollout Upon Document Acknowledgement"**, NOT "General Authority for Regulating Underwriting and Distribution Activities".)

Q6. With reference to the Clearing Corporation of India Limited (CCIL), consider the following statements:

1. CCIL was established on 30 April 2001 and is headquartered in Mumbai.
2. It provides clearing and settlement services for transactions in money, G-Secs, forex, and derivative markets.

3. Receivables from CCIL are considered guaranteed receivables for mutual funds.
4. CCIL is a subsidiary of the Reserve Bank of India.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **CCIL is NOT a subsidiary of the RBI**; it is an **independent clearing corporation** with shareholders including major banks and financial institutions, though RBI plays a supervisory role.)

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because intraday borrowings cannot be used as leverage.
2. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because borrowings are capped at 20% of net assets.
3. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because AMFI is an industry body, not a statutory regulator.
4. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because SEBI is headquartered in Mumbai.
5. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because GARUDA's expansion is different.
6. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because CCIL is not an RBI subsidiary.

2. RBI Defers Revised Kisan Credit Card (KCC) Directions Implementation to 1 January 2027

Source: Business Standard

Context

The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has **deferred the implementation of the revised Kisan Credit Card (KCC) Directions by six months — to 1 January 2027** from the originally proposed **1 July 2026** — after accepting stakeholder feedback on **operational and technology-related challenges**. The announcement was made via an RBI release on **Friday, 19 June 2026**, formally issuing the **final KCC Directions, 2026 for Commercial Banks, Small Finance Banks (SFBs), Regional Rural Banks (RRBs), and Rural Co-operative Banks**. The Directions follow **draft norms issued on 12 February 2026** for public consultation. **KCC loans sanctioned before 1 January 2027 will continue to be governed by existing KCC guidelines until maturity or the next renewal**. Key modifications accepted include: **standardising crop seasons** at **12 months for short-duration crops** and **18 months for long-duration crops** (aligned with **Income Recognition and Asset Classification (IRAC) norms**); incorporating references to **District Level Technical Committees (DLTCs)**; including an **indicative list of technological interventions**; extending **Flexi KCC to allied activities**; and **rounding off KCC credit limits to the nearest ₹1,000**. The RBI also clarified that **term loans exceeding 6 years** will be treated as **separate credit facilities outside the KCC framework**; banks may **maintain separate loan accounts** for short-term working capital and long-term investment components; and **collateral-free agricultural lending remains at ₹2 lakh** (extended to **₹3 lakh** for loans with hypothecation and tie-up arrangements). RBI declined suggestions to **raise the Flexi KCC limit, permit lending beyond Scale of Finance (SoF), raise the collateral-free limit, allow renewals based on interest servicing, and consolidate credit sub-limits**. **Interest subvention under MISS, cooperative reporting to CICs, and KCC portability** were declared outside the scope of these Directions.

The Announcement

- **Released by**: **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)**.
- **Document**: **KCC Directions, 2026** (Master Direction).
- **Original Implementation Date**: **1 July 2026**.
- **Revised Implementation Date**: **1 January 2027** (deferred by **6 months**).
- **Draft Issued On**: **12 February 2026**.

Applicable Banks

- **Commercial Banks** (Public & Private).
- **Small Finance Banks (SFBs)**.
- **Regional Rural Banks (RRBs)**.
- **Rural Co-operative Banks**.

Transition Rule

- **KCC loans sanctioned before 1 January 2027**: Continue under **existing guidelines** until **maturity** or **next renewal**.
- **KCC loans sanctioned on/after 1 January 2027**: Governed by the **new Directions**.

Suggestions Accepted by RBI (Key Modifications)

1. **Crop Season Standardisation** (aligned with IRAC norms):
   - **Short-duration crops**: **12 months**.
   - **Long-duration crops**: **18 months**.
2. **Inclusion of DLTC references** in the Directions.
3. **Indicative list of technological interventions** for KCC framework.
4. **Flexi KCC applicability** to **allied activities** (animal husbandry, fisheries, etc.).
5. **Rounding off credit limits** to **nearest ₹1,000**.
6. **Borrower consent** for **insurance premiums** can be obtained at the **application stage**.

Clarifications Made by RBI

Clarification	Details
SoF Continuity	If **Scale of Finance** is not revised for a subsequent year, banks should continue with **existing SoF**; **no automatic increase** in drawing limits.
SoF Determination	KCC loans **require SoF determined** by **State Level Technical Committees (SLTC)** or **District Level Technical Committees (DLTC)**.
Term Loans > 6 Years	Treated as **separate credit facilities outside KCC framework**.
Loan Accounts	Banks may **maintain separate accounts** for short-term (working capital) and long-term (investment) components.
Insurance Premiums	**Explicit borrower consent** at the **application stage** required.

Suggestions NOT Accepted by RBI

- **Increase Flexi KCC limit**.
- **Permit lending beyond notified Scale of Finance (SoF)**.
- **Increase collateral-free lending limit** (RBI noted limit was revised in **December 2024**).
- **Allow KCC renewals based on interest servicing alone**.
- **Single consolidated credit limit** (instead of separate sub-limits).

Issues Outside the Scope of Directions

- **Interest subvention** under the **Modified Interest Subvention Scheme (MISS)**.
- **Reporting by cooperative institutions** to **Credit Information Companies (CICs)**.
- **KCC portability** across banks.

Key Features of the Revised KCC Framework

Feature	Details
Type	**Composite credit facility**
Tenure	**6 years**
Crop Seasons	**12 months (short-duration), 18 months (long-duration)**
Sub-limits	Permitted for **operational convenience**
Repayment	Based on **crop season** or **cash flow** of allied activities
Collateral-Free Limit	**₹2 lakh per borrower**
Hypothecation + Tie-up Limit	**₹3 lakh per borrower**
Voluntary Pledge	Gold/silver pledge **not treated as violation** of collateral-free norms
Above ₹2 lakh	Banks decide collateral and margin as per **internal credit policy**

Eligible Borrowers Under KCC

- **Farmers (individual/joint)** — owner cultivators.
- **Tenant farmers, oral lessees, sharecroppers**.
- **Self-Help Groups (SHGs)**.
- **Joint Liability Groups (JLGs)**.

Coverage of KCC Credit

- **Short-term credit** for crop cultivation (seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, labour).
- **Post-harvest expenses**.
- **Working capital** for farm assets and allied activities.
- **Investment credit** for agriculture and allied activities.
- **Allied activities**: animal husbandry, fisheries, aquaculture, sericulture, lac culture, beekeeping.
- **Household consumption** (limited).

About the Kisan Credit Card Scheme

Genesis

- **Launched**: **August 1998**.
- **Conceptualised by**: **National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD)**.
- **Based on**: **R.V. Gupta Committee** recommendations.
- **Purpose**: Provide **timely and adequate institutional credit** to farmers, replacing **dependence on moneylenders**.

Historical Milestones

Year	Milestone
1998 (August)	KCC Scheme launched
2004	Expanded to **investment credit** and **non-farm allied activities**
2006-07	**Interest Subvention Scheme (ISS)** began
2018-19	Extended to **animal husbandry and fisheries**
December 2020	**Revised KCC Scheme** launched by **PM Modi**
September 2023	**Kisan Rin Portal** launched to digitise claims
2024-25	**MISS limit raised** from ₹3 lakh to ₹5 lakh (Budget 2025-26)

Year	Milestone
June 2026	**Final KCC Directions, 2026** issued for 1 January 2027

Modified Interest Subvention Scheme (MISS)

- **Effective Rate**: **4%** for farmers with prompt repayment.
- **Components**:
  - **Card Rate**: **9% p.a.**
  - **Interest Subvention (IS)**: **2% to banks** (Govt of India).
  - **Prompt Repayment Incentive (PRI)**: **3% to farmers**.
- **Loan Limit Under MISS (Budget 2025-26)**: **Raised from ₹3 lakh to ₹5 lakh**.
- **Coverage Expansion**: **10 million additional farmers**.

Insurance Benefits Under KCC

- **Personal Accidental Insurance**:
  - **Death/Permanent Disability**: **₹50,000**.
  - **Other risks**: **₹25,000**.
- **Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY)** integration.

KCC Growth Statistics

Metric	Value
Operative KCC Loans (March 2014)	**₹4.26 lakh crore**
Operative KCC Loans (December 2024)	**₹10.05 lakh crore**
Total Cards Issued (2023)	**Over 20 crore (200 million)**
NAFIS 2021-22 Penetration	**44.1% of agri households** (up from 10.5%)

About the Reserve Bank of India (RBI, Verified)

Feature	Details
Established	**1 April 1935** under **RBI Act, 1934**
Nationalised	**1 January 1949**
HQ	**Mumbai**
Governor (Current)	**Sanjay Malhotra** (since 11 December 2024)
Role	**Central bank**, monetary authority, regulator of banking and payment systems

About NABARD

Feature	Details
Established	**12 July 1982** under the **NABARD Act, 1981**
HQ	**Mumbai**
Chairman	**Shaji K.V.**
Role	**Apex development bank** for **agriculture and rural development**.
Functions	Refinance, supervision (of RRBs and Cooperative banks), institutional capacity building, KCC model.

About Scale of Finance (SoF)

- The **per-acre/hectare credit limit** for **various crops and activities**.
- **Determined annually** by **District Level Technical Committees (DLTCs)** at the district level.

- **State Level Technical Committees (SLTCs)** approve state-wide standardisation.
- **Includes**: Cost of seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, labour, electricity, water, etc.

Calculation of KCC Drawing Limit

- **Formula**: **(SoF for crop × Area cultivated) + 10% of limit** (for household/post-harvest expenses).

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the revised KCC Directions issued by RBI in June 2026, consider the following statements:

1. The RBI deferred implementation from 1 July 2026 to 1 January 2027.
2. KCC loans sanctioned before 1 January 2027 will continue under existing guidelines until maturity or next renewal.
3. The Directions apply to Commercial Banks, Small Finance Banks, Regional Rural Banks, and Rural Co-operative Banks.
4. The Directions were issued by the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD).

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **Directions were issued by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI)**, NOT NABARD. NABARD conceptualised the original KCC scheme in 1998.)

Q2. With reference to crop season standardisation under the new KCC Directions, consider the following statements:

1. Short-duration crops will be standardised at 12 months.
2. Long-duration crops will be standardised at 18 months.
3. The standardisation aligns with the Income Recognition and Asset Classification (IRAC) norms.
4. The standardisation will apply uniformly to all crops without distinction.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the standardisation **distinguishes between short-duration (12 months) and long-duration (18 months) crops**, not a uniform period.)

Q3. With reference to the Kisan Credit Card (KCC) Scheme, consider the following statements:

1. The KCC Scheme was launched in August 1998.
2. The scheme was conceptualised by NABARD based on the R.V. Gupta Committee recommendations.
3. In 2004, the scheme was expanded to include investment credit and non-farm allied activities.
4. The KCC scheme is administered exclusively by Public Sector Banks.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the KCC scheme is administered by **Commercial Banks (public and private), Small Finance Banks, Regional Rural Banks, and Rural Co-operative Banks**, NOT exclusively by PSBs.)

Q4. With reference to the Modified Interest Subvention Scheme (MISS) for KCC loans, consider the following statements:

1. The card rate is 9% per annum, with 2% interest subvention to banks and 3% Prompt Repayment Incentive (PRI) to farmers, making the effective rate 4%.
2. The Union Budget 2025-26 raised the MISS loan limit from ₹3 lakh to ₹5 lakh.

3. Issues relating to MISS were declared outside the scope of the new KCC Directions issued on 19 June 2026.
4. Interest subvention under MISS is provided to all categories of KCC borrowers regardless of loan repayment behaviour.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **3% Prompt Repayment Incentive (PRI) is conditional on timely repayment** — farmers who do not repay on time get only the 2% subvention component.)

Q5. With reference to the proposals not accepted by RBI in the revised KCC Directions, consider the following statements:

1. RBI did not increase the collateral-free lending limit, noting it was revised as recently as December 2024.
2. RBI did not permit lending beyond the notified Scale of Finance (SoF).
3. RBI did not accept a proposal for single consolidated credit limit instead of separate sub-limits.
4. RBI agreed to allow KCC renewals based purely on interest servicing.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; RBI **did NOT accept** the proposal to allow KCC renewals based on interest servicing alone.)

Q6. With reference to clarifications by RBI in the revised KCC Directions, consider the following statements:

1. Term loans with a tenure exceeding 6 years will be treated as separate credit facilities outside the KCC framework.
2. Banks may maintain separate loan accounts for short-term working capital and long-term investment components.
3. KCC credit limits will be rounded off to the nearest ₹1,000.
4. Where Scale of Finance is not revised for a subsequent year, banks must automatically increase the drawing limit by 10%.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; RBI clarified that **no automatic increase in drawing limits is envisaged**; banks should continue using the **existing SoF**.)

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because RBI (not NABARD) issued the Directions.
2. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because standardisation distinguishes short and long-duration crops.
3. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because KCC is offered by multiple bank categories.
4. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because PRI is conditional on timely repayment.
5. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because RBI rejected the interest-servicing renewal proposal.

6. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because no automatic increase in SoF is envisaged.

Exam Relevance

Banking (RBI Gr B, SBI PO, IBPS, NABARD)	**Very high importance, Direct subject matter on KCC, MISS, agricultural credit**
RBI Grade B	**Extremely high importance, Direct subject matter, Finance & Management**
NABARD Grade A	**Extremely high importance, Direct subject matter — KCC scheme**
SIDBI Grade A	**Rural finance, MSME-agri linkage**

Facts To Remember

1. 19th Mumbai International Film Festival Concludes; Polish Documentary Silver Wins Golden Conch

The 19th Mumbai International Film Festival (MIFF 2026) concluded in Mumbai, where Polish documentary *Silver* won the prestigious **Golden Conch Award**. Maharashtra Governor Jishnu Dev Varma described MIFF as one of the world's leading festivals for non-fiction cinema, highlighting its contribution to documentary and short filmmaking.

2. President Droupadi Murmu Reviews Project Cheetah at Kuno National Park

President Droupadi Murmu visited Kuno National Park to review the progress of **Project Cheetah**, India's flagship wildlife conservation initiative aimed at reintroducing cheetahs into the wild after their extinction in the country. The visit focused on conservation progress and habitat management.

3. INS Tarkash Reaches Mauritius During Operational Deployment

INS Tarkash reached Port Louis, Mauritius, as part of its operational deployment in the South West Indian Ocean Region. The deployment strengthens India's maritime cooperation and enhances regional security and naval diplomacy.

4. PM Modi Congratulates Indian Women's Hockey Team on Nations Cup Victory

Prime Minister Narendra Modi congratulated the Indian Women's Hockey Team for winning the **FIH Women's Nations Cup**. He praised the team for their outstanding performance and acknowledged their achievement as a major milestone for Indian hockey.

5. KVIC Celebrates 12th International Yoga Day

The Khadi and Village Industries Commission celebrated the **12th International Yoga Day** in New Delhi. KVIC Chairman Manoj Goel encouraged participants to embrace yoga for a healthier and more balanced lifestyle.

6. India to Host 11th BRICS Energy Ministers' Meeting

India will host the **11th BRICS Energy Ministers' Meeting** in Gurugram, Haryana, on 25–26 June 2026 under its BRICS Chairship. The meeting will focus on energy security, clean energy transition, and sustainable cooperation among BRICS nations.

7. Ministry of Earth Sciences and IMD Observe International Yoga Day

The Ministry of Earth Sciences and India Meteorological Department celebrated the **International Day of Yoga** in New Delhi with the theme **"Yoga for Healthy Ageing."** The event emphasized wellness and

healthy living through yoga.

8. Gajendra Singh Shekhawat Extends Greetings on World Camel Day

Union Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat extended greetings on **World Camel Day**, highlighting the cultural, ecological, and economic significance of camels, especially in arid and desert regions of India.

9. Government Launches Nirbhay Chetna Training Module

The Ministry of Panchayati Raj launched the **Nirbhay Chetna** training module in New Delhi under the Nirbhaya Fund project. The initiative aims to enhance awareness, safety measures, and gender-sensitive governance at the grassroots level.

10. Bhavishya Platform Improves Pension Processing

The **Bhavishya platform**, developed by the Department of Pension and Pensioners' Welfare, has significantly improved pension processing for central government employees by digitizing procedures and reducing delays, thereby enhancing ease of living for pensioners.

11. First Batch of Kailash Mansarovar Yatra 2026 Pilgrims Crosses into China

The first batch of pilgrims undertaking the **Kailash Mansarovar Yatra 2026** crossed into China through the Nathu La Pass, marking the start of their sacred pilgrimage to Mount Kailash and Lake Mansarovar.

12. World Bank Approves USD 1.5 Billion Loan to India

The World Bank approved a **USD 1.5 billion loan** to India to support structural reforms aimed at boosting private sector-led job creation and accelerating long-term economic growth.

13. Indian Women's Hockey Team Wins FIH Women's Nations Cup

India women's national field hockey team won the **FIH Women's Nations Cup 2025–26** by defeating New Zealand 2–0 in the final. The victory secured India's promotion to the FIH Pro League 2026–27.

14. World Refugee Day 2026 Observed

World Refugee Day was observed on **20 June 2026** with the theme **"Until Everyone Is Safe."** The day honors the resilience of refugees displaced by conflict and persecution.

15. International Day of Yoga 2026 Observed

International Day of Yoga was celebrated on **21 June 2026** with the theme **"Yoga for Healthy Ageing."** The global observance highlighted yoga's benefits for physical, mental, and emotional well-being.

16. World Hydrography Day 2026 Observed

World Hydrography Day was observed on **21 June 2026** with the theme **"Transforming how ocean data is shared."** The day emphasizes hydrography's importance in navigation, marine resource management, and ocean safety.

FIVE TO REMEMBER · 22 & 23 JUNE 2026

1. **Established**: **12 April 1988** (non-statutory); statutory powers via **SEBI Act, 1992.** SEBI Approves Wider Use of Intraday Borrowing b…
2. **Established**: **1983** (first ship **MV Kota Tenjong**, beached on **13 February 1983**). India Becomes World's Top Ship Recycling Nation…
3. **Vision**: **People-centric and humanity-first approach** by PM Modi articulated at **17th BRICS Summit, Rio de Janeiro (July 2025)**. 16th BRICS National Security Advisers' Meeting …
4. **Established**: **1945** (carved out of Zoological Survey of India). ASI Transfers Rakhigarhi Skeletal Remains to An…
5. **First in Class**: **INS Arnala** (lead ship, commissioned 2025). INS Dunagiri, INS Sanshodhak, and INS Agray int…

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DAY 15 OF 18

25 June 2026

Thursday · 21 items · 2 topics

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Context

The **President of India, Smt. Droupadi Murmu**, on **Tuesday, 24 June 2026**, conferred **65 Padma Awards** at the **Second Civil Investiture Ceremony** held at **Rashtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi**. The ceremony was attended by **Prime Minister Narendra Modi**, **Vice President C. P. Radhakrishnan**, **Union Home Minister Amit Shah**, and other dignitaries. The Second Investiture Ceremony presented **2 Padma Vibhushan, 7 Padma Bhushan, and 56 Padma Shri** awards — following the **First Civil Investiture Ceremony on 26 May 2026** which conferred **66 awards**. The President had **announced 131 Padma Awards** for **2026** on the eve of **Republic Day (25 January 2026)**, comprising **5 Padma Vibhushan, 13 Padma Bhushan, and 113 Padma Shri** honours (including **2 duo cases** counted as one), with **19 women awardees**, **16 posthumous honourees**, and **6 foreigners / NRI / PIO / OCI** recipients. Notable awardees included **Padma Vibhushan posthumously to Dharmendra Singh Deol** (actor; received by **wife Hema Malini** at the first ceremony) and **V S Achuthanandhan** (former Kerala CM); **Padma Bhushan to Mammootty** (Malayalam cinema legend), **Alka Yagnik** (playback singer), **Uday Kotak** (banker), **Vijay Amritraj** (tennis), and **posthumously to Shibu Soren** (former Jharkhand CM) and **Piyush Pandey** (advertising); and **Padma Shri to Rohit Sharma** (cricket captain), **R Madhavan** (actor), and **posthumously to Satish Shah** (TV actor). The **Padma Awards** are **India's highest civilian honours**, ranked **immediately after the Bharat Ratna**, instituted in **1954** and announced annually on **Republic Day** by the **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)**.

Complete Padma Vibhushan 2026 List (5 recipients)

#	Name	Field	State / Country
1	**Shri Dharmendra Singh Deol** (Posthumous)	**Art (Cinema)**	Maharashtra
2	**Shri K T Thomas**	**Public Affairs (Law)**	Kerala
3	**Ms. N Rajam**	**Art (Violinist)**	Uttar Pradesh
4	**Shri P Narayanan**	**Literature and Education**	Kerala
5	**Shri V S Achuthanandhan** (Posthumous)	**Public Affairs**	Kerala

Complete Padma Bhushan 2026 List (13 recipients)

#	Name	Field	State / Country
1	**Ms. Alka Yagnik**	**Art (Playback Singing)**	Maharashtra
2	**Shri Bhagat Singh Koshyari**	**Public Affairs**	Uttarakhand
3	**Shri Kallipatti Ramasamy Palaniswamy**	**Medicine**	Tamil Nadu
4	**Shri Mammootty**	**Art (Cinema)**	Kerala
5	**Dr. Nori Dattatreyudu**	**Medicine (Oncology)**	United States of America
6	**Shri Piyush Pandey** (Posthumous)	**Art (Advertising)**	Maharashtra
7	**Shri S K M Maeilanandhan**	**Social Work**	Tamil Nadu
8	**Shri Shatavadhani R Ganesh**	**Art**	Karnataka
9	**Shri Shibu Soren** (Posthumous)	**Public Affairs**	Jharkhand

#	Name	Field	State / Country
10	**Shri Uday Kotak**	**Trade and Industry (Banking)**	Maharashtra
11	**Shri V K Malhotra** (Posthumous)	**Public Affairs**	Delhi
12	**Shri Vellappally Natesan**	**Public Affairs (Social Leadership)**	Kerala
13	**Shri Vijay Amritraj**	**Sports (Tennis)**	United States of America

Notable Padma Shri 2026 Recipients (113 in total)

Recipient	Field	State
Shri Rohit Sharma	**Sports (Cricket)**	Maharashtra
Shri R Madhavan	**Art (Cinema)**	Maharashtra
Shri Satish Shah (Posthumous)	**Art (TV)**	Maharashtra
Ms. Harmanpreet Kaur Bhullar	**Sports (Cricket)**	Punjab
Ms. Savita Punia	**Sports (Hockey)**	Haryana
Shri Anke Gowda M	**Agriculture (Organic Farming)**	Karnataka
Ms. Armida Fernandez	**Medicine**	Maharashtra
Ms. Deepika Reddy	**Art (Kuchipudi)**	Telangana
Ms. Kalamandalam Vimala	**Art**	Kerala
Shri A E Muthunayagam	**Science and Engineering**	Kerala
Shri Shashi Shekhar Vempati	**Literature and Education**	Karnataka
Ms. Sivasankari	**Literature and Education**	Tamil Nadu
Shri Ashok Khade	**Trade and Industry**	Maharashtra

Padma Awards — Three Categories

Category	Significance	Position in Civilian Awards
Padma Vibhushan	Exceptional and distinguished service	**2nd highest** (after Bharat Ratna)
Padma Bhushan	Distinguished service of high order	**3rd highest**
Padma Shri	Distinguished service in any field	**4th highest**

The Padma Awards System

- **What**: India's **highest civilian honours**, ranked **immediately after the Bharat Ratna**; recognise **exceptional and distinguished achievements or service** across **Art, Social Work, Public Affairs, Science and Engineering, Trade and Industry, Medicine, Literature and Education, Civil Service, Sports**; **announced annually on Republic Day**; **formally presented by the President of India** at **Civil Investiture Ceremony** typically in **March-April** (sometimes May-June in recent years); **NOT titles** under **Article 18(1) of the Constitution** and **cannot be used as prefixes or suffixes** to names.
- **Where**: **Administered by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), New Delhi**; **announced through The Gazette of India**; ceremony at **Rashtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the Padma Awards 2026, consider the following statements:

1. A total of 131 Padma Awards were announced for 2026, including 5 Padma Vibhushan, 13 Padma Bhushan, and 113 Padma Shri.
2. The awards were announced on the eve of Republic Day (25 January 2026).
3. The list included 19 women, 16 posthumous awardees, and 6 foreigners/NRI/PIO/OCI.

4. The Padma Vibhushan 2026 was conferred on only 2 individuals.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **Padma Vibhushan 2026 was conferred on 5 individuals**, NOT 2: Dharmendra (posthumous), K T Thomas, N Rajam, P Narayanan, and V S Achuthanandhan (posthumous).)

Q2. With reference to the Padma Vibhushan 2026 recipients, consider the following statements:

1. Shri Dharmendra Singh Deol received the award posthumously for his contribution to art (cinema).
2. Shri V S Achuthanandhan, former Chief Minister of Kerala, received the award posthumously for public affairs.
3. Smt. N Rajam received the award for her contribution to art (violin).
4. Shri P Narayanan was awarded for his contribution to sports.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **Shri P Narayanan was awarded for Literature and Education**, NOT sports.)

Q3. With reference to the Padma Bhushan 2026 list, consider the following statements:

1. Veteran Malayalam actor Mammootty received the Padma Bhushan for Art.
2. Banker Uday Kotak (founder of Kotak Mahindra Bank) was awarded for Trade and Industry.
3. Former Jharkhand CM Shibu Soren received the Padma Bhushan posthumously for Public Affairs.
4. Cricketer Rohit Sharma received the Padma Bhushan for Sports.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **Rohit Sharma received the Padma SHRI** (not Bhushan), the fourth-highest civilian award.)

Q4. With reference to the Padma Awards system in India, consider the following statements:

1. The Padma Awards were instituted by the Government of India in 1954, alongside the Bharat Ratna.
2. They were originally designated as Pahla Varg, Dusra Varg, and Tisra Varg.
3. They were renamed to Padma Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan, and Padma Shri via a Presidential Notification issued in January 1955.
4. Padma Awards are titles under Article 18(1) of the Constitution and can be used as prefixes to names.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **Padma Awards are NOT titles** under Article 18(1) and **cannot be used as prefixes or suffixes** to names — upheld by the Supreme Court in **Balaji Raghavan v. Union of India (1995)**.)

Q5. With reference to the Second Civil Investiture Ceremony of 2026, consider the following statements:

1. It was held at Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi on 23-24 June 2026.
2. President Droupadi Murmu conferred 65 Padma Awards at this ceremony.
3. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Vice President C P Radhakrishnan, and Home Minister Amit Shah attended.
4. The Second Investiture conferred all 131 Padma Awards in a single event.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **Second Investiture conferred 65 awards**; the **First Investiture (26 May 2026) conferred 66 awards** — NOT all 131 in a single event.)

Q6. With reference to the historical and institutional details of the Padma Awards, consider the following statements:

1. The Padma Awards have been suspended twice in their history — in 1977-80 and 1993-97.
2. The Padma Awards Committee is constituted annually by the Prime Minister.
3. The Padma Awards Committee is chaired by the Cabinet Secretary.
4. The Padma Awards are administered by the Ministry of Culture.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **Padma Awards are administered by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)**, NOT the Ministry of Culture.)

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because Padma Vibhushan 2026 had 5 recipients.
2. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because P Narayanan was awarded for Literature and Education.
3. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because Rohit Sharma received Padma Shri.
4. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because Padma Awards are not titles.
5. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because 65 awards were given at the Second Investiture (not all 131).
6. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because MHA (not Culture Ministry) administers Padma Awards.

2. Union Home Minister Amit Shah Launches NAFED's Digital Auction Portal "NAFEX.in"

Source: ET

Context

On **Tuesday, 23 June 2026**, **Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation Shri Amit Shah** launched **NAFED's digital auction portal "NAFEX.in"** along with **three other major digital and farmer-centric initiatives** — **DRISHTI Portal** (inventory management for pulses and oilseeds), **Saksham ERP** (Enterprise Resource Planning for organisational efficiency), and the **NAFED-KALYAN Scholarship Scheme** (for children of farming families) — at **Atal Akshay Urja Bhawan, New Delhi**. The event was attended by **Union Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Minister Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan**, **Union Minister of State for Cooperation Shri Krishan Pal Gurjar**, **Secretary, Ministry of Cooperation Dr. Ashish Kumar Bhutani**, **NAFED Chairman Shri Jethabhai Ahir**, **NAFED Managing Director Shri Deepak Agarwal**, and other senior officials and Board members. NAFEX.in — **developed in collaboration with consulting firm Deloitte** — is a **dedicated digital auction portal** designed to **centralise and digitise the auction process** for **agricultural commodities, particularly oilseeds and pulses** procured under the **Government's Price Support Scheme (PSS)** and **Price Stabilisation Fund (PSF)**. NAFED currently handles approximately **5.3 million tonnes of commodities annually** and has so far relied on **private e-auction service providers** — **NCDEX e Markets (NeML), mjunction, and E-Teach** — for selling its stocks. NAFEX.in marks a **strategic pivot** by NAFED towards **in-house digital infrastructure**, allowing **full control over data and transaction processes**, and may eventually be opened to **other state-level cooperative agencies** to create a **centralised digital ecosystem** for cooperative agricultural trade. Addressing the gathering, Shah

highlighted NAFED's **remarkable turnaround**: from **verge of closure in 2014**, it now **serves 74 lakh farmers, has a turnover of ₹30,000 crore, and earns profits of ~₹500 crore**, with the **target to cross ₹50,000 crore turnover**. Under the **NAFED-KALYAN scheme**, **1% of NAFED's profits** will be earmarked for **scholarships and career development** of children of farming families. The launch aligns with PM Modi's vision of **"Sahkar Se Samriddhi" (Prosperity through Cooperation)** and the **Ministry of Cooperation's** efforts to strengthen cooperative institutions through technology, transparency, and farmer-centric reforms.

The Launch

- **Venue**: **Atal Akshay Urja Bhawan, New Delhi**.
- **Launched by**: **Shri Amit Shah, Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation**.
- **Also Present**: **Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan** (Agriculture & Farmers Welfare), **Shri Krishan Pal Gurjar** (MoS Cooperation), **Dr. Ashish Kumar Bhutani** (Secretary, Ministry of Cooperation), **Shri Jethabhai Ahir** (NAFED Chairman), **Shri Deepak Agarwal** (NAFED MD), Board members.

Four Initiatives Launched

#	Initiative	Purpose
1	**NAFEX.in**	**Digital auction portal** for transparent agricultural commodity trading
2	**DRISHTI Portal**	**Integrated inventory management** for **pulses and oilseeds**
3	**Saksham ERP**	**Enterprise Resource Planning** for organisational efficiency
4	**NAFED-KALYAN Scholarship Scheme**	**1% of NAFED's profits** for **scholarships and career development** of farmers' children

NAFEX.in — Key Features

- **What**: A **dedicated digital auction platform** developed by **NAFED** in collaboration with **Deloitte**, that **centralises and digitises auction processes** for **agricultural commodities**, particularly **oilseeds and pulses** procured under **Price Support Scheme (PSS)** and **Price Stabilisation Fund (PSF)**; replaces dependence on **private e-auction service providers**; enables **competitive bidding, transparent price discovery**, and **direct connection** between **farmers, cooperatives, traders, processors, and institutional buyers**; **may be opened to other state-level cooperative agencies** for a **centralised digital cooperative trade ecosystem**.
- **Where**: Hosted and operated by **NAFED** from its **HQ in New Delhi**; accessible **across India** via internet; **inventory and warehouses across India** participate via the portal.

NAFED-KALYAN Scholarship Scheme

- **Allocation**: **1% of NAFED's annual profits**.
- **Beneficiaries**: **Children of farmer/farming families**.
- **Purpose**: **Higher education** and **career development**.
- **Scholarship cheques distributed** at the launch event.

National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India (NAFED)

- **What**: An **apex cooperative organisation** for **marketing of agricultural produce in India**; established on **2 October 1958 (Gandhi Jayanti)**; registered initially under the **Bombay Co-operative Societies Act, 1925**, currently under the **Multi-State Cooperative Societies Act, 2002**; serves as the **central nodal agency** for **procurement of pulses, oilseeds, copra, and other commodities** under the **Government's Price Support Scheme (PSS)** at **Minimum Support Price (MSP)**; key implementer of **PM-AASHA**; engages in **storage, warehousing, export-import of agricultural commodities**, **trade in fertilizers and agri-inputs**, **organic farming, seed production, bio-fertilizers, retail operations**.
- **Where**: HQ at **Sidhartha Enclave, Ashram Chowk, New Delhi**; operates **branches and warehouses**

across India; under the **Ministry of Cooperation (since July 2021)**.

"Sahkar Se Samriddhi" (Prosperity through Cooperation)

- **What**: A **vision articulated by PM Narendra Modi** to **strengthen cooperative institutions** and use them as **engines of inclusive economic development**; coined and operationalised with the **creation of the Ministry of Cooperation in July 2021**; aims to **integrate technology, transparency, and farmer-centric reforms** in cooperatives; target: cooperatives in every village.
- **Where**: Implemented **across India** through the **Ministry of Cooperation** and apex bodies like **NAFED, NCCF, NCDC**.

Price Support Scheme (PSS)

- **What**: A **Government of India scheme** under which **NAFED, NCCF, FCI, CCI** etc. **procure agricultural commodities (pulses, oilseeds, copra, cotton)** at **Minimum Support Price (MSP)** from farmers; **procurement triggered when market price falls below MSP**; part of the broader **PM-AASHA (Pradhan Mantri Annadata Aay SanraksHan Abhiyan)** umbrella since **2018**.
- **Where**: Implemented **across India** by **Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare** and **central nodal agencies** (NAFED for pulses/oilseeds).

Price Stabilisation Fund (PSF)

- **What**: A **Central Sector Scheme** set up in **2014–15** with a **corpus of ₹500 crore** (subsequently augmented) to **regulate price volatility** of **agricultural and horticultural commodities** like **onions, pulses, potatoes**; **procures, stocks, and releases** to manage prices.
- **Where**: Administered by the **Department of Consumer Affairs, Ministry of Consumer Affairs**, in coordination with NAFED, NCCF, and state governments.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the launch of NAFEX.in on 23 June 2026, consider the following statements:

1. NAFEX.in was launched by Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation Shri Amit Shah at Atal Akshay Urja Bhawan, New Delhi.
2. It is a digital auction portal developed by NAFED in collaboration with Deloitte.
3. The launch event also saw the unveiling of the DRISHTI inventory management portal, Saksham ERP, and the NAFED-KALYAN scholarship scheme.
4. NAFEX.in was developed independently by the Reserve Bank of India.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **NAFEX.in was developed by NAFED in collaboration with Deloitte**, NOT by the RBI.)

Q2. With reference to NAFED's existing auction operations, consider the following statements:

1. NAFED currently handles approximately 5.3 million tonnes of agricultural commodities annually.
2. NAFED has so far used private e-auction service providers such as NCDEX e Markets (NeML), mjunction, and E-Teach.
3. NAFED procures commodities at Minimum Support Price (MSP) under the Price Support Scheme (PSS) and Price Stabilisation Fund (PSF).
4. NAFEX.in will exclusively serve only state government departments and will not allow private traders.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **NAFEX.in is designed to connect farmers, cooperatives, traders, processors, and institutional buyers**, NOT only state government departments. Private traders ARE allowed.)

Q3. With reference to NAFED, consider the following statements:

1. NAFED was established on 2 October 1958 (Gandhi Jayanti).
2. It is registered under the Multi-State Cooperative Societies Act, 2002.
3. NAFED is headquartered in New Delhi and is currently under the Ministry of Cooperation.
4. NAFED is primarily responsible for fertilizer manufacturing in India.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **fertilizer manufacturing is the domain of cooperatives like IFFCO and KRIBHCO**, NOT NAFED. NAFED focuses on agricultural marketing and procurement.)

Q4. With reference to the Ministry of Cooperation and "Sahkar Se Samriddhi", consider the following statements:

1. The Ministry of Cooperation was established on 6 July 2021 by bifurcating the Cooperation Division from the Ministry of Agriculture.
2. The current Union Minister of Cooperation is Shri Amit Shah.
3. "Sahkar Se Samriddhi" is PM Narendra Modi's vision to drive inclusive development through cooperatives.
4. The Ministry of Cooperation administers the Companies Act, 2013.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **Companies Act, 2013 is administered by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs**, NOT the Ministry of Cooperation. The Ministry of Cooperation administers laws related to **cooperative societies**, particularly the Multi-State Cooperative Societies Act, 2002.)

Q5. With reference to the NAFED-KALYAN Scholarship Scheme launched on 23 June 2026, consider the following statements:

1. Under the scheme, 1% of NAFED's annual profits will be earmarked for scholarships.
2. The scheme is targeted at children of farming families for higher education and career development.
3. Scholarship cheques were distributed at the launch event by the Union Cooperation Minister.
4. The scheme is funded by the Reserve Bank of India.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **scheme is funded from NAFED's own profits (1%)**, NOT by the RBI.)

Q6. With reference to the 97th Constitutional Amendment and cooperative reforms, consider the following statements:

1. The 97th Constitutional Amendment (2011) inserted Part IX-B (Articles 243-ZH to 243-ZT) on cooperatives.
2. It also inserted Article 43-B in the Directive Principles of State Policy promoting cooperatives.
3. The Ministry of Cooperation was set up to provide a dedicated administrative and policy framework for cooperatives.
4. India does not have any apex cooperative for consumer goods.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **NCCF (National Cooperative Consumers' Federation)** is India's apex consumer

cooperative body — running **Bharat Atta, Bharat Dal, Bharat Rice** brands.)

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because NAFED (not RBI) developed NAFEX.in.
2. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because NAFEX.in serves multiple stakeholders.
3. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because fertilizer manufacturing is by IFFCO/KRIBHCO.
4. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because Companies Act is administered by Ministry of Corporate Affairs.
5. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the scheme is funded by NAFED's own profits.
6. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because NCCF is the apex consumer cooperative.

Exam Relevance

Banking (RBI Gr B, SBI PO, IBPS, NABARD)	**Very high importance, NAFED, cooperatives, agricultural marketing, MSP**
NABARD Grade A	**Extremely high importance, Direct subject — NAFED, cooperatives, PSS, PSF, PM-AASHA**

3. ASI Uncovers Three 16th-Century Trilingual Inscriptions at Sadasivakona in Seshachalam Forest, Tirupati

Source: *The Hindu*

Context

In a major addition to the **epigraphical corpus of medieval South India**, an **expert team from the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)** has discovered **three rare 16th-century stone inscriptions** deep inside the **Seshachalam reserve forest range** of **Tirupati district, Andhra Pradesh** — at a **pristine, mostly under-explored sacred site called Sadasivakona**. Carved in characters of the **16th century** and copied by ASI scholars in the form of **estampages (paper impressions)** for **preservation and linguistic study**, the inscriptions are remarkable for their **trilingual format using Telugu, Tamil, and Kannada** — reflecting the **multilingual administrative character** of the **Vijayanagara Empire**, which spanned **Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala**. The **principal inscription documents the personal visit of King Sadasiva Raya** — the **last sovereign monarch of the Tuluva Dynasty** (reigned **1542–1570 CE**) — to this sacred spot to **take a holy bath**, records his **official royal donation**, and registers the **construction of a Shiva temple and a monastery (mutt) at Papavinasa in Sadasivakona**. According to corroborating reports, the inscriptions also include records of **land grants for daily rituals and offerings at the Parashurameswara temple in Gudimallam village of Yerpedu mandal** — a site already known to scholars for housing the **Gudimallam Lingam, considered the oldest known Shiva lingam in India**. The Sadasivakona find continues the team's earlier **epigraphical survey work in the nearby Nallamala Hills**. The discovery enriches understanding of **Vijayanagara temple administration, royal patronage of Shaivism, land grant systems, and the religious geography of the Seshachalam pilgrimage circuit** during the **politically turbulent decade preceding the catastrophic Battle of Talikota (1565)**.

The Discovery

- **Discovered by**: **Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) expert team**.
- **Number of Inscriptions**: **3 rare epigraphical records**.
- **Date**: **16th century CE** (Vijayanagara era).
- **Languages**: **Trilingual** — **Telugu, Tamil, Kannada**.

- **Documentation Method**: **Estampages** (paper impressions) for preservation and linguistic study.

Location of the Discovery

Aspect	Detail
Site	**Sadasivakona** (under-explored sacred site)
Forest Range	**Seshachalam reserve forest**
District	**Tirupati district**
State	**Andhra Pradesh**
Region	**Eastern Ghats** (Saptagiri / Seven Hills cluster)
Earlier Surveys	**Nallamala Hills** (by the same team)

Vijayanagara Empire

- A **powerful South Indian Hindu empire** (**1336–1646 CE**) that **dominated the Deccan plateau and peninsular India** (except Kerala); **founded** in **1336 by Harihara I and Bukka Raya I** of the **Sangama Dynasty** with support of saint **Vidyaranya**; capital at **Vijayanagara (Hampi)**, an iconic city described by **Persian envoy Abdur Razzaq (1443)** as **"such that the pupil of the eye has never seen such a place like it"**; reached its zenith under **Krishna Deva Raya (1509–1529)** of the Tuluva dynasty; ended its **effective political dominance** with the **catastrophic defeat at the Battle of Talikota (1565)**; the ruined capital, **Hampi**, was inscribed as a **UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1986**.
- **Where**: Empire spread across **Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, parts of Maharashtra, Goa, Odisha, and northern Sri Lanka**; capital at **Hampi**, on the **southern banks of the Tungabhadra River**, in present-day **Bellary district, Karnataka**.

Four Dynasties of the Vijayanagara Empire

#	Dynasty	Period	Founder / Key Ruler
1	**Sangama**	**1336–1485 CE**	Harihara I, Bukka Raya I, **Deva Raya II** (greatest Sangama)
2	**Saluva**	**1485–1505 CE**	**Saluva Narasimha** (briefly held off Bahmani decline)
3	**Tuluva**	**1505–1565/70 CE**	Vira Narasimha; **Krishna Deva Raya** (greatest Vijayanagara); Achyuta Raya; **Sadasiva Raya (last)**
4	**Aravidu**	**1542–1646 CE**	**Tirumala** (Rama Raya's brother); Sri Ranga; Venkata II

Tuluva Dynasty

Ruler	Reign	Significance
Vira Narasimha	**1505–1509**	Tuluva founder
Krishna Deva Raya	**1509–1529**	**Greatest Vijayanagara ruler**; patron of arts and literature; author of **Amuktamalyada (Telugu)**; ushered in **Telugu Golden Age (Ashtadiggajas)**
Achyuta Raya	**1529–1542**	Continued patronage; struggled with rising nobility
Venkata I	**1542**	Brief reign; killed in court intrigues
Sadasiva Raya	**1542–1570**	**Last Tuluva ruler**; puppet king; **subject of the newly discovered inscriptions**

King Sadasiva Raya (1542–1570 CE)

- **What**: The **last sovereign monarch of the Tuluva Dynasty** of the **Vijayanagara Empire**; **nephew of Achyuta Raya**; ascended the throne after his **cousin Venkata I** was **killed in court intrigues following Achyuta Raya's death (1542)**; though he was the **nominal ruler**, real power was wielded by his **regent and de facto ruler Aliya Rama Raya** (Krishna Deva Raya's son-in-law) and Rama Raya's brothers; **kept under guard / imprisoned** by Rama Raya in later years; his reign witnessed the **devastating**

Battle of Talikota (1565); **died soon after** the battle, ending the **Tuluva line**.

- **Where**: Ruled from the **Vijayanagara Empire** (capital at **Hampi**); his name lives on in **Sadasivakona**, the sacred site in the **Seshachalam Hills, Tirupati**, where the **new inscriptions were just discovered**.

Aliya Rama Raya — The De Facto Ruler

- **Krishna Deva Raya's son-in-law** ("Aliya" means **son-in-law** in Telugu/Kannada).
- **Powerful noble** who **placed Sadasiva Raya on the throne** after defeating **Salakaraju** at the **Battle of Tungabhadra (1543)**.
- **Regent and effective ruler** for over **two decades** (1543–1565).
- **Manipulated Deccan Sultanate politics**, eventually uniting them against him.
- **Captured and beheaded by Hussain Nizam Shah** at the **Battle of Talikota (1565)**.

Battle of Talikota (1565) — Decisive Turning Point

- **Date**: **23 January 1565**.
- **Also known as**: **Battle of Rakshasi-Tangadi** or **Battle of Bannihatti**.
- **Location**: Near **Talikota**, on the banks of the **Krishna River** (present-day **Karnataka**).
- **Sides**:
  - **Vijayanagara Empire** (led by **Aliya Rama Raya**, with brothers **Tirumala** and **Venkatadri**).
  - **Confederation of Deccan Sultanates**: **Bijapur (Adil Shahi), Ahmadnagar (Nizam Shahi), Golconda (Qutb Shahi), Bidar (Barid Shahi)** — excluding **Berar (Imad Shahi)**.
- **Outcome**: **Catastrophic defeat for Vijayanagara**; **Rama Raya captured and beheaded** by **Hussain Nizam Shah of Ahmadnagar**.

Deccan Sultanates (Five Successor States of the Bahmani Sultanate)

Sultanate	Capital	Dynasty	Founder
Bijapur	Bijapur	**Adil Shahi**	Yusuf Adil Shah
Ahmadnagar	Ahmadnagar	**Nizam Shahi**	Malik Ahmad
Golconda	Golconda	**Qutb Shahi**	Quli Qutb Mulk
Bidar	Bidar	**Barid Shahi**	Qasim Barid
Berar	Achalpur	**Imad Shahi**	Fathullah Imad-ul-Mulk

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the ASI's recent discovery at Sadasivakona, consider the following statements:

1. The discovery comprises three rare 16th-century inscriptions.
2. The inscriptions are trilingual, written in Telugu, Tamil, and Kannada.
3. The inscriptions were copied as estampages by the ASI for preservation and linguistic study.
4. The site is located in the Nallamala Hills of Telangana.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the site is in the **Seshachalam forest range, Tirupati district, Andhra Pradesh** — NOT in the Nallamala Hills of Telangana. The ASI team's earlier surveys had been in the Nallamala Hills.)

Q2. With reference to the contents of the primary inscription discovered at Sadasivakona, consider the following statements:

1. It documents the personal visit of King Sadasiva Raya to take a holy bath at the sacred spot.
2. It records his official grant of a royal donation.

3. It registers the construction of a Shiva temple and a monastery (mutt) at Papavinasa.
4. The inscription names Krishna Deva Raya as the ruling king.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **inscription is from the reign of Sadasiva Raya (1542–1570 CE)**, NOT Krishna Deva Raya (1509–1529 CE), who had died decades earlier.)

Q3. With reference to King Sadasiva Raya, consider the following statements:

1. He was the last sovereign monarch of the Tuluva Dynasty of the Vijayanagara Empire.
2. He reigned from 1542 to 1570 CE.
3. Real power during his reign was wielded by his regent Aliya Rama Raya, who later imprisoned him.
4. Sadasiva Raya himself led the Vijayanagara army at the Battle of Talikota in 1565.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **Aliya Rama Raya** (NOT Sadasiva Raya) **led the Vijayanagara forces** at the Battle of Talikota — Sadasiva was a **puppet king kept under guard**.)

Q4. With reference to the Battle of Talikota (1565), consider the following statements:

1. It was fought on 23 January 1565 between Vijayanagara and the confederated Deccan Sultanates.
2. The four Deccan Sultanates that fought against Vijayanagara were Bijapur, Ahmadnagar, Golconda, and Bidar.
3. Aliya Rama Raya was captured and beheaded; the Vijayanagara capital Hampi was subsequently sacked.
4. After the battle, the Vijayanagara Empire continued as the dominant political force in South India.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; after Talikota, **Vijayanagara's political dominance permanently ended** — the **Aravidu dynasty continued nominally** but was much reduced, with capital shifted to Penukonda.)

Q5. With reference to the Vijayanagara Empire, consider the following statements:

1. The Vijayanagara Empire was founded in 1336 CE by Harihara I and Bukka Raya I of the Sangama Dynasty.
2. The capital, Vijayanagara (Hampi), was located on the banks of the Tungabhadra River.
3. The empire comprised four dynasties — Sangama, Saluva, Tuluva, and Aravidu.
4. Hampi was inscribed as a UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage site in 1986.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **Hampi is a UNESCO World Heritage Site (1986)** under the **Cultural Heritage category** — NOT Intangible Cultural Heritage.)

Q6. With reference to the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) and epigraphical methods, consider the following statements:

1. The ASI was established in 1861 by Sir Alexander Cunningham, regarded as the "Father of Indian Archaeology".
2. The ASI functions under the Ministry of Culture, Government of India.

3. An estampage is a paper impression of an inscription used for preservation and scholarly study.
4. Gudimallam village in Tirupati district houses the Parashurameswara temple, considered to have the oldest known Shiva lingam in India.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(d) All four — all four statements are correct.

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the site is in Seshachalam, not Nallamala.
2. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the inscription is from Sadasiva Raya's reign.
3. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because Rama Raya led the forces at Talikota.
4. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because Vijayanagara's dominance permanently ended.
5. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because Hampi is a World Heritage Site (Cultural), not ICH.
6. **(d) All four** — all statements are correct.

Banking and Finance

1. RBI Revises NBFC Norms

Source: *Business Standard*

Context

The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** on **Wednesday, 24 June 2026** issued revised **final norms for the registration of and exemptions to Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs)**, **simplifying the methodology for identifying Upper Layer NBFCs (NBFC-UL)** under the **Scale-Based Regulation (SBR) framework**. The revised norms mandate that **NBFCs with an asset size of ₹1 lakh crore (₹1 trillion) and above**, based on their **latest audited balance sheet**, will be **classified as Upper Layer entities** and subjected to **enhanced regulatory oversight**. This **replaces the earlier parametric scoring methodology** (which weighed size + leverage, interconnectedness, complexity, and qualitative factors). The asset-size threshold will be **reviewed every three years**. The directions come into force **with immediate effect**. The norms significantly **tighten concentration-risk norms for government-owned NBFCs by withdrawing the exemptions previously available** to them, bringing them under the **same exposure framework applicable to their respective regulatory layers** (Base, Middle, or Upper). **Existing breaches of exposure limits will be allowed to run off until maturity**, but **no fresh exposures to such obligors will be permitted**. The RBI also introduced new guidelines for **NBFCs that are group entities of scheduled commercial banks**: where **both the NBFC and its parent bank undertake the same financial activity**, the NBFC must comply with **norms applicable to commercial banks** — irrespective of its SBR classification (to **prevent regulatory arbitrage**); however, such entities will **retain their existing layer classification**.

The Revised Norms

- **Issued by**: **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)**.
- **Earlier Notification**: **28 November 2025**.
- **Effective**: **Immediate**.

Key Changes

Change	Earlier	Revised (24 June 2026)
Upper Layer Identification	**Parametric scoring methodology + Top 10 by asset size**	**Simple ₹1 lakh crore (₹1 trillion) asset-size threshold**
Government-owned NBFC Concentration Risk	**Exemptions available**	**Exemptions WITHDRAWN — same limits as private NBFCs**
Bank-Group NBFCs	Regulated as per their SBR layer	**Must follow commercial bank norms if same activity as parent bank**
NBFC-IFC Large Exposure Limit (Group of Connected Counterparties)	**35%**	**45%** of eligible capital base
NBFC-IFC Exposure with State Government Guarantee	Subject to prudential limits	**Exempted (20% risk weight)**
Review of Asset-Size Threshold	—	**Every 3 years**
Identification Frequency	—	**Annual**

Scale-Based Regulation (SBR) Framework

- **What**: A **risk-based regulatory framework** for NBFCs introduced by the **RBI on 22 October 2021**, **effective 1 October 2022**, that **categorises NBFCs into four layers** — **Base, Middle, Upper, and Top** — based on **size, activity, and perceived riskiness**; aligns regulatory intensity with the **systemic significance** of each NBFC; calibrates **capital requirements, governance standards, prudential regulation, large exposure framework, disclosure norms** accordingly.
- **Where**: Issued by **RBI from Mumbai**; applicable to **all NBFCs registered in India** under the **RBI Act, 1934**.

Four Layers Under SBR Framework

Layer	Asset Size Criteria	Examples
Base Layer (NBFC-BL)	**<₹1,000 crore** non-deposit-taking	**NBFC-P2P, NBFC-AA, NOFHC, NBFCs without public funds**
Middle Layer (NBFC-ML)	**₹1,000 crore – ₹1 lakh crore**	All **Deposit-taking NBFCs (NBFC-Ds), CICs, IFCs, HFCs, NBFC-IDF, NBFC-SPD**
Upper Layer (NBFC-UL)	**≥₹1 lakh crore (₹1 trillion)**	Systemically important NBFCs; **~15 entities** (incl. Tata Sons, Bajaj Finance)
Top Layer (NBFC-TL)	Discretionary	**Ideally empty**; populated only if RBI identifies **substantial systemic risk** in Upper Layer

Newly Revised Upper Layer Criteria

- **Asset size ≥ ₹1 lakh crore (₹1 trillion)** based on **latest audited balance sheet**.
- **Identified annually**.
- **Threshold reviewed every 3 years**.
- **NBFC-UL must list** within **3 years** of identification.
- **Government-owned NBFC-UL exempted** from mandatory listing.
- **Enhanced regulatory oversight**: CET1 capital, LCR, exposure norms, stress tests, disclosures.

Government-Owned NBFCs — Key Changes

Aspect	Earlier	Revised
Placement in Upper Layer	Generally placed in Base or Middle Layer	Can now be in **any layer** based on asset size
Concentration Norms	**Exempted**	**NOT exempted — same as private NBFCs in respective layer**
Mandatory Listing (if in NBFC-UL)	**Exempted**	**Exemption retained** (this is one carve-out)
Existing Exposure Breaches	—	**Allowed to run off till maturity** (no fresh breaches)

Bank-Group NBFCs — New Rule

- **Definition**: NBFCs that are **group entities** (subsidiaries, associates) of **scheduled commercial banks (SCBs)**.
- **New Rule**: If **both NBFC and parent bank undertake same financial activity**, NBFC must follow **commercial bank norms** for that activity.
- **Layer Retention**: NBFC retains its **existing SBR layer classification**.
- **Purpose**: Prevent **regulatory arbitrage**.
- **Example**: An **Infrastructure Debt Fund (IDF) NBFC** in a banking group will **remain in Middle Layer** but must **comply with regulations applicable to Upper Layer NBFCs**.

Concentration Risk / Exposure Norms (SBR-based)

Layer	Single Counterparty	Group of Connected Counterparties
NBFC-ML	15% of Tier I	25% of Tier I
NBFC-UL	20% of Tier I	25% of Tier I
NBFC-UL (IFC)	25% of Tier I	**45%** (revised from 35%) of eligible capital base

Infrastructure Finance Company (NBFC-IFC)

- **What**: An **NBFC** that deploys **at least 75% of its total assets** in **infrastructure loans**; has **minimum Net Owned Fund (NOF) of ₹300 crore**; **minimum CRAR of 15%** (Tier I ≥ 10%); has **investment grade credit rating** from a SEBI-registered CRA; specialises in **infrastructure financing** for sectors like power, roads, ports, airports, telecom; examples: **REC Ltd, Power Finance Corporation (PFC), India Infrastructure Finance Company Ltd (IIFCL), Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency (IREDA), IRFC, L&T Finance**.
- **Where**: Operates **pan-India**; some are **central PSUs** (REC, PFC, IRFC under Ministry of Finance/Power/Railways), others are private (L&T Finance).

Core Investment Company (CIC)

- **What**: An **NBFC** that holds **≥ 90% of its net assets** as **investment in equity shares, preference shares, bonds, debentures, debt or loans** in **group companies**; **min ₹100 crore asset size**; engages in **investment activity** rather than lending; **systemically important if asset size ≥ ₹100 crore** and **accepts public funds**; examples: **Tata Sons, Bajaj Holdings & Investment Ltd, L&T Holdings**.
- **Where**: Operates as a **holding company** under group structures; primary registration under **RBI Master Direction — CIC, 2016**.

Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC)

- **What**: A **company registered under the Companies Act, 1956/2013** that engages in **lending, investment, hire-purchase, leasing, insurance, chit fund activities, etc.** but **does NOT hold a banking licence**; **cannot accept demand deposits**; **not part of the payment and settlement system**; **deposit insurance NOT available**; regulated by **RBI** under the **RBI Act, 1934 (Chapter III-B)**; ~9,500

NBFCs registered in India.

- **Where**: Registered with **RBI's Department of Regulation**; operates **pan-India** (and some abroad through subsidiaries).

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the RBI's revised NBFC norms issued on 24 June 2026, consider the following statements:

1. NBFCs with an asset size of ₹1 lakh crore (₹1 trillion) and above will be classified as Upper Layer entities.
2. The asset-size threshold for classification will be reviewed every three years.
3. The earlier parametric scoring methodology for identifying Upper Layer NBFCs has been replaced by the simpler asset-size threshold.
4. The new norms abolish the Scale-Based Regulation (SBR) framework entirely.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **new norms refine and simplify the SBR framework**, NOT abolish it. The SBR framework remains in force with four layers.)

Q2. With reference to the treatment of government-owned NBFCs under the revised norms, consider the following statements:

1. The exemptions previously available to government-owned NBFCs on concentration risk norms have been withdrawn.
2. Government-owned NBFCs will now have to adhere to concentration limits based on their classification under the SBR framework.
3. Existing breaches of exposure limits will be allowed to run off until maturity.
4. Fresh exposures to such obligors that breach the new limits will continue to be permitted without restriction.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **fresh exposures to such obligors are NOT permitted** under the revised norms — only existing breaches are allowed to run off till maturity.)

Q3. With reference to the Scale-Based Regulation (SBR) framework for NBFCs, consider the following statements:

1. The SBR framework was introduced by RBI on 22 October 2021 and came into effect on 1 October 2022.
2. It classifies NBFCs into four layers — Base, Middle, Upper, and Top — based on size, activity, and perceived riskiness.
3. The Top Layer is ideally expected to remain empty.
4. The SBR framework is administered by the Ministry of Finance.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **SBR framework is administered by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI)**, NOT the Ministry of Finance.)

Q4. With reference to the new rule for NBFCs that are group entities of scheduled commercial banks, consider the following statements:

1. Such NBFCs must comply with norms applicable to commercial banks if both the NBFC and its parent

bank undertake the same financial activity.
2. These requirements apply irrespective of the NBFC's classification under the SBR framework.
3. Such NBFCs will retain their existing SBR layer classification.
4. The new rule aims to encourage regulatory arbitrage between banks and bank-group NBFCs.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the new rule aims to **PREVENT** (not encourage) regulatory arbitrage between banks and bank-group NBFCs.)

Q5. With reference to the eased exposure norms for Infrastructure Finance Companies (NBFC-IFCs), consider the following statements:

1. The Large Exposure Framework (LEF) limit for NBFC-IFCs has been raised from 35% to 45% of their eligible capital base.
2. Exposures backed by state government guarantees will be treated as exposures to the guaranteeing state government, subject to a 20% risk weight.
3. IFCs may exceed the prescribed exposure limits by up to 20% of their Tier-I capital for such exposures.
4. The relaxation aims to discourage infrastructure financing in India.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the relaxation aims to **SUPPORT (not discourage) infrastructure financing** in India.)

Q6. With reference to Upper Layer NBFCs (NBFC-UL), consider the following statements:

1. NBFC-ULs must list on stock exchanges within 3 years of their identification.
2. Government-owned NBFC-ULs are exempted from this mandatory listing requirement.
3. Tata Sons, a Core Investment Company (CIC), has sought to deregister as an Upper Layer NBFC to avoid public listing; this decision is pending with RBI.
4. The mandatory listing rule was first introduced after the IL&FS crisis of 2008.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **IL&FS crisis occurred in 2018, NOT 2008**, and the **mandatory listing rule was introduced as part of the SBR framework in October 2021**, not directly after the IL&FS crisis.)

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the SBR framework is not abolished.
2. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because fresh exposures breaching limits are not permitted.
3. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because RBI (not Ministry of Finance) administers SBR.
4. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the rule prevents (not encourages) regulatory arbitrage.
5. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the relaxation supports infrastructure financing.
6. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because IL&FS crisis was in 2018, not 2008.

2. RBI Releases Draft Guidance on Model Risk Management (MRMF) for AI/ML Models

Source: *Business Standard*

Context

The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** on **Wednesday, 24 June 2026**, released the **Draft Guidance on Regulatory Principles for Model Risk Management, 2026** under **Press Release No. 2026-2027/528**, setting **comprehensive governance, validation, monitoring, and oversight requirements** for **all models used by regulated entities (REs) — including Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) models**. **Regulated entities will be required to put in place a board-approved Model Risk Management Framework (MRMF)** covering **all models**, irrespective of whether they are **developed internally, sourced from third parties, or built using a combination of both**. The draft applies to **11 categories of RBI-regulated entities — commercial banks, cooperative banks, small finance banks, payment banks, NBFCs, asset reconstruction companies (ARCs), credit information companies (CICs), all-India financial institutions, etc. Feedback is invited via RBI's "Connect 2 Regulate" portal or by post/email to the Chief General Manager, Operational Risk Group, Department of Regulation, RBI, Mumbai until 24 July 2026**. Key provisions include: **mandatory kill switches** for AI systems to halt them instantly if they produce harmful outputs; **mandatory human oversight** for AI-driven decision-making; **three lines of defence (3LoD)** structure — model owners (1st), independent validation (2nd), internal audit (3rd); **risk-tiered model classification**; **comprehensive model inventory** (active, inactive, decommissioned); **explainability and transparency thresholds**; **customer disclosure** when interacting with AI; **option to speak with a human** for customer-facing AI; **red-teaming** under edge cases, abnormal inputs, manipulation attempts, and adversarial conditions; and **mandatory accountability of REs for outcomes**, regardless of vendor origin.

11 Categories of RBI-Regulated Entities Covered

1. **Commercial Banks**.
2. **Cooperative Banks**.
3. **Small Finance Banks (SFBs)**.
4. **Payment Banks**.
5. **Local Area Banks**.
6. **NBFCs** (all layers).
7. **Asset Reconstruction Companies (ARCs)**.
8. **Credit Information Companies (CICs)**.
9. **All-India Financial Institutions (AIFIs)**.
10. **Primary Dealers (PDs)**.
11. **Other RBI-regulated entities**.

Core Pillars of the MRMF Framework

Pillar	Requirement
1. Board Accountability	Board-approved MRMF; periodic review; approve risk appetite and tolerance for model risk; scenario analysis and stress testing
2. Three Lines of Defence (3LoD)	**1st: Model owners**; **2nd: Independent validation function**; **3rd: Internal audit**
3. Model Inventory	Maintain comprehensive inventories (active, inactive, decommissioned); no model deployed without formal documentation
4. Risk-Tiered Classification	Every model assigned a risk level (high, medium, low)
5. Independent Validation	High-risk models validated before deployment
6. Ongoing Monitoring	Regular performance review, drift detection, recalibration

Pillar	Requirement
7. Audit Trail	Complete documentation of model development, validation, and deployment

Role of Risk Management Committee of the Board (RMCB)

- **Review validation reports** of models classified as **high risk before deployment**.
- **Oversee monitoring** of **third-party and AI-based models**.
- **Review model-risk classification reports** at least **annually**.
- **Examine material breaches** and other major concerns.
- **Approve material exceptions** to MRMF policies.

AI/ML-Specific Mandates

Mandate	Description
Kill Switches	**Mandatory override, suspension, deactivation mechanisms** to halt AI systems instantly
Human Oversight	Mandatory **review mechanisms** addressing **automation bias, over-reliance, decision fatigue**
Explainability	Define **explainability and transparency thresholds** for AI models
Customer Disclosure	Customers must be **informed when interacting with AI**
Human Option	Customer-facing AI must offer **option to speak with a human**
Pre-Deployment Risk Assessment	Assess if **risks can be identified, measured, monitored, managed**
Red-Teaming	Test under **edge cases, abnormal inputs, manipulation attempts, adversarial conditions**
GenAI Cybersecurity	Additional cybersecurity requirements for **generative AI** interacting with customers/external users
Supply Chain Concentration	Address dependence on **few global AI providers**
No Consumer Harm	REs **must not use models that harm consumers**
Grievance Redress	Mechanisms must address complaints arising from **customer-facing AI**

7 AI Risk Dimensions

1. **Hallucinations** (false outputs presented as facts).
2. **Bias** (discriminatory outputs).
3. **Drift** (model performance degradation over time).
4. **Adversarial attacks** (manipulation by bad actors).
5. **Explainability gaps**.
6. **Data privacy and leakage**.
7. **Concentration risk** (dependence on few vendors).

Third-Party Model Risk Provisions

- **Vendor disclosure**: If vendors don't disclose adequate information, **REs must identify risks and put safeguards** in place.
- **Restriction**: REs may restrict use of such models where necessary.
- **Accountability**: **RE is accountable for outcomes** of all models, irrespective of source.
- **No "vendor blame"** for AI-driven decisions gone wrong.

FREE-AI Committee (Framework for Responsible and Ethical Enablement of AI)

- **What**: An **RBI-constituted committee** that submitted its **report in August 2025** on **responsible AI**

deployment in India's financial sector; proposed **AI governance principles**, **explainability standards**, **human oversight mechanisms**, and **AI ethics norms**; chaired by an external expert.

- **Where**: Constituted by **RBI from Mumbai**; report applicable to **India's financial sector**.

Utkarsh 2029

- **What**: **RBI's medium-term strategic framework (2024–2029)** that outlines **regulatory and supervisory priorities**, including **digital innovation, AI governance, financial inclusion, cybersecurity, monetary policy modernisation**.
- **Where**: Issued by **RBI, Mumbai**; applies to all **RBI-regulated entities** in India.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the RBI's Draft Guidance on Regulatory Principles for Model Risk Management, 2026, consider the following statements:

1. The Draft was released on 24 June 2026 under RBI Press Release No. 2026-2027/528.
2. Regulated entities will be required to put in place a board-approved Model Risk Management Framework (MRMF) covering all models, including AI/ML.
3. Feedback can be submitted until 24 July 2026 via the "Connect 2 Regulate" portal.
4. The Guidance applies only to commercial banks and excludes NBFCs and other entities.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the Guidance applies to **11 categories of RBI-regulated entities** including **NBFCs, ARCs, CICs, SFBs, payment banks, cooperative banks**, and others — NOT just commercial banks.)

Q2. With reference to the AI/ML-specific mandates in the draft, consider the following statements:

1. Regulated entities must implement mandatory kill switches for AI systems to halt them instantly if they produce harmful outputs.
2. Mandatory human oversight is required for AI-driven decision-making to address automation bias and over-reliance.
3. Customers must be informed when they are interacting with an AI model and given the option to speak with a human.
4. Regulated entities can shift accountability for AI-driven decisions to third-party vendors who developed the models.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **REs remain fully accountable for outcomes** of all models, **irrespective of whether they are developed internally or sourced from third parties** — accountability **cannot be shifted to vendors**.)

Q3. With reference to the three lines of defence (3LoD) structure under the MRMF, consider the following statements:

1. The first line of defence comprises model owners.
2. The second line of defence is independent validation functions.
3. The third line of defence is provided by internal audit.
4. The Risk Management Committee of the Board (RMCB) is part of the first line of defence.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **RMCB is part of board-level oversight (above the three lines)** — NOT part of the first line of defence, which comprises model owners.)

Q4. With reference to the AI risk dimensions identified in the draft, consider the following statements:

1. Hallucinations (AI generating false outputs presented as facts) are identified as a key AI risk.
2. Algorithmic bias is identified as a key AI risk dimension.
3. Concentration risk arising from dependence on a few global AI providers is identified.
4. The draft excludes adversarial attacks from AI risk considerations.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **draft explicitly includes adversarial attacks** as one of the **7 AI risk dimensions** and requires **red-teaming** to test models under adversarial conditions.)

Q5. With reference to the predecessor documents and context, consider the following statements:

1. The draft follows RBI's August 2024 draft on Regulatory Principles for Management of Model Risks (in credit).
2. It also follows the August 2025 report of the Committee on FREE-AI (Framework for Responsible and Ethical Enablement of AI).
3. On finalisation, the new Guidance will supersede Chapter-3 (Credit Risk Models) of RBI's Guidance Note on Credit Risk Management dated 12 October 2002.
4. The draft is aligned with the European Union's AI Act and has been jointly drafted with the EU.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; while the draft aligns with **global AI governance trends**, it was **drafted independently by RBI**, NOT jointly with the EU.)

Q6. With reference to consumer protection provisions in the draft, consider the following statements:

1. The RBI states that regulated entities should not use any model that harms consumers.
2. Grievance-redress mechanisms must specifically address complaints arising from customer-facing AI.
3. Customer-facing AI systems must provide an option for customers to speak with a human at any point.
4. Customer-facing generative AI systems are exempted from additional cybersecurity requirements.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **generative AI systems interacting with customers or external users face ADDITIONAL cybersecurity requirements**, NOT exemption.)

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because it applies to 11 RE categories.
2. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because accountability cannot be shifted to vendors.
3. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because RMCB is board-level, not first line.
4. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because adversarial attacks are included.
5. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the draft is independent of the EU AI Act.

6. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because GenAI faces additional cybersecurity requirements.

3. RBI Drops Separate Onshore-Offshore Foreign Exchange Position Calculation

Source: *Business Standard*

Context

The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** on **Wednesday, 24 June 2026** issued the **final amendment directions on Net Open Position (NOP)** for banks and **All-India Financial Institutions (AIFIs)**, after **examining feedback on the draft norms released in January 2026** (comments deadline: **3 February 2026**). The revised framework, which **comes into effect on 1 April 2027**, **aligns the calculation of foreign-exchange risk with Basel Committee on Banking Supervision (BCBS) standards** and **clarifies the treatment of overseas operations, structural foreign-currency investments, and derivative exposures**. The most significant change: **banks will no longer be required to separately calculate onshore and offshore foreign-exchange positions** — **all open positions** from onshore and offshore operations will be captured under a **single, unified NOP calculation**. Banks can also **exclude specified structural foreign-exchange positions** from NOP calculations at **both standalone and consolidated levels**, including **capital investments and accumulated or unremitted surplus in overseas subsidiaries, joint ventures, associates, overseas branches, IFSC Banking Units (IBUs), and Offshore Banking Units (OBUs)** denominated in foreign currencies. Crucially, the **draft requirement of prior regulatory approval for such exclusions has been dropped** — banks can apply such **exemptions on a case-by-case basis**. The RBI accepted industry feedback on **derivative positions**, allowing banks to use **current spot rates without present-value adjustment** for measuring derivative exposures, and **replaced the requirement to use Foreign Exchange Dealers Association of India (FEDAI) guidelines** for spot rates with **financial benchmarks administered by authorised benchmark administrators**.

Key Changes

Change	Earlier Framework	Revised Framework (1 April 2027)
NOP Calculation	**Separate onshore + offshore positions**	**Single unified NOP** covering all operations
Structural FX Positions	Generally included in NOP	**Can be excluded** (case-by-case, no prior RBI approval)
Capital in Overseas Subsidiaries	Included in NOP	**Can be excluded** (in foreign currency)
Derivative Spot Rate	**FEDAI guidelines**	**Financial benchmarks administered by authorised benchmark administrators**
Derivative Measurement	With present-value adjustment	**Without present-value adjustment** (current spot rates)
Shorthand Method (Gold)	Combined with FX	**Gold treated separately**
Consolidated Capital Charge	Required	**Retained**; internal limits allowed as proxy for marginal overseas operations
Application of Exemptions	Required prior RBI approval (draft)	**Case-by-case** (no prior approval required)

Structural Foreign-Exchange Positions Excluded from NOP

The following can be excluded **at both standalone and consolidated levels**:

1. **Capital investments** in **overseas subsidiaries** (foreign currency).
2. **Capital investments** in **joint ventures (JVs) and associates** (foreign currency).
3. **Capital investments** in **overseas branches** (foreign currency).

4. **Capital investments** in **IFSC Banking Units (IBUs)** (foreign currency).
5. **Capital investments** in **Offshore Banking Units (OBUs)** (foreign currency).
6. **Accumulated or unremitted surplus** in any of the above.

Net Open Position (NOP)

- **What**: The **difference between a bank's total foreign currency assets and liabilities**; reveals **exposure to currency fluctuations or exchange rate risk**; **NOP is a single, easy-to-read domestic-currency exposure number** that **compresses the bank's complete FX book**; **regulated by RBI** under the **FEMA, 1999** and **RBI's prudential framework**; **must be backed by capital charge** for foreign-exchange risk.
- **Where**: Applies to all **banks and AIFIs in India**, including their **overseas operations**; monitored by **RBI from Mumbai**.

Shorthand Method

- **What**: A **simplified methodology** to **calculate NOP** under **Basel standards** for **smaller or less complex banks**; aggregates **long and short positions** across currencies into **net long** and **net short** positions; **larger of the two** is the NOP; **gold treated as a separate position** (under revised framework).
- **Where**: Applied **globally** under BCBS framework; in India, **RBI prescribes the methodology**.

Basel Committee on Banking Supervision (BCBS)

- **What**: The **primary global standard setter** for **prudential regulation of banks**; comprises **45 members from 28 jurisdictions**; sets standards for **capital adequacy (Basel I, II, III, IV), liquidity, market risk, operational risk, foreign-exchange risk**.
- **Where**: HQ at **Bank for International Settlements (BIS)** in **Basel, Switzerland**; standards followed globally including by **India through RBI**.

Foreign Exchange Dealers Association of India (FEDAI)

- **What**: An **association of authorised dealer banks** in India that **frames rules** for **foreign exchange business** and **publishes daily reference rates** for forex transactions; established in **1958**; regulated by **RBI**.
- **Where**: HQ in **Mumbai**; serves **all RBI-authorised dealer (AD) banks** in India.

International Financial Services Centre (IFSC)

- **What**: A **special economic zone** for **financial services**, established under the **Special Economic Zones Act, 2005**; allows **deemed offshore jurisdiction** within India; **GIFT City IFSC in Gandhinagar, Gujarat** is India's **first and only IFSC**; **IBUs (IFSC Banking Units)** of Indian and foreign banks operate there.
- **Where**: **GIFT City, Gandhinagar, Gujarat**; regulated by the **International Financial Services Centres Authority (IFSCA)**, established under the IFSCA Act, 2019, headquartered in GIFT City.

Offshore Banking Unit (OBU)

- **What**: A **bank branch** located in a **special economic zone (SEZ)** or **IFSC** that is **permitted to undertake international banking business** (USD or other foreign currency); **deemed offshore** for regulatory purposes.
- **Where**: Operates in **SEZs and IFSCs**; in India, primarily at **GIFT City** and **other SEZs**.

Capital Charge for Foreign-Exchange Risk

- **What**: A **regulatory capital requirement** that banks must maintain to **cover potential losses from foreign-exchange rate movements**; calculated as a **percentage of NOP**; under **Basel III, typically 8% of net open position**.
- **Where**: Mandated by **RBI for all Indian banks and AIFIs** at both **standalone and consolidated levels**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the RBI's final amendment directions on Net Open Position (NOP) issued on 24 June 2026, consider the following statements:

1. The revised framework will come into effect on 1 April 2027.
2. Banks will no longer be required to separately calculate onshore and offshore foreign-exchange positions.
3. The framework aligns NOP calculation with Basel Committee on Banking Supervision (BCBS) standards.
4. The directions abolish the capital charge for foreign-exchange risk at the consolidated level.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **capital charge for foreign-exchange risk is RETAINED at both standalone and consolidated levels**, NOT abolished.)

Q2. With reference to the structural foreign-exchange positions that can be excluded from NOP, consider the following statements:

1. Capital investments in overseas subsidiaries, joint ventures, and associates can be excluded.
2. Capital investments in overseas branches, IFSC Banking Units (IBUs), and Offshore Banking Units (OBUs) can be excluded.
3. Banks can apply such exemptions on a case-by-case basis without prior regulatory approval.
4. Such exclusions are permitted only at the standalone level, not at the consolidated level.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **exclusions are permitted at BOTH standalone and consolidated levels**, NOT only at the standalone level.)

Q3. With reference to the treatment of derivative positions under the revised framework, consider the following statements:

1. Banks shall use current spot rates, without present-value adjustment, for measuring derivative exposures.
2. The requirement to use Foreign Exchange Dealers Association of India (FEDAI) guidelines for spot rates has been replaced with financial benchmarks administered by authorised benchmark administrators.
3. The revised framework eliminates derivative positions entirely from NOP calculations.
4. Internal limits in individual currencies may be used as a proxy for actual positions in certain marginal overseas operations for consolidated NOP calculations.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 3 is wrong; the framework **does NOT eliminate derivative positions from NOP**; it modifies their measurement methodology.)

Q4. With reference to the modified shorthand method for NOP calculation, consider the following statements:

1. Banks will calculate the net position in gold independently from foreign-currency positions.
2. The net gold position will be added to the larger of aggregate net long or net short foreign-currency positions.
3. The modification aligns with Basel Committee on Banking Supervision (BCBS) standards.

4. Under the new method, gold positions are merged with other foreign-currency positions without separation.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; under the **new method, gold positions are treated SEPARATELY** from foreign-currency positions, NOT merged.)

Q5. With reference to the Basel Committee on Banking Supervision (BCBS) and India's regulatory alignment, consider the following statements:

1. The BCBS is the primary global standard setter for prudential regulation of banks.
2. The BCBS is headquartered at the Bank for International Settlements (BIS) in Basel, Switzerland.
3. India follows BCBS standards through RBI's regulatory and prudential framework.
4. The BCBS comprises members from only G7 countries.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **BCBS comprises 45 members from 28 jurisdictions**, including **India and other emerging economies**, NOT only G7 countries.)

Q6. With reference to the GIFT City IFSC and IFSC Banking Units (IBUs), consider the following statements:

1. GIFT City is India's first International Financial Services Centre (IFSC), located in Gandhinagar, Gujarat.
2. IFSC Banking Units (IBUs) are branches of banks that operate in an IFSC and conduct international banking business.
3. The IFSC is regulated by the International Financial Services Centres Authority (IFSCA), established under the IFSCA Act, 2019.
4. IBUs are considered onshore for the purpose of foreign-exchange regulation in India.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **IBUs are considered offshore (deemed offshore jurisdiction)** for regulatory purposes, NOT onshore.)

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because capital charge is retained.
2. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because exclusions apply at both levels.
3. (c), Statements 1, 2, 4 are correct; Statement 3 is wrong because derivatives are not eliminated.
4. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because gold is treated separately.
5. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because BCBS has 28 jurisdictions.
6. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because IBUs are deemed offshore.

Facts To Remember

1. PM Narendra Modi Visits Odisha for Development Projects

Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Odisha on **20 June 2026** to participate in major development and infrastructure events. Along with President Droupadi Murmu, he inaugurated and laid the foundation stone for projects worth over **₹47,600 crore**.

2. PM Modi Visits West Bengal for Development Initiatives

Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited West Bengal from **20–21 June 2026** to attend **Paschimbanga Divas** celebrations and launch multiple development projects. He also released the **23rd installment of PM-KISAN**.

3. DISHA 2.0 Scheme Approved to Strengthen Digital Justice Delivery

Union Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal approved **DISHA 2.0** with an outlay of **₹255 crore** for **2026–2031**. The scheme aims to improve digital access to justice and benefit nearly **3 crore citizens** across India.

4. DIBD and AISF Sign MoU for Multilingual AI Innovation

Digital India BHASHINI Division and Assam Innovation and Startup Foundation signed an MoU to promote language technology and multilingual AI solutions in Assam. The partnership will improve digital access through regional language services.

5. World Bank Approves USD 1.5 Billion for India's Structural Reforms

World Bank approved **USD 1.5 billion** for India's structural reforms to support private sector-led job creation and economic growth. The initiative aims to generate employment for nearly **11 million youth annually**.

6. World Bank Approves ₹4,000 Crore Loan for Haryana Water Project

World Bank approved a **₹4,000 crore loan** for the **Jal Sanrakshit Haryana Project**. The project aims to improve water management and conservation across **48.94 lakh acres** in Haryana.

7. PFRDA Launches AI-Powered Pension Sahayak Portal

Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority launched the AI-powered **Pension Sahayak** portal to simplify grievance redressal for pension subscribers. The platform enables complaint filing, status tracking, and faster resolution through a unified digital system.

8. IFC Commits USD 371 Million to Sify for AI-Ready Data Centres

International Finance Corporation committed **USD 371 million** to Sify Technologies for building AI-ready, energy-efficient data centres in India. The new facilities will be developed in Navi Mumbai and Chennai.

9. NSE Partners with BME for Metal Derivatives Market Growth

National Stock Exchange of India signed an MoU with Bharat Metal Exchange to strengthen India's non-ferrous metal derivatives market. The partnership will improve hedging tools and risk management.

10. GI Tags Granted to Four Products of Madhya Pradesh

The Geographical Indication Registry granted GI tags to **Khurasani Imli, Garadu, Malwi Potato, and Balam Kakdi** from Madhya Pradesh. These products received recognition for their unique regional identity and quality.

11. Harsh Vardhan Receives Global Prestige Award

Harsh Vardhan received the **Global Prestige Award** at the UK Parliament for contributions toward the **Viksit Bharat 2047** vision. The recognition honoured leadership in development and innovation.

12. Kunal Shah Joins Meta to Lead WhatsApp Globally

Kunal Shah reportedly joined Meta to lead WhatsApp globally. He stepped away from operational responsibilities as CEO of CRED.

13. India Wins Gold in Women's 4×100m Relay

India won gold in the women's **4×100m relay** at the **Asian Relays Championships 2026** in China. The Indian team clocked **43.85 seconds** to finish ahead of China and Thailand.

14. Book on India's IIT Ecosystem Launched

Om Birla launched the book **IIT: The Story of India's Most Prestigious Educational Ecosystem**, authored by Prabhat Kumar. The book highlights the **75-year journey** of India's IIT ecosystem.

15. International Day of the Celebration of Solstice Observed

The **International Day of the Celebration of the Solstice** was observed on **21 June 2026** to highlight the cultural and astronomical significance of solstices across civilizations worldwide.

16. World Music Day 2026 Observed

World Music Day was observed on **21 June 2026** with the theme **"Music for Peace."** The day promotes unity, creativity, and peace through music.

FIVE TO REMEMBER · 25 JUNE 2026

1. The Ministry of Cooperation administers the Companies Act, 2013. Union Home Minister Amit Shah Launches NAFED's ...
2. **What**: **RBI's medium-term strategic framework (2024–2029)** that outlines **regulatory and supervisory priorities**, including **digital innovation, AI governance, financial inclusion, cybersecurity, monetary policy modernisation**. RBI Releases Draft Guidance on Model Risk Manag...
3. Union Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal approved **DISHA 2.0** with an outlay of **₹255 crore** for **2026–2031**. The scheme aims to improve digital access to justice and benefit nearly **3 crore citizens** across India. DISHA 2.0 Scheme Approved to Strengthen Digital...
4. Harsh Vardhan received the **Global Prestige Award** at the UK Parliament for contributions toward the **Viksit Bharat 2047** vision. The recognition honoured leadership in development and innovation. Harsh Vardhan Receives Global Prestige Award
5. **Where**: Issued by **RBI from Mumbai**; applicable to **all NBFCs registered in India** under the **RBI Act, 1934**. RBI Revises NBFC Norms

Now test yourself: c4scourses.in/daily-quiz/daily-current-affairs-quiz-25-june-2026/

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Context

As **BRICS Chair for 2026**, India hosted the **BRICS Heads of Space Agencies (HOSA) Meeting** in **Bengaluru on 23-24 June 2026**, organised by the **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)** at which **Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science & Technology, Earth Sciences, Space, and Atomic Energy, Dr. Jitendra Singh** formally pitched the concept of a **"BRICS Space Economy"** as the **"next frontier of global growth"**. Addressing the **valedictory session** on **24 June 2026**, Dr. Singh said BRICS countries possess the **scale, scientific capabilities, technological strengths, and industrial capacity** required to **emerge as a major force in the rapidly expanding global space economy** — calling for member nations to move **beyond consultation** toward **"co-development, co-innovation, and co-creation"**.

What is BRICS?

BRICS is an intergovernmental organization of major emerging economies formed to promote cooperation in **trade, investment, development finance, global governance, and South-South cooperation**.

The acronym originally stood for:

- Brazil
- Russia
- India
- China

These four countries were initially grouped as **"BRIC"** in 2001 by economist Jim O'Neill.

Participating BRICS Countries

#	Country	Status
1	**India**	Original BRICS + Host + 2026 Chair
2	**Brazil**	Original BRICS
3	**Russia**	Original BRICS
4	**China**	Original BRICS
5	**South Africa**	Original BRICS
6	**Egypt**	Joined Jan 2024
7	**Ethiopia**	Joined Jan 2024
8	**Iran**	Joined Jan 2024
9	**UAE**	Joined Jan 2024
10	**Indonesia**	Joined Jan 2025

Key Pillars of the "BRICS Space Economy" Concept

#	Pillar	Description
1	**BRICS Remote Sensing Satellite Constellation (RSSC)**	**Satellite data sharing** for disaster management, agriculture, weather, environment; **operational since 2021**
2	**Proposed BRICS Space Council**	**Institutional mechanism** for long-term policy coordination and continuity
3	**Space Sustainability**	**Debris-free missions**, responsible space operations
4	**NewSpace + Private Participation**	Collaboration among **startups, private industries, scientists, innovators**
5	**Capacity Building**	Joint training, scientific exchange, technology transfer
6	**Earth Observation & Disaster Management**	Satellite-based applications for global challenges

BRICS Remote Sensing Satellite Constellation (RSSC)

- **What**: An **operational satellite constellation** under which **BRICS member space agencies share data and imagery** from their **respective Earth Observation (EO) satellites**; **launched in 2021**; designed for **disaster management, environment monitoring, agriculture, water management, weather forecasting**.
- **Where**: Contributions from **CBERS-4** (Brazil-China), **Gaofen series** (China), **Kanopus-V** (Russia), **Resourcesat-2** (India), **Ziyuan series** (China), **SumbandilaSat** legacy (South Africa); satellite data **exchanged via dedicated portal**.

BRICS Facts

Metric	Value
Founding Members (2009)	**Brazil, Russia, India, China**
South Africa Added	**2010 (BRICS acronym)**
Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, UAE Added	**1 January 2024**
Indonesia Added	**6 January 2025**
Current Members	**10**
2025 Chair	**Brazil (17th Summit, Rio, July 2025)**
2026 Chair	**India (4th time after 2012, 2016, 2021)**
18th BRICS Summit (2026)	**September 2026 in India**

Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)

- **What**: India's **national space agency**, established on **15 August 1969** under the **Department of Space (DoS)**; one of the world's **leading space agencies**; major missions include **Chandrayaan-3 (first Moon south-pole landing, August 2023), Aditya-L1 (Sun mission, January 2024), Mangalyaan (Mars Orbiter, 2014), GSLV Mk III/LVM-3, PSLV, SSLV, Gaganyaan (human spaceflight, 2026-27), Bharatiya Antariksh Station (planned 2035)**; pioneered **cost-effective space missions**.
- **Where**: HQ at **Bengaluru, Karnataka**; major centres include **VSSC (Thiruvananthapuram), LPSC (Mahendragiri/Bengaluru), SDSC SHAR (Sriharikota), URSC (Bengaluru), IISU (Thiruvananthapuram), SAC (Ahmedabad), NRSC (Hyderabad), MCF (Hassan), ISTRAC (Bengaluru)**.

Indian National Space Promotion and Authorization Center (IN-SPACe)

- **What**: India's **single-window, independent autonomous regulator** for the **promotion and**

authorization of space activities by **non-governmental entities (private sector and startups)**; established in **June 2020** and made functional from **2022**; under the **Department of Space**; **HQ at Bopal, Ahmedabad**; current Chairman: **Dr. Pawan Goenka**.

- **Where**: HQ at **Bopal, Ahmedabad, Gujarat**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the BRICS Heads of Space Agencies (HOSA) Meeting hosted by India on 23-24 June 2026, consider the following statements:

1. The meeting was hosted by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) in Bengaluru under India's BRICS Chairship 2026.
2. Union MoS Dr. Jitendra Singh pitched the concept of a "BRICS Space Economy" at the valedictory session.
3. Heads of Space Agencies from Brazil, China, Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Iran, Russia, South Africa, and the UAE attended.
4. India is hosting the BRICS Chairship for the first time in 2026.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **India is hosting the BRICS Chairship for the FOURTH time in 2026** (previous: **2012, 2016, 2021**) — NOT the first time.)

Q2. With reference to the proposed "BRICS Space Economy" framework, consider the following statements:

1. It aims to strengthen the BRICS Remote Sensing Satellite Constellation (RSSC) for satellite data sharing.
2. Discussions on establishing a "BRICS Space Council" as an institutional mechanism for policy coordination are underway.
3. The framework emphasises space sustainability through debris-free missions and responsible space operations.
4. The framework explicitly excludes private sector and startup participation.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the framework **EXPLICITLY ENCOURAGES** collaboration among **startups, private industries, scientists, and innovators (NewSpace sector)** — NOT excludes them.)

Q3. With reference to the BRICS Remote Sensing Satellite Constellation (RSSC), consider the following statements:

1. The RSSC has been operational since 2021.
2. It enables satellite data sharing among BRICS member countries for disaster management, agriculture, weather, and environmental applications.
3. India's contribution to the RSSC includes the Resourcesat-2 satellite.
4. The RSSC is operated jointly by NASA and ESA.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **RSSC is operated by BRICS member space agencies (ISRO, CNSA, Roscosmos, INPE, SANSA)** — NOT NASA or ESA, which are US and European agencies.)

Q4. With reference to the BRICS grouping in 2026, consider the following statements:

1. The original 5 BRICS members are Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa.
2. Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, and the UAE became full BRICS members on 1 January 2024.
3. Indonesia became a full BRICS member on 6 January 2025, taking the total membership to 10.
4. Saudi Arabia is currently a full member of BRICS.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **Saudi Arabia was invited to join BRICS in January 2024 but has NOT formally accepted full membership** as of 2026.)

Q5. With reference to the Indian space sector ecosystem, consider the following statements:

1. ISRO was established on 15 August 1969 and is headquartered in Bengaluru.
2. The Indian National Space Promotion and Authorization Center (IN-SPACe) was established in June 2020 as a single-window regulator for private space activities.
3. The Indian Space Policy 2023 opened the space sector to private participation and 100% FDI was permitted from February 2024.
4. NewSpace India Limited (NSIL) is the regulatory body of the Indian space sector.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **NSIL is ISRO's COMMERCIAL ARM**, NOT the regulatory body. **IN-SPACe is the regulatory body**.)

Q6. With reference to India's recent space sector achievements and targets, consider the following statements:

1. India's current space economy is approximately $8.4 billion, with a target of $44 billion by 2033.
2. India has over 200 space startups as of 2026.
3. Chandrayaan-3 (August 2023) achieved the first-ever soft landing at the Moon's south pole.
4. India's Bharatiya Antariksh Station is expected to be fully operational by 2025.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **Bharatiya Antariksh Station (BAS) is planned to be fully operational by 2035**, NOT 2025. The first module is expected by 2028.)

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because India is hosting BRICS for the 4th time in 2026.
2. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because private/startup participation is encouraged.
3. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because RSSC is operated by BRICS agencies, not NASA/ESA.
4. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because Saudi Arabia is not yet a full member.
5. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because NSIL is ISRO's commercial arm, not regulator.
6. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because BAS targets 2035, not 2025.

2. AIR SUVIDHA 2.0 Portal

Source: PIB

Context

The **Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA), Government of India** and **Delhi International Airport Limited (DIAL)** on **Wednesday, 25 June 2026** jointly launched **"AIR SUVIDHA 2.0"** — an **upgraded, fully contactless and paperless Passenger Health Self-Declaration Portal** — to **strengthen public health surveillance at India's Points of Entry (PoEs)** in response to the **ongoing Ebola disease outbreak**. The launch follows the **World Health Organization (WHO)'s formal declaration on 17 May 2026** of the **Ebola/Bundibugyo virus disease (BVD) outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Uganda** as a **Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC)** under the **International Health Regulations (IHR), 2005**. The **current outbreak has been confirmed as Bundibugyo virus disease (BVD)** — one of the **six recognised species of the Ebolavirus genus** — and **countries bordering DRC and Uganda, including South Sudan**, have been **assessed by WHO as high-risk for transmission**.

The Launch

- **Launched by**: **Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) + Delhi International Airport Limited (DIAL)**.
- **Developed in Collaboration with**: **Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (MoHFW)**.
- **Portal URL**: **https://airsuvidha.civilaviation.gov.in/**.
- **Trigger**: **WHO PHEIC declaration of 17 May 2026** for **Ebola/Bundibugyo virus disease (BVD)** outbreak in **DRC + Uganda**.

AIR SUVIDHA 2.0 — Key Features

Feature	Detail
Type	**Web-based Passenger Health Self-Declaration Portal**
Mode	**Fully Contactless and Paperless**
Mandatory For	**All International Arriving Passengers**
Self-Declaration Form (SDF) Coverage	**21-day travel history + exposure history + related symptoms**
Submission Window	**Up to 24 hours in advance** of arrival in India
Recommended Timing	**Before flight boarding / during web check-in**
Verification on Arrival	**Show downloaded SDF (PDF or QR receipt)** at **International Travel Health Desk** or **Immigration counter**
Integration	**Real-time data sharing with multiple agencies**

Multi-Agency Real-Time Data Pipeline

#	Agency	Role
1	**Airport Health Officer (APHO)**	**Public health screening at airports**
2	**Bureau of Immigration (BoI)**	**Immigration clearance**
3	**Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP)**	**Disease surveillance, outbreak detection**
4	**State Surveillance Officers**	**State-level disease monitoring + contact tracing**

Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC)

- **What**: A **formal declaration** by the **WHO Director-General** under the **International Health Regulations (IHR), 2005**, defining an **"extraordinary event"** that **constitutes a public health risk** to other states through **international spread** and **potentially requires a coordinated international response**; triggers

enhanced surveillance, travel advisories, and global health alerts.

- **Where**: Declared by **WHO HQ in Geneva, Switzerland** after recommendations from the **IHR Emergency Committee**.

Original AIR SUVIDHA Portal (Background)

- **What**: Originally **launched during the COVID-19 pandemic (2020)** by **MoCA + DIAL** for **mandatory health screening of international arrivals**; required **Self-Declaration Form (SDF), RT-PCR negative report uploads**, and **PoE health screening**; **discontinued in February 2022** when pandemic conditions eased; **revived as AIR SUVIDHA 2.0 in June 2026** in response to the Ebola PHEIC.
- **Where**: Operated by **MoCA + DIAL**; portal URL: **airsuvidha.civilaviation.gov.in**.

International Health Regulations (IHR), 2005

- **What**: A **legally binding multilateral framework** adopted by the **58th World Health Assembly in 2005** (entered into force **15 June 2007**); requires **WHO Member States to detect, assess, notify, and report public health events** of international concern; provides the **legal basis for PHEIC declarations and coordinated international response**; **revised after the 2003 SARS outbreak** to address modern transboundary health threats; **further amended in June 2024** (post-COVID) to introduce **"Pandemic Emergency" category** and strengthen WHO mandates.
- **Where**: Administered by **WHO HQ, Geneva**; **194 WHO Member States** are signatories.

Delhi International Airport Limited (DIAL)

- **What**: The **operator of Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGIA), New Delhi**; a **public-private partnership joint venture** of **GMR Group (64%), Airports Authority of India (26%), and Fraport AG (10%)**; **IGIA is India's busiest airport** and a **major international hub**; **DIAL's concession period extends to 2036** with possible extension.
- **Where**: **Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGIA), New Delhi**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the AIR SUVIDHA 2.0 Portal launched on 25 June 2026, consider the following statements:

1. The portal was jointly launched by the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Delhi International Airport Limited (DIAL).
2. It was developed in collaboration with the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
3. The launch responds to the WHO's declaration of the Ebola/Bundibugyo virus disease outbreak as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) on 17 May 2026.
4. The AIR SUVIDHA 2.0 portal is exclusively for domestic air travellers within India.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **AIR SUVIDHA 2.0 portal is for INTERNATIONAL ARRIVING PASSENGERS**, NOT domestic travellers.)

Q2. With reference to the features of AIR SUVIDHA 2.0, consider the following statements:

1. International arriving passengers must submit a mandatory online Health Self-Declaration covering a 21-day travel history, exposure history, and related symptoms.
2. The Self-Declaration Form (SDF) can be completed up to 24 hours in advance before arrival in India.
3. The portal enables real-time data sharing with the Airport Health Officer, Bureau of Immigration, IDSP, and State Surveillance Officers.
4. Passengers are required to submit physical paper forms on landing at Indian airports.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **AIR SUVIDHA 2.0 portal is fully contactless and paperless** — passengers only need to **show the downloaded SDF (PDF or QR receipt)** at the International Travel Health Desk or Immigration counter, NOT submit physical forms.)

Q3. With reference to the Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC), consider the following statements:

1. PHEIC is a formal declaration by the WHO Director-General under the International Health Regulations (IHR), 2005.
2. The IHR 2005 was adopted by the 58th World Health Assembly and entered into force on 15 June 2007.
3. The PHEIC declaration triggers enhanced surveillance, travel advisories, and global health alerts.
4. The PHEIC declaration is issued by the United Nations Security Council.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **PHEIC declaration is issued by the WHO Director-General**, NOT the UN Security Council.)

Q4. With reference to the current outbreak that triggered the AIR SUVIDHA 2.0 launch, consider the following statements:

1. The current outbreak has been confirmed as Bundibugyo virus disease (BVD), one of six species of the Ebolavirus genus.
2. The outbreak is concentrated in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Uganda.
3. WHO has assessed countries bordering DRC and Uganda — including South Sudan — as high-risk for transmission.
4. The Bundibugyo virus disease has a case fatality rate of below 5%.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **historical case fatality rate of Bundibugyo virus disease is approximately 30–50%**, NOT below 5%.)

Q5. With reference to the multi-agency data pipeline of AIR SUVIDHA 2.0, consider the following statements:

1. Real-time data sharing is enabled with the Airport Health Officer (APHO) for medical screening.
2. The Bureau of Immigration receives data for immigration clearance integration.
3. The Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP) and State Surveillance Officers are integrated for outbreak detection and contact tracing.
4. The portal shares passenger health data with the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI).

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **portal does NOT share data with SEBI** (SEBI regulates securities markets) — data sharing is with **public health and immigration agencies only**.)

Q6. With reference to the broader Indian health security architecture, consider the following statements:

1. The Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP) was launched in 2004 under the National

Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), MoHFW.
2. The Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) is an attached office of the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare.
3. The Bureau of Immigration (BoI) functions under the Ministry of Home Affairs.
4. Delhi International Airport Limited (DIAL) is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Indian Railways.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **DIAL is a public-private partnership joint venture of GMR Group (64%), Airports Authority of India (26%), and Fraport AG (10%)** — NOT a subsidiary of Indian Railways.)

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because AIR SUVIDHA 2.0 is for international arrivals.
2. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because the portal is paperless.
3. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because PHEIC is declared by WHO, not UN Security Council.
4. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because BVD CFR is 30-50%.
5. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because SEBI doesn't get health data.
6. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because DIAL is PPP, not under Indian Railways.

Exam Relevance

UPSC Prelims	GS Paper II on Health Schemes, International Organisations (WHO, IHR); GS Paper III on Science & Tech, Public Health, Disease Outbreaks
UPSC Mains	GS Paper II on Health Governance, International Relations (WHO), Disaster Management; GS Paper III on Health, Science & Technology; Essay on pandemic preparedness

3. UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) List

Source: *The Hindu*

Context

Jammu & Kashmir Chief Minister Mr. Omar Abdullah has formally **forwarded a proposal to the Union Ministry of Culture** — through a **formal letter to Union Minister of Culture and Tourism Mr. Gajendra Singh Shekhawat** in **June 2026** — to **nominate Kashmir's Sufiyana Music for inclusion in UNESCO's "Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) of Humanity"**, a list maintained under the **UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003)**. Kashmir's **Sufiyana Music** (also known as **Sufiyana Mausiqi** or **Sufiyana Kalam**) is a **distinctive form of classical choral ensemble music** — a **highly structured, mystical art form** that **blends devotional poetry, classical melody, and philosophy**, serving as a **unique bridge between Persian, Central Asian, and Indian classical musical systems**. The art form is **entirely indigenous and exclusive to the Kashmir Valley** in the **Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir**, and is historically **preserved and carried forward by a select few surviving gharanas** (traditional musical lineages or schools) located across **Budgam, Srinagar, and Anantnag** districts.

Kashmir's Sufiyana Music

- **What**: A **distinctive form of classical choral ensemble music** of **Kashmir**; also known as **"Sufiyana Mausiqi"** or **"Sufiyana Kalam"**; a **highly structured, mystical art form** blending **devotional poetry, classical melody, and philosophy**; bridges **Persian, Central Asian, and Indian classical musical systems**; performed by **5-7 musicians (Sazandar)** who are **simultaneously vocalists and instrumentalists**; **lyrics from Rumi, Hafiz, Omar Khayyam, Amir Khusro**.

- **Where**: **Indigenous to Kashmir Valley** (UT of Jammu and Kashmir); **gharanas concentrated in Budgam, Srinagar, and Anantnag** districts; today **largely confined to Radio Kashmir studios** and a few private gatherings.

Origins & Cultural Synthesis

Aspect	Detail
Origins	**14th–15th centuries**
Continuum	Continuum of **pre-Islamic musical practices** in Kashmir
Synthesis	**Persian + Islamic + Shaivite philosophical thought**
Influences From	**Iran, Bukhara, Samarkand** (Central Asia)
Carriers	**Sufi saints, scholars, artisans, musicians**
Royal Patronage	**Sultanate, Mughal, Afghan, and Dogra periods**

The Maqam System

- **What**: A **system of melodic modes** rooted in **Persian classical traditions** — similar to **Indian ragas** in concept but with distinct structure; defines the **scale, characteristic phrases, and ornamentation** for a composition.
- **Status**:
  - **Historically: ~50 distinct maqams**.
  - **Today: Only 20–25 actively practiced**.
- **Examples**: **Maqam-i Bahr, Maqam-i Nawa, Maqam-i Sahnai**, etc.

Specialised Instruments

Instrument	Description
Sufiana Santoor	**Unique Kashmiri hammer-stringed instrument**; **100 strings** over a **triangular three-legged stand**; central instrument
Saz-e-Kashmir	**Kashmiri bowed string instrument**
Sehtar (Sitar)	Modified version of the Indian sitar
Tabla	Indian percussion
Harmonium	Hand-pumped keyboard
Ney	**Persian-style end-blown flute**
Rabab	Long-necked plucked string instrument
Madham	Traditional drum

Panjhatheyari: Combination of **5 core instruments** (typically Santoor + Sitar + Tabla + Saz-e-Kashmir + Madham).

Notable Past and Present Maestros

Era	Maestros
Past Elite Masters	**Ramzan Joo, Sidh Joo, Abdullah Shah, Muhammed Abdullah Tibetbaqal, Qaleenbaaft**
20th Century	**Ustad Ghulam Muhammed Qaleenbaaft, Ustad Ghulam Muhammed Saaznawaz, Ustad Abdul Ghani Ganaie (Namtahali)**
Living Maestros	**Ustad Muhammad Yaqoob Sheikh** (Sangeet Natak Akademi awardee, AIR top-grade composer), **Ustad Manzoorul Haq** (Sangeet Natak Akademi Yuva Awardee), **Ustad Muhammad Maqbool Bhat**

UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH)

- **What**: A **UNESCO convention** adopted in **2003** for the **safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage** — including **oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature, and traditional craftsmanship**; aims to **ensure respect, raise awareness, protect, and promote ICH globally**; has **two lists** (**Representative List** + **List of ICH in Need of Urgent Safeguarding**) + **Register of Good Safeguarding Practices**.
- **Where**: Administered by **UNESCO HQ in Paris, France**; **India ratified the convention in 2005**.

India's UNESCO ICH Inscriptions (15 as of 2024)

Year	Element
2008	**Kutiyattam Sanskrit Theatre** (Kerala)
2008	**Vedic Chanting**
2008	**Ramlila** (Northern India)
2009	**Ramman** (Garhwal Himalayas)
2010	**Mudiyettu** (Kerala)
2010	**Kalbelia** (Rajasthan folk songs and dances)
2010	**Chhau Dance** (Eastern India)
2012	**Buddhist Chanting of Ladakh**
2013	**Sankirtana** (Manipuri ritual singing, drumming, dancing)
2014	**Traditional Brass and Copper Craft of Utensil-Making among Thatheras of Jandiala Guru, Punjab**
2016	**Yoga**
2016	**Nawrouz/Navroz** (multi-country)
2017	**Kumbh Mela**
2021	**Durga Puja in Kolkata**
2023	**Garba of Gujarat**
(Proposed)	**Sufiyana Music (Kashmir) — June 2026**

About Omar Abdullah

- **Current Chief Minister of J&K** (since 16 October 2024); first CM after Article 370 abrogation in 2019; **National Conference (NC) leader**; previous CM tenure: **2009–2015**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the proposal to nominate Kashmir's Sufiyana Music for UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage list, consider the following statements:

1. The proposal has been forwarded by J&K CM Omar Abdullah to Union Minister of Culture Gajendra Singh Shekhawat in June 2026.
2. The nomination seeks inclusion in UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.
3. The UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage was adopted in 2003.
4. India has not yet ratified the UNESCO Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **India ratified the UNESCO Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2005** — and has **15 ICH elements inscribed** as of 2024.)

Q2. With reference to Kashmir's Sufiyana Music, consider the following statements:

1. Sufiyana Music is indigenous and exclusive to the Kashmir Valley in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.
2. The art form emerged between the 14th and 15th centuries as a continuum of pre-Islamic musical practices.
3. It represents a cultural synthesis of Persian, Islamic, and Shaivite philosophical thought.
4. Sufiyana Music is primarily a solo performance form.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **Sufiyana Music is a CHORAL ENSEMBLE form** performed by **5-7 musicians (Sazandar)** who are simultaneously vocalists and instrumentalists — NOT a solo performance.)

Q3. With reference to the structure and instruments of Sufiyana Music, consider the following statements:

1. The Sufiana Santoor is a unique Kashmiri hammer-stringed instrument featuring 100 strings spread over a triangular three-legged stand.
2. Most compositions open with an instrumental prelude, followed by a short poem sung free-hand without rhythm.
3. The main lyrics, known as "Bathe", are presented as a couplet adhering to a designated maqam and tala.
4. The maqam system in Sufiyana derives entirely from South Indian Carnatic music.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **maqam system in Sufiyana is rooted in PERSIAN classical traditions**, NOT South Indian Carnatic music.)

Q4. With reference to the Maqam system in Sufiyana, consider the following statements:

1. Maqams in Sufiyana are similar in concept to Indian ragas.
2. Historically, around 50 distinct maqams existed in Sufiyana; only 20-25 are actively practiced today.
3. Examples include Maqam-i Bahr, Maqam-i Nawa, and Maqam-i Sahnai.
4. The maqams, talas, and accompanying poetry are codified in extensive written texts.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **complex system of maqams, talas, and poetry is NOT codified in text**; it is **passed down entirely orally** from one generation to the next.)

Q5. With reference to India's UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage inscriptions, consider the following statements:

1. Yoga was inscribed in 2016.
2. Kumbh Mela was inscribed in 2017.
3. Garba of Gujarat was inscribed in 2023.
4. India does not have any UNESCO ICH inscriptions for performing arts.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; India has **MULTIPLE UNESCO ICH inscriptions for performing arts** including

Kutiyattam Sanskrit Theatre, Ramlila, Chhau Dance, Mudiyettu, Kalbelia, Sankirtana, Garba, etc.)

Q6. With reference to the lyrical content and oral transmission of Sufiyana, consider the following statements:

1. The lyrics draw from mystical poetry of Persian masters like Rumi, Hafiz, Omar Khayyam, and Amir Khusro.
2. The art form is preserved by a select few gharanas located across Budgam, Srinagar, and Anantnag districts.
3. The tradition is passed down entirely orally within specialised families.
4. Sufiyana Music thrives today with active patronage from over 100 gharanas across India.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **Sufiyana Music is endangered**, with **only a handful of surviving gharanas** in Kashmir — NOT 100 gharanas across India.)

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because India ratified the convention in 2005.
2. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because Sufiyana is choral ensemble form.
3. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because maqams are Persian, not Carnatic.
4. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because Sufiyana is orally transmitted.
5. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because India has many performing arts ICH.
6. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because few gharanas survive in Kashmir alone.

4. Gramin Vikas Sammelan (RGVS) 2026

Source: TNIE

Context

The **Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India** is organising the **Rashtriya Gramin Vikas Sammelan (RGVS) 2026** on **28-29 June 2026** at the **ICAR-NASC Complex, Pusa, New Delhi**, to be **inaugurated by Union Minister for Rural Development and Agriculture Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan**. The Sammelan will bring together the **Union Minister for Rural Development**, **Ministers of State (MoS) for Rural Development**, **State Rural Development Ministers**, **senior officials from the Central and State Governments**, **representatives of State Rural Livelihood Missions (SRLMs)**, and **other key stakeholders** to **deliberate on the roadmap for a developed rural India**. A **major showcase** at RGVS 2026 will be the **SARAS Aajeevika Gallery** — a curated display by the Ministry of Rural Development of products created by **women-led Self Help Groups (SHGs)** under the **Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana - National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM)**, reflecting the **richness and diversity of rural India**.

Participants

Category	Detail
Union Minister	**Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan** (Rural Development & Agriculture)
Ministers of State (MoS)	**Rural Development**
State Rural Development Ministers	From all states/UTs
Senior Officials	Central + State Governments
State Rural Livelihood Missions (SRLMs)	Representatives
Other Stakeholders	Industry, NGOs, Academia, SHG leaders

SARAS Aajeevika

- **What**: A **national branding and marketing initiative** of the **Ministry of Rural Development** to **promote and market products made by women Self Help Groups (SHGs)** under the **Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana - National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM)**; provides a **distinct national identity** for SHG products; comprises **trademarks** (SARAS, SARAS Aajeevika, Aajeevika), **SARAS Melas**, **the permanent SARAS Aajeevika Gallery in New Delhi**, and the **eSARAS e-commerce platform**.
- **Where**: Pan-India presence through **SARAS Melas at national, regional, state, and district levels**; **Permanent Gallery at Baba Kharak Singh Marg, New Delhi**.

Three Key Brands Under SARAS Initiative

Brand	Use
SARAS	Original umbrella brand for SHG products
SARAS Aajeevika	Premium brand for curated, quality SHG products
Aajeevika	Generic livelihoods-focused brand

SARAS Aajeevika Ecosystem

Channel	Detail
SARAS Aajeevika Gallery	**Permanent physical retail platform** at **Baba Kharak Singh Marg, New Delhi**
eSARAS	**E-commerce platform** + **mobile application**
SARAS Melas	**Periodic exhibitions** at national/regional/state/district levels
National Showcases	**RGVS 2026, SARAS Shakti Collection launch, etc.**
Institutional Tie-ups	**Government, Corporate, Bulk gifting markets**

Lakhpati Didi Initiative

- **What**: A **target programme** under **DAY-NRLM** that **identifies women SHG members earning ≥ ₹1 lakh per annum (sustainable annual income)** as **"Lakhpati Didis"**; aims to **transform rural women into successful entrepreneurs**, **job creators**, and **economic drivers**; **6 crore target** announced by PM Modi in **Independence Day 2024 speech**, revised upward from the **3 crore target announced in 2023**.
- **Where**: Across India under the **DAY-NRLM** ecosystem.

Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana - National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM)

- **What**: A **flagship rural poverty alleviation programme** of the **Government of India**, **launched in 2011 as NRLM** under the **National Rural Livelihood Project**; **rebranded as DAY-NRLM in 2015**; under the **Ministry of Rural Development**; aims to **eliminate rural poverty** through **mobilising poor rural women** into **Self Help Groups (SHGs)**, **federating them into Village Organisations (VOs) and Cluster-Level Federations (CLFs)**, and **providing capacity-building, financial inclusion, skills, and market access**; uses **World Bank assistance**.
- **Where**: Implemented across **all 28 states and 8 UTs**; **State Rural Livelihood Missions (SRLMs)** lead state-level implementation.

Self Help Groups (SHGs) in India

- **What**: **Voluntary associations of 10-20 rural poor women** who **save small amounts regularly**, **bank with each other**, and **eventually access bank credit** (under SHG-Bank Linkage Programme since 1992); foundational unit of India's **financial inclusion and rural livelihoods movement**; promoted by **NABARD, MoRD, DAY-NRLM**.
- **Where**: Across all states/UTs; especially strong in **Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Kerala, Bihar, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra**.

Indian Council of Agricultural Research-National Agricultural Science Complex (ICAR-NASC)

- **What**: The **administrative + conference hub of ICAR** in New Delhi; houses **major ICAR offices, conference halls, and exhibition facilities**; venue for major **rural/agriculture/research conferences and stakeholder consultations**.
- **Where**: **Pusa Campus, New Delhi**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the Rashtriya Gramin Vikas Sammelan (RGVS) 2026, consider the following statements:

1. RGVS 2026 will be organised on 28-29 June 2026 at the ICAR-NASC Complex, Pusa, New Delhi.
2. The event will be inaugurated by Union Minister for Rural Development Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan.
3. The Sammelan will deliberate on the roadmap for a developed rural India.
4. The RGVS 2026 will be organised by the Reserve Bank of India.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **RGVS 2026 will be organised by the Ministry of Rural Development**, NOT the RBI.)

Q2. With reference to the SARAS Aajeevika initiative, consider the following statements:

1. It is an initiative of the Ministry of Rural Development to promote products made by women Self Help Groups (SHGs) under DAY-NRLM.
2. The Ministry has secured trademarks such as SARAS, SARAS Aajeevika, and Aajeevika.
3. The SARAS Aajeevika Gallery is located at Baba Kharak Singh Marg, New Delhi as a permanent retail platform.
4. The eSARAS platform is an in-person retail store with no digital presence.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **eSARAS is an E-COMMERCE PLATFORM and mobile application** for **digital marketing** of SHG products — NOT an in-person retail store.)

Q3. With reference to the Lakhpati Didi initiative, consider the following statements:

1. Lakhpati Didis are women SHG members earning ≥ ₹1 lakh per annum (sustainable annual income).
2. The 6 crore Lakhpati Didi target was announced by PM Modi in his Independence Day 2024 speech.
3. Over 3 crore women entrepreneurs have already been mobilised by 2026.
4. The Lakhpati Didi initiative is implemented under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY).

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **Lakhpati Didi initiative is implemented under the DAY-NRLM (Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana - National Rural Livelihoods Mission)**, NOT PMAY (which is for housing).)

Q4. With reference to RGVS 2026 product showcase, consider the following statements:

1. Chanderi sarees from Madhya Pradesh and Phulkari from Punjab will be featured.
2. Patola and Ajrakh textiles from Gujarat will be on display.
3. Kalamkari from Andhra Pradesh and Ikat from Telangana will be showcased.
4. The showcase will exclusively feature products made by men's cooperatives.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **showcase features products created by WOMEN-LED Self Help Groups**, NOT men's cooperatives.)

Q5. With reference to DAY-NRLM (Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana - National Rural Livelihoods Mission), consider the following statements:

1. It was launched in 2011 as NRLM under the National Rural Livelihood Project and rebranded as DAY-NRLM in 2015.
2. It is under the Ministry of Rural Development.
3. It aims to mobilise rural poor women into Self Help Groups (SHGs) and federate them into Village Organisations and Cluster-Level Federations.
4. DAY-NRLM receives assistance from the Asian Development Bank, not the World Bank.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **DAY-NRLM receives World Bank assistance** under the **National Rural Livelihood Project (NRLP)** — NOT Asian Development Bank.)

Q6. With reference to the launch of the SARAS Shakti Collection at RGVS 2026, consider the following statements:

1. It is a thoughtfully curated premium gift collection featuring handcrafted products from rural women SHGs.
2. It is designed as a distinctive gifting solution for corporate, government, and institutional markets.
3. The launch is aligned with India's broader vision of Viksit Bharat 2047 and the 6 crore Lakhpati Didi target.
4. The SARAS Shakti Collection is exclusively available for export markets.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **SARAS Shakti Collection targets corporate, government, and institutional markets** — both domestic and international — NOT exclusively for exports.)

Answer Key

1. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because MoRD organises RGVS, not RBI.
2. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because eSARAS is e-commerce, not in-person.
3. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because Lakhpati Didi is under DAY-NRLM, not PMAY.
4. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because showcase features women-led SHGs.
5. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because DAY-NRLM gets World Bank assistance.
6. (c), Statements 1, 2, 3 are correct; Statement 4 is wrong because SARAS Shakti targets multiple markets.

Exam Relevance

Exam	Relevance
UPSC Prelims	GS Paper II on Government Schemes (DAY-NRLM, SARAS Aajeevika, Lakhpati Didi, RGVS); GS Paper III on Inclusive Growth, Rural Development
UPSC Mains	GS Paper II on Welfare Schemes, Women Empowerment; GS Paper III

Banking and Finance

1. RBI's revised Upper Layer NBFC rules

Source: *IE*

Context

The RBI on **Wednesday, 24 June 2026** issued **revised final norms** for registration and exemptions of NBFCs, **simplifying the methodology for identifying Upper Layer NBFCs (NBFC-UL)** under the **Scale-Based Regulation (SBR) framework**. NBFCs with **asset size ≥ ₹1 lakh crore** as per the latest audited balance sheet will now qualify as NBFC-UL, replacing the earlier parametric scoring methodology. The threshold will be **reviewed every 3 years**; directions are **effective immediately**. NBFC-UL must **list within 3 years** of identification (fully government-owned NBFCs exempted from listing). Concentration-risk exemptions previously available to government NBFCs have been **withdrawn**; bank-owned NBFCs face **tighter bank-like norms**; and the **Large Exposure Framework (LEF) limit for NBFC-IFCs in the upper layer** has been **raised from 35% to 45%**. The reform makes Tata Sons' public listing virtually unavoidable.

What is the key announcement?

- **Authority**: **RBI** under **Sections 45-IA, 45JA, 45L, 45M of the RBI Act, 1934**.
- **NBFC-UL Asset Threshold**: **≥ ₹1 lakh crore (₹1 trillion)** based on latest audited balance sheet.
- **Methodology Shift**: From **multi-parameter scoring** to **single objective criterion (asset size)**.
- **Industry-Demanded Threshold (Rejected)**: **₹2.5 lakh crore**.
- **Review Cycle**: Every **3 years**.
- **Identification Frequency**: **Annual** by RBI.
- **RBI's Rationale**: Asset size is *"a reasonably good proxy for systemic significance"*.

What are the key changes introduced under the revised norms?

Change	Detail
Mandatory Listing	Within **3 years** of NBFC-UL identification
Govt-Owned NBFC Listing Exemption	**Exempted** (developmental mandate)
Govt NBFC Concentration-Risk Exemption	**WITHDRAWN** — same exposure framework as private NBFCs
Bank-Owned NBFCs	Must follow **commercial bank norms** for same activities; **retains SBR layer classification** (prevents regulatory arbitrage)
NBFC-IFC (Infra Finance Co.) LEF Limit	**Raised from 35% to 45%** of eligible capital base
Enhanced Oversight	**CET-1 capital, LCR, exposure norms, stress tests, disclosures**

What is the Scale-Based Regulation (SBR) framework?

- A **risk-based 4-layer regulatory framework** for NBFCs introduced by RBI on **22 October 2021**, effective **1 October 2022**.
- Categorises NBFCs based on **size, activity, and systemic significance**.
- **Calibrates** capital, governance, prudential norms, large exposure framework, and disclosure

standards.

What are the 4 layers of NBFC classification?

Layer	Criteria
NBFC-BL (Base)	Asset size **< ₹1,000 crore**; non-deposit; non-systemic
NBFC-ML (Middle)	Asset size **≥ ₹1,000 crore** OR deposit-taking OR systemic
NBFC-UL (Upper)	**Asset size ≥ ₹1 lakh crore** (new norm, June 2026)
NBFC-TL (Top)	RBI discretion based on systemic risk; **currently empty**

What is the RBI Act, 1934, and what are its key NBFC provisions?

- A **central statute** establishing the RBI and providing it regulatory powers; **Chapter III-B governs NBFCs**.

Section	Provision
45-I	Definition of NBFC
45-IA	Mandatory registration with RBI + minimum **Net Owned Funds (NOF)**
45-IB	Maintenance of liquid assets
45-IC	Reserve fund — transfer **20% of net profit**
45-JA	RBI's power to determine policy for NBFCs
45-L	RBI's power to call for information + give directions
45-M	NBFCs' duty to furnish statements

What is an NBFC?

- A **company registered under the Companies Act, 1956/2013** engaged in **lending, investment, hire-purchase, leasing, insurance, chit-fund activities**, etc., but **does NOT hold a banking licence**.
- **Cannot accept demand deposits**.
- **Not part of the payment and settlement system**.
- **Deposit insurance NOT available**.
- Regulated by **RBI** under **RBI Act, 1934 (Chapter III-B)**.
- **~9,500 NBFCs** registered in India.

What is a Core Investment Company (CIC)?

- An NBFC holding **≥90% of net assets** as investment in **equity/preference shares, bonds, debentures, debt, or loans of group companies**.
- **Minimum asset size**: **₹100 crore**.
- **Systemically important** if asset size ≥ ₹100 crore AND accepts public funds.
- Engages in **investment activity, not lending**.
- Registered under **RBI Master Direction — CIC, 2016**.
- **Examples**: **Tata Sons, Bajaj Holdings & Investment Ltd, L&T Holdings**.

Why is Tata Sons the definitive test case?

Aspect	Detail
Classification	**NBFC-CIC**
Standalone Assets	**~₹1.75-1.9 lakh crore** (ETIG estimate)
First Designated NBFC-UL	**September 2022**
Original Listing Deadline	**30 September 2025 (MISSED)**

Aspect	Detail
Deregistration Application	Filed **2024**; pending with RBI
Debt Repaid for Deregistration	**>₹20,000 crore**
Status	**Only unlisted entity** in earlier NBFC-UL list

How healthy is India's NBFC sector?

Metric	Value
Total NBFCs Registered	**~9,500**
Sector Assets	**~₹47 lakh crore**
Share in Total Credit	**~12.5%**
Sector CRAR	**~26%** (vs 15% mandatory)
GNPA Ratio	**~3.0%**
NBFC-UL (Current List)	**15 entities**

Which NBFCs are currently in the Upper Layer?

LIC Housing Finance, Bajaj Finance, Shriram Finance, **Tata Sons (only unlisted)**, L&T Finance, Piramal Capital & Housing Finance, Cholamandalam, Aditya Birla Finance, M&M Financial, Sundaram Finance, HDB Financial (listed July 2025), PNB HFL, Indiabulls HFL, Muthoot Finance, Bajaj HFL.

Key Terms (Simple)

- **What is NBFC-UL?** Systemically important NBFCs with **assets ≥ ₹1 lakh crore**; subject to bank-like prudential norms + mandatory listing in 3 years.
- **What is Scale-Based Regulation (SBR)?** RBI's **4-layer NBFC regulatory framework** (BL/ML/UL/TL) issued via Master Direction on **22 October 2021**, effective **1 October 2022**.
- **What is a CIC?** NBFC holding **≥90% net assets** in group-company securities; **min ₹100 crore**; under **Master Direction — CIC, 2016**.
- **What is CET-1? Common Equity Tier-1** — highest-quality regulatory capital; **9% requirement** for NBFC-UL.
- **What is CRAR? Capital-to-Risk-Weighted Assets Ratio** — **minimum 15%** for NBFCs.
- **What is LCR? Liquidity Coverage Ratio** — ratio of HQLA to 30-day net cash outflows; **100% target** for NBFC-UL.
- **What is NOF? Net Owned Funds** — paid-up capital + reserves minus specified deductions; prescribed under **Section 45-IA**.
- **What is the Large Exposure Framework (LEF)?** RBI's prudential norm capping a bank/NBFC's exposure to a single counterparty or group; NBFC-IFC limit now **45%** (raised from 35%).
- **What is Regulatory Arbitrage?** Exploiting differences in regulatory regimes; new bank-group-NBFC rule prevents this.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the RBI's revised NBFC-UL norms issued on 24 June 2026, consider the following statements:

1. The asset-size threshold for inclusion in the upper layer has been set at ₹1 lakh crore as per the latest audited balance sheet.
2. The revised methodology replaces the earlier parametric scoring approach with a single objective criterion.
3. The asset-size threshold will be reviewed every three years.

4. The RBI accepted industry demand to raise the threshold to ₹2.5 lakh crore.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the RBI **rejected** the industry demand to raise the threshold to ₹2.5 lakh crore.)

Q2. With reference to the Scale-Based Regulation (SBR) framework, consider the following statements:

1. The SBR was introduced via the RBI Master Direction dated 22 October 2021, effective from 1 October 2022.
2. The framework classifies NBFCs into four layers — Base, Middle, Upper, and Top.
3. The Base Layer typically covers NBFCs with asset size below ₹1,000 crore that are non-systemic.
4. The Top Layer currently has more than 10 NBFCs identified by RBI.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **Top Layer (NBFC-TL) is currently empty**.)

Q3. With reference to the RBI Act, 1934, consider the following statements:

1. Section 45-IA mandates registration of NBFCs with RBI and prescribes minimum Net Owned Funds.
2. Section 45-IC requires NBFCs to transfer at least 20% of their net profit to a Reserve Fund.
3. Section 45-JA empowers RBI to determine policy for NBFCs.
4. Section 45-L empowers SEBI (not RBI) to call for information from NBFCs.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **Section 45-L empowers RBI** (NOT SEBI) to call for information from NBFCs.)

Q4. With reference to the exemption framework under the revised norms, consider the following statements:

1. Fully government-owned and controlled NBFCs are exempted from the mandatory listing requirement.
2. The concentration-risk exemptions earlier available to government-owned NBFCs have been withdrawn.
3. Bank-owned NBFCs undertaking the same activity as their parent SCB must follow commercial bank norms for that activity.
4. The Large Exposure Framework (LEF) limit for NBFC-IFCs in the upper layer has been reduced from 45% to 35%.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **LEF limit for NBFC-IFCs has been RAISED from 35% to 45%** — NOT reduced.)

Q5. With reference to Tata Sons and the revised NBFC-UL norms, consider the following statements:

1. Tata Sons is classified as a Core Investment Company (CIC).
2. Tata Sons was first designated as an Upper-Layer NBFC in September 2022.
3. Tata Sons' standalone assets are approximately ₹1.75-1.9 lakh crore, well above the new ₹1 lakh crore threshold.
4. Tata Sons is the only listed entity in the existing NBFC-UL list.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **Tata Sons is the ONLY UNLISTED entity** in the existing NBFC-UL list — NOT the only listed one.)

Q6. With reference to Core Investment Companies (CICs), consider the following statements:

1. A CIC holds at least 90% of its net assets as investment in equity, preference shares, bonds, debentures, debt, or loans in group companies.
2. The minimum asset size for CIC registration is ₹100 crore.
3. CICs are regulated under the RBI Master Direction on CIC, 2016.
4. CICs are primarily engaged in retail lending activities.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **CICs are primarily engaged in INVESTMENT in group companies, NOT retail lending**.)

Answer Key

1. (c) — Statement 4 wrong: RBI rejected ₹2.5 lakh crore demand.
2. (c) — Statement 4 wrong: NBFC-TL is currently empty.
3. (c) — Statement 4 wrong: Section 45-L empowers RBI, not SEBI.
4. (c) — Statement 4 wrong: LEF limit raised 35% → 45% (not reduced).
5. (c) — Statement 4 wrong: Tata Sons is the only UNLISTED entity in NBFC-UL.
6. (c) — Statement 4 wrong: CICs do investment, not retail lending.

Exam Relevance

Exam	Relevance
RBI Grade B (Phase I + II)	**Direct subject — ESI (NBFC sector, financial stability) + FM (SBR framework, RBI Act sections, CIC, capital adequacy)**
NABARD Grade A	High — NBFC regulation, SBR framework
SIDBI / SEBI / IRDAI Grade A	High — NBFC-bank linkages, listing requirements, LEF
Banking (SBI PO, IBPS, RBI Assistant)	High — NBFC categorisation, RBI's regulatory role
UPSC Prelims & Mains (GS-III Economy)	Medium-High — Financial sector reforms, NBFC regulation
CA, CFA, CS	High — NBFC compliance, CIC norms, listing

Facts To Remember

1. AI Opportunity Statement Signed by 35 Nations at Pax Silica Summit

India joined 34 other nations in signing a US-led AI statement at the 2nd Pax Silica Summit in Washington D.C. The initiative aims to build trusted and resilient supply chains for AI technologies. It focuses on critical sectors like semiconductors, energy, and advanced manufacturing.

2. RBI Issues Credit Derivatives Directions 2026

Reserve Bank of India introduced new credit derivative products to deepen India's corporate bond market. The framework includes Total Return Swaps and credit index derivatives. It also strengthens risk management through a dedicated FIMMDA committee.

3. jUMPP Gets NPCI Approval as TPAP

jUMPP received approval from National Payments Corporation of India to operate as a Third Party Application Provider. This enables UPI-based transfers, bill payments, and merchant payments on its platform. The move expands its fintech ecosystem with YES Bank support.

4. LEXI Receives IFSCA Approval for PSP Operations at GIFT-IFSC

LEXI Money IFSC Private Limited secured in-principle approval to operate as a Payment Service Provider at GIFT City. The approval supports AI-powered cross-border payments. It strengthens infrastructure for international trade and exports.

5. Paisabazaar and SBM Bank Launch FD-Backed Credit Card

Paisabazaar and SBM Bank India launched a secured FD-backed credit card. The card helps users build credit history while earning cashback. Customers can start with deposits as low as Rs 2,000.

6. Six Startups Win Youth Co:Lab Innovation Challenge 2026

Six youth-led startups were recognized for sustainability-focused innovations in Hyderabad. The competition promoted solutions in circular economy, sustainable textiles, and water conservation. Winners received seed grants for scaling impact-driven ideas.

7. Viswanathan Anand Receives SJFI Gold Medal

Viswanathan Anand was awarded the SJFI Gold Medal for his contribution to Indian chess. He became the sixth recipient of the prestigious award. The honor recognizes his lasting impact on sports development in India.

8. Mahesh Dixit Appointed New IB Director

Mahesh Dixit has been appointed Director of India's Intelligence Bureau. He will serve a two-year term after succeeding Tapan Kumar Deka. Dixit brings extensive intelligence and policing experience to the role.

9. IAF Gets Final Clearance for Netra AEW&C System

Indian Air Force received final operational clearance for the indigenous Netra surveillance system. Developed by Defence Research and Development Organisation, it boosts airborne monitoring and battle management. Netra enhances India's network-centric warfare capability.

10. World Vitiligo Day Observed on June 25

World Vitiligo Day raises awareness about vitiligo and promotes social inclusion. The 2026 theme is "From Stigma to Strength." It emphasizes dignity, awareness, and support for affected individuals.

11. NITI Aayog Releases 8th Trade Watch Quarterly

NITI Aayog released the 8th edition of Trade Watch Quarterly for Q4 FY26. The report highlights pharmaceutical trade and API dependence. India's total trade grew 5.4% to USD 1.84 trillion.

12. India Launches First Hub-and-Spoke Flight from Varanasi

India inaugurated its first hub-and-spoke flight model from Varanasi under Air India's Easy Connect initiative. The system improves international connectivity from tier-2 and tier-3 cities. It simplifies baggage and immigration processes.

13. C-DOT and IIT Hyderabad Sign MoU for Communication Research

Centre for Development of Telematics partnered with Indian Institute of Technology Hyderabad to set up a Centre of Excellence. The collaboration focuses on 5G, 6G, AI, and quantum communication. It aims to accelerate telecom innovation.

14. China's LineShine Tops TOP500 Supercomputer Rankings

China's LineShine became the world's most powerful supercomputer in 2026. It replaced the US system El Capitan at the top of TOP500 rankings. India's Shakti Cloud ranked 32nd globally.

15. Bangladesh Joins International Big Cat Alliance

Bangladesh became the 27th member of India's International Big Cat Alliance. The move strengthens regional conservation efforts for tigers and leopards. It also enhances anti-poaching and ecosystem cooperation.

16. USA Announces Defence Support Package for India

United States approved a USD 482.2 million support package for India's Apache helicopters and M777 howitzers. The package improves maintenance and operational readiness. It strengthens India-US defence cooperation.

17. S&P Cuts India's FY27 Growth Forecast to 6.6%

S&P Global Ratings reduced India's GDP growth forecast for FY27 to 6.6%. The downgrade reflects energy stress, weaker monsoon, and slowing global demand. Inflation is expected to remain elevated.

18. Abiy Ahmed Wins Second Term as Ethiopian PM

Abiy Ahmed secured a second consecutive term after a strong election victory. His Prosperity Party retained parliamentary dominance. He is expected to continue leading Ethiopia for another five years.

19. Honda Gets Approval to Increase Stake in Astemo

Honda Motor Co. received CCI approval to raise its stake in Astemo to 61%. The acquisition gives Honda controlling ownership. It strengthens Honda's long-term mobility strategy.

20. Scientists Discover New Snail Species in Meghalaya

Researchers from Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment discovered two microscopic snail species in Meghalaya caves. The discovery enriches biodiversity knowledge of the Indo-Burma hotspot. It also highlights threats from mining and tourism.

21. ZSI Discovers Two New Moth Species in Western Ghats

Zoological Survey of India identified two new moth species in the Western Ghats. These discoveries strengthen biodiversity records. Scientists also highlighted habitat degradation risks.

22. FIE and FAI Sign MoU to Promote Fencing in India

International Fencing Federation signed an MoU with Fencing Association of India. The partnership aims to improve athlete development and public engagement. It supports India's preparation for LA 2028.

23. India Launches World's First Nuclear Heat-Based Hydrogen Facility

Department of Atomic Energy inaugurated the world's first hydrogen facility using the Copper-Chlorine cycle. Located at Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research, it uses nuclear process heat. The project marks a breakthrough in clean hydrogen technology.

24. J&K Police Launches Project Hawk Eye

Jammu and Kashmir Police launched Project Hawk Eye for Amarnath Yatra security. The system uses advanced 360-degree surveillance from air and ground. It aims to ensure safe pilgrimage movement through enhanced monitoring.

FIVE TO REMEMBER · 26 & 27 JUNE 2026

1. **Current Chief Minister of J&K** (since 16 October 2024); first CM after Article 370 abrogation in 2019; **National Conference (NC) leader**; previous CM tenure: **2009-2015**. UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) List
2. **What is NBFC-UL?** Systemically important NBFCs with **assets ≥ ₹1 lakh crore**; subject to bank-like prudential norms + mandatory listing in 3 years. RBI's revised Upper Layer NBFC rules
3. The 6 crore Lakhpati Didi target was announced by PM Modi in his Independence Day 2024 speech. Gramin Vikas Sammelan (RGVS) 2026
4. (Statement 4 is wrong; **DIAL is a public-private partnership joint venture of GMR Group (64%), Airports Authority of India (26%), and Fraport AG (10%)** — NOT a subsidiary of Indian Railways.) AIR SUVIDHA 2.0 Portal
5. Paisabazaar and SBM Bank India launched a secured FD-backed credit card. The card helps users build credit history while earning cashback. Customers can start with deposits as low as Rs 2,000. Paisabazaar and SBM Bank Launch FD-Backed Credi...

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DAY 17 OF 18

28 & 29 June 2026

33 items · 2 topics

General **2** · Agriculture **3** · Facts To Remember **28**

The Union Health Ministry is set to launch **e-Sushrut@Clinic** — a **lightweight, cloud-based Hospital Management Information System (HMIS)** developed by the **Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC)** to help **small outpatient clinics, sub-centres, and primary health centres (PHCs)** that struggle with **manual processes** and lack of **affordable digital solutions**. Large HMIS systems have been too complex and costly for small facilities, and despite many private HMIS players, demand for a **government-backed affordable solution** had persisted (especially from **ABDM microsite participants** and **States/UTs**). The platform is being rolled out under a **MoU between the National Health Authority (NHA) and C-DAC** signed in **August 2025** in the presence of **Union Health Secretary Smt. Punya Salila Srivastava**, with C-DAC handling maintenance and upgradation.

What is e-Sushrut@Clinic?

- A **lightweight, cloud-based HMIS** designed specifically for **small outpatient clinics**.
- A **lighter version** of C-DAC's flagship **e-Sushrut HMIS** (which runs at **17 AIIMS + 4,000+ health facilities** nationwide).
- **ABDM-enabled**; integrates Health Facility Registry (HFR) + Health Professionals Registry (HPR).
- **Accessible from any device**; no technical expertise needed.
- **Use cases**: patient registration, billing, prescriptions, diagnostics, telemedicine, pharmacy, nursing modules.

Who built it and who rolls it out?

- **Developed by**: **Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC)**.
- **Rolled out by**: **National Health Authority (NHA)** under MoU signed August 2025.
- **C-DAC Noida Executive Director**: **Shri Vivek Khaneja**.
- **Union Health Secretary**: **Smt. Punya Salila Srivastava**.

What is the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM)?

- A **flagship mission** launched by **PM Narendra Modi on 27 September 2021**.
- Aim: Develop India's **integrated digital health infrastructure** bridging gaps among healthcare stakeholders through "digital highways".
- Implemented by the **National Health Authority (NHA)**.
- Builds an **interoperable digital health ecosystem**.

What are the 4 key building blocks of ABDM?

Building Block	Role
ABHA (Ayushman Bharat Health Account)	**14-digit unique health ID** for every citizen
HPR (Healthcare Professionals Registry)	Comprehensive database of **doctors, nurses, paramedics, AYUSH practitioners**
HFR (Health Facility Registry)	Database of **public + private health facilities**
UHI (Unified Health Interface)	**Open protocol** for digital health services (similar to UPI)

What is the National Health Authority (NHA)?

- **Implementing agency** for the **Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM)** and the **Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY)**.
- A **society** under the **Societies Registration Act, 1860**.
- Functions under the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**.
- **HQ**: New Delhi.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the e-Sushrut@Clinic, consider the following statements:

1. e-Sushrut@Clinic is a lightweight, cloud-based Hospital Management Information System (HMIS) designed for small outpatient clinics.
2. It has been developed by the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC).
3. It is being rolled out by the National Health Authority (NHA) under the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM) framework.
4. The platform is designed only for large multi-specialty private hospitals.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; e-Sushrut@Clinic is designed for **small outpatient clinics, sub-centres, and PHCs** — NOT large multi-specialty hospitals.)

Q2. With reference to the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM), consider the following statements:

1. ABDM was launched by PM Narendra Modi on 27 September 2021.
2. It is implemented by the National Health Authority (NHA) under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
3. Its four building blocks include ABHA (Ayushman Bharat Health Account), HPR (Healthcare Professionals Registry), HFR (Health Facility Registry), and UHI (Unified Health Interface).
4. The ABHA is a 12-digit unique health ID for every Indian citizen.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **ABHA is a 14-digit unique health ID**, NOT 12-digit.)

Answer Key

1. (c) — Statement 4 wrong: Designed for small clinics, not large hospitals.
2. (c) — Statement 4 wrong: ABHA is 14-digit, not 12-digit.

Exam Relevance

UPSC Prelims & Mains	**High — GS Paper II (Government schemes, Health policy, ABDM); GS Paper III (Digital infrastructure)**

4. Govt Launches AI-Enabled "Rural Internal Audit Portal"

Source: TH

Context

Union Rural Development Minister **Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan** on **Sunday, 28 June 2026** launched the **"Rural Internal Audit Portal"** at the **Rashtriya Gramin Vikas Sammelan (RGVS) 2026** held at **Pusa Campus, New Delhi** — ahead of the **Viksit Bharat - Guarantee for Rozgar & Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) [VB-G RAM G]** rollout from **1 July 2026**. The **AI-enabled portal** is a **first-of-its-kind unified digital**

platform for **end-to-end management of internal audits** — covering both **risk-based** and **compliance audits**. **Conceived** by the **Office of the Chief Controller of Accounts (CCA), Ministry of Rural Development**, the platform was **developed in collaboration with the National Informatics Centre (NIC)**. The portal was **piloted in Chandauli district, Uttar Pradesh on 1 April 2025**, and **all core modules became operational from October 2025**. The **Office of the Controller General of Accounts (CGA), Ministry of Finance** issued **Office Memorandum No. I-104/3/2024-ITD-CGA/E-19878/621A dated 9 December 2025** granting **in-principle approval** for **pan-Civil-Ministry rollout** across all **Pr. CCA / CCA / CA offices** — positioning the Rural Internal Audit Portal as a **benchmark for internal audit governance** across the Government of India.

What is the Rural Internal Audit Portal?

- A **first-of-its-kind unified digital platform** for **end-to-end management of internal audits**.
- Covers **two audit types**:
  - **Risk-based audits**.
  - **Compliance audits**.
- **AI-enabled**: intelligent audit planning, risk identification, predictive analytics.
- Replaces **fragmented, paper-intensive, manual audit practices**.

Who built it?

Entity	Role
Office of the Chief Controller of Accounts (CCA), MoRD	**Conceptualised** the Portal
Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD)	**Implementing ministry**
National Informatics Centre (NIC)	**Developed + hosts** the digital platform

What are the Portal's standout features?

Feature	Detail
Map View Module (geospatial)	Visualisation of audit coverage, team deployment, **identifies never-audited units** for targeted intervention
Role-Based Access	Auditors, auditees, approving authorities, programme divisions, States, districts, certified internal auditors
Centralised Audit Repository	Digital records, ATRs, observations, compliance responses
Real-Time Analytics Dashboards	Audit coverage, pending observations, ATR compliance, financial irregularities
AI/ML Integration (progressive)	Risk scoring, pattern recognition, predictive analytics, intelligent audit planning
Multilingual Interface	Accessibility across India
Paperless	Reduces manual records, accelerates approvals

What is the technology architecture and security framework?

- **Hosted on NIC infrastructure**.
- **Modern stack**: **Git-based version control**, **CI/CD pipelines** (Continuous Integration/Continuous Deployment).
- **Three environments**: **Development, User Acceptance Testing (UAT), and Production**.
- **Security**: **Role-based access control, centralised monitoring, secure API-based integrations, complete audit logging, periodic security assessments, daily backups, disaster recovery protocols**.
- **Future-ready**: integrates **AI, advanced analytics, ML** for audit prioritisation + decision support.

What is VB-G RAM G (Viksit Bharat - Guarantee for Rozgar & Ajeevika Mission, Gramin)?

- **Statutory basis**: **VB-G RAM G Act, 2025** (assented by President).

- **Replaces**: **MGNREGA, 2005**.
- **Effective from**: **1 July 2026**.
- **Implementing Ministry**: **Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD)**.

Key Features of VB-G RAM G Act, 2025

Feature	Detail
Guaranteed Workdays	**125 days per rural household per FY** (up from MGNREGA's 100)
Eligibility	Adult members of rural households for **unskilled manual work**
No-Work Period	**60 days aggregated** during peak sowing/harvest (ensures availability of agri labour)
Effective Work Period	**305 days**
Wage Disbursement	**Weekly** (within fortnight)
Planning Unit	**Viksit Gram Panchayat Plans**, spatially integrated with **PM Gati Shakti**
National Aggregation	**Viksit Bharat National Rural Infrastructure Stack**

What is the Office of the Controller General of Accounts (CGA)?

- **Principal Accounting Adviser to GoI**.
- Functions under **Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance**.
- **Constitutional mandate**: derived from **Article 150** of the Constitution.
- **Current CGA**: **Shri S.S. Dubey** (1989 batch ICAS officer).
- **Responsibilities**: Establishes/maintains management accounting system; prepares **Union Finance Accounts and Appropriation Accounts (Civil)**; **Internal Audit + Exchequer Control**; reconciles **cash balances with RBI**; coordinates **Audit Para Monitoring System (APMS)**.

What is the Office of the Chief Controller of Accounts (CCA)?

- Operates under each **central ministry/department**.
- Handles **payments, accounts, internal audit, financial advice**.
- Falls under the **Controller General of Accounts (CGA)**, **Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance**.
- Reports through **Principal CCA (Pr. CCA) → CGA**.

What is the National Informatics Centre (NIC)?

- **Premier IT services organisation** of GoI.
- Under **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)**.
- **Established**: **1976**.
- **HQ**: **CGO Complex, New Delhi**.
- Provides **e-governance infrastructure** (data centres, networking, cloud, software development) to **central + state govts**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the Rural Internal Audit Portal launched on 28 June 2026, consider the following statements:

1. The Portal was launched by Union Rural Development Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan during the Rashtriya Gramin Vikas Sammelan at Pusa Campus, New Delhi.
2. The Portal was conceived by the Office of the Chief Controller of Accounts (CCA), Ministry of Rural Development.
3. The Portal was developed in collaboration with the National Informatics Centre (NIC).

4. The Portal covers only compliance audits and excludes risk-based audits.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the Portal covers **both risk-based AND compliance audits**.)

Q2. With reference to the development journey of the Rural Internal Audit Portal, consider the following statements:

1. The Portal was piloted in Chandauli district, Uttar Pradesh, on 1 April 2025.
2. All core modules of the Portal became operational from October 2025.
3. The Office of the Controller General of Accounts (CGA) issued an Office Memorandum on 9 December 2025 granting in-principle approval for rollout across all Pr. CCA/CCA/CA offices of Civil Ministries.
4. The Portal was developed entirely by a private-sector consultancy.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **Portal was developed by the Ministry of Rural Development in collaboration with NIC** (Government of India organisation) — NOT a private-sector consultancy.)

Q3. With reference to Viksit Bharat - Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) [VB-G RAM G], consider the following statements:

1. VB-G RAM G is statutorily backed by the VB-G RAM G Act, 2025.
2. It replaces the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), 2005.
3. It guarantees 125 days of wage employment per rural household per financial year, up from 100 days under MGNREGA.
4. The Act provides for wage disbursement on a quarterly basis.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the Act mandates **weekly wage disbursement** (in any case, not later than a fortnight) — NOT quarterly.)

Q4. With reference to the Office of the Controller General of Accounts (CGA), consider the following statements:

1. The CGA is the Principal Accounting Adviser to the Government of India.
2. The CGA functions under the Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance.
3. The CGA's mandate is derived from Article 150 of the Constitution.
4. The CGA is an independent constitutional body like the CAG.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **CGA is an executive office under the Department of Expenditure** — NOT an independent constitutional body. The **CAG (Article 148) is the constitutional body**, NOT the CGA.)

Answer Key

1. (c) — Statement 4 wrong: Covers both risk-based and compliance audits.
2. (c) — Statement 4 wrong: Built by MoRD + NIC (govt), not private consultancy.
3. (c) — Statement 4 wrong: Wages weekly, not quarterly.
4. (c) — Statement 4 wrong: CGA is executive office; CAG is the constitutional body (Article 148).

Exam Relevance

Exam	Relevance
RBI Grade B (Phase I + II)	**Critical — ESI on Public Financial Management, CGA, Internal Audit, MGNREGA reform; FM on accounting + audit standards**
NABARD Grade A	**Critical — Direct subject — Rural employment, MGNREGA → VB-G RAM G, rural audit**
SIDBI / SEBI / IRDAI Grade A	Medium — Govt scheme + PFM awareness
Banking (SBI PO, IBPS, RBI Assistant)	High — Government schemes, DBT linkages
UPSC Prelims & Mains	**Very High — GS-II (Governance, Schemes), GS-III (Rural Economy, PFM), Essay**
State PCS	High — Rural development, MGNREGA reform

5. DIKSHA (Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing)

Source: PIB

Context

The **Press Information Bureau (PIB)** on **28 June 2026** released a comprehensive **backgrounder on DIKSHA** — **Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing** — the **Government of India's national digital platform for school education**. **Launched on 5 September 2017** (Teachers' Day) by then **Vice-President Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu**, DIKSHA is **spearheaded by NCERT in collaboration with the Central Institute of Educational Technology (CIET)** under the **Ministry of Education**, and is **hosted on NIC infrastructure**. It is **built on Sunbird**, an **MIT-licensed open-source technology stack** with **100+ micro-services**. DIKSHA is a **key component of the PM e-Vidya initiative** (declared part of **Atmanirbhar Bharat** in **May 2020**) and was declared **"One Nation, One Digital Platform" for school education**. The platform now supports **135 languages (128 Indian + 7 foreign)**, hosts over **614 Virtual Laboratories**, and has been adopted by **all States, Union Territories, CBSE, NIOS, and Kendriya Vidyalayas**. The platform is explicitly recognised in **NEP 2020 clauses 2.60 and 23.60** as the national repository for foundational literacy and numeracy and teacher professional development content.

What is DIKSHA?

- **Full Form**: **Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing**.
- **Type**: **Open-source national digital platform** for school education.
- **Launched**: **5 September 2017** (Teachers' Day) by VP **Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu**.
- **Spearheaded by**: **NCERT** (National Council of Educational Research and Training).
- **Developed by**: **CIET (Central Institute of Educational Technology)** — a constituent unit of NCERT.
- **Hosted on**: **NIC (National Informatics Centre)** infrastructure.
- **Ministry**: **Ministry of Education (MoE)**, Government of India.

What is its status?

- Declared **"One Nation, One Digital Platform" for school education** in **May 2020** under **Atmanirbhar Bharat**.
- Key component of **PM e-Vidya initiative**.
- **Adopted by**: All States, UTs, CBSE, NIOS, Kendriya Vidyalayas.
- **Coverage**: **K-12** (Foundational Literacy and Numeracy → Senior Secondary).

What are the key features?

Feature	Detail
QR-Coded Energised Textbooks	Physical NCERT books → linked to videos, interactives, teacher guides
Media-Rich Content	**2D/3D animations, AR experiences, simulations, virtual labs, sign language videos**
Inclusive Features	**DAISY format (Digital Accessible Information System)**, text-to-speech, **Indian Sign Language (ISL) videos** for **differently-abled learners**
Practice + Assessment	**Unlimited practice questions**, adaptive assessments, competency-based question banks
Teacher Professional Development	Via **NISHTHA + state-specific TPD modules** — self-paced, certified training
Offline Access	Content downloadable; preloaded on Smart Class boards by States/UTs
Virtual Laboratories	**614+** virtual labs for critical thinking, creativity
Mobile App	Available on **Android + iOS** for students, teachers, parents
PM e-Vidya DTH-TV Integration	**One Class, One Channel** (Classes 1-12); QR-linked to DIKSHA

What is PM e-Vidya?

- A **comprehensive initiative** of the Ministry of Education for **multimodal digital education**.
- Declared part of **Atmanirbhar Bharat** package in **May 2020** (COVID response).
- **Components**:
  - **DIKSHA** (One Nation, One Digital Platform).
  - **One Class, One Channel** — **12 DTH-TV channels** for Classes 1-12.
  - **Radio, Community Radio, Podcasts** (Shiksha Vani).
  - **Special e-content for visually + hearing impaired**.
  - **Top 100 university online courses**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to DIKSHA (Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing), consider the following statements:

1. DIKSHA was launched on 5 September 2017 by the then Vice-President Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu.
2. It is spearheaded by NCERT in collaboration with the Central Institute of Educational Technology (CIET).
3. It is built on Sunbird, an MIT-licensed open-source technology stack.
4. DIKSHA is a proprietary platform developed exclusively by a private MNC.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **DIKSHA is an OPEN-SOURCE platform** built on **Sunbird (MIT-licensed)**, developed by **NCERT/CIET** (Government of India), NOT a proprietary platform from a private MNC.)

Q2. With reference to DIKSHA's place in the digital education ecosystem, consider the following statements:

1. DIKSHA is a key component of the PM e-Vidya initiative under the Ministry of Education.
2. DIKSHA was declared "One Nation, One Digital Platform" for school education in May 2020 as part of Atmanirbhar Bharat.
3. DIKSHA has been adopted by all States, UTs, CBSE, NIOS, and Kendriya Vidyalayas.
4. DIKSHA is administered by the Reserve Bank of India.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **DIKSHA is administered by NCERT/CIET under the Ministry of Education**, NOT the RBI.)

Q3. With reference to DIKSHA's features and accessibility, consider the following statements:

1. DIKSHA features QR-coded Energised Textbooks that link physical NCERT books to digital content.
2. DIKSHA includes inclusive features like the DAISY format, text-to-speech, and Indian Sign Language videos for differently-abled learners.
3. As per the latest PIB release (June 2026), DIKSHA supports 135 languages, including 128 Indian and 7 foreign languages.
4. DIKSHA only works with active internet connectivity and does not support offline access.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **DIKSHA supports BOTH online and offline access** — content can be downloaded in advance and States/UTs preload it on Smart Class boards.)

Answer Key

1. (c) — Statement 4 wrong: DIKSHA is open-source, not proprietary.
2. (c) — Statement 4 wrong: Administered by NCERT/CIET, not RBI.
3. (c) — Statement 4 wrong: Supports both online and offline.

Exam Relevance

UPSC Prelims & Mains	**Very High — GS-II (Schemes, Education Policy, Governance), Essay on Education/Digital India**

Agriculture

1. APEDA Facilitates First Commercial Export of GI-Tagged Rewa Sundarja Mango

Source: PIB

Context

The **Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA)**, under the **Ministry of Commerce & Industry**, facilitated the **first commercial export of GI-tagged Rewa Sundarja Mangoes** from **Madhya Pradesh to the UAE** on **26 June 2026**. The **1-metric-tonne consignment** was exported by **M/s Salt Range Foods Pvt. Ltd.**, sourced from **M/s Seondha Farmer Producer Company Limited** and farmer **Shri Sonu Gupta of Govindgarh, Rewa district, MP**. Packing was done at the **APEDA-facilitated pack house of Trisagar FPC in Bhadohi, UP**, and the consignment was shipped via **Varanasi Airport**. **Farmers received ₹150/kg** — a **premium of ₹40-50/kg** over the local rate of ₹100-110/kg. The Rewa Sundarja variety received its **GI tag in 2023**.

What is the key announcement?

- **Product**: GI-tagged **Rewa Sundarja Mango** (GI tag year **2023**).
- **Origin**: **Rewa district, Madhya Pradesh**.
- **Destination**: **UAE**.
- **Facilitator**: **APEDA**.

What is APEDA?

- **Full Form**: **Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority**.
- **Type**: **Statutory body**.
- **Established**: **13 February 1986** under the **APEDA Act, 1985** (Act No. 2 of 1986).
- **Ministry**: **Department of Commerce, Ministry of Commerce & Industry**.
- **HQ**: **NCUI Building, August Kranti Marg, Hauz Khas, New Delhi**.
- **Regional Offices**: **15** (Mumbai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Guwahati, Ahmedabad, Varanasi, Chandigarh, Bhopal, Chennai, Kochi, Tripura, Srinagar, Jammu, Ladakh).
- **Chairman**: **Shri Abhishek Dev, IAS**.
- **Replaced**: **Processed Food Export Promotion Council (PFEPC)**.

What are APEDA's key mandates?

- **Export promotion** of **17 scheduled product categories** covering **802 HS codes** at 8-digit level (fruits & vegetables, meat & poultry, dairy, cereals, processed food, honey, alcoholic & non-alcoholic beverages, floriculture, herbal & medicinal plants, etc.).
- **Basmati Rice** included in the **Second Schedule** of APEDA Act.
- **Monitors import of sugar**.
- **Secretariat for National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP)**.
- **Cashew Kernels, Cashewnut Shell Liquid, Cardanol** added in **June 2021**.

What is the Geographical Indications (GI) Act, 1999?

- **Full Title**: **Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999**.
- **Enacted**: **30 December 1999**; **came into force 15 September 2003**.
- **Purpose**: Legal protection for products with geographical origin-linked qualities.
- **Compliance With**: **WTO TRIPS Agreement** (Articles 22-24).
- **Validity**: **10 years**; **renewable indefinitely** for further 10-year periods.
- **Penalty for Infringement**: Up to **3 years jail + ₹2 lakh fine**.

Who administers GI in India?

- **Geographical Indications Registry**, **Chennai**.
- Under the **Controller General of Patents, Designs & Trade Marks (CGPDTM)**.
- CGPDTM operates under the **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)**, **Ministry of Commerce & Industry**.

What is a Farmer Producer Organisation (FPO) / Farmer Producer Company (FPC)?

- **Collective entity** of primary producers (farmers).
- FPC registered under **Part IX-A of the Companies Act, 2013**.
- **Aim**: Scale, market access, bargaining power.
- **Central Scheme**: **"Formation and Promotion of 10,000 FPOs"** (launched **29 February 2020**, ₹6,865 crore outlay).
- **Implementing Agencies**: **SFAC, NABARD, NCDC**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to APEDA, consider the following statements:

1. APEDA is a statutory body established on 13 February 1986 under the APEDA Act, 1985.
2. APEDA functions under the Department of Commerce, Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
3. APEDA replaced the erstwhile Processed Food Export Promotion Council (PFEPC).

4. APEDA also functions as the Secretariat for the National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP).

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

(All four statements are correct.)

Q2. With reference to India's agri-export performance and APEDA targets, consider the following statements:

1. APEDA's scheduled product exports in FY 2024-25 stood at an all-time high of approximately USD 28.59 billion.
2. APEDA has set a target of exporting USD 55+ billion of scheduled products by 2030.
3. Total India agri exports in FY 2024-25 stood at approximately USD 51.9 billion, with APEDA accounting for about 55%.
4. APEDA's scheduled product exports in FY 2024-25 already crossed USD 100 billion.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; APEDA's scheduled product exports in FY 2024-25 stood at **USD 28.59 billion**, NOT USD 100 billion. The $100 billion is the broader agri-export aspirational target.)

Answer Key

1. **(d) All four** — all statements correct.
2. (c) — Statement 4 wrong: APEDA exports USD 28.59 billion, not USD 100 billion.

Exam Relevance

Exam	Relevance
NABARD Grade A	**Critical — Direct subject — APEDA, FPOs, agri-exports, rural value chains**

2. NABARD-BIRD Three-Day Training on "Geographical Indications (GI) and Post-GI Initiatives for Livelihood" Begins at Namsai, Arunachal Pradesh

Source: NABARD

Context

A **three-day Capacity Building Programme on Geographical Indications (GI) and Post-GI Initiatives for Livelihood** began at **Hotel Namlau, Namsai, Arunachal Pradesh** on **Wednesday, 17 June 2026**, running through **19 June 2026**. The programme is organised by the **Bankers Institute of Rural Development (BIRD), Kolkata** — one of **NABARD's training institutes (serving the Eastern + North-Eastern Region)**. Participants include **NGOs, Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs), Organic Farmer Producer Organisations (OFPOs)**, and other stakeholders from **Arunachal Pradesh and Assam**. The inaugural session was attended by **MLA Namsai Shri Chau Zingnu Namchoom** as Chief Guest, **District Planning Officer Dr. Keshab Sarmah**, **NABARD DGM Shri Vivek Anand**, **BIRD Kolkata Programme Director Dr. Bhawana Pal**, and **NABARD AGM Shri Kamal Roy**. The training focuses on **GI registration procedures, post-GI livelihood initiatives, branding strategies, IPR awareness, market development, and case studies** — citing **Khaw Tai (Khamti Rice)**, a GI-tagged Arunachal variety, as a key example for scaling up production while maintaining quality.

What is BIRD?

- **Full Form**: **Bankers Institute of Rural Development**.
- **Promoted by**: **NABARD** (National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development).
- **Three BIRD institutes**:

  - **BIRD Lucknow** — **premier/apex** training institute (est. **1983**).
  - **BIRD Kolkata** — focuses on **Eastern + North-Eastern Region** (est. **1984**).
  - **BIRD Mangaluru** — third institute (est. **November 1984**).
- **Mandate**: Training, research, consultancy in **agriculture + rural development banking**.
- **Clients**: **Commercial Banks, RRBs, Cooperative Banks, IAS officers, IES officers**, NGOs, FPOs.

What is NABARD's role in GI promotion?

Role	Detail
GI Registration Facilitation	Helping FPOs/artisans apply for GI tags
Post-GI Interventions	**Capacity building, branding, packaging, quality standardisation, market linkages, IPR awareness**
FPO Support	Equity grants, refinance, training
Rural Livelihood Promotion	Income enhancement for farmers, artisans, producer groups

What is Khaw Tai (Khamti Rice)?

- A **chewy sticky rice variety** from the **Namsai region** of Arunachal Pradesh.
- Cultivated by the **traditional Khampti tribal farmers**.
- **GI-tagged** (granted in **2024 batch** of Arunachal GI registrations).
- District Planning Officer noted: **GI is only a milestone; commercial success depends on scaling production while maintaining quality**.

What is the local example cited — Namsai Fresh?

- Brand of **locally produced ghee** from Namsai.
- Effective **branding + promotion** has driven increased market demand.
- Cited as a model for **value addition + market linkage**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the NABARD-BIRD Capacity Building Programme on GI held at Namsai (17-19 June 2026), consider the following statements:

1. The three-day programme was organised by BIRD, Kolkata — one of NABARD's training institutes.
2. The programme brought together NGOs, FPOs, and OFPOs from Arunachal Pradesh and Assam.
3. The inaugural session was attended by MLA Namsai Shri Chau Zingnu Namchoom as Chief Guest.
4. The programme focused exclusively on private sector trade, with no government participation.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the programme included **government officials, FPOs, NGOs, and stakeholders** — NOT exclusively private sector.)

Q2. With reference to the Bankers Institute of Rural Development (BIRD), consider the following statements:

1. BIRD is promoted by the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD).
2. BIRD Lucknow, established in 1983, is the premier/apex training institute.
3. BIRD Kolkata serves the Eastern and North-Eastern Region of India.
4. BIRD is administered directly by the Reserve Bank of India.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **BIRD is promoted and administered by NABARD**, NOT directly by the RBI. NABARD itself is under the Ministry of Finance, Department of Financial Services.)

Q3. With reference to NABARD's role in GI promotion mentioned at the Namsai training, consider the following statements:

1. NABARD facilitates GI registration and post-GI interventions for FPOs and artisans.
2. Post-GI interventions include capacity building, branding, packaging, quality standardisation, market linkages, and IPR awareness.
3. The aim is to improve incomes of farmers, artisans, and producer groups by helping them capture greater value from traditional products.
4. NABARD does not engage in any IPR or branding-related work.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **NABARD's post-GI interventions explicitly include IPR awareness and branding**.)

Q4. With reference to Khaw Tai (Khamti Rice) cited at the Namsai training, consider the following statements:

1. Khaw Tai is a chewy sticky rice variety from the Namsai region of Arunachal Pradesh.
2. It is cultivated by the traditional Khampti tribal farmers.
3. It is a GI-tagged variety from Arunachal Pradesh.
4. GI registration alone guarantees commercial success without any need for production scale-up or quality standardisation.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **DPO Dr. Keshab Sarmah explicitly emphasised that commercial success depends on scaling up production while maintaining quality** — GI registration alone is just a milestone.)

Answer Key

1. (c) — Statement 4 wrong: Programme included govt + private + NGOs.
2. (c) — Statement 4 wrong: BIRD under NABARD, not RBI directly.
3. (c) — Statement 4 wrong: NABARD explicitly does IPR + branding work.
4. (c) — Statement 4 wrong: GI alone is only a milestone; scale + quality essential.

Exam Relevance

NABARD Grade A	**Critical — Direct subject — NABARD's GI work, BIRD, FPOs, post-GI interventions**

3. "Jasdan Patari" Traditional Wooden Handicraft from Rajkot District, Gujarat Receives Geographical Indication (GI) Tag

Source: *Times of India*

Context

The **centuries-old "Jasdan Patari" handicraft** of **Jasdan town and taluka, Rajkot district, Gujarat** has been **officially granted Geographical Indication (GI) tag registration** in **June 2026** — adding another distinctive product to **Saurashtra's cultural heritage**. The **Patari (also called Patara)** is a **brass-ribbed wooden chest** typically made of **teak wood** with **8+ drawers**, traditionally **covered with brass and copper** (now also white metal), **strengthened with thick black metal pieces** and **embossed with thin white metal decoration**. Used historically for **storage and as dowry/trousseau carriers**, fine examples can be seen in the **Hingolgadh Castle** and **Gondal Palace** museum collections. The GI tag recognises

Jasdan as a leading craft centre for **embellished wooden chests and ornate jewel boxes**, strengthening the rural artisan economy and adding to **Gujarat's growing GI basket**, which already includes **Sankheda Furniture, Kutch Embroidery, Rajkot Patola, Patan Patola, Tangaliya Shawl, Kutch Ajrakh, Gir Kesar Mango, Bhalia Wheat**, and others.

What is the Jasdan Patari?

Aspect	Detail
Type	**Brass-ribbed wooden chest** with **embellishments**
Local Names	**Patara / Patari**
Primary Material	**Teak wood**
Metal Embellishments	Traditionally **brass + copper**; now also **white metal**
Strengthening	**Thick black metal pieces** on edges
Decoration	Thin **white metal pieces embossed** on wood
Lining	**Brass strips** + **brass stoppers**
Traditional Use	**Storage** + **dowry/trousseau carriers**
Museum Collections	**Hingolgadh Castle** and **Gondal Palace**

Where is it produced?

- **Jasdan town and surrounding villages** in **Rajkot district**, Gujarat.
- **Markets**: Main market + **Lathi Bazaar of Jasdan**.
- Smaller versions of pataras and jewel boxes also sold at **Udhyog Bharati and Khadi Plaza, Gondal**.

What other crafts does Rajkot district have?

Craft	Description
Rajkot Patola	**Single ikat saris** (GI-tagged)
Meenakari Furniture	Painted lacquered wooden furniture
Silver Jewellery + Silverware	Soni Bazaar, Palace Road, Rajkot
Block Printing	Jetpur (in district)

What other GI-tagged products does Gujarat have?

Category	GI-Tagged Products
Handicraft	**Sankheda Furniture, Agates of Cambay, Kutch Embroidery, Tangaliya Shawl, Surat Zari Craft, Kachchh Shawls, Patan Patola, Warli Painting, Jamnagari Bandhani, Rajkot Patola, Pethapur Printing Blocks, Pithora, Mata ni Pachhedi, Kutch Rogan Craft, Gharchola Craft, Gujarat Suf Embroidery, Ahmedabad Sodagari Block Print, Surat Sadeli Craft, Bharuch Sujani Weaving, Kutch Ajrakh**
Agricultural	**Gir Kesar Mango, Bhalia Wheat, Kachchhi Kharek**

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the recently GI-tagged Jasdan Patari, consider the following statements:

1. Jasdan Patari is a centuries-old handicraft from Jasdan town and taluka in Rajkot district, Gujarat.
2. It is a brass-ribbed wooden chest typically made of teak wood, with eight or more drawers.
3. It has been traditionally used for storage and as dowry/trousseau carriers.
4. Jasdan Patari is a textile handicraft made of silk and zari.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **Jasdan Patari is a wooden chest handicraft (with brass/copper/white metal embellishments)**, NOT a textile silk/zari handicraft.)

Q2. With reference to Jasdan Patari and the Saurashtra craft tradition, consider the following statements:

1. Jasdan is located in Rajkot district of Gujarat, in the Saurashtra region.
2. Fine examples of Jasdan Patari can be seen in the museum collections of Hingolgadh Castle and Gondal Palace.
3. The patari was traditionally an essential part of a bride's trousseau in Saurashtra culture.
4. Jasdan Patari has its origin in the Vidarbha region of Maharashtra.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **Jasdan Patari originates in the Saurashtra region of Gujarat**, NOT Vidarbha (Maharashtra).)

Answer Key

1. (c) — Statement 4 wrong: Jasdan Patari is a wooden chest, not silk/zari textile.
2. (c) — Statement 4 wrong: Jasdan Patari originates in Saurashtra, not Vidarbha.

Facts To Remember

1. Ethan Vaz and Harshavardhan Become India's 96th and 97th Grandmasters

Ethan Vaz and G. B. Harshavardhan became India's 96th and 97th Chess Grandmasters. Ethan secured his final GM norm at the Sarajevo GM tournament while remaining unbeaten. Their achievement strengthens India's rising global chess dominance.

2. DAE Launches World's First Nuclear Heat-Based Hydrogen Facility

Department of Atomic Energy inaugurated the world's first hydrogen production facility using the Copper–Chlorine thermochemical cycle. Located at Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research, it uses nuclear process heat for carbon-free hydrogen production. The facility marks a major clean-energy breakthrough.

3. Amazon to Invest USD 48 Billion in India by 2030

Amazon announced a USD 48 billion investment in India to expand AI, cloud, e-commerce, and logistics infrastructure. The investment includes AWS data center expansion and new fulfillment centers. It is expected to boost jobs, exports, and AI adoption.

4. Herbalife and IIT Madras Launch CoE on Plant Cell Fermentation

Herbalife partnered with Indian Institute of Technology Madras to establish India's first CoE on plant cell fermentation. The center will support R&D in herbal biomass and phytochemicals. It aims to bridge laboratory innovation with industrial applications.

5. IIT Bombay and SUNY Old Westbury Sign AI Research Collaboration

Indian Institute of Technology Bombay signed an LoI with State University of New York Old Westbury. The partnership will promote joint AI research, faculty exchange, and academic programs. IIT Bombay will also establish its first overseas sub-campus in New York.

6. MAHE Achieves Top Ranking in THE Sustainability Impact Ratings

Manipal Academy of Higher Education secured the top global rank in SDG-5 (Gender Equality) in THE Sustainability Impact Ratings 2026. The ranking measures universities' contributions to UN SDGs. MAHE retained its place in the 101–200 global overall band.

7. RBI Revises Upper Layer Classification for NBFCs

Reserve Bank of India revised the framework for identifying Upper Layer NBFCs. NBFCs with assets above Rs 1 lakh crore will now automatically enter the upper layer. This enhances regulatory oversight for systemically important financial institutions.

8. ADB Approves USD 42.2 Million Loan for Bamboo Industry

Asian Development Bank approved a USD 42.2 million loan to support bamboo development in Northeast India. The funding will promote cultivation, value-chain development, and women-led enterprises. It aligns with India's National Bamboo Mission.

9. Goldman Sachs Raises India's GDP Forecast to 6.8%

Goldman Sachs raised India's CY26 GDP growth forecast to 6.8%. The revision reflects improved macroeconomic conditions and lower inflation expectations. It also projects stronger balance-of-payments performance.

10. Florence Rabier Wins WMO's Top IMO Prize

Florence Rabier received the 71st IMO Prize from the World Meteorological Organization. She was recognized for major contributions to numerical weather prediction. Her work improved forecasting accuracy through advanced data and AI models.

11. Jaime de la Espriella Wins Colombia Presidential Election

Jaime Abelardo de la Espriella won Colombia's presidential runoff election. He defeated Iván Cepeda and will assume office in August 2026. His victory marks a major political shift in Colombia.

12. Dr. U.P. Rajeev Appointed VSSC Director

U. P. Rajeev was appointed Director of Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre. He succeeds Dr. A. Rajarajan and brings expertise in rocket guidance systems. He will lead India's launch vehicle programs.

13. India Tops ISSF Junior World Championship Medal Tally

India topped the medal tally at the ISSF Junior World Championship 2026 with 25 medals. India secured 7 gold, 8 silver, and 10 bronze medals. The performance highlights India's growing strength in shooting sports.

14. Veteran Filmmaker K. Bhagyaraj Passes Away at 73

K. Bhagyaraj passed away at the age of 73 in Chennai. He was widely known as actor, writer, and director with a five-decade career. His storytelling earned him the title "Screenplay King."

15. 'The Second Orbit' Memoir Released in New Delhi

The Second Orbit was released by Amar Preet Singh. The memoir chronicles astronaut Shubhanshu Shukla's journey to the ISS. It aims to inspire youth toward STEM and space exploration.

16. VP Releases 'Sanskritir Ratna Bhandar' Book

Sanskritir Ratna Bhandar: Bhaowaiyar Itibritto was released by C. P. Radhakrishnan. The book documents

the cultural heritage of Bhawaiya folk music. It highlights preservation of India's regional traditions.

17. World Refrigeration Day Observed on June 26

World Refrigeration Day highlights the importance of refrigeration and cooling technologies. The 2026 theme is "Cool Intelligence." It promotes sustainable cooling and energy-efficient innovation.

18. International Day of Deafblindness Observed on June 27

The day raises awareness about deafblindness and challenges faced by affected individuals. It promotes inclusion, accessibility, and equal rights. The UN officially recognized the observance in 2025.

19. Sanjay Jaju Appointed Telangana Chief Secretary

Sanjay Jaju was appointed the new Chief Secretary of Telangana. He succeeds K. Ramakrishna Rao and also holds additional administrative responsibilities. His appointment strengthens governance.

20. Government Launches Revamped Anaemia Mukt Bharat Abhiyaan

Ministry of Health and Family Welfare launched the revamped Anaemia Mukt Bharat Abhiyaan. The programme introduces a new 7x7x7 strategy and T4 approach—Test, Treat, Talk, and Track. It expands into a technology-enabled, people-centric health mission.

21. Pralhad Joshi to Inaugurate Two Major Solar Power Parks in Madhya Pradesh

Pralhad Joshi will inaugurate two major solar power parks in Madhya Pradesh at Neemuch and Shajapur. These projects aim to boost renewable energy generation and strengthen India's clean energy transition. The parks will support the country's solar power capacity expansion.

22. J.P. Nadda to Launch Samagra Shishu Bal Swasthya Karyakram

Jagat Prakash Nadda will launch the Samagra Shishu Bal Swasthya Karyakram in New Delhi. The initiative focuses on improving child health, nutrition, and early healthcare intervention. It aims to strengthen pediatric healthcare delivery nationwide.

23. Tiger Reintroduction in Sariska Completes 18 Years

Bhupender Yadav congratulated citizens on 18 years of tiger reintroduction in Sariska Tiger Reserve. The milestone reflects India's successful wildlife conservation efforts. Sariska remains a key example of tiger restoration.

24. INS Udaygiri, Kavaratti and Shakti Reach Thailand

Indian Navy ships INS Udaygiri, INS Kavaratti, and INS Shakti reached Sattahip, Thailand. The deployment aims to enhance maritime cooperation in Southeast Asia. It strengthens regional naval partnerships and strategic engagement.

25. INS Ikshak Reaches Seychelles on Operational Deployment

Indian Navy's survey vessel INS Ikshak reached Port Victoria in Seychelles. The deployment supports maritime cooperation in the South West Indian Ocean Region. It reinforces India's regional maritime presence.

26. Shivraj Singh Chouhan to Chair National Rural Development Conference 2026

Shivraj Singh Chouhan will chair the National Rural Development Conference 2026 in New Delhi. The conference will focus on rural development strategies and policy coordination. It aims to accelerate inclusive rural growth.

27. Amit Shah Launches Cooperative Taxi Service ‘Bharat Taxi’

Amit Shah launched cooperative ride-hailing service Bharat Taxi in Gujarat. The platform will expand to 500 cities and towns over the next two years. It aims to promote cooperative entrepreneurship in mobility services.

28. India Launches World’s First Nuclear Heat-Based Hydrogen Facility

Department of Atomic Energy inaugurated the world’s first hydrogen production facility using the Copper–Chlorine thermochemical cycle. Located at Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research, it uses nuclear process heat for carbon-free hydrogen production. The facility marks a major clean-energy breakthrough.

FIVE TO REMEMBER · 28 & 29 JUNE 2026

1. **Launched**: **5 September 2017** (Teachers' Day) by VP **Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu**. DIKSHA (Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sh…
2. **Established**: **13 February 1986** under the **APEDA Act, 1985** (Act No. 2 of 1986). APEDA Facilitates First Commercial Export of GI…
3. **Statutory basis**: **VB-G RAM G Act, 2025** (assented by President). Govt Launches AI-Enabled "Rural Internal Audit …
4. **Full Form**: **Bankers Institute of Rural Development**. NABARD-BIRD Three-Day Training on "Geographical…
5. Smaller versions of pataras and jewel boxes also sold at **Udhyog Bharati and Khadi Plaza, Gondal**. "Jasdan Patari" Traditional Wooden Handicraft f…

Now test yourself: c4scourses.in/daily-quiz/daily-quiz-023-june-2026/

DAY 18 OF 18

30 June 2026

Tuesday · 23 items · 3 topics

General **5** · Banking and Finance **1** · Agriculture **2** · Facts To Remember **15**

Context

The **World's Best School Prizes 2026** shortlist — released by **T4 Education**, a **UK-headquartered global education platform** on **25 June 2026** — features **seven Indian schools across four of the five award categories**, setting a **new global record** for the **highest number of shortlisted schools from any country in a single year since the awards were launched in 2022** (now in their 4th year). T4 Education was founded by **Mr. Vikas Pota** in the wake of the **COVID-19 pandemic** to celebrate schools transforming lives globally. Each category features a **Top 10 shortlist** (total 50 schools); **category winners** are selected by an **independent Judging Academy of global education experts** in **November 2026**, while the **Community Choice Award** is decided by **public vote**. All shortlisted schools will gather at the **World Schools Summit in London in January 2027** to share best practices.

What is the World's Best School Prizes?

- **Organiser**: **T4 Education**, **UK-headquartered**.
- **Founded**: **2022** (post-COVID).
- **Founder**: **Mr. Vikas Pota**.
- **Year**: 2026 = **4th edition**.
- **Categories (5)**:
  1. **Innovation**.
  2. **Community Collaboration**.
  3. **Environmental Action**.
  4. **Supporting Healthy Lives**.
  5. **Overcoming Adversity**.
- **Per Category**: **Top 10 schools shortlisted** = 50 total.
- **Community Choice Award**: Decided by **public vote** from all 50 shortlisted schools.
- **World Schools Summit**: **London, January 2027**.

Which 7 Indian schools made the shortlist?

Category	School	State	Type
Innovation	**PCMC Chhatrapati Shahuji Maharaj English Medium School, Kasarwadi, Pune**	Maharashtra	**Public** (Pimpri-Chinchwad Municipal Corporation-run)
Innovation	**Army Goodwill School Wuzur, Anantnag**	Jammu & Kashmir	**Public** (Indian Army-run)
Community Collaboration	**Healthy Planet TGA Early Years School, Noida**	Uttar Pradesh	**Independent** (Kindergarten)
Community Collaboration	**Inventure Academy, Bengaluru**	Karnataka	**Independent**
Community Collaboration	**Seth M.R. Jaipuria School, Vineet Khand, Gomti Nagar, Lucknow**	Uttar Pradesh	**Independent**

Category	School	State	Type
Environmental Action	**EuroSchool Bannerghatta, Bengaluru**	Karnataka	**Independent**
Supporting Healthy Lives	**Seth Anandram Jaipuria School, Lucknow**	Uttar Pradesh	**Independent**

State-wise distribution

State	Schools Shortlisted
Uttar Pradesh (Noida + Lucknow ×2)	**3**
Karnataka (Bengaluru ×2)	**2**
Maharashtra (Pune)	**1**
Jammu & Kashmir (Anantnag)	**1**

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the World's Best School Prizes 2026, consider the following statements:

1. The prizes are organised by T4 Education, a UK-headquartered global education platform.
2. The prizes were founded in 2022 in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. India has the highest number of shortlisted schools (seven) from any country in a single year since the prizes were launched.
4. The prizes are organised by UNESCO at its headquarters in Paris.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **World's Best School Prizes are organised by T4 Education (UK)**, NOT by UNESCO.)

Q2. With reference to the categories of the World's Best School Prizes, consider the following statements:

1. The prizes cover five categories: Innovation, Community Collaboration, Environmental Action, Supporting Healthy Lives, and Overcoming Adversity.
2. Each category has a Top 10 shortlist of schools.
3. Indian schools were shortlisted in four of the five categories in 2026.
4. The category winners are decided through a public vote.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **the category winners are selected by an independent Judging Academy of global education experts** — NOT by public vote. Only the **Community Choice Award** is decided by public vote.)

Answer Key

1. (c) — Statement 4 wrong: T4 Education organises it, not UNESCO.
2. (c) — Statement 4 wrong: Judging Academy decides category winners; only Community Choice Award is by public vote.

2. Captive-Bred, Radio-Tagged White-Rumped Vulture (Gyps bengalensis)

Source: *The Hindu*

Context

A **radio-tagged, captive-bred white-rumped vulture (Gyps bengalensis)** — released earlier in 2026 at the **Mudumalai Tiger Reserve (MTR)**, Nilgiris district, Tamil Nadu — was **electrocuted on Sunday, 28 June 2026** after contact with a power line at **Ebbanad village** overlooking the **Sigur plateau**. The bird was initially part of the **Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS)** release of **34 captive-bred vultures** at **Pench, Melghat, and Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserves** during **December 2025-January 2026**. It was first released at **Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR), Maharashtra** in **December 2025**, drifted into **Karnataka**, was **captured and treated** after showing signs of illness, and in **April 2026** BNHS + Karnataka Forest Department secured permission from the Tamil Nadu Forest Department to release it in MTR — **home to the last sizeable population of white-rumped vultures in South India**. The bird, however, **failed to acclimatise**, undertaking exploratory forays to **Gudalur, Kalhatty, and Ebbanad** before its electrocution. This **marks the end of India's first attempted reintroduction of a captive-bred white-rumped vulture into the South Indian landscape** and is expected to influence future conservation policy.

What is the White-Rumped Vulture (Gyps bengalensis)?

Aspect	Detail
Scientific Name	**Gyps bengalensis**
Family	Accipitridae (Old World vultures)
IUCN Status	**Critically Endangered (since 2000)**
CITES	**Appendix II**
Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972	**Schedule I** (highest protection)
Population Decline	**>99% in South Asia** since 1990s
Main Cause	**Diclofenac** + other NSAIDs in veterinary use
Diet	**Exclusively carrion** (scavenger)
Breeding	**October-April**; monogamous; **1 nestling/year**
Size	**Smallest among Gyps species**

What is the Mudumalai Tiger Reserve (MTR)?

- **State**: **Tamil Nadu**.
- **District**: **Nilgiris**.
- **Part of**: **Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve** (India's first BR, 1986).
- **Adjoins**: **Bandipur TR (Karnataka), Nagarhole TR (Karnataka), Wayanad WLS (Kerala)** — **Mudumalai-Bandipur-Wayanad-Nagarhole landscape**.
- **WRV Population in MTR**: **49-104 individuals** across nesting colonies (Manigandan et al., 2023); **36 active nesting pairs** documented (Venkitachalam & Senthilnathan, 2016); **~68 nests** in adjoining Nilgiri North Forest Division (Ramakrishnan et al., 2014).
- **Moyar Valley**: Key vulture stronghold in MTR.

Who is the BNHS?

- **Full Form**: **Bombay Natural History Society**.
- **Founded**: **1883**.
- **HQ**: **Hornbill House, Mumbai**.
- **Status**: **Pan-India wildlife research and conservation NGO**; partner of **BirdLife International**.
- **Notable Role**: First documented vulture decline in **1999**; leads vulture conservation breeding programme since early 2000s.

What are the Jatayu Conservation Breeding Centres (JCBCs)?

Centre	State	Partners
Pinjore	**Haryana**	BNHS + State Forest Dept
Rajabhatkhawa	**West Bengal**	BNHS + State Forest Dept
Rani	**Assam**	BNHS + State Forest Dept
Bhopal	**Madhya Pradesh**	BNHS + State Forest Dept

Why are vultures critically important to ecosystem?

- **Apex scavengers** — clean up carcasses, prevent disease spread (anthrax, rabies, etc.).
- **Ecosystem services**: control pathogens that affect humans + livestock.
- Their decline has caused **rise in feral dog populations** → spike in **rabies cases**.
- A 2008 study estimated **vulture decline caused ~₹2.3 lakh crore in economic losses** in India over a decade.

What are India's vulture conservation initiatives?

- **Vulture Action Plan (VAP) 2020-2025** — by **MoEFCC**.
- **Jatayu Conservation Breeding Centres** (4 centres).
- **Vulture Safe Zones (VSZs)** — Diclofenac-free areas across India.
- **Pench, Tadoba-Andhari, Melghat Tiger Reserves** in Maharashtra — current reintroduction sites.
- **Kaziranga landscape** (Assam) — first soft-release of slender-billed vultures in March 2026.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the White-Rumped Vulture (Gyps bengalensis), consider the following statements:

1. It is classified as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List.
2. It is listed under Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
3. Its primary cause of population decline has been the veterinary use of diclofenac and other NSAIDs.
4. It is endemic to the South American continent.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **White-Rumped Vulture is native to South Asia (India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan)**, NOT endemic to South America.)

Q2. With reference to the electrocution incident at Mudumalai Tiger Reserve (28 June 2026), consider the following statements:

1. The captive-bred white-rumped vulture was first released at Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve in Maharashtra in December 2025.
2. The bird was subsequently captured in Karnataka after showing signs of illness and treated before being released at Mudumalai Tiger Reserve in April 2026.
3. The bird was electrocuted at Ebbanad village overlooking the Sigur plateau.
4. The electrocution incident marks the success of India's first attempted captive-bred WRV reintroduction in South India.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **electrocution marks the END (failure)**, NOT success of the first attempted

reintroduction.)

Q3. With reference to the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), consider the following statements:

1. BNHS was founded in 1883 and is headquartered at Hornbill House, Mumbai.
2. BNHS is a partner of BirdLife International.
3. BNHS leads India's vulture conservation breeding programme in collaboration with state forest departments and the RSPB (UK).
4. BNHS is a statutory body created under an Act of Parliament.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **BNHS is a non-governmental, pan-India wildlife research NGO**, NOT a statutory body created under an Act of Parliament.)

Q4. With reference to the Jatayu Conservation Breeding Centres (JCBCs), consider the following statements:

1. The four JCBCs are located at Pinjore (Haryana), Rajabhatkhawa (West Bengal), Rani (Assam), and Bhopal (Madhya Pradesh).
2. JCBCs are operated by BNHS in collaboration with state forest departments and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), UK.
3. The JCBCs currently house approximately 740 vultures, with about 110 already released into the wild for reintroduction.
4. There is only one JCBC in India, located in Tamil Nadu.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **there are 4 JCBCs (Pinjore, Rajabhatkhawa, Rani, Bhopal)** — NOT one located in Tamil Nadu.)

Answer Key

1. (c) — Statement 4 wrong: WRV is native to South Asia, not South America.
2. (c) — Statement 4 wrong: Marks failure (end), not success.
3. (c) — Statement 4 wrong: BNHS is an NGO, not a statutory body.
4. (c) — Statement 4 wrong: 4 JCBCs exist, none in Tamil Nadu.

Exam Relevance

Exam	Relevance
UPSC Prelims & Mains	**Very High — GS-III (Environment, Biodiversity Conservation), Prelims (Schedules, IUCN, species)**
State PCS (esp. TN, Kerala, Karnataka, Maharashtra)	**High — MTR, Tadoba, BNHS, WRV**
RBI Grade B (Phase I + II)	**Medium — ESI on environment/biodiversity (recurring GA topic)**
NABARD Grade A	High — Rural biodiversity, eco-services
Banking (SBI PO, IBPS, RBI Assistant)	High — GA on critically endangered species, schemes
Forest Service (IFS/IFoS)	**Critical — Direct subject — Vulture conservation, BNHS, NSAIDs, JCBCs**
SSC, Railway, Insurance	High — IUCN, Schedule I species, BNHS

3. Jonathan the Giant Tortoise

Source: *Times of India*

Context

During his **State Visit to Seychelles on 28 June 2026**, **PM Modi visited the Seychelles National Botanical Garden in Victoria**, where he **interacted with and fed native giant tortoises** and **planted a Coco de Mer palm sapling**. The visit drew **global attention** to the **Seychelles giant tortoise (Aldabrachelys gigantea)** — particularly to **Jonathan**, the world's oldest known living land animal at an estimated **194 years (as of 2026)**, recognised by **Guinness World Records**. Important: **Jonathan does NOT live in Seychelles** — he lives on the **grounds of Plantation House (Governor's Residence) on Saint Helena**, a **British Overseas Territory in the South Atlantic** — where he was brought from Seychelles in **1882** as a gift to the Governor (already "fully mature" at ~50 years, implying birth no later than 1832). On **17 June 2026**, **Guinness World Records designated Jonathan a "Guinness Icon"**, joining the likes of John Cena and Shohei Ohtani. Giant tortoises function as **ecosystem engineers** in their native island habitats — clearing brush, dispersing seeds, modifying landscapes.

Who is Jonathan?

Aspect	Detail
Species	**Seychelles giant tortoise** (Aldabrachelys gigantea hololissa) — sub-species of **Aldabra giant tortoise**
Estimated Birth	**c. 1832** (Governor of Saint Helena assigned symbolic birthday: **4 December 1832**)
Estimated Age (2026)	**194 years**
Current Home	**Plantation House (Governor's Residence), Saint Helena** (British Overseas Territory, South Atlantic)
Brought from Seychelles to St Helena	**1882** (at full maturity, ~50 years old)
Guinness Record	**Oldest living land animal** (since 2022, surpassing Tu'i Malila of Tonga who died in 1966 aged 189)
Guinness Icon Status	**17 June 2026**

What is the Seychelles giant tortoise?

Aspect	Detail
Scientific Name	**Aldabrachelys gigantea** (Aldabra giant tortoise; Seychelles tortoise is a subspecies)
Habitat	Native to **Aldabra Atoll, Seychelles** (UNESCO WHS) — primary wild sanctuary
Wild Population	**~100,000+ on Aldabra Atoll**
Weight	**250-350 kg** (550-770 lbs)
Diet	Herbivorous — grasses, leaves, fruits, woody plants
Lifespan	Can exceed 150 years; among the longest-living animals
IUCN Status	**Vulnerable**
Schedule	**CITES Appendix II**
Role	**Ecosystem engineers** — clear brush, disperse seeds, modify habitat

Other notable giant tortoises in history

Tortoise	Detail
Adwaita	Aldabra giant tortoise that died at **Alipore Zoological Gardens, Kolkata (2006)** at estimated 255 years (unverified)
Tu'i Malila	Madagascar radiated tortoise that died in Tonga (1966) at 189 years
Lonesome George	Last Pinta Island tortoise (Galápagos), died June 2012

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to Jonathan the giant tortoise, consider the following statements:

1. Jonathan is a Seychelles giant tortoise (Aldabrachelys gigantea hololissa) estimated to be 194 years old in 2026.
2. He has been recognised by Guinness World Records as the world's oldest living land animal.
3. Jonathan currently lives on the grounds of Plantation House on Saint Helena, a British Overseas Territory in the South Atlantic.
4. Jonathan currently lives at the Seychelles National Botanical Garden in Victoria.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **Jonathan lives on Saint Helena Island**, NOT in Seychelles. He was brought to Saint Helena from Seychelles in **1882** and has lived there since.)

Q2. With reference to the Aldabra giant tortoise (Aldabrachelys gigantea), consider the following statements:

1. It is one of the largest reptiles on Earth and a herbivorous species.
2. The Aldabra Atoll in Seychelles is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and the primary wild sanctuary, hosting approximately 100,000 individuals.
3. It is classified as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List.
4. It is native to South America.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **Aldabra giant tortoise is native to the Indian Ocean (specifically Aldabra Atoll, Seychelles)**, NOT South America.)

Answer Key

1. (c) — Statement 4 wrong: Jonathan lives on Saint Helena, not Seychelles.
2. (c) — Statement 4 wrong: Native to Indian Ocean, not South America.

Exam Relevance

Exam	Relevance
UPSC Prelims & Mains	**High — GS-III (Environment, Biodiversity, Endangered Species)**
State PCS	High — Environment, IUCN species
Forest Service (IFS/IFoS)	**Critical — Direct subject — Giant tortoise, IUCN, Aldabra Atoll**
RBI Grade B / NABARD	Low — General Awareness only
Banking (SBI PO, IBPS, RBI Assistant)	High — Current Affairs, world records
SSC, Railway, Insurance	**Very High — Jonathan, Aldabra, IUCN, Guinness Icon**

4. PM Modi Conferred Seychelles' Highest Presidential Distinction "Guardian of the Blue Horizon"

Context

On **Sunday, 28 June 2026**, **Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi** was conferred Seychelles' **highest presidential distinction — "Guardian of the Blue Horizon"** — by **President Dr. Patrick Herminie** at a special state ceremony in **Victoria, Mahé**. This is the **first time the honour has ever been bestowed**, after the **Seychelles Parliament instituted it just weeks before the visit by overhauling its national awards system and repealing older medals** (the previous framework automatically entitled every Seychelles President to the honour, drawing criticism on transparency). The award marks PM Modi's **34th international state honour from a foreign nation**. The distinction recognises India's **green leadership, Blue Economy advocacy, climate action, sustainable ocean resource management, and championing of Small Island Developing States (SIDS)** — including the **MAHASAGAR + SAGAR** visions, **International Solar Alliance (ISA)**, **Mission LiFE**, **"Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam"** (Plant for Mother) afforestation drive, and the **International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA)**. PM Modi **dedicated the honour to all countries fighting climate change**.

What is the Guardian of the Blue Horizon?

- **Type**: **Highest presidential distinction** of Seychelles.
- **Purpose**: Recognises exemplary **international leadership** in:
  - **Environmental conservation**.
  - **Climate resilience**.
  - **Green growth**.
  - **Sustainable management of marine ecosystems**.
- **Recently Instituted**: Created by Seychelles Parliament **weeks before PM Modi's visit** by **overhauling national awards system** + repealing older medals.

Why was the honour conferred? (Key Pillars)

Pillar	Detail
Blue Economy	India's strategic push under **MAHASAGAR (2025) + SAGAR (2015)** visions — clean ocean trade, maritime safety, ocean resource protection
SIDS Support	India as trusted partner to **Small Island Developing States** like Seychelles
International Solar Alliance (ISA)	Co-founded with France in **November 2015**; scaling solar power globally
Mission LiFE	**Lifestyle for Environment** — launched **20 October 2022** by PM Modi at COP27; "Pro-Planet People" movement
"Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam"	**Plant a Tree for Mother** — afforestation drive launched **5 June 2024** (World Environment Day)
International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA)	Conservation alliance for 7 big cat species; launched **9 April 2023** by PM Modi at "Project Tiger 50" celebration in Mysuru

What is the International Solar Alliance (ISA)?

- **Co-founded**: by **PM Modi + French President François Hollande** on the sidelines of **UNFCCC COP21, Paris (30 November 2015)**.
- **HQ**: **Gurugram, India**.
- **Status**: **Treaty-based international organisation** (Framework Agreement entered into force **6 December 2017**).
- **Mandate**: Promote **solar energy** in **sun-rich countries** (between Tropic of Cancer + Tropic of Capricorn, later widened to all UN member states).

- **Membership**: 100+ countries.

What is Mission LiFE?

- **Full Form**: **Lifestyle for Environment**.
- **Launched by**: **PM Modi at COP27 (20 October 2022), Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt**.
- **Concept**: **"Pro-Planet People (P3)"** — turn climate action into an individual movement; **mindful, sustainable consumption**.
- **Approach**: 7 themes — sustainable food, energy conservation, e-waste reduction, water conservation, waste reduction, plastic ban, healthy lifestyles.

What is "Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam"?

- **Full Form**: **"Plant a Tree in the Name of Mother"**.
- **Launched by**: **PM Modi on 5 June 2024 (World Environment Day)**.
- **Aim**: **Mass afforestation drive** linking environmental care with maternal tribute.
- **Target (Phase 1)**: 80 crore (800 million) saplings by March 2025.
- **Implementing**: Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change (MoEFCC).

What is the International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA)?

- **Launched by**: **PM Modi on 9 April 2023** at "Project Tiger 50" celebration in **Mysuru**.
- **HQ**: **India**.
- **Members**: Initially 96 countries (range countries + supporters).
- **Big Cat Species Covered**: **Tiger, Lion, Snow Leopard, Cheetah, Jaguar, Leopard, Puma**.
- **Status**: India ratified its Framework Agreement in 2024; entered into force after 5+ countries ratified.

Other major international honours received by PM Modi (selected, of 34 total)

- **Order of the White Double Cross (First Class)** — **Slovakia** (June 2026, Bratislava).
- **The Grand Cordon of the Order of the Two Niles** — Sudan.
- **Order of King Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa** — Bahrain.
- **Champions of the Earth Award (UNEP)** — 2018.
- **Seoul Peace Prize** — 2018.
- **Order of St. Andrew the Apostle** — Russia.
- **Legion of Merit** — USA.
- **Agricola Medal** — FAO.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the "Guardian of the Blue Horizon" honour conferred on PM Modi on 28 June 2026, consider the following statements:

1. It is the highest presidential distinction of Seychelles and was conferred by President Dr. Patrick Herminie.
2. This is the first time this honour has ever been bestowed.
3. It marks PM Modi's 34th international state honour from a foreign nation.
4. The honour was bestowed by the United Nations General Assembly.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the honour was **bestowed by the President of Seychelles**, NOT by the United Nations General Assembly.)

Q2. With reference to the key pillars behind the honour, consider the following statements:

1. The honour recognises India's MAHASAGAR (2025) and SAGAR (2015) maritime visions for the Indian Ocean.
2. It honours India's co-founding of the International Solar Alliance (ISA) at COP21 in Paris.
3. It recognises Mission LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment), launched by PM Modi at COP27 in 2022.
4. It honours India's withdrawal from the Paris Climate Agreement.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **India is a SIGNATORY and active participant in the Paris Climate Agreement** — it has NOT withdrawn from it.)

Answer Key

1. (c) — Statement 4 wrong: Conferred by Seychelles President, not UNGA.
2. (c) — Statement 4 wrong: India is in Paris Agreement.

5. Delegation of Financial Powers to DRDO (DFP-2026)

Source: News on Air

Context

Defence Minister **Shri Rajnath Singh** on **Monday, 29 June 2026** released the **"Delegation of Financial Powers to DRDO (DFP-2026)"** in **New Delhi** — a **major reform** to enhance **efficiency, accountability, and timely execution** of strategic R&D projects. The revised framework provides:

- **Dedicated financial provisions** for **trial campaigns, testing and evaluation activities**.
- **Authorises sanctioning of pre-project R&D initiatives**.
- **Segregates financial powers** for **grants-in-aid related to Extra-Mural Research (EMR) Projects** and **Defence Innovation Accelerator-Centres of Excellence (DIA-CoE)** under separate schedules.

The framework will **enable faster production and induction of systems, platforms and technologies** developed by DRDO into the **Armed Forces**, while strengthening collaboration with **industry and academia** — reinforcing the **Aatmanirbhar Bharat** vision. Alongside DFP-2026, the Minister also released the **Delegation of Financial Powers to Defence Services (DFPDS-2026)** to expedite **defence procurement** across the Armed Forces. The event was attended by **CDS General NS Raja Subramani**, **Defence Secretary + DRDO Chairman Shri Rajesh Kumar Singh**, **Secretary (Defence Production) Shri Sanjeev Kumar**, and **CGDA Shri Anugraha Narayana Das**.

What are the key features of DFP-2026?

Feature	Detail
Trial + Testing Provisions	**Dedicated financial provisions** for **trial campaigns, testing and evaluation** activities
Pre-Project R&D	Authorises **sanctioning of pre-project R&D initiatives**
EMR Grants	**Segregated** under separate schedule — **Extra-Mural Research (EMR)** Projects
DIA-CoE Grants	**Segregated** under separate schedule — **Defence Innovation Accelerator-Centres of Excellence (DIA-CoE)**
Functional Empowerment	Enhanced at **various levels** within Department of Defence R&D
Safeguards	Powers subject to **(a) availability of funds** + **(b) compliance with existing rules/regulations**

What is DRDO?

- **Full Form**: **Defence Research and Development Organisation**.
- **Established**: **1958**.
- **Under**: **Department of Defence R&D (DDR&D), Ministry of Defence**.
- **HQ**: **DRDO Bhawan, New Delhi**.
- **Chairman**: **Shri Rajesh Kumar Singh** (also Defence Secretary).
- **Network**: **50+ labs/establishments** across India.
- **Notable Projects**: **BrahMos, Agni, Prithvi, Akash, Astra, Tejas (LCA), Arjun MBT, Pinaka MBRL, INS Arihant, Nag, ABHYAS, Rustom**.

What is Extra-Mural Research (EMR)?

- DRDO **grants-in-aid for external research partners** — universities, IITs, NITs, research institutions.
- Aims to leverage **academia talent** for defence R&D.
- Now under a **separate schedule** in DFP-2026 for clearer financial governance.

What is the Defence Innovation Accelerator-Centres of Excellence (DIA-CoE)?

- DRDO-supported **Centres of Excellence** at premier academic institutions.
- Anchors **iDEX (Innovations for Defence Excellence)** ecosystem.
- Now under a **separate schedule** in DFP-2026 for streamlined grant management.

What is iDEX?

- **Innovations for Defence Excellence** — launched **April 2018**.
- Under **Department of Defence Production (DDP)**.
- **Engages startups, MSMEs, academia, R&D bodies, innovators** for defence innovation.
- Implements **Defence India Startup Challenge (DISC)** initiatives.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the Delegation of Financial Powers to DRDO (DFP-2026), consider the following statements:

1. DFP-2026 was released by Defence Minister Shri Rajnath Singh on 29 June 2026 in New Delhi.
2. The framework aims to enhance efficiency, accountability, and timely execution of strategic defence R&D projects.
3. It provides dedicated financial provisions for trial campaigns, testing and evaluation activities, and authorises sanctioning of pre-project R&D initiatives.
4. DFP-2026 was released by the Reserve Bank of India.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **DFP-2026 was released by the Defence Minister, not the RBI**.)

Q2. With reference to the key features of DFP-2026, consider the following statements:

1. The framework segregates financial powers for grants-in-aid related to Extra-Mural Research (EMR) Projects under a separate schedule.
2. It segregates financial powers for Defence Innovation Accelerator-Centres of Excellence (DIA-CoE) under a separate schedule.
3. All financial powers are subject to (a) availability of funds and (b) compliance with existing rules/regulations.
4. The framework eliminates all internal approval hierarchies and grants unrestricted financial

autonomy.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **the framework retains internal approval hierarchies and is subject to availability of funds + compliance with rules** — it does NOT grant unrestricted financial autonomy.)

Q3. With reference to DRDO, consider the following statements:

1. DRDO was established in 1958 and is headquartered at DRDO Bhawan, New Delhi.
2. DRDO functions under the Department of Defence Research and Development (DDR&D), Ministry of Defence.
3. Notable DRDO projects include BrahMos, Agni, Prithvi, Akash, Tejas (LCA), Arjun MBT, and Pinaka MBRL.
4. The current DRDO Chairman is also the Defence Secretary, Shri Rajesh Kumar Singh.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

(All four statements are correct.)

Answer Key

1. (c) — Statement 4 wrong: Released by Defence Minister, not RBI.
2. (c) — Statement 4 wrong: Powers subject to funds + rules; no unrestricted autonomy.
3. **(d) All four** — all statements correct.

6. Govt Launches "PM Family Care Tracker (PM-FCT)" + Health Passports

Source: *The Hindu*

Context

Union Home and Cooperation Minister **Shri Amit Shah** on **Sunday, 28 June 2026** launched the **pilot project of the PM Family Care Tracker (PM-FCT) and Health Passports** in **Gandhinagar, Gujarat** — an **integrated digital platform** for **real-time monitoring of beneficiaries** to strengthen **maternal and child health, nutrition, family welfare, and education**. The system tracks **pregnant women, newborns, infants, children, and adolescents up to 18 years**, integrating data from **three Gujarat State Departments — Health, Women & Child Development (WCD), and Education** via the **Poshan Tracker** and **Child Tracking System (CTS)** portals. Every mother and child gets a **unique digital identity** through **ABHA (Ayushman Bharat Health Account, 14-digit)** + **Birth Registration Number**. The platform issues **digital Health Passports** at birth — containing **hereditary disease records, treatments, immunisation up to age 18**. The Minister also administered **polio drops** under the **state's three-day Pulse Polio campaign**, distributed **welfare kits + digital certificates** to beneficiaries, and inaugurated the **PM eBus Sewa in Gandhinagar**. The pilot will be **scaled pan-India in phases**.

What is the PM Family Care Tracker (PM-FCT)?

- An **integrated digital platform** for **end-to-end monitoring** of family welfare beneficiaries.
- **Target Group**: Pregnant women, newborns, infants, children, **adolescents up to 18 years**.
- **Focus Areas**: **Health, Nutrition, Education, Welfare**.

What does PM-FCT track?

Stage	Tracking
Pregnancy	Antenatal care (ANC)
Birth	Birth Registration Number + ABHA issuance

Stage	Tracking
Newborn	Postnatal care, BCG immunisation
Infancy	Full immunisation, growth monitoring
Childhood	Nutrition, anganwadi enrolment, school enrolment + attendance
Adolescence	Adolescent health services up to age 18

Which 3 Gujarat departments are integrated?

Department	Contribution
Health Department	Health records via **Poshan Tracker** + ABHA
Women + Child Development (WCD) Department	Anganwadi data, **Poshan Tracker**
Education Department	School enrolment + attendance via **Child Tracking System (CTS)**

What is the Unique Digital Identity used?

- **ABHA** (Ayushman Bharat Health Account) — **14-digit unique health ID** under ABDM.
- **Birth Registration Number** — issued at birth.
- Combined, they form the child's **lifetime digital identity** on PM-FCT.

What are the key features?

- **Digital Health Passports** for families — containing **medical records, hereditary diseases, treatments, immunisations** up to age 18.
- **Real-time dashboards** for delivery of welfare schemes.
- **Auto-alerts** for **missed vaccinations** (notified to **taluka + district health officers**).
- **Auto-alerts** for **school drop-outs**.
- **End-to-end monitoring** of **antenatal + postnatal care, immunisation, nutrition, growth monitoring, school enrolment + attendance, adolescent health**.

What is ABHA (Ayushman Bharat Health Account)?

- A **14-digit unique health ID** under the **Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM)**.
- Launched: **27 September 2021** by PM Modi.
- Implemented by **National Health Authority (NHA)**.

What is the Poshan Tracker?

- An **ICT-enabled application** under the **Ministry of Women and Child Development**.
- Tracks **nutritional status, anganwadi services, beneficiaries (children + pregnant + lactating women)**.
- Part of **Mission Saksham Anganwadi & POSHAN 2.0**.

What is the Child Tracking System (CTS)?

- A **digital portal** for tracking **school enrolment + attendance** under State Education Departments.
- Helps identify **school drop-outs** for re-engagement.

What is the Namo Shri Yojana referenced?

- **Gujarat state scheme**.
- **Financial assistance up to ₹12,000** for eligible **pregnant + lactating mothers**.
- Complements central schemes like **PM Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)**.

What is PM eBus Sewa (also inaugurated)?

- **Central scheme** approved by Union Cabinet on **16 August 2023**.
- **Outlay**: **₹57,613 crore** (Central share: **₹20,000 crore** over 10 years).
- Deploys **10,000 e-buses** in **169 cities** (priority to Tier-2/Tier-3 cities + cities with 3-40 lakh population).
- Implementing Ministry: **Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs (MoHUA)**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the PM Family Care Tracker (PM-FCT) launched on 28 June 2026, consider the following statements:

1. The pilot project was launched by Union Home and Cooperation Minister Shri Amit Shah at Gandhinagar, Gujarat.
2. PM-FCT is an integrated digital platform tracking pregnant women, newborns, infants, children, and adolescents up to 18 years.
3. The platform integrates data from three Gujarat departments — Health, Women and Child Development, and Education.
4. PM-FCT was launched simultaneously in all 28 states and 8 Union Territories of India.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **PM-FCT was launched as a pilot project in Gandhinagar only**, with plans for phased expansion — NOT simultaneously across all states/UTs.)

Q2. With reference to the unique digital identity used by PM-FCT, consider the following statements:

1. PM-FCT uses ABHA (Ayushman Bharat Health Account), a 14-digit unique health ID, as a key identifier.
2. The platform also uses the Birth Registration Number to assign a unique identity to each child.
3. The ABHA ID was launched on 27 September 2021 as part of the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM).
4. The ABHA ID is a 10-digit mobile-linked identifier.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **ABHA is a 14-digit unique health ID**, NOT a 10-digit mobile-linked identifier.)

Q3. With reference to the key features of PM-FCT, consider the following statements:

1. The platform issues digital Health Passports containing lifetime medical records of children up to age 18.
2. The platform generates auto-alerts for missed vaccinations and notifies taluka and district health officers.
3. The platform provides end-to-end monitoring of antenatal/postnatal care, immunisation, nutrition, growth, school enrolment, and adolescent health.
4. The platform is restricted to tracking only school enrolment and excludes health and nutrition data.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **platform tracks health, nutrition, education, AND welfare** in an integrated manner — NOT restricted to school enrolment only.)

Q4. With reference to the supporting digital ecosystem of PM-FCT, consider the following statements:

1. The Poshan Tracker is an ICT-enabled application under the Ministry of Women and Child

Development.
2. The Child Tracking System (CTS) is a digital portal for tracking school enrolment and attendance under State Education Departments.
3. The ABHA is implemented by the National Health Authority (NHA) under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
4. The Poshan Tracker is administered by the Reserve Bank of India.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **the Poshan Tracker is under the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD)**, NOT the RBI.)

Answer Key

1. (c) — Statement 4 wrong: Pilot in Gandhinagar only, phased expansion planned.
2. (c) — Statement 4 wrong: ABHA is 14-digit, not 10-digit.
3. (c) — Statement 4 wrong: Platform integrates health + nutrition + education + welfare.
4. (c) — Statement 4 wrong: Poshan Tracker under MWCD, not RBI.

Banking and Finance

1. RBI's New "Capital Market Exposure" Framework

Source: *Business Standard*

Context

A **new RBI framework on bank credit to Capital Market Intermediaries (CMIs)** comes into effect on **Tuesday, 1 July 2026**, after being **deferred by three months from 1 April 2026** following representations from banks, brokers, and industry bodies. The framework — issued as **RBI (Commercial Banks – Credit Facilities) Amendment Directions, 2026 (Revised)** on **30 March 2026** (replacing the **13 February 2026** original) — inserts a **new Chapter XIII A "Credit Facilities to Capital Market Intermediaries (CMIs)"** prescribing **100% collateralisation, bars bank finance for CMI proprietary trading**, allows **market-makers funding against 100% cash/cash equivalents**, and brings all CMI exposures under **Capital Market Exposure (CME) + Large Exposure Framework (LEF)** norms. On **24 June 2026**, a **four-member broker delegation met Union Finance Minister Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman and DEA Secretary Smt. Anuradha Thakur** seeking relief — particularly a **carveout for "liquidity providers"** in designated liquid derivatives contracts, with bank provisions linked to **SPAN (Standard Portfolio Analysis of Risk) utilisation below 50% of margin**. The industry warns of widening **bid-ask spreads + higher impact costs**; **bank guarantees** account for **~₹1.2 trillion** of the **₹11-12 trillion collateral pool** at clearing corporations, with **intraday funding facilities contributing another ₹80,000 crore**. **CareEdge Ratings** has flagged potential adverse impact on trading volumes and market activity.

What are the 3 broad objectives of the framework?

1. **Enabling framework** for banks to finance **acquisitions** by Indian corporates (incl. mergers + amalgamations).
2. **Rationalisation** of lending limits for individuals against **shares + units of REITs/InvITs**.
3. **Principle-based framework** for lending to **Capital Market Intermediaries (CMIs)** — brokers, clearing members, custodians, market makers.

Who are Capital Market Intermediaries (CMIs)?

- **Regulated entities** undertaking **trade execution + market infrastructure services** in capital markets.

- Includes: **broking, clearing, custody, market-making, and other incidental services**.
- **Excludes**: **Standalone Primary Dealers (SPDs)** and **Qualified Central Counterparties (QCCPs)**.

What are the key changes for CMIs (Chapter XIII A)?

Element	Norm
Eligibility	Only **SEBI-registered + regulated CMIs** in **compliance** with prudential norms
Treatment	**All exposures to CMIs = Capital Market Exposure (CME)**
Collateral	**100% (Fully Secured)** for all credit facilities, including intraday
Eligible Collateral	Eligible securities + cash + permissible financial assets + immovable property + receivables + **bank guarantees + SBLC**
Excluded as Collateral	**Commercial Paper + Non-Convertible Debentures** of original/initial maturity ≤ 1 year
Proprietary Trading Funding	**PROHIBITED** (banks shall NOT provide finance to CMIs for acquiring securities on their own account)
Limited Exception	**Market-makers** can be funded — **but against 100% cash or cash equivalents**
Intraday Facilities	Permitted at **50% collateral minimum** for centrally cleared client trades
Group/Promoter Collateral	Acceptable if **unencumbered + exclusively charged + legally enforceable**
Counterparty Limits	Required at counterparty + aggregate level under **Large Exposure Framework (LEF)**

What are the bank guarantee norms (for CMIs)?

Purpose	Collateral Requirement
Non-Proprietary (client) Guarantees	**Minimum 50% collateral; at least 25% in cash**
Proprietary Trading Guarantees	**100% Secured; at least 50% in cash**

What are the loan-against-securities (LAS) norms (for individuals)?

- **Loan-to-Value (LTV) cap on listed shares**: **60%**.
- **IPO subscription loans**: Capped at **₹25 lakh per individual**; minimum **25% margin**.
- **Minimum haircut on equity shares**: **40%**.
- **LAS caps**: Apply at **banking system level** (not just per-bank).

What is the acquisition finance norm?

- Scope **expanded to include mergers + amalgamations**.
- Permitted **only for acquisition of CONTROL of a NON-FINANCIAL target**.
- **Maximum financing cap**: **75% of acquisition value**.
- **Refinancing**: Only **after deal is complete + control established**.
- **SPV/subsidiary acquisitions**: Require **corporate guarantee** from acquiring company.

What are brokers seeking?

Demand	Detail
Carveout for Liquidity Providers	Recognition in **designated liquid derivatives contracts**
SPAN-Linked Treatment	Bank provisions linked to **SPAN < 50% margin utilisation** for liquidity providers
Interim Arrangement	Formal liquidity-provider recognition could take time
Wider Market-Making Definition	Currently narrow (restricted to SME platforms)
Commodity Brokers	**Capital gains tax exemption on Electronic Gold Receipts (EGRs)**

What is SPAN?

- **Standard Portfolio Analysis of Risk** — a **portfolio-based margining system** developed by **Chicago Mercantile Exchange (CME) in 1988**.
- Used globally + by Indian exchanges to compute **initial margin** on F&O positions.
- Calculates **worst probable loss** under multiple scenarios.

What is a "Liquidity Provider" in capital markets?

- An entity that **continuously quotes bid + ask prices** across market segments.
- **Maintains narrow spreads + market depth**.
- **Absorbs buy/sell orders** — helping investors enter/exit with **minimal market impact**.
- Different from **Market-Makers**, who are formally designated under SEBI's market-making framework.

What is the Large Exposure Framework (LEF)?

- RBI's **prudential framework** capping a **bank's exposure** to a **single counterparty + group of connected counterparties** as a percentage of **Tier 1 capital**.
- **Single counterparty limit**: **20% of Tier 1 capital** (extendable to 25% in exceptional cases).
- **Group limit**: **25% of Tier 1 capital**.

What is Capital Market Exposure (CME)?

- A **prudential category** for bank exposures linked to **capital market activities** (loans against shares, financing brokers, IPO funding, etc.).
- Aggregate CME of a bank is **capped at 40% of net worth** (with sub-limits on direct + indirect exposures).
- All exposures to CMIs are now **explicitly classified as CME** under the new framework.

What are Electronic Gold Receipts (EGRs)?

- A **digital instrument** representing physical gold stored in a vault.
- **Traded on Indian exchanges** like NSE, BSE under SEBI's EGR framework.
- Approved by SEBI in **September 2021**.
- Commodity brokers seek **capital gains tax exemption** on EGRs (currently treated as securities).

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the RBI (Commercial Banks – Credit Facilities) Amendment Directions, 2026 (Revised), consider the following statements:

1. The Directions take effect from 1 July 2026, after being deferred from 1 April 2026.
2. The Directions insert a new Chapter XIII A titled "Credit Facilities to Capital Market Intermediaries (CMIs)".
3. The Directions are issued under the Banking Regulation Act, 1949.
4. The Directions apply only to NBFCs and not to commercial banks.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **Directions apply specifically to COMMERCIAL BANKS**, NOT NBFCs.)

Q2. With reference to the framework for bank credit to Capital Market Intermediaries (CMIs), consider the following statements:

1. All credit facilities to CMIs must be on a fully secured (100% collateralised) basis.
2. Banks are prohibited from financing CMIs for acquiring securities on their own account, i.e. proprietary trading.

3. Bank funding for market-makers is permitted against 100% cash or cash equivalents.
4. The Standalone Primary Dealers and Qualified Central Counterparties are also classified as CMIs under the framework.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **Standalone Primary Dealers (SPDs) and Qualified Central Counterparties (QCCPs) are EXCLUDED from the definition of CMIs**.)

Q3. With reference to the broker delegation that met the Finance Minister on 24 June 2026, consider the following statements:

1. The four-member broker delegation met Union Finance Minister Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman and DEA Secretary Smt. Anuradha Thakur seeking relief.
2. The brokers sought a carveout for "liquidity providers" in designated liquid derivatives contracts.
3. The brokers proposed bank-credit treatment for liquidity providers linked to SPAN utilisation below 50% of margin.
4. Commodity brokers sought capital gains tax exemption on Electronic Gold Receipts (EGRs).

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) Only three (d) **All four** (e) None

(All four statements are correct.)

Q4. With reference to the size of the collateral pool, consider the following statements:

1. Bank guarantees account for approximately ₹1.2 trillion of the ₹11-12 trillion collateral pool maintained with clearing corporations.
2. Intraday funding facilities contribute approximately ₹80,000 crore to the collateral pool.
3. A CareEdge Ratings report has flagged potential adverse impact on trading volumes and market activity.
4. The Indian capital markets currently have no collateral pool with clearing corporations.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **the collateral pool with clearing corporations is approximately ₹11-12 trillion**, NOT non-existent.)

Answer Key

1. (c) — Statement 4 wrong: Apply to commercial banks, not NBFCs.
2. (c) — Statement 4 wrong: SPDs and QCCPs are EXCLUDED from CMIs.
3. **(d) All four** — all statements correct.
4. (c) — Statement 4 wrong: Collateral pool is ~₹11-12 trillion.

Exam Relevance

Exam	Relevance
RBI Grade B (Phase I + II)	**CRITICAL — Direct subject — Capital market exposure, CMIs, prudential norms, BR Act 1949, LEF, CME, broker regulation; Phase II ESI + FM essay-worthy**
SEBI Grade A	**Critical — Direct subject — CMIs, broker regulation, market-making, SPAN, EGR**
NABARD Grade A	High — RBI prudential norms (recurring)
SIDBI / IRDAI Grade A	High — Banking regulation, capital markets

Agriculture

1. SOMS 2026: 4th Edition of Speciality Fertilizer Summit + B2B Expo

Source: *BL*

Context

The **Soluble Fertilizer Industry Association (SFIA)** is hosting the **4th edition of SOMS 2026 — the Speciality Fertilizer Summit + B2B Expo** at the **Helipad Exhibition Centre, Gandhinagar, Gujarat** from **2-4 July 2026** (the two-day conference component on 3-4 July; B2B engagement opening 2 July). With theme **"The Foundation of a Self-Reliant India"**, the event aims to **promote innovation, reduce import dependency** (India currently imports **70-80% of soluble fertilizer needs**), and accelerate India's **specialty fertilizer self-reliance** under the **Aatmanirbhar Bharat** framework. Discussions will cover **"The Big Debate"**, **linkages in fertilizer distribution, India's agri-startup readiness, the Fertilizer (Control) Order (FCO) 1985, the Essential Commodities Act (ECA) 1955, and specialty fertilizers as a solution to the subsidy burden**. The Summit also features **SFIA's first-ever Agri-Journalism Awards** recognising agricultural journalism in **English, Hindi, Gujarati, and Marathi**, and a **national platform for students and researchers**. **Shri Rajib Chakraborty, National President of SFIA**, said the summit will produce **policy recommendations** to the Government of India for an industry-friendly framework supporting **domestic manufacturing + innovation + import substitution**.

What is the key event?

- **Event**: **SOMS 2026** — 4th edition.
- **Full Form**: **Soluble, Organic, Micronutrient & Bio-Stimulant Fertilizers** Summit + B2B Expo.
- **Venue**: **Helipad Exhibition Centre, Gandhinagar, Gujarat**.
- **Theme**: **"The Foundation of a Self-Reliant India"**.
- **Organiser**: **Soluble Fertilizer Industry Association (SFIA)**.

What will the summit cover?

Session	Detail
The Big Debate (Day 1)	Linkages in fertilizer distribution + agri-startup readiness
Policy Reform	Industry views on **FCO 1985, ECA 1955**
Subsidy Reform	Specialty fertilizers as solution to subsidy burden
Panel Discussions	Fertilizer startups, innovation, policy reforms, manufacturing challenges, roadmap
Agri-Journalism Awards	**First-ever** by SFIA — English, Hindi, Gujarati, Marathi
Student/Researcher Platform	Showcase innovations + research

What is SFIA?

- **Full Form**: **Soluble Fertilizer Industry Association (India)**.
- **Status**: **National association** for MSME + large manufacturers of specialty (water-soluble, organic, micronutrient, bio-stimulant) fertilizers.
- **Role**: Policy advocacy, agronomy research support, supply chain stabilisation.
- **Engagement**: With **50+ universities, ICAR, CSIR, ICAR-National Research Centre for Grapes**.
- **Global Partner**: **China Council for the Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT)**.

What is SOMS?

Letter	Meaning
S	**Soluble Fertilizers** (water-soluble)
O	**Organic Fertilizers**
M	**Micronutrient Fertilizers**
S	**Bio-Stimulants**

- **A scientifically structured approach** to nutrient delivery that integrates **multiple nutrient sources** for high yield, residue-free, sustainable agriculture.
- **Reduces dependency on conventional subsidised urea + DAP by 30-90%**.

What is the Fertilizer (Control) Order (FCO), 1985?

- Issued under **Section 3 of the Essential Commodities Act, 1955**.
- Regulates **quality, distribution, pricing** of fertilizers in India.
- Defines specifications and grades, lists permissible fertilizers, regulates manufacturing licences.
- Administered by **Department of Fertilizers, Ministry of Chemicals & Fertilizers**.

What is the Essential Commodities Act (ECA), 1955?

- A **central law** empowering the Government of India to **control production, supply, distribution, and prices** of essential commodities.
- Covers **food grains, drugs, fertilizers, petroleum products**, etc.
- Allows the Centre to **prescribe price ceilings, ban hoarding, regulate stock limits**.

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to SOMS 2026, consider the following statements:

1. SOMS 2026 is the 4th edition of the Speciality Fertilizer Summit + B2B Expo.
2. It is being organised by the Soluble Fertilizer Industry Association (SFIA), India.
3. The event will be held at the Helipad Exhibition Centre, Gandhinagar, Gujarat in early July 2026.
4. SOMS stands for "Sustainable Organic Mango Strategy".

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **SOMS stands for Soluble + Organic + Micronutrient + Bio-Stimulant fertilizers** — NOT "Sustainable Organic Mango Strategy".)

Q2. With reference to the theme and objectives of SOMS 2026, consider the following statements:

1. The theme of SOMS 2026 is "The Foundation of a Self-Reliant India".
2. The summit aims to reduce India's dependency on imports for soluble fertilizers.
3. India currently imports approximately 70-80% of its soluble fertilizer needs.
4. The summit aims to increase India's dependence on imported chemical fertilizers.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the summit aims to **REDUCE import dependence and promote self-reliance**, NOT increase dependence on imports.)

Q3. With reference to the Fertilizer (Control) Order (FCO), 1985, consider the following statements:

1. The FCO 1985 was issued under Section 3 of the Essential Commodities Act, 1955.

2. The FCO regulates the quality, distribution, and pricing of fertilizers in India.
3. The FCO is administered by the Department of Fertilizers under the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers.
4. The FCO 1985 is a regulation issued by the Reserve Bank of India.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **FCO 1985 was issued by the Government of India under the ECA 1955**, NOT by the RBI.)

Q4. With reference to the SOMS approach and Water-Soluble Fertilizers (WSFs), consider the following statements:

1. SOMS = Soluble + Organic + Micronutrient + Bio-Stimulant Fertilizers.
2. WSF adoption has reportedly reduced reliance on subsidised urea and DAP by 30-90%.
3. In banana farming, WSF use has reduced water consumption by approximately 35% and increased profits by up to ₹98,000/hectare.
4. Water-Soluble Fertilizers cannot be used with drip irrigation.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **WSFs are SPECIFICALLY DESIGNED for use with drip irrigation/fertigation** — that is their core application.)

Answer Key

1. (c) — Statement 4 wrong: SOMS = Soluble + Organic + Micronutrient + Bio-Stimulant.
2. (c) — Statement 4 wrong: Aims to reduce, not increase, import dependence.
3. (c) — Statement 4 wrong: FCO by GoI under ECA, not RBI.
4. (c) — Statement 4 wrong: WSFs designed FOR drip irrigation.

2. AgriStack: India's Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) for Agriculture

Source: *Businessline*

Context

India's **AgriStack** — the **Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) for agriculture** built by the **Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare** — is being hailed as the **"UPI of Indian agriculture"**, driving rapid scheme delivery and credit transformation. Two recent proof points: **Maharashtra disbursed over ₹14,000 crore in Kharif disaster relief to 89 lakh farmers in just 5 days in February 2026**, and **Chhattisgarh successfully executed MSP-based paddy procurement for over 32 lakh farmers in a single season in March 2026**. AgriStack rests on **three federated, authenticated, consent-driven registries**: the **Farmers' Registry** (target 11 crore Farmer IDs; ~8.62 crore created), the **Crop Sown Registry** (target 30 crore farm plots across 604 districts by **Kharif 2026** via mobile-based Digital Crop Surveys), and **Geo-Referenced Village Maps** (5.4 lakh of 6.75 lakh villages done; full target **March 2027**). AgriStack is connected to **RBI's Unified Lending Interface (ULI)** — built by **Reserve Bank Innovation Hub (RBIH), Bengaluru** — enabling **paperless, sub-30-minute farmer loans** by pulling verified data via APIs. The **RBI Kisan Credit Card Directions, 2026** issued on **19 June 2026** (effective **1 January 2027**) consolidate KCC rules across Commercial Banks, SFBs, RRBs, and Rural Co-op Banks, retaining the **₹2 lakh collateral-free limit per borrower** (raised in December 2024 from ₹1.6 lakh). **Bharat-VISTAAR** (Virtually Integrated System to Access Agricultural Resources) — a **multilingual AI platform** announced in the **Union Budget 2026** — will further integrate AgriStack portals with ICAR best-practice packages.

What is AgriStack?

- **Type**: **Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)** for agriculture.
- **Built by**: **Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare**, GoI.
- **Architecture**: **Federated, authenticated, consent-driven**.
- **Compared to**: Often called the **"UPI of Indian agriculture"** or **"Aadhaar of farmers"** (FM Nirmala Sitharaman in Budget 2026: "*one of the next UPI initiatives*").
- **Status**: Phased rollout; over 70% coverage already in several states.

What are the 3 foundational registries?

Registry	Detail	Target
1. Farmers' Registry	Single verified **digital Farmer ID** linked to land + livestock + family details	**11 crore Farmer IDs** (8.62 crore created so far)
2. Crop Sown Registry	Dynamic record of **crops planted, season-wise**, via mobile **Digital Crop Survey (DCS)**	**30 crore farm plots, 604 districts** by **Kharif 2026**
3. Geo-Referenced Village Maps	**Cadastral maps with GPS coordinates** for every farm plot	**5.4 lakh of 6.75 lakh villages done**; full by **March 2027**

What is the Unified Farmer Service Interface (UFSI)?

- **Open API gateway** under AgriStack.
- Allows **authorised public + private apps** (banks, agri-techs, value-chain firms) to **plug in + exchange data** seamlessly.
- Center-State data federation with **consent-brokered access**.

What is Krishi-DSS?

- **Krishi Decision Support System**.
- **Launched**: **16 August 2024** by Govt of India.
- **Integrates**: Geospatial + non-geospatial data (satellite, weather, soil, crop signatures, reservoir + groundwater data, govt scheme data).
- **Use**: Decision support to ministry + state agri-departments + extension workers.

What is Bharat-VISTAAR?

- **Full Form**: **Virtually Integrated System to Access Agricultural Resources**.
- **Announced**: **Union Budget 2026** by FM Nirmala Sitharaman.
- **Purpose**: **Multilingual AI platform** integrating AgriStack portals with **ICAR best-practice packages**.

What is the Digital Crop Survey (DCS)?

- A **mobile-based crop-mapping system** captured directly from the field.
- **Replaces traditional Girdawari paper-based surveys**.
- Uses **smartphone + image-based + drone/satellite imagery**.
- Provides **real-time crop area information** at plot level.
- **Pilot**: 11 states (2023-24).
- **Geo-fencing**: Surveyors cannot log a crop unless their **live GPS location matches the plot's coordinates** — eliminating proxy reporting.

How does AgriStack link with RBI's Unified Lending Interface (ULI)?

Aspect	Detail
ULI built by	**Reserve Bank Innovation Hub (RBIH), Bengaluru**

Aspect	Detail
Announced by RBI	**10 August 2023** (as "Public Tech Platform for Frictionless Credit")
Pilot	**September 2022** — digitalising KCC loans <₹1.6 lakh in **MP, TN, Karnataka, UP, Maharashtra**
Phase 1 Focus	Digital Kisan Credit, crop loans, agri-financing (₹2 lakh crore annual market)
Connectivity	**89 integrated lenders + 53 data providers + 141 data points**
Loan Speed	**Sub-30 minutes**, paperless; via Aadhaar + satellite crop data + soil reports + market prices

What is the Kisan Credit Card (KCC) and the RBI KCC Directions 2026?

Aspect	Detail
KCC launched	**1998**
Modified KCC Scheme	**2004**
Latest Update — RBI KCC Directions, 2026	Issued **19 June 2026**
Effective Date	**1 January 2027**
Covers	**Commercial Banks, SFBs, RRBs, Rural Co-operative Banks**
Collateral-Free Limit	**₹2 lakh per borrower** (raised in **December 2024** from ₹1.6 lakh)
Marginal Farmer Limit (≤1 ha)	**₹10,000-₹50,000 flexible** (not linked to land value)
Crop Season Definition	**Short-duration crops: 12 months**; **long-duration crops: 18 months**
Interest Subvention	**2%** (effective rate 7%); **prompt repayment incentive 3%** (effective 4%)

How does AgriStack bridge the credit gap?

Earlier Pain Point	AgriStack Solution
Self-reported farmer data → loan fraud / multiple loans on same plot	**Crop Sown Registry** matches loan amounts to actual crop acreage
Land verification took weeks	**Geo-referenced village maps + Farmer ID** enable instant verification
High collateral asks for small farmers	**₹2 lakh collateral-free KCC limit** + pre-populated risk-scored applications
Tenant farmers couldn't get credit (no land title)	**ULI verifies end-use of funds** without requiring land titles

Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to AgriStack, consider the following statements:

1. AgriStack is a Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) for India's agriculture sector, built by the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare.
2. It is built on a federated, authenticated, and consent-driven architecture.
3. Its three foundational registries are the Farmers' Registry, the Crop Sown Registry, and the Geo-Referenced Village Maps.
4. AgriStack is an open-source initiative developed and administered exclusively by the Reserve Bank of India.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **AgriStack is built by the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare**, NOT the RBI. The RBI handles the linked credit infrastructure (ULI).)

Q2. With reference to the Crop Sown Registry and Geo-Referenced Village Maps under AgriStack, consider the following statements:

1. The Crop Sown Registry is populated via mobile-based Digital Crop Surveys (DCS).
2. The Government targets covering 30 crore farm plots across 604 districts by the Kharif 2026 season.
3. Approximately 5.4 lakh of 6.75 lakh villages have been geo-referenced, with full coverage targeted by March 2027.
4. Surveyors can log a crop or upload a photo from any location, regardless of GPS coordinates.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **the platform is GEO-FENCED** — surveyors can log a crop or upload a photo only when their **live GPS location matches the plot's coordinates** — to prevent proxy reporting.)

Q3. With reference to the Unified Lending Interface (ULI), consider the following statements:

1. ULI was announced by the RBI on 10 August 2023 as a "Public Tech Platform for Frictionless Credit".
2. ULI was developed by the Reserve Bank Innovation Hub (RBIH), located in Bengaluru.
3. The pilot launched in September 2022 covered digitalisation of Kisan Credit Card loans below ₹1.6 lakh in select districts of MP, TN, Karnataka, UP, and Maharashtra.
4. ULI is operated by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI).

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; **ULI is built and operated by the RBI (via RBIH), NOT SEBI**.)

Q4. With reference to the RBI Kisan Credit Card Directions, 2026, consider the following statements:

1. The Directions were issued by the RBI on 19 June 2026 and will become effective from 1 January 2027.
2. The collateral-free credit limit under KCC is ₹2 lakh per borrower, raised from ₹1.6 lakh in December 2024.
3. The Directions apply to Commercial Banks, Small Finance Banks, Regional Rural Banks, and Rural Co-operative Banks.
4. The Directions have raised the collateral-free limit further to ₹10 lakh per borrower in 2026.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 4 is wrong; the **collateral-free limit remains at ₹2 lakh per borrower** under the 2026 Directions — it has NOT been raised to ₹10 lakh.)

Q5. With reference to the real-world impact of AgriStack cited in the article, consider the following statements:

1. Maharashtra disbursed over ₹14,000 crore in disaster relief to 89 lakh farmers in just five days in February 2026.
2. Chhattisgarh successfully executed MSP-based paddy procurement covering over 32 lakh farmers in a single season in March 2026.
3. AgriStack relies exclusively on individual farmer smartphone ownership and high-speed internet for delivery.
4. Last-mile connectivity is supported by Common Service Centres (CSCs), farmer cooperatives, and Krishi Sakhis.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) **Only three** (d) All four (e) None

(Statement 3 is wrong; **AgriStack does NOT require every farmer to own a smartphone or have high-speed internet** — it relies on on-the-ground support networks (CSCs, cooperatives, Krishi Sakhis).)

Answer Key

1. (c) — Statement 4 wrong: Built by MoAFW, not RBI.
2. (c) — Statement 4 wrong: Platform is geo-fenced.
3. (c) — Statement 4 wrong: ULI by RBI/RBIH, not SEBI.
4. (c) — Statement 4 wrong: Collateral-free limit remains at ₹2 lakh.
5. (c) — Statement 3 wrong: AgriStack doesn't require farmer smartphones for all.

Exam Relevance

NABARD Grade A	**CRITICAL — Direct subject — AgriStack, KCC, FPOs, rural credit, ULI**

Facts To Remember

1. Amit Shah Chairs 10th Apex-Level NCORD Meeting in New Delhi

Amit Shah chaired the 10th Apex-Level Meeting of the Narco-Coordination Centre in New Delhi. A vision document on narcotics control and the NCB Annual Report 2025 were released. The meeting also launched a nationwide drug disposal campaign targeting seized narcotics worth ₹6,000 crore.

2. Virendra Kumar Leads Nasha Mukt Bharat Saptah Rally in Haridwar

Virendra Kumar led the valedictory rally of Nasha Mukt Bharat Saptah in Haridwar. Over 4,000 citizens participated in the campaign promoting a drug-free India. The initiative strengthened awareness on drug prevention and community welfare.

3. GBU Partners for Mission ShakthiSAT Lunar Initiative

Gautam Buddha University partnered with IN-SPACe and Space Kidz India for Mission ShakthiSAT. The mission aims to empower 12,000 girls from 108 countries in space technology and STEM education. It supports women-led leadership in global space research.

4. Gujarat Police Signs MoU with Bharat Taxi

Gujarat Police signed an MoU with Bharat Taxi to improve public safety and urban mobility. The initiative integrates SOS emergency response and mandatory driver verification. It enhances secure and tech-enabled transportation services.

5. Shivraj Singh Chouhan Launches AI-Enabled Rural Audit Portal

Shivraj Singh Chouhan launched an AI-enabled Rural Internal Audit portal. The platform improves audit planning, compliance tracking, and financial oversight for rural development schemes. It strengthens transparency and governance in public spending.

6. IIT Delhi and Sorbonne University Launch Joint Degree Programmes

Indian Institute of Technology Delhi and Sorbonne University announced joint Master's and PhD programmes from 2026. The collaboration expands research in biological sciences, AI, robotics, and materials science. It deepens Indo-French academic cooperation.

7. Two Indian Women Win 2026 Green Oscar Awards

Parveen Sheikh and Barkha Subba won the 2026 Whitley Awards, known as the Green Oscars. They were honored for protecting endangered bird and amphibian species. Their work highlights India's grassroots conservation success.

8. Indian Coast Guard Commissions ICGS Akshay

Indian Coast Guard commissioned the Fast Patrol Vessel ICGS Akshay in Goa. The vessel strengthens maritime security, search and rescue, and EEZ surveillance. It boosts coastal defense and marine protection capabilities.

9. ISRO Conducts Record Test of Next-Generation Rocket Engine

Indian Space Research Organisation successfully tested a semi-cryogenic rocket engine at 88% target thrust. The engine will power the SC120 propulsion stage of future launch vehicles. It is expected to enhance payload capacity and efficiency.

10. Ethan Vaz and Harshavardhan Become India's 96th and 97th Grandmasters

Ethan Vaz and G. B. Harshavardhan became India's 96th and 97th Chess Grandmasters. Ethan secured his final GM norm in Sarajevo while Harshavardhan achieved his title in Chennai. Their success reflects India's growing chess excellence.

11. Ben Stokes Retires from International Cricket

Ben Stokes announced retirement from international cricket after a 15-year career. He retired with over 7,000 Test runs and 250 wickets. Stokes leaves behind a remarkable all-round legacy.

12. Mintage World Launches Book on Modi-Era Stamps and Coins

Stamps, Coins, and Banknotes Issued During the Premiership of Shri Narendra Modi was launched by Mintage World in New Delhi. The book documents India's development through stamps, coins, and currency. It showcases major initiatives under the Modi government.

13. World MSME Day Observed on June 27

World MSME Day recognizes the contribution of micro, small, and medium enterprises to innovation and economic growth. The 2026 theme is "Empowering MSMEs through Innovation and Sustainable Industrial Development." It highlights MSMEs' role in achieving SDGs.

14. National Insurance Awareness Day Observed on June 28

National Insurance Awareness Day promotes awareness about insurance as a financial protection tool. It emphasizes risk management for individuals and businesses. The day also highlights the evolution of India's insurance sector.

15. World Allergy Week Observed from June 21–27

World Allergy Organization observed World Allergy Week from June 21 to 27. The 2026 theme is "Allergy Care Is Essential Care." The campaign raises awareness about allergic diseases and healthcare access.

FIVE TO REMEMBER · 30 JUNE 2026

1. **Full Form**: **Soluble, Organic, Micronutrient & Bio-Stimulant Fertilizers** Summit + B2B Expo. SOMS 2026: 4th Edition of Speciality Fertilizer…
2. **Part of**: **Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve** (India's first BR, 1986). Captive-Bred, Radio-Tagged White-Rumped Vulture…
3. **Launched by**: **PM Modi at COP27 (20 October 2022), Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt**. PM Modi Conferred Seychelles' Highest President…
4. Aggregate CME of a bank is **capped at 40% of net worth** (with sub-limits on direct + indirect exposures). RBI's New "Capital Market Exposure" Framework
5. **Compared to**: Often called the **"UPI of Indian agriculture"** or **"Aadhaar of farmers"** (FM Nirmala Sitharaman in Budget 2026: "one of the next UPI initiatives"). AgriStack: India's Digital Public Infrastructur…

Now test yourself: c4scourses.in/daily-quiz/daily-quiz-023-june-2026/

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of the top ten scorers	final selections, one batch	reached the interview	current affairs, free

NABARD Grade A 2026	The complete course — c4scourses.in/join/nabard/
RBI Grade B 2026	Phase 1 + Phase 2 with descriptive practice — c4scourses.in/join/rbi/
Free live strategy sessions	Every week on Zoom, with the mentors behind these results — c4scourses.in/webinar/
Daily current affairs	Every morning, free — c4scourses.in/current-affairs/
Daily quiz	Ten questions on each day's news — c4scourses.in/daily-quiz/
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