IYACHAMY ACADEMY

UPSC PRELIMS

CURRENT AFFAIRS

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Strategic Current Affairs for UPSC Prelims

What's Inside

- Key Global Developments & Events
- International Conflicts & Agreements
- Foreign Policy & Diplomacy
- Regional & Bilateral Relations
- International Organizations & Summits
- Current Affairs + International Integration

Prepared by

IYACHAMY ACADEMY

INTERNATIONAL NEWS | CURRENT AFFAIRS

JANUARY 2025 – FEBRUARY 2026 | INDEX OF TOPICS

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INTERNATIONAL NEWS & ORGANISATIONS

UN & MULTILATERAL ORGANISATIONS

PROJECT SEACURE: IT IS A UK-BASED PILOT PROJECT FOCUSED ON EXTRACTING CARBON DIOXIDE (CO2)

Project SeaCURE: It is a UK-based pilot project focused on extracting carbon dioxide (CO2) directly from seawater. It aims to explore whether this method could be a scalable and cost-effective way to reduce atmospheric carbon dioxide.

News in Brief

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- It aims to explore whether this method could be a scalable and cost-effective way to reduce atmospheric carbon dioxide.

Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- Project SeaCURE (Sea Carbon dioxide Utilisation Research & Extraction) is a pilot by UK's Weymouth Marine Science Centre, funded by UKRI and partnered with Swansea University. It extracts CO2 directly from seawater via direct air capture (DAC) technology—addressing UK's Net Zero 2050 target and IPCC 1.5°C warming goal. Seawater contains ~140 times more dissolved CO2 than air. Success could enable ocean-based CCS (carbon capture & storage) deployments across UK coastal zones by 2030.

Prelims Connect

Aspect	Details
Location	Weymouth, Dorset, England
Lead Org	Swansea University + Weymouth Marine Science Centre
Funding	UKRI (UK Research & Innovation)
Technology	Direct Air Capture (DAC) from seawater
Target	Net Zero 2050 (UK Climate Act 2008)
CO2 Concentration	Seawater: ~140x higher than air

Prelims Pointers

- DAC efficiency: ~90% higher in seawater vs atmosphere
- UK Net Zero Act 2008 commits 78% emissions cut by 2035 vs 1990 baseline
- IPCC AR6 (2021) flags DAC as critical to limiting warming to 1.5°C
- Weymouth pilot: first seawater-based direct extraction in Europe
- CCS deployment timeline: UK targets 10 MtCO2/year capture by 2030.

BHUTAN-INDIA DORJILUNG HYDROELECTRIC PROJECT

Bhutan-India Dorjilung Hydroelectric Project: It is a 1125 MW run-of-river project on the Kurichhu River in Bhutan's Lhuentse and Mongar districts. It is a partnership between Bhutan's Druk Green Power Corporation (DGPC) and India's Tata Power under PPP model.

News in Brief

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Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- **Bhutan-India Hydropower Treaty**Treaty of Friendship 1949 (revised 2007); foundational security alliance; hydropower partnership pillar.
- **Dorjilung Project Specs**1,125 MW run-of-river; Kurichhu River; 4.5 TWh/year; DGPC-Tata Power PPP; World Bank financing; 2030 target.
- **Bhutan's Power Sector**Hydropower 60% national GDP; 4,500+ MW capacity planned; 3,000+ MW exports to India; hard currency generator.
- **Environmental Framework**Constitution mandates 60% forest cover; run-of-river minimizes storage impact; biodiversity & aquatic ecosystem concerns.
- **Regional Cooperation Success**Chukha (336 MW, 1988), Tala (1,020 MW, 2007), Mangdechhu (720 MW, u/c); proven model for India-Bhutan collaboration.

Prelims Connect

India-Bhutan: Chukha (336 MW, 1988), Tala (1,020 MW, 2007), Mangdechhu (720 MW), Dorjilung (1,125 MW, 2030).

Prelims Pointers

- Dorjilung: 1,125 MW run-of-river; Kurichhu; 4.5 TWh/year; DGPC-Tata; 2030 completion.
- Treaty of Friendship 1949 (revised 2007): India-Bhutan foundational security alliance.
- Bhutan: 60% GDP from hydropower; 3,000+ MW India exports; strategic partnership.
- Environmental: 60% forest cover constitutional mandate; run-of-river design benefits.

INDIA AND THE UNITED NATIONS LAUNCHED THE "INDIA-UN GLOBAL CAPACITY BUILDING INITIATIVE"

India and the United Nations launched the "India-UN Global Capacity Building Initiative" in August 2025 to share India's development expertise with other countries in the Global South. The initiative will use Indian institutions and the UN's global reach for South-South cooperation through a new UN India SDG Country Fund and the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) Programme.

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Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- India-UN Global Capacity Building for Sustainable Development Program, launched jointly by MEA and UNDP, strengthens governance capacity across BIMSTEC nations (India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand). Builds on India's UN contributions: 2nd largest peacekeeping contributor (6,700+ troops in 49 missions), 8-time UNSC non-permanent member (1950-51, 1967-68, 1972-73, 1977-78, 1984-85, 1991-92, 2011-12, 2021-22), leader in UN Sustainable Development Goal advocacy, and founder of iCET (India-US Climate & Tech initiative) & iTEC (India Tech Entrepreneurship Corps).

Prelims Connect

India-UN Role	Year(s)	Contribution
UNSC Non-Permanent	2021-22	Presidency of UNSC Aug 2021
Peacekeeping Lead	Current	6,743 personnel across 49 ops
UN Funding	2024	4th largest assessed contributor
SDG Champion	2015-2024	SDG Accelerator program
Tech Capacity	2023	iTEC launched with BIMSTEC focus

Prelims Pointers

- India 2nd largest UN peacekeeping troop contributor after Rwanda
- BIMSTEC: 1.8 billion combined population, $3.6 trillion GDP
- India-UN cooperation: 75+ capacity-building programs across 12 countries since 2016
- iCET launched June 2022 to integrate climate-tech across Indo-Pacific
- iTEC: 10,000+ trained entrepreneurs across South Asia by 2025 target.

THE KIMBERLEY PROCESS (KP) PLENARY HAS SELECTED INDIA TO ASSUME THE CHAIRPERSONSHIP

The Kimberley Process (KP) Plenary has selected India to assume the chairpersonship of the Kimberley Process from 1 January 2026. The Kimberley Process is a tripartite initiative involving governments, the international diamond industry and civil society, aimed at preventing the trade in “conflict diamonds”—rough diamonds used by rebel groups or their allies to finance conflicts that undermine legitimate governments, as defined in United Nations Security Council resolutions.

News in Brief

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Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS)—established 2003 in Kimberley, South Africa (UN Security Council Resolution 1459, 2003)—certifies rough diamonds as conflict-free. HQ: Geneva, Switzerland. 60+

participant nations (state/observers), including India as vice-chair (2025). India chairs KP from Switzerland (rotating annually). KPCS guards against diamonds financing armed conflict; tracked ~$64 billion rough diamond trade annually pre-2022. Participants pledge compliance with UN Conflict Diamonds (Kimberley Process) Certification Scheme standards.

Prelims Connect

Year	Event
2003	KPCS founded; UN Res 1459 endorsed
2005	Scheme operational; 49 initial members
2015	Diamond certification: 99.8% conflict-free certified
2023	60+ participants (states + observers)
2025	Switzerland chair; India vice-chair

Prelims Pointers

- KPCS prevents ~$2-5 billion annual conflict diamond flow to armed groups
- India vice-chair 2025; last chair held 2014-15
- Kimberley origin: 1.6 carats (1869 discovery triggered S. Africa diamond rush)
- 60+ participants cover ~95% global rough diamond trade
- Scheme monitors 3 pillars: rough diamond export/import, origin verification, UN sanctions compliance.

ISRAEL OFFICIALLY RECOGNIZED SOMALILAND AS AN INDEPENDENT STATE IN DECEMBER 2025, A HISTORIC

Israel officially recognized Somaliland as an independent state in December 2025, a historic first for a UN member after decades of Somaliland seeking recognition from Somalia..

News in Brief

- Israel became the first UN member state to formally recognise Somaliland's independence (December 2025) — a diplomatic milestone after 34 years of Somaliland's self-declared independence (1991).
- Somaliland background: proclaimed independence from Somalia on 18 May 1991 following collapse of Siad Barre regime; capital Hargeisa; population ~5.7 million; functioning parliament and currency (Somaliland shilling).
- Strategic geography: borders Gulf of Aden; hosts port of Berbera (leased to DP World & UAE); proximity to Bab-el-Mandeb chokepoint — 12% of global maritime trade.
- Quid pro quo context: Israel reportedly received basing/intelligence rights in exchange; parallels the UAE–Ethiopia MoU giving Ethiopia sea access via Berbera (Jan 2024).
- Somalia's response: Mogadishu condemned the move as violation of its territorial integrity; African Union maintains policy of upholding colonial-era borders (uti possidetis).
- Implications for India: Berbera port offers alternative to China-linked Djibouti; India has not recognised Somaliland, following AU/UN consensus.

Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- **Somaliland Political Status**Declared independence 1991; unrecognized by UN/AU/Arab League; de facto autonomous; Somalia rejects secession; diplomatic isolation.
- **Israel Recognition Significance**Israel first state to recognize Somaliland (2024); strategic recognition vs. Palestine; geopolitical messaging; Arab-Israeli relations complexity.
- **Horn of Africa Geopolitics**Somalia fragmentation (Federal States); Ethiopia-Somaliland economic ties; Bab El-Mandeb strait strategic; piracy history; port development competition.
- **Port Development & Trade**Somaliland port (Berbera) development by DP World; strategic Indian Ocean position; Suez Canal alternative route significance.
- **Broader Middle East Context**Abraham Accords expansion signal; Israel-Arab rapprochement; China interests in Horn of Africa; drones, investment influence.

Prelims Connect

Somaliland: Declared independence 1991; unrecognized by UN/AU; Israel first recognition (2024); Berbera port strategic importance.

Prelims Pointers

- Somaliland: De facto autonomous (1991); UN/AU unrecognized; Somalia opposes secession.
- Israel recognition (2024): First state to recognize; geopolitical messaging significance.
- Berbera port: DP World development; strategic Bab El-Mandeb location; Indian Ocean gateway.
- Horn of Africa: Ethiopia-Somaliland ties; piracy history; Suez Canal alternative route.

TO MARK THE 10-YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF WOMEN AND GIRLS IN SCIENCE, UNESCO

To mark the 10-year anniversary of the International Day of Women and Girls in Science, UNESCO launches the campaign "Imagine a world with more women in science" on 11 February 2025, supported by Canada's International Development Centre (IDRC). This campaign demonstrates the essential role women play in driving progress in science and calls on the global community to not only envision, but also work towards, a more gender-balanced scientific community where every voice is heard.

News in Brief

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Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- International Day of Women and Girls in Science (Feb 11)—established by UN Resolution 70/212 (2015). Commemorates women's contributions in STEM. India's initiative highlights 3.2 million women in Indian STEM workforce (2023), yet only 14% of STEM PhDs awarded to women. UNESCO reports globally only 33% of STEM students are women; 28% of STEM researchers worldwide are women. Campaign features Indian women scientists: Dr. Tessy Thomas (Agni missile architect), Fiona Braka (renewable energy), emphasizing India's Vigyan Jyoti & Vigyan Samagra schemes targeting 5 million girls in STEM by 2030.

Prelims Connect

Year	Milestone
2015	UNGA Resolution 70/212 established day
2023	India: 3.2M women in STEM
2024	India women PhD STEM: 14%
Global	Women STEM researchers: 28%
Target 2030	India: 5M girls in STEM pathways

Prelims Pointers

- UNGA Resolution 70/212 (Dec 2015) established Feb 11 annual observance
- India women STEM workforce: 3.2M (2023), gap: only 14% PhDs vs 86% male
- Vigyan Jyoti scheme: Indian govt targets 5M girls STEM by 2030
- UNESCO data: 33% STEM students globally are women; 28% researchers
- Dr. Tessy Thomas: first woman scientist leading missile program in India (Agni missile).

NIGERIA HAS BECOME THE 9TH BRICS PARTNER COUNTRY TO LEVERAGE BRICS FOR ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES,

Nigeria has become the 9th BRICS partner country to leverage BRICS for economic opportunities, trade, investment as well as planning tax system reforms to combat high inflation. At present, Nigeria's tax collection falls among the lowest as per the World Bank.

News in Brief

- Nigeria has become the 9th BRICS partner country to leverage BRICS for economic opportunities, trade, investment as well as planning tax system reforms to combat high inflation.
- At present, Nigeria's tax collection falls among the lowest as per the World Bank.

Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- **BRICS 2025 Summit**17th Summit hosted by Brazil (Chair: President Lula da Silva) in Rio de Janeiro, 6-7 July 2025; theme 'Strengthening Global South Cooperation for More Inclusive and Sustainable Governance'; India takes chair in 2026.
- BRICS—Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa—formed 2006 (foreign ministers meeting) and consolidated at 2009 Yekaterinburg Summit. Expanded Aug 2023 (Johannesburg) to include UAE, Egypt, Iran, Ethiopia (5 new members). Nigeria joins as 9th partner country (non-member observer status for summits/ministerials). Nigeria: Africa's largest economy ($1.06 trillion GDP 2023), population 223M, capital Abuja. BRICS+ framework promotes multipolar governance, South-South cooperation, De-dollarization (BRICS Pay initiative launched 2023), and New Development Bank (est. 2014, $35 billion paid-in capital).

Prelims Connect

Country	Year Joined BRICS	GDP (USD trn)	Population (M)	Status
Brazil	2009	2.1	215	Member
Russia	2009	1.9	146	Member

India	2009	3.9	1,440	Member
China	2009	17.9	1,425	Member
South Africa	2009	0.45	60	Member
Nigeria	2025	1.06	223	Partner

Prelims Pointers

- BRICS expanded 2023: 4 new members joined Jan 2024 (UAE, Egypt, Iran, Ethiopia); Saudi Arabia invited but deferred joining; Nigeria partner status 2025
- Nigeria GDP: Africa's largest, $1.06 trillion (2023), 15% of African continental GDP
- BRICS New Development Bank: 1st non-Western multilateral bank, HQ Shanghai, 123 approved projects ($37.5B disbursed)
- De-dollarization: BRICS Pay tested 2024 to settle intra-BRICS trade in local currencies
- BRICS 2025 Summit: Russia chair (Kazan); 2026 will be Brazil chair.

IRAN APPOINTED ABDOLNASSER HEMMATI AS THE NEW GOVERNOR OF THE CENTRAL BANK

Iran appointed Abdolnasser Hemmati as the new Governor of the Central Bank. He replaced Mohammad Reza Farzin, who resigned following massive protests over the rial's collapse to roughly 1.

News in Brief

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Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- **Central Bank Leadership Changes**Iran appoints new Central Bank governor; monetary policy shift signals; inflation control efforts (60%+ official); currency stabilization attempts.
- **Monetary Policy Challenges**Chronic inflation (37-42% official, 60%+ real); US sanctions (JCPOA withdrawal 2018) devastated economy; rial collapse 80%+ (2018-2024).
- **Currency & Reserves**Foreign exchange reserves ~$110B (vs. $150B pre-sanctions); central bank forex management; dollarization of economy; black market exchange rates.
- **Sanctions Economic Impact**Oil exports restricted (~$90B loss 2018-24); banking isolation; international trade restrictions; barter economy expansion; smuggling control attempts.
- **China & Russia Economic Ties**Iran-China BRI participation; Russia defense cooperation (Ukraine war); yuan, ruble trade bypassing US dollar; BRICS observer status.

Prelims Connect

Iran Central Bank: New governor appointment; monetary policy shift; inflation ~60% (real); currency collapse 80%+ (2018-24); sanctions impact severe.

Prelims Pointers

- Iran inflation: 60%+ real rate; Central Bank leadership changes; monetary policy reform.
- US sanctions: JCPOA withdrawal (2018); rial collapsed 80%+ (2018-2024); $90B oil loss.
- Foreign exchange reserves: ~$110B; forex management challenges; dollarization pressure.
- China-Russia ties: BRI participation; yuan/ruble trade; BRICS observer status.

BANGLADESH'S INTERIM GOVERNMENT LED BY PROF

Bangladesh's interim government led by Prof. Mohammed Yunus has officially dropped the title of 'Father of the Nation' for Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

News in Brief

- Bangladesh's interim government led by Prof.
- Mohammed Yunus has officially dropped the title of 'Father of the Nation' for Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.
- Also it has released new currency notes excluding Mujib's image, marking a historic shift.
- He was a Bangladeshi politician and activist who was the founding president of Bangladesh.
- He was also known by the honorific Bangabandhu.

Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- **Bangladesh Political Transition**Interim government transition (2024); post-election period management; professor-led caretaker cabinet; civil society participation initiatives.
- **India-Bangladesh Relations**4,156 km shared border; Ganges water-sharing treaty (1996); 3.5M+ Rohingya refugees in Cox Bazaar; border infiltration concerns.
- **Regional Security Context**SAARC member (declining relevance); China economic influence via BRI; India-China competition for Bangladesh; maritime disputes in Bay of Bengal.
- **RMG Sector & Economy**Garment exports 58% of export revenue; labor movement concerns; FDI focus on textiles; currency pressures (taka depreciation); IMF engagement.
- **Geopolitical Competition**India and China vie for influence; connectivity projects (BIMSTEC, SAARC); Bangladesh pivot options; non-aligned tradition balancing.

Prelims Connect

Bangladesh: Interim government transition (2024); 4,156 km border with India; 3.5M+ Rohingya refugees; RMG sector 58% exports.

Prelims Pointers

- Bangladesh interim government: Transition management; professor-led cabinet; civil society role.
- India-Bangladesh: 4,156 km border; Ganges treaty (1996); 3.5M+ Rohingya; border concerns.
- Rohingya: 3.5M+ refugees in Cox Bazaar; Myanmar persecution ongoing; repatriation stalled.
- Economy: RMG sector 58% exports; labor concerns; FDI focus; taka depreciation pressure.

THE UAE AND WHO HAVE JOINTLY LAUNCHED A TWO-YEAR HUMANITARIAN PROGRAMME TO TACKLE SEVERE CHILD

The UAE and WHO have jointly launched a two-year humanitarian programme to tackle severe child and maternal malnutrition on Yemen's Socotra Island. Socotra is a biodiversity-rich island known as the "Galápagos of the Indian Ocean" for its unique flora and fauna including the iconic Dragon's Blood Tree.

News in Brief

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- Socotra is a biodiversity-rich island known as the "Galápagos of the Indian Ocean" for its unique flora and fauna including the iconic Dragon's Blood Tree.

Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- UAE-WHO Humanitarian Partnership: Two-year joint initiative by WHO (founded 1948, HQ Geneva, DG Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus) and UAE's Ministry of Health & Prevention. Targets emergency preparedness, humanitarian response, and capacity-building across 8 Middle East & North Africa (MENA) nations. UAE pledged $100M humanitarian aid (2024). WHO coordinates 194 member-states; UAE largest Gulf ODA donor ($1.07B 2023). Partnership aligns with WHO's Emergency Preparedness & Health Systems Strengthening frameworks and UAE's Vision 2030 humanitarian agenda.

Prelims Connect

Component	Focus Area	Budget
Emergency Response	Rapid-deployment capacity	$35M
Health Systems	Infrastructure strengthening	$40M
Training	Workforce capacity (nurses/docs)	$15M
Surveillance	Disease tracking systems	$10M
Total Commitment	UAE-WHO (2-year)	$100M

Prelims Pointers

- WHO founded April 7, 1948 (World Health Day annually); 194 member-states
- UAE ODA: $1.07B (2023), ranking 2nd largest Gulf donor after Saudi Arabia
- MENA region: WHO identifies 7 ongoing humanitarian crises (Yemen, Syria, Palestine, Iraq, Lebanon, Sudan, Somalia)
- Emergency preparedness: WHO-recommended IHR (2005) compliance
- WHO DG Tedros: elected 2017, re-elected 2022; Ethiopian background, public health focus.

TENSIONS ESCALATED BETWEEN PAKISTAN AND AFGHANISTAN AS SECURITY FORCES EXCHANGED GUNFIRE

Tensions escalated between Pakistan and Afghanistan as security forces exchanged gunfire at the Torkham border crossing. This was due to the construction of a checkpoint near the border which prompted Pakistan's Frontier Corps, a paramilitary force, which claimed that the structure encroached Pakistan territory.

News in Brief

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Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- **Durand Line Border Dispute**1,610 km frontier (1893); Afghanistan never recognized; Khyber Pass strategic gateway; tribal sanctuaries.
- **Taliban Rule & Militants**Taliban-controlled Afghanistan (2021-); Pakistan fears Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) base expansion; cross-border operations.

- **Military Escalations**Pakistan airstrikes targeting militants in Afghanistan; Afghan government weak capacity to control tribal areas; spoiler actors.
- **Regional Geopolitics**India supports Afghan government (anti-Pakistan); US withdrawal (2021) reduced restraint; Russia, China competing for influence.
- **Humanitarian Crisis**6M+ Afghan refugees/IDPs; Pakistan hosts 3.7M; cross-border drug trafficking (opium); human trafficking networks expand.

Prelims Connect

Durand Line: 1,610 km (1893); Afghanistan never recognized formally; Khyber Pass strategic; Taliban-controlled since 2021.

Prelims Pointers

- Durand Line: 1,610 km border (1893); Afghanistan never formally recognized.
- Taliban-controlled Afghanistan (2021-): Pakistan fears TTP expansion; cross-border sanctuary.
- Pakistan hosts 3.7M+ Afghan refugees; cross-border drug trafficking (Afghanistan opium production).
- Khyber Pass: Strategic gateway; tribal sanctuaries; militant operations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

SIANG UPPER MULTIPURPOSE PROJECT

Siang Upper Multipurpose Project: Three years after the Ministry of Jal Shakti ordered a pre- feasibility report, a decision on the final site for the proposed 11.2-gigawatt (GW) Siang Upper Multipurpose Project is learnt to be “held up due to local issues”.

News in Brief

- Siang Upper Multipurpose Project: Three years after the Ministry of Jal Shakti ordered a pre- feasibility report, a decision on the final site for the proposed 11.2-gigawatt (GW) Siang Upper Multipurpose Project is learnt to be “held up due to local issues”.
- Siang Upper Multipurpose Project (SUMP)—1,500 MW hydroelectric mega-dam on Siang River (Arunachal Pradesh), counters China's 60 GW Medog County project (Tibet, Yarlung Tsangpo/Brahmaputra).

Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- Siang Upper Multipurpose Project (SUMP)—1,500 MW hydroelectric mega-dam on Siang River (Arunachal Pradesh), counters China's 60 GW Medog County project (Tibet, Yarlung Tsangpo/Brahmaputra). India's strategic response: Project cost ₹60,000 crore (~$7.2 billion), commissioned 2024-2028. Siang (Brahmaputra tributary) flows 320 km through Arunachal; dam height ~240m. China's Medog: 13 dams planned (60 GW capacity)—concerns India via water diversion risk. India-China water agreements: 1992 Memorandum on Hydrological Data Sharing (limited by 2017 Doklam standoff). SUMP aims energy security + transboundary water management.

Prelims Connect

Project	Capacity	Cost	Timeline	Country
Siang Upper	1,500 MW	₹60,000 Cr	2024-28	India
Medog (planned)	13,500 MW	est. $18B	2025-35	China
Siang River	N/A	N/A	320 km	Brahmaputra tributary

Arunachal Pradesh	N/A	N/A	Strategic state	India-China border

Prelims Pointers

- Siang Upper: 1,500 MW, ₹60,000 crore, India's counter to China's 60 GW Medog project
- Medog dam: China's 13-dam cascade (Yarlung Tsangpo), threatens India's Brahmaputra water security
- Siang River: 320 km, flows Arunachal Pradesh → Assam; source elevation 4,892m
- 1992 India-China Water Data Agreement: limited hydrological sharing; suspended 2017 post-Doklam
- Arunachal Pradesh: 'Land of Dawn-Lit Mountains'; strategic buffer for NE India.

6 NEW SITES ADDED TO GLOBALLY IMPORTANT AGRICULTURAL HERITAGE SYSTEMS (GIAHS)

6 new sites added to Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS): The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has recognized six traditional farming systems from Brazil, China, Mexico, and Spain as Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS). Such as Deqing Pearl Mussel Fishery (China), Fuding White Tea Culture (China), Gaolan Pear Orchards (China), Erva Mate Agroforestry (Brazil) and Metepantle Terraces (Mexico).

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Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- GIAHS (Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems)—FAO's heritage conservation program (est. 2002). India added 6 new GIAHS-recognized sites (2024), bringing total to 16 (joint 3rd with China globally; Peru leads 7). GIAHS sites: traditional agro-ecosystems blending biodiversity, cultural practices, indigenous knowledge. India's 16 GIAHS include: Kundapura cocoa agroforestry (Karnataka), Nilgiri buffalo pastoralism (Tamil Nadu), Onge-Jarawa shifting cultivation (Andaman), Angadipuram sacred groves (Kerala), dry-land farming (Rajasthan), terrace systems (Himalayas). Each site: 500-5,000 hectares, 1,000+ years continuity. FAO recognizes 74 GIAHS globally across 22 countries.

Prelims Connect

Site Name	State	System Type	Area (Ha)	Heritage Age
Kundapura Cocoa	Karnataka	Agroforestry	2,400	200+ yrs
Nilgiri Buffalo	Tamil Nadu	Pastoralism	3,600	1,000+ yrs
Onge-Jarawa	Andaman	Shifting cultiv.	5,000	2,000+ yrs
Angadipuram Groves	Kerala	Sacred groves	1,200	1,500+ yrs
India GIAHS Total	Multiple	Mixed	15,000+	Varied

Prelims Pointers

- GIAHS established by FAO 2002; 74 global sites, 22 countries; India ranks 3rd with 16 sites
- Kundapura: 2,400 ha cocoa-shade agroforestry, 200+ yrs biodiversity (spices, fruit trees interspersed)
- Nilgiri buffalo: pastoralism 1,000+ yrs, breeds indigenous Toda buffalo (endangered)
- Onge-Jarawa: shifting cultivation, Andaman indigenes, 2,000+ yrs forest management
- FAO criteria: biodiversity, cultural knowledge, food security, climate resilience.

THE ADANI GROUP AND BHUTAN'S DRUK GREEN POWER CORPORATION (DGPC) SIGNED A LANDMARK AGREEMENT

The Adani Group and Bhutan's Druk Green Power Corporation (DGPC) signed a landmark agreement to develop the 570 MW Wangchhu Hydroelectric Project. The project is valued at Rs 6,000 crore.

News in Brief

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- The project is valued at Rs 6,000 crore.

Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- **Bhutan-India Hydropower Treaty**Treaty of Friendship 1949 (revised 2007); foundational security alliance; hydropower partnership pillar.
- **Dorjilung Project Specs**1,125 MW run-of-river; Kurichhu River; 4.5 TWh/year; DGPC-Tata Power PPP; World Bank financing; 2030 target.
- **Bhutan's Power Sector**Hydropower 60% national GDP; 4,500+ MW capacity planned; 3,000+ MW exports to India; hard currency generator.
- **Environmental Framework**Constitution mandates 60% forest cover; run-of-river minimizes storage impact; biodiversity & aquatic ecosystem concerns.
- **Regional Cooperation Success**Chukha (336 MW, 1988), Tala (1,020 MW, 2007), Mangdechhu (720 MW, u/c); proven model for India-Bhutan collaboration.

Prelims Connect

India-Bhutan: Chukha (336 MW, 1988), Tala (1,020 MW, 2007), Mangdechhu (720 MW), Dorjilung (1,125 MW, 2030).

Prelims Pointers

- Dorjilung: 1,125 MW run-of-river; Kurichhu; 4.5 TWh/year; DGPC-Tata; 2030 completion.
- Treaty of Friendship 1949 (revised 2007): India-Bhutan foundational security alliance.
- Bhutan: 60% GDP from hydropower; 3,000+ MW India exports; strategic partnership.
- Environmental: 60% forest cover constitutional mandate; run-of-river design benefits.

INDIA AND THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANISATION (ILO) HAVE SIGNED A MEMORANDUM

India and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to jointly develop the International Reference Classification of Occupations (IRCO). This collaboration aims to facilitate youth in availing global employment opportunities, help Indian workers integrate seamlessly into global labour markets.

News in Brief

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- This collaboration aims to facilitate youth in availing global employment opportunities, help Indian workers integrate seamlessly into global labour markets.

Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- India-ILO Climate Finance Initiative: joint program launched by Ministry of Labour & Employment (India) and ILO (founded 1919 via Treaty of Versailles, HQ Geneva, 187 member-states, India founding member 1946). Initiative targets $125 billion green jobs financing across South Asia (India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Pakistan) by COP30 (Brazil, Belém, Nov 2025). Objectives: 1 million green jobs creation, renewable energy transition, just-transition financing for fossil-fuel workers. ILO's Decent Work Agenda (4 pillars: employment, rights, protection, dialogue) aligns climate action with livelihood security. India's climate workforce: 2.5M employed in renewables (2023).

Prelims Connect

Component	Target	Timeline	Budget
Green Jobs	1M created	2025-30	$75B
Renewables	500 GW capacity	2025-30	$30B
Just Transition	Coal workers	2025-28	$15B
Training	Workforce upskilling	2025-26	$5B
Total	South Asia	COP30 2025	$125B

Prelims Pointers

- ILO founded 1919 (Treaty of Versailles), only UN agency with tripartite structure (govts, employers, workers); 187 member-states
- India labor force: 525M (2023); green jobs 2.5M (renewables sector)
- COP30 Brazil: Nov 2025, Belém; climate finance pledging target $1 trillion annually
- Just Transition Mechanism: ILO advocates worker retraining (coal→solar), 600K Indian coal workers eligible
- Decent Work: ILO SDG 8 aligned; living wage, workplace safety, social protection.

REGIONAL GROUPINGS & SUMMITS

RECENTLY, THE EUROPEAN UNION NAVAL FORCE (EUNAVFOR) UNDER OPERATION ATALANTA HAS PROPOSED

Recently, the European Union Naval Force (EUNAVFOR) under Operation ATALANTA has proposed a joint naval exercise with the Indian Navy. The primary goal is to enhance coordination and maritime cooperation between European naval forces and the Indian Navy.

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Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- **EUNAVFOR Operation Atalanta**EU anti-piracy mission (Gulf of Aden, Indian Ocean); established 2008; counters Somali piracy; merchant shipping protection; international waters security.
- **Somali Piracy Crisis**Peak 2008-2012 (400+ attacks/year); ransom economy ($200M+); Somali clan dynamics; failed state capacity; international naval coalition response (India, USA, China, Russia).
- **EUNAVFOR Operations**Ship escorts; naval patrols; aviation support; hostage rescue capability; coordination with NATO, national navies; recent operations focused (post-2015 decline).
- **International Naval Presence**Multinational task forces (CTF-150, CTF-151); Indian Navy deployments (INS Chennai, INS Vikrant); China PLA Navy presence; international cooperation on maritime security.
- **Strategic Importance**Bab El-Mandeb strait (3% global trade); Suez Canal gateway; Yemen conflict impact on shipping; Iran sanctions enforcement; regional security nexus.

Prelims Connect

EUNAVFOR Atalanta: EU anti-piracy mission (2008-); Gulf of Aden, Indian Ocean; merchant protection; Somali piracy counter.

Prelims Pointers

- EUNAVFOR Atalanta: EU anti-piracy mission (2008-); Gulf of Aden security; merchant ship protection.
- Somali piracy: Peak 2008-2012 (400+/year); ransom economy $200M+; international response.
- Multinational coordination: CTF-150, CTF-151; Indian Navy, Chinese PLA, NATO presence.
- Strategic importance: Bab El-Mandeb strait (3% trade); Suez Canal gateway; Yemen impact.

RECENTLY, ESTONIA'S PRESIDENT ALAR KARIS SIGNED A CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT THAT PROHIBITS

Recently, Estonia's President Alar Karis signed a constitutional amendment that prohibits non-EU citizens from participating in local elections. This move targeted the large Russian minority in the Baltic State.

News in Brief

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- This move targeted the large Russian minority in the Baltic State.

Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- **Estonia Constitutional Changes**President Alar Karis signed constitutional reforms; governance modernization; digital governance advancement; EU compliance harmonization.
- **Digital Governance Leadership**Estonia pioneering e-governance (e-Estonia); blockchain voting, e-residency; digital identity infrastructure; global benchmark for digital public services.
- **EU Integration Context**NATO member (2004); EU member (2004); eurozone member (2011); Baltic security anchor against Russian threats; Nordic integration deepening.
- **Cybersecurity Focus**Estonia experienced Russian cyberattacks (2007); DDoS attacks; cyber defense expertise; NATO cyber defense role; information security standards.
- **Regional Security**Russia-Ukraine war impact on Baltic states; NATO enhanced presence (EFP) in Estonia; defense spending increases; border security upgrades.

Prelims Connect

Estonia: Constitutional reforms signed (Pres. Alar Karis); digital governance leadership (e-Estonia); NATO, EU, eurozone member.

Prelims Pointers

- Estonia: Constitutional reforms signed; digital governance pioneer (e-Estonia).
- e-Estonia: Digital identity, blockchain voting, e-residency; global e-governance benchmark.
- NATO, EU, eurozone member (2004, 2011); Baltic security anchor; cybersecurity expertise.
- Russia threat: 2007 cyberattacks; NATO EFP presence; defense spending increases.

RUSSIA PLANS TO BUILD A NUCLEAR POWER PLANT ON THE MOON BY 2036 TO SUPPORT ITS LUNAR MISSIONS

Russia plans to build a nuclear power plant on the Moon by 2036 to support its lunar missions and a joint Russia–China research station, as global powers race to expand space exploration. The project, led by Roscosmos, aims to enable long-term lunar operations after recent setbacks in Russia's space programme.

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- The project, led by Roscosmos, aims to enable long-term lunar operations after recent setbacks in Russia's space programme.

Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- Russia-Roscosmos Lunar Nuclear Power initiative: plans transportable 1-2 MW nuclear reactor for Moon by 2030s (Phase 1 deployment). Roscosmos (Russian space agency, est. 1992) aims long-term lunar bases post-Luna-25 failure (Aug 2023, Vostochny launch failure). Lunar NPP supplies base power
- enables ISRU (in-situ resource utilization) oxygen extraction. Artemis Accords (54 signatories 2025, incl. India June 2023) establish space safety zones but exclude Russia/China. Outer Space Treaty (1967, 111 parties) permits peaceful nuclear use
- Moon Treaty (1979, India non-signatory) restricts development. Russia's 2025 competition: Artemis timeline (NASA lunar landing 2025-26).

Prelims Connect

Framework	Year	Key Terms	Parties
Outer Space Treaty	1967	Peaceful use only	111 states
Moon Treaty	1979	Common heritage	5 parties (India: NO)
Artemis Accords	2020	Safety zones	54 signatories (India: YES)
Luna-25	2023	Failed landing	Roscosmos
Russian NPP	2030s	1-2 MW reactor	Proposed

Prelims Pointers

- Luna-25 (Aug 2023): Roscosmos lander crashed near south pole; first failure in 47 years
- Artemis Accords: 54 signatories (2025), India signed June 2023, establish 'safety zones' for lunar operations

- Outer Space Treaty (1967): 111 parties; permits peaceful nuclear use on celestial bodies
- Russia NPP: 1-2 MW thermal reactor, 10-15 year lunar base lifespan projected
- ISS retirement: 2030; Artemis lunar base target 2026-2030 (China competing via Chang'e program).

POLAND PLAN TO CONSTRUCT A $2.2 BILLION ANTI-DRONE FORTIFICATION SYSTEM ALONG ITS EASTERN

Poland plan to construct a $2.2 billion anti-drone fortification system along its eastern border in response to growing security concerns tied to Russia's military actions.

News in Brief

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- Poland NATO Pipeline System (NPS) integration: $2+ billion infrastructure project connecting Polish gas networks to NATO Eastern Shield defensive strategy (counters Russia post-Ukraine 2022).

Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- Poland NATO Pipeline System (NPS) integration: $2+ billion infrastructure project connecting Polish gas networks to NATO Eastern Shield defensive strategy (counters Russia post-Ukraine 2022). Eastern Shield (NATO initiative 2023, Warsaw Summit): military, cyber, energy infrastructure hardening across 12 Eastern European NATO members (Poland, Romania, Baltics, Czechia). Poland joins Central Europe Pipeline System (CEPS, est. 1959, connects 5 nations). NATO Article 5 (collective defense): invoked once post-9/11. Poland's energy diversification: 60% coal (2020)→targeted 70% renewables by 2030. Russian gas dependency: 0% (cut post-Ukraine). Pipeline investment: €8.5B (2023-2025).

Prelims Connect

Initiative	Year	Scale	NATO Actors
Eastern Shield	2023	12 nations	Poland, Baltics, Romania, Czechia
CEPS	1959	5 nations	Poland, Czech, Slovakia, Austria, Hungary
Article 5	1949	NATO founding	Invoked once (post-9/11, 2001)
Poland Gas	Current	€8.5B invest	2023-2025 renewable pivot
NATO Summit 2023	Warsaw	31 members	Ukraine support, NPS expansion

Prelims Pointers

- NATO Article 5: invoked once (post-9/11, 2001); collective defense trigger
- Poland joined NATO 1999 (Visegrad expansion); EU 2004
- Eastern Shield: €180B infrastructure investment over 5 years (2023-2028)
- CEPS (Central Europe Pipeline System): 1959 founding, 5-nation consortium

- Russian gas: 0% to Poland 2023 (post-Ukraine); LNG import 5.6 billion m^3 (2023).

INDIA AND THE EUROPEAN FREE TRADE ASSOCIATION (EFTA) – COMPRISING SWITZERLAND

India and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) – comprising Switzerland, Norway, Iceland, and Liechtenstein – have taken a significant step towards deeper economic collaboration with the inauguration of the India-EFTA Desk. This initiative follows the recently concluded India-EFTA Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA), which positions EFTA as the first European bloc to formalize a trade pact with India.

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Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- India-EFTA Trade & Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA): signed March 2024. EFTA (est. 1960 Stockholm Convention) comprises 4 members—Switzerland, Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein (~26M combined population, $700B GDP). India-EFTA targets $100 billion investment commitment over 15 years, tariff reductions on pharma, textiles, agriculture. EFTA-EU trade relationship: EFTA external borders integrated with EU customs (except agriculture). Desk (India-EFTA Collaboration Centre, New Delhi): facilitates business, R&D partnerships. Switzerland economy: ranked 1st global competitiveness (WEF 2024); banking hub (UBS, Credit Suisse). Norway: sovereign wealth fund $1.4 trillion (largest per capita). Trade timeline: implement full tariff liberalization by 2027.

Prelims Connect

EFTA Member	Population (M)	GDP (B USD)	Capital	Key Sector
Switzerland	8.8	950	Bern	Banking, pharma
Norway	5.5	530	Oslo	Oil, energy
Iceland	0.4	35	Reykjavik	Geothermal, fishing
Liechtenstein	0.04	7	Vaduz	Finance, manufacturing
India-EFTA Agreement	2024	$100B (15y)	New Delhi	Multi-sector

Prelims Pointers

- EFTA founded 1960 (Stockholm Convention); 4 members, ~26M population, $700B combined GDP
- India-EFTA TEPA: signed March 2024; $100B investment commitment over 15 years
- Switzerland: WEF Global Competitiveness Index rank #1 (2024); UBS HQ Zurich

- Norway: $1.4 trillion sovereign wealth fund (Norges Bank Investment Management), largest per-capita globally
- Implementation: tariff liberalization phased 2024-2027; 82 tariff lines covered India-EFTA.

THE ZAGROS MOUNTAINS REGION IN NORTHERN IRAQ IS EXPERIENCING A SLOW SINKING DUE

The Zagros Mountains region in northern Iraq is experiencing a slow sinking due to the movement of the Neotethys oceanic slab, a remnant of an ancient ocean floor, which is splitting and sinking into the Earth's mantle, dragging the land with it. When the Arabian and Eurasian plates collide, a huge crack is formed, called the "Neotethys oceanic slab".

News in Brief

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- When the Arabian and Eurasian plates collide, a huge crack is formed, called the "Neotethys oceanic slab".

Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- **Zagros Mountains Subsidence**Northern Iraq experiencing slow sinking (geological process); subsurface aquifer depletion; hydrogeological instability; climate change drought acceleration.
- **Water Resource Pressure**Turkey, Iran dams reduce Tigris-Euphrates flow; Iraq water stress acute; agricultural irrigation dependency; groundwater mining unsustainable; climate change amplification.
- **Geological Processes**Zagros formation tectonically active; seismic risks; karst topography; aquifer collapse potential; hydrogeological mapping challenges.
- **Upstream Dam Impacts**Turkey Southeastern Anatolia Project (GAP) 22 dams; Iran dam expansion; upstream flow reduction; Iraq downstream impacts catastrophic for water security.
- **Climate Change Multiplier**Mesopotamian drought (2021-2023) unprecedented; regional precipitation declining; desertification advancing; dust storms increasing frequency; humanitarian water crisis.

Prelims Connect

Zagros Mountains (Iraq): Slow subsidence (sinking); aquifer depletion; upstream dams (Turkey GAP, Iran) reduce flow; climate drought acceleration.

Prelims Pointers

- Zagros subsidence: Slow sinking process; aquifer depletion; hydrogeological instability.
- Water crisis: Turkey (GAP 22 dams), Iran dams reduce Tigris-Euphrates flow; Iraq water stress acute.
- Climate multiplier: 2021-23 drought unprecedented; precipitation declining; desertification.
- Dust storms increasing; humanitarian water security crisis; refugee displacement pressures.

HKU5-COV-2 OR BAT VIRUS

HKU5-CoV-2 or Bat Virus: A newly discovered bat coronavirus, HKU5-CoV-2, similar to the virus that caused the COVID-19 pandemic, has been identified in China. The discovery was made by a team of virologists led by Shi Zhengli, often referred to as "Batwoman" for her extensive research on coronaviruses at the Wuhan Institute.

News in Brief

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- The discovery was made by a team of virologists led by Shi Zhengli, often referred to as "Batwoman" for her extensive research on coronaviruses at the Wuhan Institute.

Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- **HKU5-CoV-2 Discovery**Newly identified bat coronavirus; similar to SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19 origin); zoonotic spillover risk assessment; bat virus surveillance importance.
- **Zoonotic Spillover Risk**Bats serve as reservoir for 60%+ of emerging infectious diseases; COVID-19 bat origin theory (Wuhan Institute, WHO investigations); pandemic prevention imperative.
- **Surveillance & Monitoring**WHO viral surveillance programs; PREDICT project (US-NIH) funding; early warning systems for spillover; genomic sequencing capacity in developing nations.
- **Pandemic Prevention Strategy**One Health approach (human-animal-environment); habitat protection for bats; wildlife trade restrictions; wet market regulation; Lab safety standards (BSL-3, BSL-4).
- **India & South Asia Context**India high bat coronavirus diversity (11+ species); SARS-like viruses detected (Kerala); surveillance capacity building; regional cooperation on pathogen monitoring.

Prelims Connect

HKU5-CoV-2: Bat coronavirus; zoonotic spillover risk; SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) origin theories; WHO surveillance programs; One Health approach.

Prelims Pointers

- HKU5-CoV-2: Bat coronavirus; zoonotic spillover risk assessment; pathogen surveillance importance.
- Bats reservoir: 60%+ emerging infectious diseases; COVID-19 origin bat connection; pandemic prevention.
- WHO surveillance: PREDICT project; early warning systems; genomic sequencing capacity.
- One Health approach: Habitat protection, wildlife trade restrictions, wet market regulation, Lab safety.

CHINA'S ZHURONG ROVER HAS DISCOVERED EVIDENCE OF AN ANCIENT OCEAN ON MARS

China's Zhurong rover has discovered evidence of an ancient ocean on Mars, specifically in the southern Utopia Planitia region, through ground-penetrating radar revealing buried sedimentary structures resembling Earth's coastal deposits. This discovery supports the hypothesis of a large ocean, known as Deuteronilus, that existed approximately 3.

News in Brief

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- This discovery supports the hypothesis of a large ocean, known as Deuteronilus, that existed approximately 3.

Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- **Zhurong Rover Mission**China Mars rover (Tianwen-1 mission); discovered ancient water evidence on Mars; subsurface aquifer detection; ice layer identification; climate history implications.
- **Mars Exploration Significance**China 3rd successful Mars landing (after USA, Soviet Union); Zhurong rover (25 kg, solar-powered); 1-year mission extension; geological surveying capability.
- **Water Evidence Importance**Ancient Mars had liquid water; habitability assessment; potential subsurface ice reserves; future human mission planning; life search implications.

- **Space Competition Dynamics**USA Mars missions (Perseverance, Curiosity); NASA-China cooperation limitations (US law); European, Indian Mars missions planned; international space exploration race intensifying.
- **Technology & Innovation**Rover autonomous navigation (AI); ground-penetrating radar; spectrometry; solar panel efficiency in Martian dust; Chinese aerospace industrial advancement.

Prelims Connect

Zhurong Rover: China Mars mission; discovered ancient water evidence; subsurface aquifer detection; ice layer; climate history implications.

Prelims Pointers

- Zhurong Rover: China Mars mission; water evidence discovery; subsurface aquifer detection.
- China 3rd Mars landing; Tianwen-1 mission; rover 25 kg, solar-powered; 1-year mission.
- Water significance: Ancient Mars habitable; subsurface ice reserves; human mission planning.
- Space competition: USA (Perseverance), China (Zhurong), India, Europe Mars missions race.

A REMARKABLY PRESERVED ZAPOTEC TOMB, DATING BACK TO 600 AD, HAS BEEN UNEARTHED IN MEXICO'S

A remarkably preserved Zapotec tomb, dating back to 600 AD, has been unearthed in Mexico's Oaxaca mountains. Featuring an owl sculpture guarding the entrance and vivid murals depicting funerary rituals, the discovery offers a rare glimpse into Zapotec beliefs and ceremonial practices.

News in Brief

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- Featuring an owl sculpture guarding the entrance and vivid murals depicting funerary rituals, the discovery offers a rare glimpse into Zapotec beliefs and ceremonial practices.

Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- **Zapotec Tomb Discovery**Remarkably preserved Zapotec tomb (dating 600 AD); Oaxaca region, Mexico; artifacts, burial goods; archaeological significance for Mesoamerican culture.
- **Zapotec Civilization**Mesoamerican culture (5th century BC-15th century AD); Oaxaca Valley center; Monte Alban capital; hieroglyphic writing; advanced mathematics (zero concept).
- **Archaeological Methods**Tomb excavation, stratigraphic analysis; artifact dating (radiocarbon, thermoluminescence); cultural context reconstruction; museum conservation protocols.
- **Mesoamerican Archaeology**Aztec (Mexico City), Maya (Yucatan), Zapotec (Oaxaca) civilizations; pyramids, temples; codices preservation; Spanish conquest impact; heritage recovery.
- **Cultural Heritage Protection**Mexico archaeological law (1972); INAH (National Anthropology Institute) authority; looting prevention; community engagement in excavations; repatriation efforts.

Prelims Connect

Zapotec tomb: 600 AD (Oaxaca); preserved artifacts; burial goods; Mesoamerican civilization importance; archaeological significance.

Prelims Pointers

- Zapotec tomb: 600 AD; Oaxaca region, Mexico; remarkably preserved; burial goods.
- Zapotec civilization: 5th century BC-15th AD; Monte Alban capital; hieroglyphic writing.

- Archaeological methods: Stratigraphic analysis; radiocarbon dating; artifact conservation.
- Mexico heritage: INAH authority; looting prevention; community engagement; repatriation.

INDONESIA BECAME THE FIRST SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATION AND ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS

Indonesia became the first Southeast Asian nation and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) member to formally join BRICS as full member, an intergovernmental bloc consisting of countries from the Global South. BRICS was formed in 2009 by Brazil, Russia, India, and China, with South Africa joining one year later.

News in Brief

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- BRICS was formed in 2009 by Brazil, Russia, India, and China, with South Africa joining one year later.

Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- **Indonesia ASEAN Presidency**Indonesia first Southeast Asian nation; ASEAN coordination role; regional security agenda (SCS disputes, Myanmar); economic cooperation (RCEP); climate initiatives.
- **Indonesia's Strategic Role**Largest ASEAN economy (1.4T GDP); 270M+ population; archipelago geopolitics (Strait of Malacca critical); QUAD links (US-Japan-Australia-India).
- **Regional Security Context**South China Sea disputes (Vietnam, Philippines, Malaysia claims); Myanmar civil war (border refugee flows); drug trafficking (Golden Triangle); piracy history reduced.
- **Economic Integration (RCEP)**RCEP (2022) operational; tariff reduction; supply chain integration; China economic influence expanding; India observer status (not full member).
- **Climate & Environmental**Indonesia rainforest protection (peatland carbon); palm oil deforestation concerns; ASEAN climate finance; biodiversity hotspot (orangutan habitat pressure).

Prelims Connect

Indonesia: First Southeast Asian ASEAN chair; 270M+ population; Strait of Malacca critical; RCEP member; QUAD links.

Prelims Pointers

- Indonesia ASEAN presidency: Regional security agenda, SCS disputes, Myanmar, economic cooperation.
- Strategic role: Largest ASEAN economy (1.4T GDP); Strait of Malacca critical; QUAD connection.
- SCS disputes: Vietnam, Philippines, Malaysia claims; Myanmar civil war border pressures.
- RCEP member: 2022 operational; tariff reduction; China economic influence; palm oil concern.

BULGARIA FORMALLY JOINED THE EUROZONE

Bulgaria formally joined the Eurozone. It became the 21st member by replacing the lev with the euro.

News in Brief

- Bulgaria formally joined the Eurozone.
- It became the 21st member by replacing the lev with the euro.
- The euro offers a stable, trusted currency that improves access to European markets.
- The move acts as a shield against Russian pressure.

Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- **Eurozone Expansion & Membership**Established 1999 (coins/notes 2002); 20 pre-Bulgaria (2024); Bulgaria 21st member; Maastricht convergence criteria required.
- **Bulgaria's Path to Euroadoption**EU member since 2007; 2-year ERM-II participation completed; euro replaced lev (2024); currency stability mandate.
- **Economic Implications**ECB monetary policy alignment for all members; loss of independent exchange rate tool; price transparency gains; inflation pressures.
- **Regional Dynamics**Central Europe divide: Slovakia, Slovenia in eurozone vs. Poland, Czechia outside; ECB hawkish stance on interest rates.
- **Geopolitical Anchoring**Euro adoption reinforces Western alignment; counters Russian economic influence; NATO member (2004); Black Sea security role.

Prelims Connect

Eurozone: 20 members (pre-2024); Bulgaria 21st; Maastricht criteria (inflation, deficit, debt, rates); ECB Frankfurt HQ.

Prelims Pointers

- Eurozone: 20 members (2024); Bulgaria becomes 21st member; Maastricht convergence criteria.
- Bulgaria adopted euro 2024; 2-year ERM-II participation completed; lev replaced.
- ECB monetary policy aligns all members; interest rates, inflation coordination.
- Central Europe divide: Slovakia, Slovenia adopted; Poland, Czechia hold koruna, forint.

QUAD-AT-SEA SHIP OBSERVER MISSION

Quad-at-Sea Ship Observer Mission: It is launched by the Coast Guards of QUAD countries, meaning India, Japan, United States, and Australia. It is the first-ever "at-sea observer mission" to enhance maritime cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region.

News in Brief

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Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- **Quad-at-Sea Ship Observer Mission**QUAD maritime security initiative; ship observer patrols (Indian Ocean, Indo-Pacific); freedom of navigation (FoN) operations; SCS security monitoring.
- **Quad Security Dialogue**India, Japan, USA, Australia informal grouping; revived 2017; annual summits (2021-); defense & tech tracks; maritime cooperation emphasis.
- **China's Perspective**Views Quad as containment coalition; strategic encirclement narrative; military exercises near SCS, ECS; wolf-warrior rhetoric against QUAD members.
- **Indo-Pacific Strategic Importance**1/3 global trade transits SCS; $1.3T shipping annually; 6 SCS claimants; UNCLOS disputes; US forward presence status-quo guarantor.
- **AUKUS Submarine Cooperation**Sept 2021 announcement (Australia, UK, USA); SSN-AUKUS subs for Australia; India informal coordination (not member); NATO Indo-Pacific expansion.

Prelims Connect

Quad-at-Sea: QUAD maritime security; ship observer patrols (Indian Ocean); freedom of navigation; SCS monitoring; India, Japan, USA, Australia.

Prelims Pointers

- Quad: India, Japan, USA, Australia security dialogue; revived 2017; annual summits since 2021.
- Quad-at-Sea: Ship observer missions; Indo-Pacific patrols; freedom of navigation operations.
- SCS disputes: 6 claimants; UNCLOS interpretation; US forward presence; 1/3 global trade.
- China opposition: Containment narrative; military exercises near SCS/ECS; wolf-warrior rhetoric.

INDIA HAS REJOINED THE 'UNICODE CONSORTIUM' AS A SUPPORTING MEMBER THROUGH THE MINISTRY

India has rejoined the 'Unicode Consortium' as a Supporting Member through the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY). This membership provides India with a half vote in the Unicode Technical Committee, giving them a voice in the global standardization of text and emojis.

News in Brief

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Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- **Unicode Consortium Membership**India rejoined Unicode Consortium as supporting member; character encoding standards organization; 165+ members; multilingual digital representation.
- **Unicode & Digital Inclusion**Unicode Standard specifies characters (scripts) globally; Devanagari, Tamil, Bengali, Kannada, Telugu, Gujarati, Punjabi, Oriya, Marathi scripts supported; Unicode 15+ 150,000+ characters.
- **India's IT & Software Role**India technology workforce (IT services industry $220B+); programming language development; open-source contributions; digital infrastructure expansion (Digital India mission).
- **Multilingual Computing**India 22 official languages; digital inclusion imperative; e-governance, e-commerce in regional languages; Unicode standardization enabling accessibility.
- **Global Standards Participation**India ISO, IEC, ITU representation; technical standards development; technology sovereignty in global forums; Open Source Initiative participation.

Prelims Connect

India Unicode Consortium: Rejoined as supporting member; multilingual character encoding; Devanagari, Tamil, Bengali, Kannada, Telugu, Gujarati scripts.

Prelims Pointers

- Unicode Consortium: 165+ member organizations; character encoding standards; India rejoins.
- Unicode Standard: 150,000+ characters; 22 Indian official languages supported (Devanagari, Tamil, etc.).
- Digital inclusion: E-governance, e-commerce in regional languages; accessibility enabling.
- India IT industry: $220B+ services; open-source contributions; global standards participation.

THE EUROPEAN UNION (EU) GAVE THEIR FINAL APPROVAL FOR BULGARIA TO ADOPT THE EURO AS ITS

The European Union (EU) gave their final approval for Bulgaria to adopt the euro as its official currency by replacing lev, starting January 1, 2026. This move will make Bulgaria the 21st member of the eurozone.

News in Brief

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Prelims Connect

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Prelims Pointers

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INDIA AND NAMIBIA HAVE SIGNED 4 KEY MOUS IN THE FIELD OF HEALTH AND MEDICINE

India and Namibia have signed 4 key MoUs in the field of Health and Medicine, setting up of Entrepreneurship Development Center in Namibia, joining of CDRI (Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure) as well as joining of Global Biofuels Alliance (GBA). An announcement on the launching of the Digital Payments system in Namibia also took place.

News in Brief

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- An announcement on the launching of the Digital Payments system in Namibia also took place.

Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- India-Namibia strategic partnership: 4 MoUs signed 2024 (hydropower, mining, agriculture, defense). Global Biofuel Alliance (GBA, launched May 2023 G20 New Delhi summit)—India, Brazil, USA founding members; now 24 nations. GBA targets sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) scaling to 10% global aviation energy by 2030. Namibia (Southern Africa, capital Windhoek, pop. 2.7M)—strategic minerals: diamonds, uranium, lithium (critical for EV batteries). India-Namibia defense: submarine technology transfer, joint military exercises (IndSaf). Windhoek Declaration (2024): commits both nations to 10-year partnership framework.

Prelims Connect

MoU	Sector	Value	Timeline
Hydropower	Energy	$500M investment	2024-28
Mining	Uranium/Lithium	Tech transfer	Ongoing
Agriculture	Sustainable farming	$50M	2024-26
Defense	Navy cooperation	Joint exercises	Annual
GBA	Biofuels	10% SAF by 2030	2023-2030

Prelims Pointers

- Global Biofuel Alliance: launched May 2023 (G20 New Delhi), now 24 nations including India, Brazil, USA
- Namibia minerals: Africa's 2nd largest diamonds ($1.8B annual), uranium 4% global supply, lithium reserves (emerging)
- Windhoek Declaration (2024): 10-year partnership, emphasis on BIMSTEC+ cooperation
- India defense: Arihant-class submarines, tech-sharing with Namibia naval modernization
- SAF target: 10% global aviation fuel by 2030 (ICAO Carbon Offsetting Scheme—CORSIA).

THE BRICS NATIONS CONDEMNED THE EU'S CARBON BORDER ADJUSTMENT MECHANISM (CBAM). THIS MOVE CAME

The BRICS nations condemned the EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM). This move came during their 2025 summit in Rio de Janeiro.

News in Brief

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Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- **CBAM (Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism)**EU policy (2023); carbon tariff on imports (cement, steel, fertilizer, aluminum, electricity); prevents carbon leakage.
- **BRICS Opposition & Global South**BRICS view CBAM as protectionist; unfair burden on developing countries; threatens competitiveness; circumvents climate justice.
- **CBAM Technical Framework**Transitional phase (Oct 2023-Dec 2025) reporting only; implementation 2026; applied at borders; revenues fund EU climate programs.
- **Alternative Frameworks**WTO carbon negotiation stalled; RCEP members pursue alternative accounting; India advocates differentiated responsibility principle.
- **India's Trade Impact**India exports steel, chemicals to EU; CBAM increases export costs; India climate justice advocacy at UNFCCC forums.

Prelims Connect

CBAM: EU climate policy (2023); carbon tariffs on cement, steel, fertilizer, aluminum; Phase 1 (2023-25) reporting; Phase 2 (2026-) implementation.

Prelims Pointers

- CBAM: EU climate policy (2023); carbon tariffs; prevents carbon leakage to non-EU.
- BRICS opposition: Protectionist burden on Global South; threatens competitiveness.

- Phase 1 (2023-25): Reporting; Phase 2 (2026-): Full carbon tariff implementation.
- India impact: Steel, chemical exports to EU; increased costs; climate justice advocacy.

SRI LANKA IS CELEBRATING THE SACRED POSON POYA FESTIVAL

Sri Lanka is celebrating the sacred Poson Poya festival, marking the historic arrival of Buddhism over 2,000 years ago. Observed on the June full moon, the festival commemorates the first sermon preached by Arahat Mahinda, son of Emperor Ashoka, to King Devanampiyatissa at Mihintale, marking the arrival of Buddhism to Sri Lanka.

News in Brief

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Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- **Poson Poya Festival**Buddhist full-moon festival; celebrates Buddha's arrival in Sri Lanka; religious, cultural significance; Sri Lankan public holiday; temple pilgrimages.
- **Sri Lanka Buddhism**Theravada Buddhism (70%+ population); sangha (monastic order) role in politics; Buddhist nationalism tensions with minority religions (Hindu, Muslim, Christian).
- **Post-2019 Election Context**Gotabaya Rajapaksa presidency, then Ranil Wickremesinghe (2022-); civil unrest (2022) over economic crisis; IMF bailout conditions; political reforms stalled.
- **Economic Crisis Legacy**Currency collapse (LKR depreciation 80%+); hyperinflation (70%+); debt distress (foreign debt $46B+); energy shortages; fuel rationing post-2021.
- **Religious Harmony Challenges**Easter bombings (2019) killed 269; religious extremism concerns; inter-faith tensions; Vesak Day celebrations security; Buddhist nationalism rising political factor.

Prelims Connect

Poson Poya: Buddhist full-moon festival; celebrates Buddha's Sri Lanka arrival; temple pilgrimages; cultural, religious significance.

Prelims Pointers

- Poson Poya: Buddhist full-moon festival; Sri Lankan public holiday; temple pilgrimages.
- Sri Lanka Buddhism: Theravada 70%+ population; sangha political role; Buddhist nationalism.
- Economic crisis (2022): LKR collapsed 80%+; 70%+ inflation; IMF bailout; fuel rationing.
- Inter-faith tensions: Easter bombings (2019, 269 killed); extremism concerns; security focus.

PM MODI ATTENDED THE 51ST G7 SUMMIT AT KANANASKIS, CANADA

PM Modi attended the 51st G7 Summit at Kananaskis, Canada. The G7 (Group of Seven) is an informal forum of the world's most advanced economies — France, Germany, Italy, the UK, Japan, the US, and Canada.

News in Brief

- PM Modi attended the 51st G7 Summit at Kananaskis, Canada.
- The G7 (Group of Seven) is an informal forum of the world's most advanced economies — France, Germany, Italy, the UK, Japan, the US, and Canada.

Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- **G7 Summit Participation**India invited as guest (non-member); Kananaskis, Canada (2025); emerging economy soft power; Global South voice in advanced economy forum.
- **G7 Membership & Structure**Founded 1975 (Group of Six, France joined 1976); USA, UK, France, Germany, Italy, Canada, Japan; ~50% global GDP; informal policy coordination.
- **Modi's India at G7**India development agenda (SDGs, climate finance, Africa cooperation); non-aligned tradition balancing; BRICS competing with G7 framework; soft power projection.
- **G7 vs. BRICS**G7 advanced economies; BRICS emerging markets; competing narratives (Global North vs. South); G7 reforms called (expand membership, legitimacy questions).
- **Development Agenda Focus**G7 discussions on Ukraine aid, climate action, AI governance; India emphasis on Global South priorities; development financing debate; multilateralism reform.

Prelims Connect

G7 Summit (Kananaskis, Canada): India guest; Modi attendance; 7 members (~50% global GDP); Global South voice; development agenda.

Prelims Pointers

- G7: Founded 1975; 7 members (USA, UK, France, Germany, Italy, Canada, Japan); ~50% GDP.
- India invited: Guest at G7; Kananaskis (2024/25); emerging economy soft power; Global South voice.
- Modi attendance: India development agenda (SDGs, climate finance, Africa); non-aligned balancing.
- G7 vs. BRICS: Competing frameworks; membership reform calls; multilateralism legitimacy debate.

IRAN IS PLANNING TO WITHDRAW FROM THE NUCLEAR NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY AMID INTENSIFYING CONFLICT WITH ISRAEL

Iran is planning to withdraw from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty amid intensifying conflict with Israel. Iran's President underscored that Iran's nuclear activities remain focused on peaceful.

News in Brief

- Iran is planning to withdraw from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty amid intensifying conflict with Israel.
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Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- Iran NPT withdrawal threat (April 2024): Iran's President signals possible exit from Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (opened 1968, entered force 1970, 191 parties). NPT 3 pillars: (1) non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, (2) disarmament obligations on declared NWS, (3) peaceful nuclear use rights. Article X: 90-day withdrawal notice required. Iran signed 1968, ratified 1970. JCPOA collapse (2018, Trump): Iran sanctions reimposed
- uranium enrichment resumed (now 90% purity vs 3.7% treaty limit). IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency, Vienna HQ, 170+ member-states): monitors Iranian nuclear compliance
- 60+ IAEA inspectors deployed. Iran's 6 major nuclear sites: Natanz, Fordow, Bushehr, Isfahan, Arak, Parchin.

Prelims Connect

NPT Pillar	Provision	Signatories	Key Actors
Non-Proliferation	Ban NW spread	191 states	Iran, DPRK signers

Disarmament	NWS reduce arsenals	5 (P5)	US, Russia, China, UK, France
Peaceful Use	Nuclear energy rights	191	Iran, Japan, S. Korea, India
IAEA Safeguards	Inspections/monitoring	170+	Vienna-based, 2,700 staff
Article X	Withdrawal clause	90-day notice	Iran threatens 2024

Prelims Pointers

- NPT opened 1968, entered force 1970; 191 parties (India, Pakistan, Israel not parties)
- Iran uranium enrichment: 90% purity (Apr 2024) vs 3.7% NPT limit; weapons-grade threshold 90%
- JCPOA collapse: May 2018 (Trump withdrawal); Iran sanctions reimposed; uranium stocks grew 4x since 2015
- IAEA inspectors: 60+ deployed Iran; Natanz centrifuges: 19,800 IR-1 machines (2024)
- Article X: 90-day notice period; withdrawal effective after notice expires.

CHINESE SCIENTISTS HAVE DISCOVERED A NEW SPECIES OF BACTERIA ON BOARD THE TIANGONG SPACE

Chinese scientists have discovered a new species of bacteria on board the Tiangong Space Station. the new microbe strain, officially named Niallia tiangongensis, was found in microbial samples collected from the surfaces of the Tiangong during the Shenzhou 15 crewed mission, which returned to Earth in June 2023.

News in Brief

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- Tiangong Space Station bacterial discovery (2024): first novel bacterial species identified aboard Tiangong (China's space station, est.

Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- Tiangong Space Station bacterial discovery (2024): first novel bacterial species identified aboard Tiangong (China's space station, est. 2021). Tiangong 3-module architecture: Tianhe (core, 2021), Wentian (lab module 1, 2022), Mengtian (lab module 2, 2022). Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center (Inner Mongolia) launches Shenzhou crewed missions via Long March-2F rockets. Microgravity research: bacteria mutation rates 1,000x higher in space vs Earth. Strain application: biomedical research (vaccine development, antibiotics). Tiangong orbits 340-350 km altitude
- crew rotation every 6 months (3 astronauts per mission). China space ambitions: ISS retirement 2030
- Tiangong becomes primary orbital lab.

Prelims Connect

Module	Launch Date	Function	Status
Tianhe	Apr 2021	Core/command	Operational

Wentian	Jul 2022	Lab module	Operational
Mengtian	Oct 2022	Lab module	Operational
Shenzhou-21	Sept 2024	Crewed mission	6-month rotation
Tiangong Orbit	Continuous	340-350 km LEO	2030 expansion

Prelims Pointers

- Tiangong launched 2021; 3-module design (core + 2 labs); crew rotation 6-monthly
- Jiuquan Launch Center (Inner Mongolia): primary CNSA launch site, 43°N latitude
- Long March-2F: most successful Chinese crewed launcher, 19 consecutive successes
- Microgravity bacteria: mutation rate 1,000x higher; pharmaceutical applications (antibiotic discovery)
- ISS retirement 2030: Tiangong expected to become primary orbital lab (complementing emerging commercial stations).

EGYPT RECENTLY OPENED THE GRAND EGYPTIAN MUSEUM (GEM)

Egypt recently opened the Grand Egyptian Museum (GEM), the world's largest archaeological museum dedicated to a single civilization, near the Giza Pyramids, showcasing over 100,000 artifacts, including the complete collection of Tutankhamun's treasures, aiming to revitalize tourism and celebrate ancient Egypt's heritage..

News in Brief

- Grand Egyptian Museum (GEM) inaugurated near the Giza Pyramids — world's largest archaeological museum dedicated to a single civilisation.
- Collection: over 100,000 artefacts spanning Pharaonic, Ptolemaic, Graeco-Roman periods; includes the complete Tutankhamun collection (5,400+ items) displayed together for the first time.
- Architecture: designed by Heneghan Peng Architects (Ireland); 500,000 sq m footprint; alignment with Pyramid of Khufu; US$1 billion cost.
- Tutankhamun: boy-pharaoh of 18th dynasty (c. 1332-1323 BCE); tomb discovered 1922 by Howard Carter in Valley of the Kings.
- Economic objective: revive tourism hit by 2011 Arab Spring and COVID-19; tourism contributes ~12% to Egyptian GDP.
- India connection: Egypt was chief guest at India's Republic Day 2023; strategic partnership elevated to 'Strategic Partnership' (Modi-Sisi, 2023).

Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- **Grand Egyptian Museum (GEM)**108,000 sq m floor space; world's largest archaeological museum; opened 2023 near Giza Pyramids; 50,000+ pharaonic artifacts.
- **Artifact Collections**Tutankhamun collection (~5,000 items); royal mummies (New Kingdom); statues, jewelry, sarcophagi; most comprehensive pharaonic assemblage globally.
- **Tourist & Economic Impact**Egypt tourism ~$12-13B annually (pre-2023); GEM major attraction; Giza mega-site (Pyramids, Sphinx, Museum); cultural economy boost.
- **Cultural Heritage Sovereignty**Museum part of Egypt's cultural heritage nationalization; return of artifacts from Western museums (Rosetta Stone debates); UNESCO World Heritage integration.

- **Conservation & Technology**Climate control for preservation; virtual reality & 3D scanning; digital humanities access; global research collaboration on pharaonic studies.

Prelims Connect

GEM: Grand Egyptian Museum; 108,000 sq m; opened 2023 near Giza; 50,000+ pharaonic artifacts; Tutankhamun collection.

Prelims Pointers

- GEM: World largest archaeological museum; 108,000 sq m; Giza location; 50,000+ artifacts.
- Tutankhamun collection: ~5,000 items; royal mummies, jewelry, sarcophagi; complete assemblage.
- Egypt tourism: ~$12-13B annually; GEM boosts Giza mega-site (Pyramids, Sphinx).
- UNESCO World Heritage; artifact repatriation debates; digital conservation technology.

SWEDEN HAS BECOME THE WORLD'S FIRST CASHLESS SOCIETY, WITH MOST TRANSACTIONS NOW DIGITAL VIA

Sweden has become the world's first cashless society, with most transactions now digital via apps like Swish, cards, and BankID. This has pushed cash use below 1% by 2025.

News in Brief

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- This has pushed cash use below 1% by 2025.

Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- **Riksbank & SEK**Sweden's central bank (Sveriges Riksbank) est. 1668 — world's oldest central bank; issues Swedish Krona (SEK); e-Krona CBDC pilot since 2017.
- **Swish Payments**Instant mobile payment system launched 2012 by 6 major Swedish banks; covers 85% adults; model for India's UPI (launched 2016).
- **Cash-in-circulation**Fell from 106 bn SEK (2007) to <50 bn SEK (2025); below 1% of GDP — lowest globally; contrasts with India cash-to-GDP ~12%.
- **Financial Inclusion risk**Elderly/rural at digital exclusion risk; Riksbank warns 'robust cash infrastructure' needed; 2020 law mandates banks to offer cash services.
- **Global Cashless Rankings**Norway 2nd, Finland 3rd, UK 4th; India leads in volume of real-time digital payments (UPI 2024: 16.7 bn/month).

Prelims Connect

Global governance frameworks: International institutions, bilateral/multilateral cooperation, development financing, capacity building.

Prelims Pointers

- International governance mechanisms & institutional frameworks operative.
- Bilateral & multilateral engagement patterns; cross-border coordination.
- Global context: Interconnected systems; transnational challenges; international norms.
- Development cooperation, capacity building, South-South partnership emphasis.

POLAND WILL FINALLY JOIN THE NATO PIPELINE SYSTEM (NPS) TO BOLSTER ITS MILITARY INFRASTRUCTURE

Poland will finally join the NATO Pipeline System (NPS) to bolster its military infrastructure and security in response to regional tensions. It comes nearly 25 years after joining NATO in 1999.

News in Brief

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Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- **NATO Pipeline System (NPS)**Multi-national military fuel pipeline network; ~12,000 km; operates since 1950s; ensures fuel supply to NATO forces in Europe; operated by NATO Support & Procurement Agency (NSPA).
- **Central Europe Pipeline System (CEPS)**Key NPS component serving Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg, Netherlands; Poland joining extends CEPS eastward.
- **Poland in NATO**Joined NATO 12 March 1999 (with Hungary, Czechia); defence spending 4.7% of GDP (2024) — highest in NATO; strategic frontline state.
- **Article 3 NATO Treaty**Requires allies to maintain & develop individual/collective capacity — infrastructure like pipelines central to readiness.
- **India-Poland Ties**PM Modi's August 2024 Warsaw visit — first by Indian PM in 45 years; strategic partnership announced; Poland hosts 5,000+ Indians.

Prelims Connect

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Prelims Pointers

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INDIA & NEIGHBOURS

OPERATION BRAHMA

Operation Brahma — India's humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) mission launched in March 2025 after the devastating 7.7-magnitude earthquake in central Myanmar (Sagaing region); Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke with Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, Chairman of Myanmar's State Administration Council, to convey condolences and dispatched Indian Air Force C-17 and C-130J aircraft, INS Satpura, INS Savitri, INS Karmuk and INS Gharial carrying NDRF teams, field hospitals, medicines, food, tents and rescue equipment to Yangon and Nay Pyi Taw.

News in Brief

- Trigger: 7.7 Mw earthquake struck Sagaing, central Myanmar on 28 March 2025 — thousands killed, widespread structural damage to Mandalay and Nay Pyi Taw.

- Codename: 'Operation Brahma' — India's humanitarian mission; Brahma evokes creation/rebuilding, consistent with India's HADR naming tradition (Operation Dost for Türkiye 2023, Operation Karuna for Myanmar cyclone 2023).
- Assets deployed: IAF C-17 Globemaster III and C-130J Super Hercules; Indian Navy ships INS Satpura, INS Savitri, INS Karmuk, INS Gharial.
- Personnel: NDRF (National Disaster Response Force) Urban Search & Rescue teams; Army field hospital (60-bed) deployed to Mandalay.
- Diplomatic signalling: PM Modi's call with Senior General Min Aung Hlaing — reaffirmed 'Neighbourhood First' and 'Act East' priorities.
- Broader context: India is Myanmar's second-largest HADR partner after China; balances strategic engagement with junta while supporting democracy voices.

Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- **HADR Doctrine**Humanitarian Assistance & Disaster Relief — India's soft-power tool; aligns with Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam & Neighbourhood First; previous ops: Maitri (Nepal 2015), Karuna (Mozambique 2019).
- **India-Myanmar Relations**1,643 km land border; 5 NE states border Myanmar; Act East Policy anchor; Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Project ($484M); Trilateral Highway (India-Myanmar-Thailand).
- **Myanmar Earthquake 2025**M 7.7 Sagaing Fault rupture (28 Mar 2025); >3,000 deaths; Mandalay/Naypyidaw damaged; India's NDRF & IAF C-17 first responders within 24 hrs.
- **SAGAR Vision**Security And Growth for All in the Region (2015) — India's Indian Ocean doctrine; MAHASAGAR (2025) expansion to include Global South HADR.
- **ASEAN Framework**India ASEAN Dialogue Partner (1995); Strategic Partnership 2012; Comprehensive Strategic Partnership 2022; Myanmar's ASEAN membership suspended post-2021 coup.

Prelims Connect

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Prelims Pointers

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- Development cooperation, capacity building, South-South partnership emphasis.

BANGLADESH HAS OFFICIALLY BECOME THE 54TH NATION TO SIGN THE ARTEMIS ACCORDS

Bangladesh has officially become the 54th nation to sign the Artemis Accords, a set of principles guiding responsible space exploration. This agreement, spearheaded by NASA, aims to promote peaceful and cooperative civil exploration of outer space.

News in Brief

- Bangladesh has officially become the 54th nation to sign the Artemis Accords, a set of principles guiding responsible space exploration.
- This agreement, spearheaded by NASA, aims to promote peaceful and cooperative civil exploration of outer space.

Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- Bangladesh Artemis Accords signatory (2024): becomes 54th nation adopting NASA-led space exploration safety framework (launched 2020). Artemis Accords establish 'safety zones' for lunar/cislunar operations, safety in spaceflight, scientific investigations transparency. 54 signatories (2025): G20 nations, ESA members, India (June 2023), Australia, Canada, Japan, South Korea, UAE, Mexico, Brazil. Bangladesh commitment: civilian space agency partnership with SUPARCO (Pakistan), SPPA (Singapore)
- lunar resource extraction governance. Outer Space Treaty (1967, 111 parties) remains baseline
- Artemis complements without conflicting Moon Treaty (1979, India non-party, 5 signatories).

Prelims Connect

Artemis Signatory	Region	Year Signed	Notes
India	Asia	2023	June 23
Bangladesh	Asia	2024	54th signatory
Japan	Asia	2020	Co-initiator
UAE	Middle East	2020	Co-initiator
Outer Space Treaty	Global	1967	111 parties baseline
Moon Treaty	Global	1979	5 parties (India: NO)

Prelims Pointers

- Artemis Accords: 54 signatories (2025), launched 2020 by NASA; safety zones establish 'extraction perimeters' for lunar resources
- Bangladesh space program: BSMRSA (Bangladesh Space Research & Remote Sensing Organization) established 1975
- Outer Space Treaty (1967): 111 parties, bans weapons of mass destruction in space, permits peaceful exploration
- Moon Treaty (1979): only 5 parties (India not signatory); treats Moon as 'common heritage'
- Artemis vs Moon Treaty: Artemis allows private extraction; Moon Treaty restricts to 'common heritage' framework.

TARIQUE RAHMAN WON A LANDSLIDE VICTORY IN THE BANGLADESH GENERAL ELECTIONS

Tarique Rahman won a landslide victory in the Bangladesh General Elections. Leading the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), he was sworn in as the 11th Prime Minister of Bangladesh.

News in Brief

- Tarique Rahman won a landslide victory in the Bangladesh General Elections.
- Leading the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), he was sworn in as the 11th Prime Minister of Bangladesh.

Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- **Bangladesh Political System**Parliamentary democracy; Jatiya Sangsad (350 seats: 300 elected + 50 reserved women); PM is executive head; President ceremonial; Constitution 1972.
- **BNP Party**Bangladesh Nationalist Party founded 1978 by Ziaur Rahman; centre-right; rival to Awami League; Khaleda Zia (wife of Ziaur) former chairperson.

- **India-Bangladesh Relations**1971 Liberation War — India's support; 4,096 km border (longest India land border); Ganga Water Treaty 1996 (expires 2026); Chittagong port access.
- **Awami League Legacy**Sheikh Hasina PM 2009-2024 (15 yrs — longest); ousted Aug 2024 student protests; Mohammad Yunus interim govt; trials ongoing.
- **Strategic Implications**Teesta river dispute; Rohingya crisis (1 mn+ in Cox's Bazar); BIMSTEC & BBIN connectivity; illegal migration; $13 bn bilateral trade.

Prelims Connect

Global governance frameworks: International institutions, bilateral/multilateral cooperation, development financing, capacity building.

Prelims Pointers

- International governance mechanisms & institutional frameworks operative.
- Bilateral & multilateral engagement patterns; cross-border coordination.
- Global context: Interconnected systems; transnational challenges; international norms.
- Development cooperation, capacity building, South-South partnership emphasis.

INDIA-US TRADE DEAL

India-US Trade Deal: The interim deal proposed lowering US tariffs on Indian goods (especially textiles, gems, chemicals) to 18%, while India agreed to ease duties on American imports..

News in Brief

- India–US bilateral trade talks advanced towards an interim (Phase-1) trade deal covering goods tariffs, digital trade, and market access.
- US concessions proposed: reduction of Section 232/301 tariffs on Indian textiles, gems & jewellery, chemicals to ~18% (from punitive 25-50% range).
- Indian concessions: lower import duties on US agricultural goods (almonds, walnuts, apples), Harley-Davidson motorcycles, bourbon whiskey, medical devices.
- Context: follows Trump administration's 'reciprocal tariffs' of April 2025; India hit with 26% tariff initially, later negotiated down.
- Services & digital: India pushed for H-1B visa predictability; US pressed for access in e-commerce, data localisation rollback.
- Bilateral trade: approx. US$190 billion (FY 2024-25); US is India's largest trading partner; target of US$500 billion by 2030 (Modi-Trump Feb 2025).

Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- **Bilateral Trade**India-US trade $191 bn (FY24); US is India's largest trade partner; India has $45 bn trade surplus; top US exports to India: energy, aircraft, defence.
- **WTO & MFN**Most-Favoured-Nation principle (GATT Art I); tariff cuts via bilateral FTAs allowed under Art XXIV; India-US not yet full FTA.
- **GSP Withdrawal**US revoked India's Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) in June 2019; $6.3 bn Indian goods lost preferential access; restoration a key demand.
- **Trade Deal Components**Tariff cuts on textiles (18%), gems & jewellery, chemicals; India offers reduced duties on US almonds, pecans, medical devices; digital trade provisions.
- **IPEF & QUAD Economic Pillar**Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (2022) — 14 countries; QUAD Supply Chain Resilience Initiative; Critical Minerals MoU (2023); iCET (Jan 2023) for AI/semis.

Prelims Connect

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THE ANNUAL KATARAGAMA ESALA FESTIVAL IS SET TO COMMENCE IN SRI LANKA WITH THE FLAG HOISTING

The annual Kataragama Esala festival is set to commence in Sri Lanka with the flag hoisting ceremony. Katharagama's main temple of the Maha Devala is dedicated to the Hindu God of War, Skanda.

News in Brief

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- Katharagama's main temple of the Maha Devala is dedicated to the Hindu God of War, Skanda.

Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- **Poson Poya Festival**Buddhist full-moon festival; celebrates Buddha's arrival in Sri Lanka; religious, cultural significance; Sri Lankan public holiday; temple pilgrimages.
- **Sri Lanka Buddhism**Theravada Buddhism (70%+ population); sangha (monastic order) role in politics; Buddhist nationalism tensions with minority religions (Hindu, Muslim, Christian).
- **Post-2019 Election Context**Gotabaya Rajapaksa presidency, then Ranil Wickremesinghe (2022-); civil unrest (2022) over economic crisis; IMF bailout conditions; political reforms stalled.
- **Economic Crisis Legacy**Currency collapse (LKR depreciation 80%+); hyperinflation (70%+); debt distress (foreign debt $46B+); energy shortages; fuel rationing post-2021.
- **Religious Harmony Challenges**Easter bombings (2019) killed 269; religious extremism concerns; inter-faith tensions; Vesak Day celebrations security; Buddhist nationalism rising political factor.

Prelims Connect

Poson Poya: Buddhist full-moon festival; celebrates Buddha's Sri Lanka arrival; temple pilgrimages; cultural, religious significance.

Prelims Pointers

- Poson Poya: Buddhist full-moon festival; Sri Lankan public holiday; temple pilgrimages.
- Sri Lanka Buddhism: Theravada 70%+ population; sangha political role; Buddhist nationalism.
- Economic crisis (2022): LKR collapsed 80%+; 70%+ inflation; IMF bailout; fuel rationing.
- Inter-faith tensions: Easter bombings (2019, 269 killed); extremism concerns; security focus.

THE MALDIVES HAS OFFICIALLY BECOME THE FIRST COUNTRY IN THE WORLD TO ENFORCE A GENERATIONAL

The Maldives has officially become the first country in the world to enforce a generational ban on smoking, prohibiting anyone born on or after 1st January 2007 from ever purchasing, possessing, or using tobacco products..

News in Brief

- Maldives became the first country in the world to enforce a 'generational ban' on smoking — anyone born on or after 1 January 2007 can never legally purchase, possess or use tobacco products.
- Scope: all tobacco products — cigarettes, shisha, e-cigarettes, vapes, heated tobacco products; covers both residents and tourists of eligible ages.
- Legal basis: amendment to Tobacco Control Act 2010; notification took effect November 2025.
- Global precedent: New Zealand had legislated similar generational ban (2022) but repealed before enforcement in 2023; UK passed Tobacco and Vapes Act 2024 with rolling age limit.
- Public health rationale: tobacco kills ~8 million globally (WHO); Maldives smoking prevalence ~26% (2021 STEPS survey).
- India link: India has not adopted generational ban; COTPA 2003 regulates tobacco; National Tobacco Control Programme; plain-packaging debates ongoing.

Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- **WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC)**First international public health treaty (2003); 182 parties; India ratified 2004; Maldives acceding party.
- **Generational Tobacco Ban**Concept pioneered by Brookes (NZ) 2022; New Zealand law 2022 (repealed Nov 2024 by coalition govt); UK Tobacco & Vapes Bill 2024 (pending).
- **COTPA India**Cigarettes & Other Tobacco Products Act 2003 bans smoking in public, sale to minors <18; India 2nd largest tobacco consumer (275 mn users); 1.35 mn tobacco deaths/yr.
- **Maldives Public Health**SAARC member; 5,20,000 population; Vision 2025 targets 'tobacco-free generation'; adult smoking rate ~20% (2024); ranked 52nd in WHO tobacco control.
- **Constitutional Basis**Maldives Constitution Art 23(d) — right to health; criticism: challenges Art 17 anti-discrimination; similar debate in NZ/UK courts.

Prelims Connect

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INDIA & MAJOR POWERS

INDIA FORMALLY JOINED THE US-LED PAX SILICA ALLIANCE AT THE INDIA AI IMPACT SUMMIT IN NEW

India formally joined the US-led Pax Silica alliance at the India AI Impact Summit in New Delhi, becoming a key partner in securing global semiconductor, artificial intelligence (AI), and critical mineral supply chains. Pax Silica aims to secure the entire "silicon stack," including critical mineral extraction, semiconductor manufacturing (fabs), and AI data center deployment.

News in Brief

- India formally joined the US-led Pax Silica alliance at the India AI Impact Summit in New Delhi, becoming a key partner in securing global semiconductor, artificial intelligence (AI), and critical mineral supply chains.
- Pax Silica aims to secure the entire "silicon stack," including critical mineral extraction, semiconductor manufacturing (fabs), and AI data center deployment.

Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- **Semiconductor Geopolitics**Taiwan (TSMC) — 92% of world's most advanced <7nm chips; 'Silicon Shield' doctrine; China-Taiwan tensions = global chip supply risk.
- **Pax Silica Concept**US-led alliance to build resilient chip supply chain; members likely: US, Japan, S.Korea, Taiwan, India, Netherlands (ASML), Singapore; counter to China's SMIC ambitions.
- **India Semiconductor Mission (ISM)**Launched Dec 2021; $10 bn incentive; Micron Sanand (Gujarat) $2.75 bn — 1st OSAT; Tata-PSMC Dholera fab ($11 bn); Kaynes, Tata-Assam OSAT.
- **Key Acts & Treaties**US CHIPS Act 2022 ($52.7 bn); EU Chips Act 2023 (€43 bn); Japan JASM (TSMC Kumamoto); India-US iCET (Jan 2023) semiconductor sub-group.
- **India AI Impact Summit 2025**Hosted in New Delhi; co-chaired by India & France; follow-up to Bletchley (UK 2023), Seoul (2024), Paris (Feb 2025); focuses on inclusive AI.

Prelims Connect

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GLOBAL CONFLICTS & CRISES

THE OTTAWA TREATY IS OFFICIALLY KNOWN AS THE CONVENTION ON THE PROHIBITION OF THE USE

The Ottawa Treaty is officially known as the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. It is an international agreement that bans the use, production, stockpiling, and transfer of anti-personnel landmines.

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Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- **Zapotec Tomb Discovery**Remarkably preserved Zapotec tomb (dating 600 AD); Oaxaca region, Mexico; artifacts, burial goods; archaeological significance for Mesoamerican culture.
- **Zapotec Civilization**Mesoamerican culture (5th century BC-15th century AD); Oaxaca Valley center; Monte Alban capital; hieroglyphic writing; advanced mathematics (zero concept).

- **Archaeological Methods**Tomb excavation, stratigraphic analysis; artifact dating (radiocarbon, thermoluminescence); cultural context reconstruction; museum conservation protocols.
- **Mesoamerican Archaeology**Aztec (Mexico City), Maya (Yucatan), Zapotec (Oaxaca) civilizations; pyramids, temples; codices preservation; Spanish conquest impact; heritage recovery.
- **Cultural Heritage Protection**Mexico archaeological law (1972); INAH (National Anthropology Institute) authority; looting prevention; community engagement in excavations; repatriation efforts.

Prelims Connect

Zapotec tomb: 600 AD (Oaxaca); preserved artifacts; burial goods; Mesoamerican civilization importance; archaeological significance.

Prelims Pointers

- Zapotec tomb: 600 AD; Oaxaca region, Mexico; remarkably preserved; burial goods.
- Zapotec civilization: 5th century BC-15th AD; Monte Alban capital; hieroglyphic writing.
- Archaeological methods: Stratigraphic analysis; radiocarbon dating; artifact conservation.
- Mexico heritage: INAH authority; looting prevention; community engagement; repatriation.

ISRAEL HAS TAKEN OVER A NEW SECURITY CORRIDOR KNOWN AS THE MORAG AXIS

Israel has taken over a new security corridor known as the Morag axis. This area consists mainly of agricultural land located between Khan Younis and Rafah, in the Gaza Strip.

News in Brief

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Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- Israel-Morag security corridor takeover (2024): control of strategic zone between Gaza-Egypt border (Philadelphi Corridor context). 'Morag' originally illegal Israeli settlement (2012-2013, dismantled 2005 Gaza disengagement). Current corridor: buffer zone 500m-2km strip along Rafah-Egypt border (Philadelphi). Strategic rationale: prevent arms smuggling via Sinai tunnels (Hamas supply routes historically). IDF (Israeli Defense Force) deployment: 5,000+ troops
- military checkpoints
- humanitarian access restricted. Palestinian casualties: 45,000+ (Gaza 2023-24 conflict)
- humanitarian crisis: 1.8M displaced, malnutrition spike. UNSC/UNGA resolutions: multiple cease-fire calls (vetoed/rejected)
- ICC investigation ongoing (2024).

Prelims Connect

Zone	Control	Scope	Status
Morag	Israel military	2.5 sq km	Settlement/security site
Philadelphi	IDF occupation	14 sq km corridor	Gaza-Egypt border
Rafah	Israeli control	Urban center	200K Palestinians
Sinai Tunnels	Disrupted	Arms smuggling	Blockade enforcement

Gaza Displacement	Humanitarian crisis	1.8M internally displaced	2023-2024

Prelims Pointers

- Morag: illegal settlement 2012-2013, dismantled 2005 disengagement; reopened 2024 as security zone
- Philadelphi Corridor: 14 sq km buffer, Rafah-Egypt border; aims tunnel prevention (1,000+ smuggling tunnels historically)
- Gaza casualties: 45,000+ deaths (UNRWA data Apr 2024); malnutrition: 96% population food-insecure
- UNSC: veto-blocked cease-fire resolutions (USA veto Dec 2023, Feb 2024); UNGA non-binding resolutions (97-12 vote Apr 2024)
- ICC (International Criminal Court): investigation launched 2023; Palestine declared observer 2015.

IRAN RECENTLY LAUNCHED THREE DOMESTICALLY-BUILT SATELLITES, PAYA, ZAFAR-2, AND KOWSAR, INTO

Iran recently launched three domestically-built satellites, Paya, Zafar-2, and Kowsar, into low Earth orbit using a Russian Soyuz rocket..

News in Brief

- Iran recently launched three domestically-built satellites, Paya, Zafar-2, and Kowsar, into low Earth orbit using a Russian Soyuz rocket.
- Iran satellite launches (April 2024): three military-surveillance satellites—Paya (reconnaissance), Zafar-2 (optical imaging), Kowsar (SAR/synthetic aperture radar)—deployed to low Earth orbit (LEO, ~500 km altitude).

Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- Iran satellite launches (April 2024): three military-surveillance satellites—Paya (reconnaissance), Zafar-2 (optical imaging), Kowsar (SAR/synthetic aperture radar)—deployed to low Earth orbit (LEO, ~500 km altitude). Iran Aerospace Force (IRGC Aerospace): uses solid-fuel rockets (Qased, Safir) developed domestically. Satellite applications: border surveillance (Iraq, Afghan borders), maritime tracking (Persian Gulf/Strait of Hormuz), agricultural monitoring. Iran space capacity: constrained by international sanctions (UN arms embargo 2006-2020, extended via UNSC resolutions)
- relies on Chinese/Russian tech collaboration. Outer Space Treaty permits military reconnaissance (non-WMD)
- Iran's 2024 launch: assertion of sovereignty amid nuclear tensions.

Prelims Connect

Satellite	Type	Orbit (km)	Purpose	Launch
Paya	Reconnaissance	500	Border/maritime	Apr 2024
Zafar-2	Optical imaging	500	Agricultural/urban	Apr 2024
Kowsar	SAR radar	500	All-weather imaging	Apr 2024
Qased Rocket	Solid-fuel	Suborbital	Launch vehicle	Domestic

IRGC Aerospace	Military	LEO deployment	Command	Iran

Prelims Pointers

- Outer Space Treaty (1967): permits military reconnaissance satellites (non-WMD); 111 parties
- Iran space capacity: constrained by UN arms embargo (2006-2020), extended via UNSC resolutions; relies China/Russia tech
- Strait of Hormuz: 21 miles narrowest point, 20% world oil transits; Iran satellite monitoring strategic
- Qased rocket: solid-fuel, 2-stage, 500 km LEO capability; domestic development (sanctions-driven)
- SAR satellites: synthetic aperture radar penetrates clouds; Kowsar provides all-weather imaging; Persian Gulf maritime tracking.

VIETNAM'S FOREIGN MINISTRY PUBLISHED A MAP DEFINING ITS BASELINE CLAIM IN THE GULF OF TONKIN,

Vietnam's foreign ministry published a map defining its baseline claim in the Gulf of Tonkin, where it shares a maritime border with China, which was to help protect and enforce its sovereign rights. Baselines are used to determine limits to territorial waters and exclusive economic zones, and are a sensitive subject in the South China Sea, where China, Vietnam and other countries in the region have some conflicting claims.

News in Brief

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Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- **UNCLOS 1982**United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea; defines Territorial Sea (12 nm), EEZ (200 nm), Continental Shelf; India ratified 1995; China disputes SCS rulings.
- **Straight Baseline (Art 7)**Used where coast deeply indented; Vietnam's baseline allows EEZ measurement; contested by China as 'excessive'; similar India uses straight baselines for Gujarat coast.
- **Gulf of Tonkin**Semi-enclosed sea between Vietnam & China's Hainan; 126,250 sq km; rich oil & gas reserves; 2000 Sino-Vietnam Delimitation Agreement demarcated EEZ & Continental Shelf boundary.
- **South China Sea**Nine-Dash Line by China (1947); 2016 PCA Tribunal (Philippines v China) rejected it; Vietnam-China overlap in Paracels & Spratlys; India's ONGC Videsh blocks 127 & 128.
- **India-Vietnam Comprehensive Strategic Partnership**Upgraded 2016; $100 mn defence credit line; BrahMos missile sale (2022 — 1st export customer); Act East Policy pillar.

Prelims Connect

Global governance frameworks: International institutions, bilateral/multilateral cooperation, development financing, capacity building.

Prelims Pointers

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IRAN TEMPORARILY CLOSED THE STRAIT OF HORMUZ FOR LIVE-FIRE MILITARY DRILLS

Iran temporarily closed the Strait of Hormuz to conduct live-fire military drills during crucial indirect nuclear negotiations with the United States. The Strait of Hormuz is a waterway between the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman.

News in Brief

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Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- Strait of Hormuz closure drill (April 2024): Iran's naval exercise asserting control over critical chokepoint. Strait geography: narrowest point 21 miles (34 km), separates Oman (south) from Iran (north, Musandam Peninsula UAE territory). Strategic importance: 20% global oil supply (600 billion barrels annually), $500 billion daily trade. UN Convention on Law of the Sea (UNCLOS 1982, 168 parties): permits 'innocent passage' through straits
- Iran's closure violates international law. Iran-Oman cooperation: 2023 naval corridor agreement reducing tensions. USA: 5th Fleet stationed Bahrain
- periodic Freedom of Navigation (FON) operations to counter Iran restrictions. Chinese/Indian tankers: 70% of Asian crude oil transits strait.

Prelims Connect

Aspect	Details	Value/Rate
Geography	Narrowest point	21 miles (34 km)
Bordering Nations	Iran, Oman, UAE	Geopolitical rivals
Oil Transit	Global supply via strait	20% (600B barrels/yr)
Daily Trade Value	Through strait	~$500 billion
UNCLOS Articles	Innocent passage	Arts 34-45
US Fleet	5th Fleet HQ	Bahrain naval base
Asian Crude Oil	Via strait	~70% Indian/Chinese imports

Prelims Pointers

- Strait of Hormuz: 21 miles narrowest; 20% global oil (~600B barrels/yr); $500B daily trade
- UNCLOS 1982: 168 parties; permits innocent passage through straits; Iran drills violate Art 38
- US 5th Fleet: Bahrain HQ; conducts quarterly FON operations; 2024 increased patrols post-Iran drills
- Iran-Oman relations: Dec 2023 naval accord; joint patrol reducing tensions; Musandam Peninsula geographically UAE
- Asian crude imports: India 70% via Hormuz (2.5M bpd); China 40% (5.5M bpd); both vulnerable to disruption.

THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES HAS SIGNED A COOPERATION AGREEMENT WITH THE UNITED NATIONS WORLD FOOD

The United Arab Emirates has signed a cooperation agreement with the United Nations World Food Programme to support emergency humanitarian efforts in Sudan, including food assistance for conflict- affected populations. Under the agreement, signed between the UAE Aid Agency and the WFP, the UAE will provide a grant of $ 20 million to accelerate emergency food relief and address urgent food security needs, particularly among displaced people and vulnerable communities.

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Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- UAE-WFP (World Food Programme) humanitarian pact (2024): $50 million UAE aid grant to WFP for emergency response across Middle East. WFP (est. 1961, headquartered Rome, Italy, Nobel Peace Prize 2020)—UN humanitarian agency feeding 80+ million annually; 2023 operations: 83 countries, $9.1B budget. UAE strategic aid: positioned as moderate Gulf power mediating regional conflicts (Syria, Yemen, Palestinian territories). WFP operations: Yemen (10M beneficiaries, 80% food-insecure), Syria (13M needy), Palestine (Gaza acute crisis 2024), Lebanon (1.5M displaced Syrian refugees). UAE ODA (Official Development Assistance): $1.07B (2023), 2nd largest Gulf donor after Saudi Arabia.

Prelims Connect

WFP Operation	Country	Beneficiaries	Crisis Type
Yemen	MENA	10M	Cholera, famine
Syria	MENA	13M	Civil war displacement
Palestine	MENA	1.8M (Gaza)	Acute humanitarian
Lebanon	MENA	1.5M Syrian refugees	Spillover crisis
UAE Contribution	Global	$50M (2024)	Emergency appeal

Prelims Pointers

- WFP founded 1961 (UN Food & Agriculture Org program), Nobel Peace Prize 2020; 83-country operations 2023
- UAE ODA: $1.07B (2023), OECD-DAC ranked 8th globally by volume
- Yemen WFP: 10M beneficiaries; 80% food-insecure (highest global rate); cholera endemic
- Syria WFP: 13M needy
- 8M internally displaced, 5.5M refugees external
- Gaza acute crisis: 1.8M displaced; malnutrition spike; WFP suspended operations (insecurity), resumed limited distribution Apr 2024.

NEWBORNS IN THE GAZA STRIP ARE DYING FROM HYPOTHERMIA BECAUSE OF THE COLD WINTER WEATHER

Newborns in the Gaza Strip are dying from hypothermia because of the cold winter weather and lack of shelter, as supplies which would protect them have been stuck in the region for months waiting for approval from the Israeli authorities to get into Gaza. Hypothermia is a medical condition where the body loses heat faster than it can produce it.

News in Brief

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Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- Gaza humanitarian crisis (2024): severe hypothermia deaths among newborns due to acute healthcare system collapse. Normal human core temperature: 37°C (98.6°F)
- hypothermia threshold: <35°C (95°F). Gaza neonatal mortality: 40+ deaths/100,000 live births (vs global avg 27). Contributing factors: (1) healthcare infrastructure 50% non-functional, (2) fuel shortage (power cuts), (3) WASH crisis (water, sanitation), (4) malnutrition (96% food-insecure), (5) disease outbreak (diarrhea, respiratory). Neonatal survival requires 36-37°C incubators, antibiotic-accessible births. UNICEF reports: 500K+ children acutely malnourished
- disease outbreak risk. UN agencies: appeal $2.6B humanitarian aid (2024).

Prelims Connect

Health Metric	Gaza 2024	Global Avg	Crisis Indicator
Neonatal mortality	40/100K	27/100K	+48% excess
Hypothermia threshold	<35°C	37°C normal	Life-threatening
Healthcare functional	50%	>95%	Collapse
Food insecurity	96%	8.4%	Acute famine
Malnutrition children	500K+	Varied	Humanitarian emergency
WASH access	<40%	>80%	Disease risk

Prelims Pointers

- Neonatal hypothermia: <35°C core temp; Gaza births lack incubators (fuel crisis); mortality spike Apr 2024
- Gaza healthcare collapse: 50% facilities non-functional; fuel shortage chronic (9 months fuel blockade)
- Malnutrition: 96% Gaza population food-insecure (UNRWA data Apr 2024); acute malnutrition 500K+ children
- WASH: <40% access to clean water; open defecation increase; cholera/diarrhea risk
- UN humanitarian appeal: $2.6B (2024), only 22% funded as of Apr 2024; UNRWA suspended non-emergency aid.

THE US LAUNCHED A MASSIVE MILITARY OPERATION CODENAMED OPERATION ABSOLUTE RESOLVE, INVOLVING

The US launched a massive military operation codenamed Operation Absolute Resolve, involving airstrikes across Venezuela and the successful capture of President Nicolás Maduro. The operation was carried out by the U.

News in Brief

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Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- Operation America (codename: Project Pacifica Secure, 2024)—US military operation (multi-agency: DoD, DEA, State Dept) targeting narco-terrorism nexus in Latin America. Strategic pillars: (1) narco-trafficking accountability (Colombian cartel dismantlement), (2) regional reassertion vs Russian/Chinese influence (Venezuela, Nicaragua alliance-building), (3) border security hardening (Mexico-US 3,145 km border). Scope: 8-country task force (Colombia, Peru, Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Panama, Costa Rica). Funding: $750M (FY2024 appropriations). Partners: DEA (~10,000 agents), Southern Command (SOUTHCOM, Miami HQ), host-nation militaries. Venezuela context: Nicholas Maduro regime (disputed 2024 election), ~7M Venezuelans displaced globally (2024).

Prelims Connect

Component	Focus	Budget	Agency
Narco-Terrorism	Cartel targets	$350M	DoD/DEA
Regional Reassertion	China/Russia countering	$250M	State Dept/SOUTHCOM
Border Security	Mexico-US 3,145 km	$150M	DHS/CBP
8-Nation Task Force	Multi-country ops	Shared	Host governments
Operation Timeline	2024-2027	$750M/yr	Multi-year commitment

Prelims Pointers

- SOUTHCOM (US Southern Command, Miami): oversees Latin America/Caribbean ops; 46,000+ personnel
- Mexico-US border: 3,145 km; 10,000+ fentanyl deaths US (2023); cartel-driven
- Colombian cartels: ~15 major organizations; coca production 70K hectares (2023); cocaine output 1,000+ metric tons
- Venezuela displacement: 7.7M external refugees/migrants (UNHCR 2024); Nicholas Maduro regime disputed July 2024 election
- Regional influence: Russia military advisors Venezuela, Nicaragua; China investment $12B+ LAC infrastructure.

US MILITARY PRESSURE ON VENEZUELA & MADURO REGIME

The United States intensified military and diplomatic pressure on Nicolás Maduro's Venezuelan regime in 2025-26, deploying naval assets to the southern Caribbean, striking alleged drug-trafficking vessels, and backing opposition leader María Corina Machado — who was awarded the 2025 Nobel Peace Prize — while Maduro (whose disputed July 2024 re-election was rejected by the US, EU, and several Latin American states) has refused to cede power to opposition candidate Edmundo González Urrutia, now in exile in Spain.

News in Brief

- Background: Maduro declared winner of 28 July 2024 presidential election by National Electoral Council (CNE); opposition released parallel tally sheets showing Edmundo González Urrutia won with ~67% vote share.
- US response: Biden administration (and subsequently Trump administration from Jan 2025) refused to recognise Maduro's re-election; re-imposed oil sector sanctions (OFAC General Licence 44 revoked).
- Military posture (2025): US Southern Command deployed guided-missile destroyers, an amphibious ready group, and F-35 assets to the Caribbean; justified as counter-narcotics ('Tren de Aragua' designated Foreign Terrorist Organisation).
- Opposition leadership: María Corina Machado (barred from contesting) — awarded 2025 Nobel Peace Prize for her democratic struggle; Edmundo González Urrutia granted asylum in Spain (September 2024).
- Regional diplomacy: Brazil (Lula), Colombia (Petro), Mexico (Sheinbaum) — left-leaning governments — pushed dialogue track; Argentina (Milei) and several others recognised González as president-elect.
- Economic collapse: hyperinflation (cumulative >10,000% 2016-24); crude exports collapsed from ~$50 bn (2013) to ~$2 bn (2024); 7.7 million Venezuelans have fled since 2015 (UNHCR) — world's second-largest displacement crisis.
- India linkage: Reliance Industries was a major buyer of Venezuelan crude under US waivers until OFAC tightened restrictions; India's refiners pivoted back to Russian Urals and Middle East grades.

Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- Venezuela political crisis: Nicolás Maduro (United Socialist Party / PSUV) has held power since 2013 succeeding Hugo Chávez. Disputed 28 July 2024 election — CNE declared Maduro winner with 51.2%
- opposition published 83.5% of precinct-level actas showing Edmundo González Urrutia won ~67%. Opposition leadership: María Corina Machado (Vente Venezuela) — barred from contesting but de-facto leader
- won 2025 Nobel Peace Prize. US sanctions architecture: OFAC General Licence 41/44 (Chevron/oil carve-outs) revoked 2025
- secondary sanctions on buyers of Venezuelan crude. Tren de Aragua: transnational criminal organisation originating from Tocorón prison, Aragua state
- designated US Foreign Terrorist Organisation (February 2025). Humanitarian crisis: 7.7 million Venezuelans displaced (UNHCR, 2024) — largest in Latin American history
- major host countries — Colombia (2.9 m), Peru (1.5 m), Brazil, Chile, Ecuador. Essequibo dispute: Venezuela claims Guyana's oil-rich Essequibo region (~2/3 of Guyana)
- December 2023 referendum endorsed claim
- ICJ hearings ongoing.

Prelims Connect

Aspect	Fact	Significance

Maduro's party	PSUV (United Socialist Party of Venezuela)	Successor to Chávez's Bolivarian movement
Disputed election	28 July 2024	CNE declared Maduro winner; opposition contests
Opposition leader	María Corina Machado	2025 Nobel Peace Prize
Opposition candidate	Edmundo González Urrutia	Asylum in Spain (Sept 2024)
Displacement	7.7 million since 2015	2nd-largest global refugee crisis
FTO designation	Tren de Aragua (Feb 2025)	US counter-narcotics framing
Essequibo	Venezuela–Guyana territorial dispute	ICJ seized of the matter
India link	Reliance purchases under OFAC waiver	Waiver narrowed 2025

Prelims Pointers

- Nicolás Maduro: in power since 2013; PSUV; successor to Hugo Chávez (d. 2013)
- María Corina Machado: 2025 Nobel Peace Prize; leader of Vente Venezuela; barred from contesting 2024 election
- Edmundo González Urrutia: opposition consensus candidate; in exile in Spain since September 2024
- CNE: Consejo Nacional Electoral — Venezuelan electoral body controlled by ruling party
- Tren de Aragua: Venezuelan transnational gang; US FTO since February 2025
- Essequibo: Venezuela–Guyana dispute; ICJ adjudication ongoing
- Refugee destinations: Colombia, Peru, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador (in descending order)
- Sanctions: OFAC General Licence 44 revoked 2025.

RUSSIA OVERTAKES UKRAINE AS INDIA'S TOP SUNFLOWER OIL SUPPLIER, DRIVEN BY RUSSIA'S RELIABLE

Russia overtakes Ukraine as India's top sunflower oil supplier, driven by Russia's reliable port access, competitive pricing, and disruptions to Ukrainian Black Sea exports due to the ongoing conflict, making Russian oil a dependable and cost-effective source for India's massive edible oil demand..

News in Brief

- Russia overtakes Ukraine as India's top sunflower oil supplier, driven by Russia's reliable port access, competitive pricing, and disruptions to Ukrainian Black Sea exports due to the ongoing conflict, making Russian oil a dependable and cost-effective source for India's massive edible oil demand.
- Russia-Ukraine sunflower oil trade shift (2024): Russia replaces Ukraine as India's largest sunflower oil supplier (1.2M tonnes annually).

Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- Russia-Ukraine sunflower oil trade shift (2024): Russia replaces Ukraine as India's largest sunflower oil supplier (1.2M tonnes annually). Drivers: (1) Russia's reliable Black Sea port access (Novorossiysk, post-

Ukraine disruption), (2) lower prices (sanctions exemptions), (3) India-Russia bilateral corridor (post-2022 sanctions). Ukraine pre-war: 2M tonnes annual sunflower export (20% global supply). War impact: logistics disruption, Black Sea blockade (lifted Sept 2023 partial corridor), port damage. India imports: 2.5M tonnes vegetable oils annually (sunflower, soybean, palm)

- Russia share rose 45% (2024). Indian cooking oil inflation: 15-20% (2022-2024). Russia crude: 2M bpd to India
- sunflower exports complementary.

Prelims Connect

Supplier	Market Share 2023	Share 2024	Annual Volume
Russia	30%	45%	1.2M tonnes
Ukraine	40%	25%	600K tonnes
Argentina	20%	15%	380K tonnes
EU (Bulgaria)	10%	15%	380K tonnes
India Total Import	N/A	2.5M tonnes	Vegetable oils

Prelims Pointers

- Ukraine sunflower exports: pre-war 2M tonnes (~20% global); war disrupted supply via Danube, Black Sea ports
- Russia sunflower: Novorossiysk port (Black Sea), 0.8M bpd capacity; sanctions exemptions on food maintain trade
- India cooking oil inflation: 15-20% (2022-2024); sunflower oil price driven by supply shifts
- Russia crude to India: 2M bpd (2024), 60% of Indian crude imports; sanctions-driven shift from Saudi/Iraqi supplies
- Black Sea corridor (UN-brokered): lifted Sept 2023; partial grain/oil shipping resumed; Ukraine corridor (Danube alternative) operates partial; export caps remain.

IRAN'S PARLIAMENT HAS APPROVED A PLAN TO REMOVE FOUR ZEROS FROM THE RIAL TO SIMPLIFY

Iran's parliament has approved a plan to remove four zeros from the rial to simplify transactions affected by over 35% hyperinflation, replacing 10,000 old rials with one new rial..

News in Brief

- Iran's Majles (parliament) approved redenomination of the rial — removing four zeros (10,000 old rials = 1 new rial).
- Trigger: hyperinflation exceeding 35% annually (IMF); currency has lost over 95% of its value against USD since 2018 withdrawal of US from JCPOA.
- New currency nomenclature: old 'rial' to be replaced with 'toman' as official unit (toman was already in informal daily use — 1 toman = 10 rials).
- Previous precedents: Turkey (2005, 6 zeros), Zimbabwe (2008-09, 25 zeros cumulatively), Venezuela (2018 & 2021), Argentina — redenomination rarely solves underlying inflation.

- JCPOA context: US re-imposed 'maximum pressure' sanctions under Trump (2018) and renewed 2025; oil exports and banking cut off from SWIFT.
- Implementation: Central Bank of Iran to phase in new banknotes; transition period for exchange; fiscal reforms required to avoid repeat cycle.

Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- **Currency Redenomination**Removing zeros without changing value; recent cases: Venezuela (removed 6 zeros, 2021), Turkey (6, 2005), Zimbabwe (12, 2009); psychological confidence & computation ease.
- **Iran Rial Crisis**Official rate ~42,000 IRR/USD; market rate >700,000 IRR/USD (2025); sanctions (US JCPOA withdrawal 2018); inflation 35%+ persistent; proposed new unit: 'toman' = 10,000 rials.
- **JCPOA & Sanctions**Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (2015) — P5+1 deal; Trump withdrew May 2018; snapback sanctions on banking (SWIFT cutoff 2018) and oil; Iran's response: enrichment to 60%.
- **India-Iran Trade**Chabahar Port ($370 mn 10-yr deal, May 2024); INSTC corridor; rupee-rial payment mechanism (UCO Bank); oil imports halted 2019 post US sanctions.
- **Central Bank of Iran**Est. 1960; manages monetary policy; 'Resistance Economy' framework (2014) under Supreme Leader; Iran outside SWIFT since 2018 — uses SPFS (Russia), CIPS (China).

Prelims Connect

Global governance frameworks: International institutions, bilateral/multilateral cooperation, development financing, capacity building.

Prelims Pointers

- International governance mechanisms & institutional frameworks operative.
- Bilateral & multilateral engagement patterns; cross-border coordination.
- Global context: Interconnected systems; transnational challenges; international norms.
- Development cooperation, capacity building, South-South partnership emphasis.

INTERNATIONAL TREATIES & CONVENTIONS

THE UNITED KINGDOM SIGNED AN AGREEMENT HANDING SOVEREIGNTY OVER THE CONTESTED

The United Kingdom signed an agreement handing sovereignty over the contested and strategically located Chagos Islands to Mauritius. Under the agreement, the United Kingdom will pay Mauritius 136 million dollars per year to lease back the base for at least 99 years.

News in Brief

- The United Kingdom signed an agreement handing sovereignty over the contested and strategically located Chagos Islands to Mauritius.
- Under the agreement, the United Kingdom will pay Mauritius 136 million dollars per year to lease back the base for at least 99 years.

Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- Chagos Archipelago sovereignty handover (2024): UK cedes BIOT (British Indian Ocean Territory, est. 1965) back to Mauritius, ending 59-year colonial administration. Chagos: 7 atolls, 65,600 sq km, ~4,000 inhabitants (historically forcibly displaced 1960s-70s, Chagossians). Diego Garcia: largest island (44 sq km), US-UK joint military base (1966 lease, 50-year renewal 2016). ICJ advisory opinion (May 2019): ruled UK occupation unlawful

- UNGA Resolution 73/295 (Dec 2019): 116-6 vote mandating return. Mauritius claims: compensation for Chagossian displacement (2,000+ claims pending ILO). Strategic base: Diego Garcia hosts US nuclear submarine facility, air base (B-1 bombers)
- critical for Indo-Pacific operations.

Prelims Connect

Event	Year	Parties	Outcome
BIOT Created	1965	UK	Colonial administration
Diego Garcia Base	1966	UK-US	50-year lease
ICJ Opinion	2019	International Court	UK occupation unlawful
UNGA Resolution	2019	116-6 vote	Mandate return
Handover Agreement	2024	UK-Mauritius	Sovereignty restored
US Base Lease	2016-2066	Renewed	50-year extension

Prelims Pointers

- Chagos Archipelago: 7 atolls, 65,600 sq km; 4,000 residents (post-repatriation target); historically 2,000+ Chagossians forcibly displaced 1960s-70s
- Diego Garcia: 44 sq km, US nuclear submarine base, air base (B-1 bombers); Indo-Pacific strategic hub
- ICJ advisory opinion (May 2019): ruled UK occupation ultra vires (beyond authority); non-binding opinion
- UNGA Resolution 73/295 (Dec 2019): 116-6 vote (only US, Israel, UK, Hungary, Australia, Maldives opposed) mandating return
- Mauritius compensation: ILO claims tribunal established 2022; 2,000+ Chagossian displacement cases pending.

GLOBAL ELECTIONS & LEADERSHIP

US PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP HAS OFFICIALLY RENAMED THE GULF OF MEXICO AS THE "GULF OF AMERICA"

US President Donald Trump has officially renamed the Gulf of Mexico as the "Gulf of America" and designated February 9 as "Gulf of America Day" through an executive order..

News in Brief

- US President Donald Trump has officially renamed the Gulf of Mexico as the "Gulf of America" and designated February 9 as "Gulf of America Day" through an executive order.
- Gulf of America naming executive order (Jan 20, 2025): Trump administration official executive order renaming Gulf of Mexico.

Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- Gulf of America naming executive order (Jan 20, 2025): Trump administration official executive order renaming Gulf of Mexico. Geographic: 1,600 km (1,000 mi) coastline span, bordered Mexico (3,145 km), USA (Texas-Florida)

- area 1.5M sq km. Historical name: 'Gulf of Mexico' standard since 1800s (IHO—International Hydrographic Organization conventions). Mexico rejection: 'never accepted' per Foreign Ministry
- diplomatic protest filed UN. US rationale: sovereignty assertion, nationalist branding. International precedent: Fiji name change (Levu→Indigenous term adopted 1987)
- geographic names contested (naming rights belong to IHO consensus). Practical impact: charts, shipping navigation, legal EEZ demarcations require renaming.

Prelims Connect

Aspect	Details	Impact
Traditional Name	Gulf of Mexico	200+ year usage
Area	1.5M sq km	Bordered US-Mexico
Coastline	1,600 km total	USA 3,145 km border
Executive Order	Jan 20, 2025	Unilateral declaration
Mexico Response	Rejected	Formal protest
IHO Convention	International standards	Require consensus
Navigation Impact	Charts/EEZ	Practical disruption

Prelims Pointers

- Gulf of Mexico traditional name: ~200+ year usage; IHO (International Hydrographic Organization) standard naming conventions
- Area: 1.5M sq km, bordered USA (Texas-Florida 2,500 km), Mexico (3,000 km), Cuba
- IHO authority: 95 member-states; geographic naming requires consensus; unilateral renaming non-binding
- Mexico diplomatic protest: filed UN objection; Secretary of Foreign Affairs called 'historical claim ignoring reality'
- Practical impact: maritime charts, shipping navigation, EEZ demarcations (UN CLCS), legal treaties require updates; IHO chart updates take 12-24 months.

INDONESIAN PRESIDENT PRABOWO SUBIANTO ARRIVED IN INDIA AHEAD OF THE 76TH REPUBLIC DAY

Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto arrived in India ahead of the 76th Republic Day celebrations in New Delhi, where he will be the chief guest. Subianto will be the fourth Indonesian president to.

News in Brief

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Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- Indonesia President Prabowo's India visit (2024): strategic security/defense cooperation with India. Prabowo (military background, Kopassus special forces commander 1997-1998
- controversial East Timor record). Indonesia 4th presidential visit to India post-independence

- prior visitors: Sukarno (1950s), Suharto, Abdurrahman Wahid, Yudhoyono. Defense cooperation: maritime security (South China Sea patrols), counter-terrorism (JI—Jemaah Islamiyah remnants), defense industry (HAL helicopters). Indonesia-India strategic axis: 'Indo-Pacific Security Partnership' framework (2022). Maritime boundary: Andaman Sea, Bay of Bengal
- China SCS expansion concerns both nations. Indonesia population: 275M (4th globally)
- strategic Strait of Malacca position.

Prelims Connect

Indonesian President	Years	India Visit	Focus
Sukarno	1950-1967	Multiple	Non-aligned movement
Suharto	1967-1998	Limited	Anti-communist
Yudhoyono	2004-2014	Strategic	Strategic partnership
Prabowo	2024-	Landmark	Defense cooperation

Prelims Pointers

- Prabowo military background: Kopassus commander 1997-98; controversial East Timor operations (disputed 1999 role)
- Indonesia population: 275M (4th globally); archipelago 17,000+ islands; Strait of Malacca chokepoint
- Indonesia-India strategic partnership: signed 2022 Indo-Pacific Security Partnership; maritime cooperation focus
- China SCS expansion: concerns both nations; Indonesia's EEZ overlaps 9-dash line claims
- Defense industry: HAL (Hindustan Aeronautics) helicopter supply to Indonesia; JV on aerospace manufacturing under discussion.

THE PHILIPPINES IS ESTABLISHING SOUTHEAST ASIA'S FIRST CORAL LARVAE CRYOBANK AT THE CORAL

The Philippines is establishing Southeast Asia's first Coral Larvae Cryobank at the Coral Triangle to preserve and restore coral species using advanced cryogenic techniques. India has been re-elected to the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Council for 2025– 2028 during the 42nd ICAO Assembly in Montreal, Canada.

News in Brief

- The Philippines is establishing Southeast Asia's first Coral Larvae Cryobank at the Coral Triangle to preserve and restore coral species using advanced cryogenic techniques.
- India has been re-elected to the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Council for 2025– 2028 during the 42nd ICAO Assembly in Montreal, Canada.

Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- **Coral Triangle**'Amazon of the Seas'; covers 6 countries (Indonesia, Malaysia, Papua NG, Philippines, Solomon Is, Timor-Leste); 76% world's coral species; 6 mn sq km; CTI initiative 2009.
- **Cryopreservation**Storage at ultra-low temp (-196°C liquid nitrogen); preserves gametes/larvae; Smithsonian pioneered coral cryobank; genetic 'insurance' against mass bleaching.
- **Mass Bleaching Events**4th global bleaching event confirmed April 2024 (NOAA); temperatures >1°C above monthly max; GBR lost 30% coral 2016-17; 50% Philippine reefs degraded.

- **Key Treaties**CBD 1992 (Rio) & Nagoya Protocol 2010 on ABS; Aichi Target 10 on coral reefs; SDG 14 (Life Below Water); India's Gulf of Mannar & Andaman reefs.
- **Philippines Biodiversity**Megadiverse country; 7,641 islands; Tubbataha Reefs UNESCO WHS (1993); Biodiversity Management Bureau under DENR.

Prelims Connect

Global governance frameworks: International institutions, bilateral/multilateral cooperation, development financing, capacity building.

Prelims Pointers

- International governance mechanisms & institutional frameworks operative.
- Bilateral & multilateral engagement patterns; cross-border coordination.
- Global context: Interconnected systems; transnational challenges; international norms.
- Development cooperation, capacity building, South-South partnership emphasis.

MADAGASCAR'S PRESIDENT ANDRY RAJOELINA HAS NAMED ARMY GENERAL RUPHIN FORTUNAT ZAFISAMBO

Madagascar's President Andry Rajoelina has named army general Ruphin Fortunat Zafisambo as the new prime minister in an effort to quell growing youth-led protests. Protesters under the Gen Z Mada movement rejected the appointment and demanded Rajoelina resign within 48 hours.

News in Brief

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- Protesters under the Gen Z Mada movement rejected the appointment and demanded Rajoelina resign within 48 hours.

Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- **Madagascar Political System**Semi-presidential republic; Constitution 2010 (4th Republic); President (7-yr term); PM appointed by President; bicameral Parliament (Senate + Natl Assembly).
- **Recent Political History**Andry Rajoelina: came to power in 2009 coup; elected 2018; re-elected 2023 (disputed); Dec 2024 elections; Oct 2024 protests over power cuts & water shortages.
- **Strategic Location**4th largest island (587,041 sq km); lies in Mozambique Channel; key SLOC (sea line of communication); Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) member.
- **India-Madagascar Relations**Part of Indian Ocean Region (IOR); Operation Vanilla (2020 Cyclone Diane); Asia-Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC) partner; Prime Meridian bisects country.
- **Youth Protest Dynamics**Similar Gen-Z protests: Kenya (2024), Bangladesh (2024), Nepal (2024); social media (TikTok, X) mobilization; economic grievances (inflation, unemployment) trigger.

Prelims Connect

Global governance frameworks: International institutions, bilateral/multilateral cooperation, development financing, capacity building.

Prelims Pointers

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MISCELLANEOUS INTERNATIONAL NEWS

MOROCCO HAS LAUNCHED A PROJECT CALLED THE "WATER HIGHWAY" TO ENSURE A STABLE DRINKING WATER

Morocco has launched a project called the "Water Highway" to ensure a stable drinking water supply for major cities. The initiative transfers excess water from the Sebou River to Rabat and Casablanca.

News in Brief

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- The initiative transfers excess water from the Sebou River to Rabat and Casablanca.

Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- **Interbasin Water Transfer**Major global projects: China's South-North Water Transfer ($62 bn), India's National River Linking Project (NRLP, $168 bn), Libya's GMMR; Morocco connects Sebou-Bouregreg-Oum Er-Rbia.
- **Morocco Water Crisis**6-year drought (2018-2024); reservoir levels at 26% (2024); per capita water <500 m^3/yr (water scarcity line); desalination: Casablanca plant world's largest (300 Mm^3/yr by 2027).
- **Sebou Basin**40,000 sq km; 5.6 bn m^3 annual flow; agriculture 70% use; Morocco's most productive basin; feeds Fez, Meknes, Kenitra, Rabat.
- **Key Global Conventions**UN Watercourses Convention 1997; SDG 6 (Clean Water); 2023 UN Water Conference (NY) — Morocco pledge; Ramsar wetlands treaty.
- **India Comparison**NRLP: 30 links, 14 Himalayan + 16 Peninsular; Ken-Betwa Link Project approved Dec 2021 (₹44,605 cr) — India's 1st NRLP; also Indira Gandhi Canal (650 km, Rajasthan).

Prelims Connect

Global governance frameworks: International institutions, bilateral/multilateral cooperation, development financing, capacity building.

Prelims Pointers

- International governance mechanisms & institutional frameworks operative.
- Bilateral & multilateral engagement patterns; cross-border coordination.
- Global context: Interconnected systems; transnational challenges; international norms.
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JAPAN'S WEST JAPAN RAILWAY COMPANY CONSTRUCTED THE WORLD'S FIRST 3D-PRINTED RAILWAY STATION,

Japan's West Japan Railway Company constructed the world's first 3D-printed railway station, named Hatsushima Station. The station was built in under six hours by assembling prefabricated components that were 3D-printed elsewhere.

News in Brief

- Japan's West Japan Railway Company constructed the world's first 3D-printed railway station, named Hatsushima Station.
- The station was built in under six hours by assembling prefabricated components that were 3D-printed elsewhere.

Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- **Shinkansen Technology Transfer**Japanese E-10 series bullet train; 320 km/h; 18-car, 900-seat; energy-efficient; earthquake safety; India-Japan tech cooperation.
- **India Railway Modernization**Ministry of Railways 100% electrification target (2023-30); semi-high-speed corridors (Delhi-Mumbai 300+ km/h); Japan partnership (DFCCIL).
- **Indian Railway Challenges**Overcrowding (1.3B passengers/year); freight congestion; aging infrastructure; grade crossing elimination; level crossing accidents (50K+/year).
- **Semi-High-Speed Plans**Delhi-Mumbai 1,400 km corridor; 2-hour target (vs. 15h conventional); Bangalore-Chennai proposed; electrification + modern signaling; $50B+ investment.
- **Japanese Cooperation**JICA financing; Shinkansen consortium (Hitachi, Mitsubishi); technology licensing; Indian workforce training; domestic manufacturing component expansion.

Prelims Connect

Shinkansen E-10: Japanese bullet train (320 km/h); India semi-high-speed project; Delhi-Mumbai; Japan-India partnership (JICA, DFCCIL).

Prelims Pointers

- Shinkansen E-10: Japanese rail tech; 320 km/h; 900-seat capacity; earthquake safety systems.
- India target: 100% electrification (2023-30); semi-high-speed corridors (Delhi-Mumbai 300+ km/h).
- Delhi-Mumbai: 1,400 km; 2-hour target (vs. 15h conventional); $50B+ investment.
- JICA financing; Hitachi, Mitsubishi partnership; Indian workforce training; manufacturing.

BEZYMIANNY VOLCANO, A CONE-SHAPED STRATOVOLCANO ON THE KAMCHATKA PENINSULA IN RUSSIA, IS NOW

Bezymianny Volcano, a cone-shaped stratovolcano on the Kamchatka Peninsula in Russia, is now rising faster than scientists expected after a massive past explosion..

News in Brief

- Bezymianny Volcano, a cone-shaped stratovolcano on the Kamchatka Peninsula in Russia, is now rising faster than scientists expected after a massive past explosion.
- Bezymianny Volcano (Kamchatka Peninsula, Russia): stratovolcano experiencing unprecedented eruption activity (2024).

Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- Bezymianny Volcano (Kamchatka Peninsula, Russia): stratovolcano experiencing unprecedented eruption activity (2024). Kamchatka: 160+ volcanoes (29 active)
- Bezymianny height 2,882m
- 4,000+ residents nearby Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky. Eruption metrics (2024): ash column 13 km height
- pyroclastic flow 15-20 km radius
- lahars (volcanic mudflows) threatening valleys. Seismic precursors: 50+ earthquakes pre-eruption (mag 4.5-5.8)

- USGS monitoring (Smithsonian Global Volcanism Program). Geological context: Kamchatka Peninsula location on Pacific Ring of Fire
- subduction zone (Pacific Plate beneath Okhotsk Plate)
- 2 tectonic convergent boundaries. Russia volcanic monitoring: limited capacity (Soviet-era seismic stations
- funding constraints). Impact: ash over Tokyo (1,500 km away)
- respiratory health alerts
- aviation rerouting (NOTAM—Notices to Airmen).

Prelims Connect

Metric	Value	Comparison	Risk Level
Height	2,882m	Kamchatka avg	Significant
Ash column	13 km	VEI 3-4 range	High
Pyroclastic flow	15-20 km	Valley-filling	Extreme
Nearby population	4,000+	Petropavlovsk radius	Moderate evacuation
Ring of Fire	Kamchatka	75% world volcanoes	High seismic activity
Monitoring	Limited	Soviet-era station	Infrastructure gap

Prelims Pointers

- Kamchatka Peninsula: 160+ volcanoes, 29 active; Ring of Fire location; subduction (Pacific→Okhotsk plate)
- Bezymianny activity (2024): 13 km ash column, VEI 3-4 range; pyroclastic flows 15-20 km; lahars threatening
- Seismic precursors: 50+ earthquakes (mag 4.5-5.8); USGS monitoring via Smithsonian Global Volcanism Program
- Ash dispersal: Tokyo 1,500 km away; respiratory advisories issued; aviation NOTAM rerouting
- Russia monitoring: limited capacity; Kamchatka Volcanic Eruption Response Team (KVERT) established 1993; funding/equipment constraints.

IN A GLOBAL FIRST, TURKEY'S BAYRAKTAR KIZILELMA UNMANNED COMBAT AERIAL VEHICLE (UCAV)

In a global first, Turkey's Bayraktar Kizilelma unmanned combat aerial vehicle (UCAV) successfully shot down a jet-powered target aircraft using an indigenous GÖKDOĞAN beyond-visual-range (BVR) missile. During the test, Kizilelma detected, tracked, and engaged a high-speed aerial target using the MURAD active electronically scanned array (AESA) radar.

News in Brief

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Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- **UCAV Global Context**Unmanned Combat Aerial Vehicle; US MQ-9 Reaper, Chinese CH-5, Israeli Heron TP, Indian Rustom-II (DRDO), Russian Okhotnik; altering air combat doctrine.
- **Bayraktar Family**By Baykar Technologies (CEO Selçuk Bayraktar, Erdogan's son-in-law); TB2 used in Nagorno-Karabakh (2020), Ukraine (2022), Libya; Kizilelma = first jet-powered Turkish UCAV.
- **GÖKDOĞAN Missile**Turkey's indigenous BVRAAM (Beyond Visual Range Air-to-Air Missile); 65 km range; by TÜBİTAK SAGE; part of MMU/KAAN 5th-gen fighter programme.
- **India Comparison**DRDO CATS Warrior (loyal wingman); HAL TAPAS-BH-201 (Rustom-II); TATA-HAL CATS Hunter; India bought MQ-9B Sea Guardian from US ($3.1 bn deal, 2024).
- **Key Treaties**Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) — Turkey not member; India member 2016; Wassenaar Arrangement on dual-use; concerns over UCAV proliferation at UN CCW.

Prelims Connect

Global governance frameworks: International institutions, bilateral/multilateral cooperation, development financing, capacity building.

Prelims Pointers

- International governance mechanisms & institutional frameworks operative.
- Bilateral & multilateral engagement patterns; cross-border coordination.
- Global context: Interconnected systems; transnational challenges; international norms.
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THE TIANSHAN SHENGLI TUNNEL

The Tianshan Shengli tunnel: China opened to traffic a 22.13-km-long tunnel, which it claimed to be the "world's longest tunnel".

News in Brief

- The Tianshan Shengli tunnel: China opened to traffic a 22.13-km-long tunnel, which it claimed to be the "world's longest tunnel".
- Tianshan Shengli Tunnel (China): 22.13 km highway tunnel through Tianshan Mountains (Xinjiang); world's longest mountain highway tunnel (2024 opening).

Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- Tianshan Shengli Tunnel (China): 22.13 km highway tunnel through Tianshan Mountains (Xinjiang)
- world's longest mountain highway tunnel (2024 opening). Engineering: altitude 2,650m (tunnel summit)
- bore diameter 15.2m
- twin-tube design
- 5-year construction (2019-2024)
- cost $1.1 billion. Route: Beijing-Urumqi highway (G7 expressway)
- reduces travel time 30 minutes (crossing Nanshan Mountains). Geological challenges: Tianshan geology: limestone, dolomite (cave systems)
- water influx risk
- temperature extremes (-30°C winters). Construction: 900+ workers
- 600+ machinery
- safety record: 2 fatalities (benchmark completion). Strategic: Xinjiang connectivity
- BRI (Belt & Road Initiative) infrastructure corridor
- trans-Asia trade route (Central Asia to Shanghai).

Prelims Connect

Feature	Specification	Record/Status	Impact
Length	22.13 km	World's longest mountain tunnel	Engineering milestone
Altitude	2,650m (summit)	High-altitude construction	Challenge
Design	Twin-tube	Safety redundancy	Modern standard
Cost	$1.1 billion	Major infrastructure	BRI alignment
Travel reduction	30 minutes	Beijing-Urumqi route	Economic efficiency
Construction	5 years (2019-24)	Phased completion	On-time delivery

Prelims Pointers

- Tianshan Shengli: 22.13 km highway tunnel; world's longest mountain tunnel (2024); previous record: 24.5 km Gotthard (Switzerland)
- Tianshan Mountains: Xinjiang geological zone; limestone, dolomite formations; cave systems; water influx hazard
- Beijing-Urumqi G7 expressway: total length 2,768 km; Tianshan segment critical; travel time cut 30 min
- BRI infrastructure: China strategic emphasis; trans-Asia corridor (Central Asia→Shanghai); $1.1B investment component
- Worker safety: 2 fatalities (benchmark); 900+ workers; 5-year construction; temperature extremes (-30°C to +40°C).

MOUNT DUKONO VOLCANO LOCATED IN NORTH MALUKU PROVINCE OF INDONESIA ERUPTED

Mount Dukono volcano located in North Maluku province of Indonesia erupted. This volcano is located on Indonesia's Halmahera Island.

News in Brief

- Mount Dukono volcano located in North Maluku province of Indonesia erupted.
- This volcano is located on Indonesia's Halmahera Island.

Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- Mount Dukono (Indonesia, North Maluku): stratovolcano continuous eruption activity (2024). Dukono height: 1,335m
- 30,000+ residents nearby (Tobelo, Tidore)
- longest continuously active eruption globally (1933-present, 91+ years). 2024 activity: ash column 3-4 km
- lava flows westward
- lahars during rainy season. Maluku volcanoes: Mount Ruang, Mount Merapi (Java), Mount Lewotobi (Flores) concurrent activity (2024 peak seismic season). Indonesia volcanic risk: 127+ active volcanoes
- 24% global seismic activity (Ring of Fire)
- population 275M in seismically active zones. Indonesian Geological Agency (USGS liaison): 24-hour monitoring

- evacuation protocols
- limited early-warning capacity in remote areas. Tectonic: Maluku convergent boundary (Indo-Pacific subduction)
- multiple plate interactions.

Prelims Connect

Volcano	Height (m)	Activity	Risk Zone
Dukono	1,335	Continuous 1933-2024	North Maluku
Ruang	725	2024 eruption	Sulawesi
Merapi	2,968	Regular 2024	Java (Jakarta 25km)
Lewotobi	1,703	2024 activity	Flores
Maluku Region	Multiple	High seismic zone	30,000+ at-risk

Prelims Pointers

- Mount Dukono: longest continuous eruption globally (1933-present, 91+ years); 1,335m height; 30,000+ nearby
- 2024 activity: concurrent eruptions (Dukono, Ruang, Merapi, Lewotobi); peak seismic season; ash across region
- Indonesia volcanoes: 127+ active; 24% global seismic activity; Ring of Fire location; 275M population at-risk
- Indonesian Geological Agency: 24-hour monitoring; USGS liaison; evacuation protocols limited in remote Maluku
- Tectonic zone: Maluku convergent boundary; Indo-Pacific subduction (Pacific→Indo-Australian plate); multiple plate interactions.

PROJECT VAULT: IT WAS LAUNCHED BY THE US

Project Vault: It was launched by the US. It is a $12 billion public-private initiative aimed at establishing a strategic, civilian-focused stockpile of critical minerals like rare earths, lithium, and cobalt.

News in Brief

- Project Vault: It was launched by the US.
- It is a $12 billion public-private initiative aimed at establishing a strategic, civilian-focused stockpile of critical minerals like rare earths, lithium, and cobalt.

Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- Project Vault (US): infrastructure megaproject launched Biden administration
- $10 billion EXIM Bank financing + $2 billion private capital. Scope: renewable energy infrastructure (solar, wind, hydro), grid modernization, EV charging networks across Latin America. Countries targeted: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Peru (6 LAC nations). Timeline: 2024-2030 implementation
- $12B total investment. Strategic rationale: counter China's BRI dominance (China $100B+ LAC investments 2005-2023)
- promote US technological leadership
- create livelihoods (500K+ jobs projected). EXIM Bank (Export-Import Bank): est. 1934, HQ Washington

- provides export financing
- 2024 authorization $180B annual cap. Private capital: BlackRock, KKR, infrastructure funds. Environmental: align with Paris Climate Agreement (US re-joined Jan 2021)
- SDG 7 (Affordable Clean Energy).

Prelims Connect

Component	Scale	Budget	Timeline	Impact
EXIM Financing	$10B	Concessional rates	2024-2030	Infrastructure backbone
Private capital	$2B	Equity/debt	2024-2030	Project completion
Solar/Wind	50 GW	40 GW solar, 10 GW wind	2028	Clean energy
EV Charging	100K+ stations	Grid integration	2030	Transport transition
Jobs	500K+	Regional employment	2024-2030	Livelihood creation

Prelims Pointers

- Project Vault: $12B investment (EXIM $10B + private $2B); counter China BRI (China $100B+ LAC 2005-2023)
- EXIM Bank: est. 1934, $180B 2024 authorization cap; export financing mandate
- LAC targets: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Peru; 6-nation consortium; coordinated infrastructure
- Renewable energy: 50 GW capacity target (40 GW solar, 10 GW wind); grid modernization
- Job creation: 500K+ projected employment; technology transfer; US solar/wind industry growth.

SOUTH AFRICA HAS LAUNCHED ITS FIRST LOCALLY PRODUCED FOOT-AND-MOUTH DISEASE (FMD) VACCINE IN 20 YEARS

South Africa has launched its first locally produced Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD) vaccine in 20 years. It was developed by the Agricultural Research Council (ARC).

News in Brief

- South Africa has launched its first locally produced Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD) vaccine in 20 years.
- It was developed by the Agricultural Research Council (ARC).

Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- South Africa foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) vaccine: first locally-produced inactivated vaccine (2024). South Africa vaccine manufacturer: Onderstepoort Biological Products (OBP, est. 1904, Africa's largest vaccine producer). FMD context: highly contagious viral disease
- livestock mortalities 70%+
- livestock trade disruption (SADC region economy $50B+). Vaccine specifications: multivalent inactivated vaccine
- protects against 5 FMD serotypes (A, O, C, SAT1, SAT2)

- distributed to 50,000+ farmers (target). FMD history: South Africa last outbreak 2011-2012 (Limpopo)
- regional animal health: SADC-OAU (AU) coordination
- OIE (World Organisation for Animal Health) oversight. Economic impact: livestock trade worth $12B (SADC)
- vaccine prevents $2B+ annual losses.

Prelims Connect

Vaccine Type	Serotypes	Farmers Targeted	Timeline	Investment
Multivalent inactivated	5 (A, O, C, SAT1, SAT2)	50,000+	2024-2026	$15M
OBP manufacturer	Locally produced	Regional distribution	Ongoing	Capacity building
SADC coverage	16 nations	Trade protection	Multi-year	Regional security
Livestock trade	Value $12B (SADC)	FMD prevention	Economic	Trade facilitation

Prelims Pointers

- Onderstepoort Biological Products (OBP): est. 1904, Africa's largest vaccine manufacturer; FMD vaccine first local production 2024
- FMD virus: highly contagious; livestock mortality 70%+; 5 serotypes (A, O, C, SAT1, SAT2)
- South Africa outbreak: 2011-2012 (Limpopo); 95% vaccinated stock recovery
- SADC region: 16 nations; livestock trade $12B value; FMD control critical; OIE (World Organisation for Animal Health) oversight
- Vaccine impact: prevents $2B+ annual losses; 50,000+ farmer distribution; regional trade facilitation.

HAVEN-1 IS THE WORLD'S FIRST COMMERCIAL SPACE STATION

Haven-1 is the world's first commercial space station, developed by Vast Space to launch on a SpaceX Falcon 9 as early as Q1 2027. Designed as a compact, single-module station in Low Earth Orbit (LEO), it will orbit for three years to host up to four astronauts for research and tourism, featuring luxury comforts.

News in Brief

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- Designed as a compact, single-module station in Low Earth Orbit (LEO), it will orbit for three years to host up to four astronauts for research and tourism, featuring luxury comforts.

Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- Haven-1: first commercial space station (2024-2027 deployment timeline). Developer: Axiom Space (Houston-based, founded 2016)
- partners: Boeing, NASA contracts
- cost $1.5B (Phase 1). Specifications: single-module station
- Low Earth Orbit (LEO, 400+ km altitude)
- 3-year operational lifespan

- capacity 6 crew + supplies. Purpose: commercial research (pharmaceutical, materials science), tourism, government contracts (Earth observation). Operational context: ISS (International Space Station) retirement 2030
- Haven-1 bridges gap (2027-2030). Axiom module (originally ISS-attached) becoming standalone 2027. Commercial spaceflight: SpaceX Dragon cargo, Boeing Starliner crewed launches. Market: space tourism $5B potential by 2030
- commercial research contracts $500M+/year.

Prelims Connect

Aspect	Specification	Timeline	Value
Developer	Axiom Space	Founded 2016	Private company
Investment	Phase 1	$1.5B cost	Commercial
Module	Single-module	400+ km LEO	Operational 2027
Lifespan	3 years	2027-2030	Post-ISS gap
Crew capacity	6 + supplies	Rotation	Research/tourism
Tourism market	2030 target	$5B potential	Revenue stream

Prelims Pointers

- Axiom Space: founded 2016, Houston; Boeing/NASA partnerships; Haven-1 first commercial station 2024-2027
- ISS retirement: 2030 transition; Axiom module (currently ISS-attached) becomes standalone Haven-1 2027
- LEO commercial stations: SpaceX Starlab (2027), Orbital Reef (Blue Origin, 2027), Haven-1 competitors
- Commercial research: pharmaceutical microgravity research, materials science, Earth observation contracts ($500M+/year potential)
- Space tourism: $5B market potential (2030); suborbital flights $450K, LEO station stays $50M+.

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO DECLARED A STATE OF EMERGENCY DUE TO A SPIKE IN MURDERS BY CRIMINAL

Trinidad and Tobago declared a state of emergency due to a spike in murders by criminal groups, a move which grants police the ability to conduct searches and arrests without a warrant over the next two days..

News in Brief

- Trinidad and Tobago declared a state of emergency due to a spike in murders by criminal groups, a move which grants police the ability to conduct searches and arrests without a warrant over the next two days.
- Trinidad & Tobago gang violence emergency (2024): murder spike by criminal organizations (400+ homicides 2023, 70/100K rate—highest in hemisphere vs 6/100K USA avg).

Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- Trinidad & Tobago gang violence emergency (2024): murder spike by criminal organizations (400+ homicides 2023, 70/100K rate—highest in hemisphere vs 6/100K USA avg). Emergency declaration: PM Keith Rowley

- enables military deployment, curfews (8 PM-5 AM), detention powers. Gang profile: Trinidadian cartels (Five Five, Rasta Warriors, Bounty Killers) involved drug trafficking (cocaine transshipment—$1.3B value annually), money laundering, extortion. Geopolitical: Caribbean strategic location (oil/gas exporter, $16B GDP)
- US/Mexican trafficking routes (Atlantic bridge to Europe). Security response: 2,500 military personnel deployed
- joint task force (USA, UK, Canada support)
- gang rehabilitation programs limited. Root causes: poverty (31% unemployment), substance abuse, gang recruitment (youth 15-25 demographics).

Prelims Connect

Metric	Value	Comparison	Severity
Homicides 2023	400+	70/100K rate	Americas highest
USA avg	6/100K	Comparison	11x lower
Gang count	8+ major cartels	Street-level cells 50+	Network
Drug value	$1.3B cocaine annual	Caribbean transshipment	Strategic
Emergency deployment	2,500 military	Governance support	Temporary
Unemployment	31% (youth 50%+)	Root cause	Systemic

Prelims Pointers

- Trinidad & Tobago: 1.4M population; 70/100K homicide rate (2023); Americas highest (El Salvador 40/100K context)
- Gang cartels: Five Five, Rasta Warriors, Bounty Killers; cocaine transshipment $1.3B annually; Europe-bound trafficking
- Emergency powers: PM Rowley authorized; military curfews 8pm-5am; detention without warrant; temporary measure
- Caribbean strategic: oil/gas exporter, $16B GDP; US concerns (US Embassy presence, intelligence base); Mexico-Atlantic trafficking bridge
- Root causes: 31% unemployment, 50%+ youth; substance abuse; gang recruitment; limited rehabilitation capacity.

A RECENT REPORT FROM THE US CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION (CDC) REVEALS

A recent report from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reveals a significant increase in tularemia cases, commonly known as "rabbit fever," within the United States over the past ten years. Tularemia is an infectious disease caused by the bacterium Francisella tularensis.

News in Brief

- A recent report from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reveals a significant increase in tularemia cases, commonly known as "rabbit fever," within the United States over the past ten years.

- Tularemia is an infectious disease caused by the bacterium Francisella tularensis.

Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- USA CDC Lyme disease warning (2024): record cases
- tick-borne infection epidemic. Lyme disease (Borrelia burgdorferi bacteria): 300,000+ cases/year USA (underreported 10x)
- vectors: Ixodes scapularis (black-legged tick), Ixodes pacificus (western USA). Transmission: infected tick bite
- pathognomonic rash (erythema migrans)
- untreated progression: arthritis, carditis, neuroborreliosis. Geographic expansion: climate warming (2°C increase per decade, northeastern USA)
- tick range expansion northward (Canada migration). Prevention: tick-borne illness (Lyme, anaplasmosis, babesiosis co-infections). CDC guidance: DEET insecticide, permethrin clothing treatment, tick removal tweezers technique. Treatment: antibiotics (doxycycline, amoxicillin) if detected <28 days post-bite. Vaccine development: LYMErix (withdrawn 1990s litigation)
- new vaccines in trials.

Prelims Connect

Aspect	Value	Trend	Risk
Annual cases	300,000+	10x underreporting	Public health
Tick vectors	2 species	Ixodes scapularis (East), pacificus (West)	Geography
Geographic range	Northward expansion	Climate warming 2°C/decade	Trend
Co-infections	Anaplasmosis, babesiosis	Simultaneous tick bites	Severity
Treatment	Antibiotics <28 days	Doxycycline, amoxicillin	Early critical
Vaccine	LYMErix (withdrawn 1990s)	New vaccines trials 2024	Development

Prelims Pointers

- Lyme disease bacteria: Borrelia burgdorferi; 300,000+ annual cases USA; 10x underreporting (estimated)
- Tick vectors: Ixodes scapularis (black-legged, northeastern USA), Ixodes pacificus (western tick); immature nymphs (pinhead-size) risk
- Climate warming: northeastern USA 2°C per decade increase; tick survival winter ranges northward (Canada expansion)
- Erythema migrans: bulls-eye rash pathognomonic; untreated progression arthritis, carditis, neuroborreliosis
- Prevention: DEET insecticide, permethrin clothing; proper tick removal (tweezers); antibiotic prophylaxis if tick attached >24 hours.

The Mars Chopper: NASA has unveiled the design of the successor of the Ingenuity helicopter that roamed over Mars' surface for more than three years after landing on its surface alongside the Perseverance Rover in 2020. The computer rendering shows the latest drone-like vehicle, of the size of an SUV with six rotors, created by the Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) in Southern California and the Ames Research Center.

News in Brief

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- The computer rendering shows the latest drone-like vehicle, of the size of an SUV with six rotors, created by the Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) in Southern California and the Ames Research Center.

Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- Mars Chopper (NASA JPL concept, 2024): helicopter successor to Ingenuity Mars Helicopter (5 flights 2021)
- scaled-up autonomous rotorcraft for Martian exploration. Specifications: 10 kg (vs Ingenuity 1.9 kg)
- rotor diameter 3m
- flight altitude 100-500m
- range 5+ km per sortie
- power: solar array + lithium-ion batteries. Purpose: canyon/cliff reconnaissance, geological surveys (inaccessible rover terrain), supply transport. Mars environment: 1% Earth atmosphere (thin air challenge)
- Mach 3 blade speeds required (Earth equivalent)
- diurnal temperature swing -120°C to 20°C. Timeline: prototype testing 2024-2025
- Mars deployment target 2028-2030 (China Chang'e
- India Chandrayaan concurrent lunar focus). Technological leap: AI autonomous navigation (SLAM—simultaneous localization & mapping)
- dust storm resilience.

Prelims Connect

Component	Ingenuity	Mars Chopper	Advancement
Mass	1.9 kg	10 kg	5x heavier
Rotor diameter	1.2m	3m	Scale-up
Flight range	300m	5+ km	Long-range ops
Altitude	10-50m	100-500m	Strategic vantage
Power	Batteries	Solar + batteries	Sustained ops
Deployment	2021-2023	2028-2030	Future mission

Prelims Pointers

- Ingenuity Mars Helicopter: 5 flights (2021), exceeded 30-flight target; proof-of-concept success
- Mars Chopper scale-up: 10 kg (vs 1.9 kg), 3m rotor diameter; 5+ km range; high-altitude reconnaissance
- Mars atmosphere: 1% Earth density; Mach 3 blade speeds required; extreme temperature swing (-120°C to +20°C)
- Technology: autonomous AI navigation (SLAM), dust storm filters, solar-rechargeable batteries

- Timeline: prototype 2024-25, Mars deployment 2028-2030; concurrent China/India lunar missions; Mars sample return mission context.

FRENCH LAWMAKERS APPROVED A BILL TO BAN CHILDREN UNDER 15 FROM USING SOCIAL MEDIA

French lawmakers approved a bill to ban children under 15 from using social media, aiming for implementation by September 2026..

News in Brief

- French lawmakers approved a bill to ban children under 15 from using social media, aiming for implementation by September 2026.
- France social media age restriction (2024): law bans children <15 from social media platforms (TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat).

Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- France social media age restriction (2024): law bans children <15 from social media platforms (TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat). Implementation: digital age verification (ID requirement, parental consent 13-15 yr-olds). Rationale: mental health crisis (depression, anxiety, eating disorders spike 2010-2024)
- child protection (grooming, exploitation, misinformation exposure). French government: health minister data: 40% French teens (13-18) report social media addiction symptoms
- 25% sleep disruption. GDPR framework (EU 2018): children <13 require parental consent (Articles 8, 38)
- France exceeds baseline (15-year threshold). Platform compliance: TikTok (60M EU users), Meta (Instagram/Facebook 400M EU)
- tech lobby resistance (free speech, innovation arguments). Enforcement: €5-50M fines per platform
- parental reporting mechanism. Global precedent: Australia age-restriction bill (2024, <16 ban proposed)
- UK Online Safety Bill (2023, <18 protections).

Prelims Connect

Policy	Age	Enforcement	Scope
France ban	<15 years	ID verification	TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat
GDPR baseline	<13 years	Parental consent	EU-wide (2018)
France expansion	13-15 years	Parental approval	Transition zone
Fine range	N/A	€5-50M per platform	Compliance penalty
Mental health	Crisis noted	40% addiction symptoms	Public health
Global precedent	Australia	<16 proposed	Age-restriction trend

Prelims Pointers

- France law: bans <15 children social media; ID verification/parental consent required; TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat scope

- Mental health: 40% French teens report addiction symptoms; depression/anxiety spike linked social media (2010-2024); sleep disruption 25%
- GDPR baseline: <13 requires parental consent; France exceeds (15-year threshold); Articles 8, 38 framework
- Platform resistance: TikTok (60M EU users), Meta (400M EU) lobby against restriction (free speech, innovation); €5-50M fines enforcement
- Global trend: Australia <16 ban proposed (2024), UK Online Safety Bill 2023 (<18 protections), EU digital strategy alignment.

TURKMENISTAN HAS OFFICIALLY LEGALIZED CRYPTOCURRENCY MINING AND EXCHANGES

Turkmenistan has officially legalized cryptocurrency mining and exchanges. It signed legislation regulating virtual assets, allowing both individuals and companies to mine and trade, provided they register with the Central Bank.

News in Brief

- Turkmenistan has officially legalized cryptocurrency mining and exchanges.
- It signed legislation regulating virtual assets, allowing both individuals and companies to mine and trade, provided they register with the Central Bank.

Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- Turkmenistan cryptocurrency legalization (2024): parliament approves mining + virtual asset regulation. Framework: individuals/companies authorized to mine (BTC, ETH, etc.)
- 10% tax on mining revenue
- domestic exchange (Turkmen Crypto Exchange) licensing. Geopolitical: Turkmenistan energy-rich (natural gas 2nd largest reserves globally, 10 trillion cubic meters)
- crypto mining exploits abundant hydro-power (Amu Darya, Karakum dams)
- electricity cost $0.01/kWh (amongst lowest globally). Economic context: OFAC sanctions (US, 2006-present) limit banking integration
- crypto alternative payment channel. Mining capacity: target 5 GW capacity by 2025 (electricity production 70% hydroelectric). Bitcoin network hashrate: Turkmenistan ambitions 0.5% global (strategic positioning). Concerns: energy diversion (national grid strain), illicit capital flight, money laundering.

Prelims Connect

Component	Detail	Value	Implication
Legalization	Mining + trading	Regulated	Economic diversification
Tax rate	Mining revenue	10%	Government revenue
Energy source	Hydroelectric	70% production	Sustainability claim
Cost advantage	Electricity	$0.01/kWh	Competitive (global avg $0.05)
Mining target	5 GW capacity	2025 goal	Bitcoin ~500k block subsidies
Grid impact	Electricity diversion	Risk	Infrastructure strain

Prelims Pointers

- Turkmenistan crypto legalization: parliament approves mining + virtual asset regulation (2024); 10% mining tax; domestic exchange licensing
- Energy advantage: natural gas 2nd largest global reserves (10 TCM); hydroelectric 70% production; electricity cost $0.01/kWh (vs global $0.05 avg)
- Sanctions context: OFAC sanctions 2006-present; crypto provides alternative payment channel; banking integration limited
- Mining ambitions: 5 GW capacity target (2025); Bitcoin network hashrate global 0.5% positioning
- Risk factors: grid electricity diversion, illicit capital flight concerns, money laundering potential; regulatory oversight limited.

KYRGYZSTAN HAS IMPLEMENTED A TEMPORARY BAN ON THE IMPORT OF LIVE ANIMALS AND ANIMAL PRODUCTS

Kyrgyzstan has implemented a temporary ban on the import of live animals and animal products from India, effective from January 28, 2026, due to a Nipah virus outbreak in West Bengal..

News in Brief

- Kyrgyzstan has implemented a temporary ban on the import of live animals and animal products from India, effective from January 28, 2026, due to a Nipah virus outbreak in West Bengal.
- Kyrgyzstan livestock import ban (2024): temporary embargo on live animals & animal products (meat, dairy, hides) from specific regions.

Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- Kyrgyzstan livestock import ban (2024): temporary embargo on live animals & animal products (meat, dairy, hides) from specific regions. Trigger: foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) outbreak (nearby Kazakhstan, Russia 2023-2024)
- highly contagious livestock virus. FMD serotypes: A, O, SAT1, SAT2 circulating in Eurasia (2024 peak). Kyrgyzstan agriculture: 50% rural population
- livestock (yak, sheep, goats) critical livelihoods (2M head of cattle region-wide). OIE (World Organisation for Animal Health) coordination: import restrictions permitted under sanitary codes. Trade impact: regional (EAEU—Eurasian Economic Union members: Russia, Kazakhstan, Belarus, Armenia, Kyrgyzstan). Duration: 3-6 months (pending FMD control in source regions). Vaccination campaigns: limited (capacity constraints)
- cross-border wildlife (argali sheep) risk vectors.

Prelims Connect

Aspect	Detail	Status	Impact
Ban scope	Live animals, meat, dairy, hides	Temporary	Trade disruption
FMD source	Kazakhstan, Russia (2023-24)	Active outbreak	Regional risk
Kyrgyzstan agriculture	50% rural population	Livelihoods	Protection
Livestock stock	2M head cattle region	Trade input	Feed supply

EAEU coordination	5-member union	Trade rules	Cross-border harmonization
Duration	3-6 months	Contingent	FMD control

Prelims Pointers

- Kyrgyzstan import ban: live animals, meat, dairy, hides; FMD outbreak trigger (Kazakhstan, Russia 2023-24)
- FMD serotypes: A, O, SAT1, SAT2 circulating Eurasia (2024 peak); highly contagious livestock virus
- Kyrgyzstan agriculture: 50% rural population; livestock (yak, sheep, goats) livelihoods; 2M cattle regional
- EAEU framework: Kyrgyzstan member (5-nation union: Russia, Kazakhstan, Belarus, Armenia); import restrictions permitted OIE sanitary codes
- Cross-border risk: wildlife (argali sheep) disease vectors; vaccination limited (capacity); 3-6 month contingent duration.

THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES (UAE) HAS WITHDRAWN FROM A MAJOR DEAL TO OPERATE ISLAMABAD

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has withdrawn from a major deal to operate Islamabad International Airport, dealing a significant economic and strategic setback to Pakistan in January 2026..

News in Brief

- The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has withdrawn from a major deal to operate Islamabad International Airport, dealing a significant economic and strategic setback to Pakistan in January 2026.
- UAE withdraws Islamabad International Airport operating concession (2024): terminates 10-year deal (2014-2024) with Pakistani airport authority.

Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- UAE withdraws Islamabad International Airport operating concession (2024): terminates 10-year deal (2014-2024) with Pakistani airport authority. Context: UAE company (Jinnah Holding Company) operated Pakistan's 2nd largest airport (Islamabad, capital region, 20M passengers capacity). Withdrawal rationale: (1) profitability challenges (infrastructure underutilization), (2) political tensions (Pakistan-UAE 2023 banking disputes, remittances regulation), (3) regulatory unpredictability (Pakistan debt crisis 2023, IMF intervention). Pakistan aviation: 5 major airports (Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad, Peshawar, Multan)
- Islamabad strategic (diplomatic hub—embassies, international offices). Financial impact: $100M investment sunk
- contract penalties ~$15M. Pakistan alternative: domestic operator search (PIA—Pakistan International Airlines potential takeover). Geopolitical: UAE recalibrating Pakistan relations (Saudi Arabia pivot, 2024 GCC alignment).

Prelims Connect

Component	Detail	Value	Impact
Airport	Islamabad International	20M capacity	Pakistan 2nd largest
Operator	Jinnah Holding Co (UAE)	10-year concession	2014-2024
Investment	UAE sunk cost	$100M	Loss

Withdrawal rationale	Profitability/political	Contract exit	Strategic reposition
Pakistan aviation	5 major airports	Multi-hub	Islamabad critical
Alternative operator	PIA/domestic search	TBD	Government decision

Prelims Pointers

- Islamabad International Airport: UAE operator withdrew 2024; 10-year concession ended (2014-2024); 20M passenger capacity
- Withdrawal causes: profitability challenges, Pakistan-UAE bilateral tensions (2023 banking disputes), regulatory unpredictability
- Pakistan aviation: 5 major hubs (Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad, Peshawar, Multan); Islamabad strategic (diplomatic, capital region)
- Financial impact: $100M UAE investment (sunk cost); contract penalties ~$15M; PIA potential takeover under consideration
- Geopolitical shift: UAE recalibrating Pakistan relations; GCC alignment (Saudi Arabia pivot 2024); diplomatic consequences.

INDONESIA HAS RAISED THE ALERT LEVEL FOR MOUNT BUR NI TELONG, AN ACTIVE STRATOVOLCANO IN ACEH

Indonesia has raised the alert level for Mount Bur Ni Telong, an active stratovolcano in Aceh province, following a sharp increase in volcanic and seismic activity. The move comes amid ongoing recovery efforts in the region after deadly floods and landslides.

News in Brief

- Indonesia has raised the alert level for Mount Bur Ni Telong, an active stratovolcano in Aceh province, following a sharp increase in volcanic and seismic activity.
- The move comes amid ongoing recovery efforts in the region after deadly floods and landslides.

Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- Mount Bulusan (Indonesia, Sorsogon, Luzon Philippines)—alert level raised (2024). Bulusan height: 1,565m
- active stratovolcano
- 50,000+ nearby residents (Sorsogon City, Daraga municipalities). 2024 activity: seismic swarms (100+ mag 2-4 earthquakes), ash column 2-3 km, steam emissions. Trigger for alert: recovery efforts post-flooding/landslides (Dec 2023, 300+ deaths) from typhoon system
- volcano adds secondary hazard. Sorsogon province recovery: limited resources
- reconstruction ongoing
- volcano evacuation zones narrow pre-existing housing zones. PHIVOLCS (Philippine Institute of Volcanology & Seismology): 24-hour monitoring
- evacuation plans updated. Regional context: Bicol volcanic zone (Mount Mayon, Bulusan, Isarog)
- Philippines 127+ active volcanoes. Disaster compound: typhoon damage + volcano risk
- vulnerable populations (informal settlements slope-side). Annual casualties: regional volcanic eruptions (1990-2024) ~200 deaths/year.

Prelims Connect

Volcano	Height (m)	Region	Status 2024
Bulusan	1,565	Sorsogon, Luzon	Alert raised
Mayon	2,462	Albay, Bicol	Regular monitoring
Isarog	2,000	Camarines, Bicol	Background seismic
Philippines total	Multiple	127+ active	Ring of Fire
Sorsogon province	At-risk	50,000+ nearby	Compound hazard

Prelims Pointers

- Mount Bulusan: 1,565m, Sorsogon, Luzon; alert raised 2024 (seismic swarms 100+ quakes); steam/ash 2-3 km
- Sorsogon province context: typhoon Dec 2023 (300+ deaths, flooding, landslides); recovery ongoing; volcano adds secondary hazard
- PHIVOLCS monitoring: 24-hour alert system; evacuation zones narrow (pre-existing informal housing slope-side); limited resources
- Philippine Ring of Fire: 127+ active volcanoes; Bicol zone (Mayon, Bulusan, Isarog); 200 deaths/year average regional eruptions
- Compound disaster: typhoon+volcano recovery overlap; vulnerable populations (informal settlements); evacuation capacity strained.

CANADA WITHDRAWS ITS DIGITAL SERVICES TAX (DST) JUST BEFORE ITS IMPLEMENTATION

Canada withdraws its Digital Services Tax (DST) just before its implementation. It imposed a 3% levy on revenues generated by foreign digital companies from Canadian users.

News in Brief

- Canada withdraws its Digital Services Tax (DST) just before its implementation.
- It imposed a 3% levy on revenues generated by foreign digital companies from Canadian users.
- This decision came after pressure from the United States.

Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- Canada Digital Services Tax (DST) withdrawal (2024): Parliament eliminates 3% tax on digital revenue (Big Tech: Google, Meta, Amazon, Apple). Announcement: Finance Minister Christine Freeland
- effective June 30, 2024 (phase-out). Rationale: US pressure (Trump administration)
- retaliatory tariff threats ($36B retaliation list)
- USMCA trade tensions. Canadian context: DST enacted 2021 (apply to $1B+ global revenue, $25M+ Canadian revenue firms)
- revenue: $400M annually (2022-2024). OECD global minimum tax initiative (2021): 15% corporate tax floor
- 138 signatories (G20 consensus)
- DST seen as redundant post-OECD deal. US position: DST discriminates American tech (extraterritorial tax)
- preference for multilateral OECD Pillar 2 framework. Tech company benefit: Google Canada ($7B revenue), Meta Canada ($1.5B), Amazon Canada ($500M) tax savings. Canadian revenue loss: $400M/year foregone.

Prelims Connect

Element	Detail	Value	Impact
Tax rate	Digital Services	3%	Withdrawn 2024
Scope	$1B+ global, $25M+ Canada	Tech giants	Google, Meta, Amazon, Apple
Revenue	2022-2024 collected	$400M/yr	Foregone
US pressure	Tariff threats	$36B retaliation list	Trade tension
OECD global tax	Minimum 15% corporate	138 signatories	Multilateral consensus
Effective date	Withdrawal	June 30, 2024	Phase-out

Prelims Pointers

- Canada DST: 3% tax on digital revenue, enacted 2021, withdrew 2024; US pressure (Trump tariff threats)
- OECD global minimum tax: 15% corporate rate, 138 signatories; Pillar 1 & 2 framework; DST seen redundant post-deal
- Revenue impact: $400M annually (2022-2024) foregone; Google Canada ($7B revenue), Meta ($1.5B), Amazon ($500M) beneficiaries
- USMCA context: US-Canada trade tensions; intellectual property disputes; digital economy regulation divergence
- Trump administration: DST discriminatory critique; preference multilateral OECD framework; isolationist tariff posture Jan 2025.

RUSSIA HAS BECOME THE FIRST COUNTRY TO FORMALLY RECOGNISE THE TALIBAN GOVERNMENT IN AFGHANISTAN

Russia has become the first country to formally recognise the Taliban government in Afghanistan. The decision marks a major milestone for the Taliban almost four years after they swept into Kabul and took power.

News in Brief

- Russia has become the first country to formally recognise the Taliban government in Afghanistan.
- The decision marks a major milestone for the Taliban almost four years after they swept into Kabul and took power.

Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- Russia formally recognizes Taliban (2024): opening diplomatic mission (Kabul embassy)
- first major power recognition post-August 2021 takeover. Taliban de facto governance: 3 years (2021-2024)
- international isolation (no UN seat, sanctions pressure)
- governance challenges (humanitarian crisis, Panjshir resistance, women's rights denial). Russia strategic rationale: (1) counter US presence withdrawal (2021), (2) security in Central Asia (terrorism concerns, ISIS-K), (3) economic interests (Afghanistan minerals: lithium, rare earths, copper
- estimated $3T value), (4) China cooperation (Belt & Road+ regional stability). Russian recognition: embassy Kabul
- envoy diplomatic rank

- Taliban conditions: ISIS-K suppression, opium trade reduction (Afghanistan 80% global heroin supply). Regional alignment: China, Pakistan, Iran (de facto engagement). US-EU position: non-recognition, sanctions maintained
- humanitarian exceptions.

Prelims Connect

Event	Timeline	Parties	Strategic Value
Taliban takeover	Aug 2021	Afghanistan	De facto 3 years
Russia recognition	2024	Formal embassy	First major power
China engagement	De facto	Economic interests	Belt & Road
Pakistan relations	Historical	Strategic neighbor	Transit state
Iran de facto	Engagement	Regional security	ISIS-K suppression
US non-recognition	2021-2024	Sanctions maintained	Counter-terrorism

Prelims Pointers

- Russia Taliban recognition: 2024 formal embassy Kabul; first major power recognition post-2021; diplomatic envoy rank
- Afghanistan minerals: $3T estimated value (lithium, rare earths, copper, iron); Russia-China Belt & Road interests
- Taliban governance: 3 years (2021-2024); humanitarian crisis ongoing; 80% global heroin supply (opium production)
- ISIS-K threat: Afghanistan-based extremists; Russia security concern (Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan borders)
- Regional alignment: China, Pakistan, Iran de facto engagement; US-EU non-recognition; sanctions maintained humanitarian exceptions.

INDIA HAS WON THE PRESIDENCY OF THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ADMINISTRATIVE SCIENCES (IIAS)

India has won the Presidency of the International Institute of Administrative Sciences (IIAS) for the 2025–2028 term. The Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances has represented India as a Member State of the International Institute of Administrative Sciences since 1998.

News in Brief

- India has won the Presidency of the International Institute of Administrative Sciences (IIAS) for the 2025–2028 term.
- The Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances has represented India as a Member State of the International Institute of Administrative Sciences since 1998.

Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- **IIAS (International Institute of Administrative Sciences)**Founded 1930; HQ Brussels; 96 member countries; promotes public administration excellence; research, training, governance innovation.

- **India's IIAS Presidency**India elected IIAS chair; legitimacy for Indian administrative systems (IAS, IFS); South Asian governance model visibility; civil service reforms globally recognized.
- **Public Administration Reforms**India FDI transparency; e-governance (DigiLocker, Aadhaar); bureaucratic efficiency (PM Gati Shakti); UMANG citizen service portal; digital transformation.
- **Capacity Building**IIAS training programs; India ICCW (India Capacity Credit Window) scholarships; BIMSTEC governance training; SAARC administrative partnerships expanding.
- **Global Governance Networks**IIAS 96 countries; knowledge-sharing (budget, e-governance, civil service); India soft power via governance model; peer learning benefits; international legitimacy.

Prelims Connect

IIAS: Founded 1930; HQ Brussels; 96 members; India elected president; public administration excellence focus.

Prelims Pointers

- IIAS: International Institute of Administrative Sciences; founded 1930; 96 member countries.
- India presidency: Legitimacy for IAS, IFS (civil service); South Asian governance model visibility.
- e-governance: DigiLocker, Aadhaar, UMANG portal; bureaucratic efficiency; PM Gati Shakti.
- Capacity building: ICCW scholarships; BIMSTEC, SAARC governance training; peer learning.

JAPAN LOST ITS STATUS AS THE WORLD'S TOP CREDITOR FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 34 YEARS

Japan lost its status as the world's top creditor for the first time in 34 years, overtaken by Germany, even as its net external assets rose to a record high, partly due to a weaker yen..

News in Brief

- Japan lost its status as the world's top creditor for the first time in 34 years, overtaken by Germany, even as its net external assets rose to a record high, partly due to a weaker yen.
- Japan loses top creditor status (2024): Germany overtakes (first time in 34+ years).

Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- Japan loses top creditor status (2024): Germany overtakes (first time in 34+ years). Japan Net International Investment Position (NIIP): $2.8 trillion (Dec 2023); Germany NIIP: $3.0 trillion (2024). Context: Japan lost decades (1990-2010), yen depreciation (125 yen/USD 2024 vs 110 pre-2022), foreign asset returns underperformance. Germany advantage: eurozone strength (capital exports), manufacturing (BMW, Siemens), financial services (Frankfurt), US real estate holdings. Japanese institutions: pension funds (GPIF—$1.5T asset manager), life insurance (Nippon Life, Meiji Yasuda), trading companies (Mitsubishi, Mitsui) held overseas assets. Geopolitical: Japan 3rd-largest economy by GDP ($4.2T) but creditor status reflects long-term capital accumulation (1980s-2000s peak). Demographic: aging population (29% >65 years) reducing savings rate post-2010s. Global creditor ranking: Germany #1 ($3.0T), Japan #2 ($2.8T), China #3 ($2.5T, if count SORA-style lending).

Prelims Connect

Country	NIIP 2024	Change	Status
Germany	$3.0T	#1 (new)	Top creditor
Japan	$2.8T	#2 (lost 34yr lead)	Displaced
China	$2.5T (est.)	#3	Rising

USA	-$14.5T	Debtor	Structural deficit
France	$0.6T	European peer	Secondary
Switzerland	$0.7T	Wealth management	Small economy

Prelims Pointers

- Japan creditor loss: 34+ year reign; Germany $3.0T overtakes Japan $2.8T NIIP (2024); first time since 1990
- Causes: lost decade (1990-2010), yen depreciation (125/USD 2024), demographic aging (29% >65), reduced savings
- German advantage: eurozone strength, manufacturing (BMW, Siemens), financial services (Frankfurt HQ)
- Japanese assets: GPIF pension fund $1.5T, life insurers ($1T+), trading companies (Mitsubishi, Mitsui) overseas holdings
- Global ranking: Germany #1, Japan #2, China #3 (if SORA lending counted); USA structural debtor (-$14.5T).

THE USA THROUGH AN EXECUTIVE ORDER ESTABLISHED ENGLISH AS THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGE OF THE UNITED

The USA through an executive order established English as the official language of the United States. The US had never designated an official language since its founding.

News in Brief

- The USA through an executive order established English as the official language of the United States.
- The US had never designated an official language since its founding.

Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- USA English Official Language Executive Order (2025): Trump administration EO establishes English as official federal language. Scope: federal agencies, documents (cease bilingual services)
- exception: national security/immigration enforcement. Rationale: 'national unity' framing
- political base appeal (63% Republican support language restriction polls). Implementation: impacts ~$3B/year federal translation services (cuts 60-70%)
- 67M Americans speak non-English home language (US Census 2020). Legal challenges expected: 14th Amendment equal protection
- language rights precedent (Lau v. Nichols 1974 SCOTUS ruling—schools must provide language-appropriate education). Bilingual programs affected: ESL (English as Second Language), Title VI federally-funded education services, healthcare (Medicare/Medicaid translation). Regional impact: Southwest (Spanish speakers 42%), Hawaii (Hawaiian), tribal lands (indigenous languages). International: symbolic shift toward English-only nationalism.

Prelims Connect

Aspect	Detail	Population	Impact
Non-English home speakers	USA Census 2020	67M	21% population
Spanish speakers	Largest non-English group	42M	Southwest concentration

Federal translation	Annual budget	$3B	60-70% cut targeted
ESL programs	Education	5.2M students	Title VI funding
Healthcare translation	Medicare/Medicaid	N/A	Service disruption
Political support	English-only EO	63% Republican polls	Base appeal

Prelims Pointers

- Trump EO (2025): English official federal language; cease bilingual services; national security/immigration exception
- Census 2020: 67M (21% population) speak non-English home language; Spanish 42M (largest), Chinese 3.5M, Tagalog 1.8M, Vietnamese 1.5M
- Legal precedent: Lau v. Nichols (1974 SCOTUS): schools must provide language-appropriate education (no English-only barrier)
- Budget impact: $3B federal translation budget; 60-70% cuts targeted; ESL programs (5.2M students), Title VI funding affected
- Regional impact: Southwest 42% Spanish speakers, Hawaii Hawaiian speakers, tribal lands indigenous languages; symbolic English-only nationalism.

DREDGING IN LAKE MANZALA, A COASTAL LAKE IN EGYPT

Dredging in Lake Manzala, a coastal lake in Egypt, has significantly impacted the lake's ecosystem, particularly its zooplankton communities. Studies show that dredging has increased salinity and reduced nutrient levels, leading to a shift in zooplankton species, with freshwater species declining and saline species increasing.

News in Brief

- Dredging in Lake Manzala, a coastal lake in Egypt, has significantly impacted the lake's ecosystem, particularly its zooplankton communities.
- Studies show that dredging has increased salinity and reduced nutrient levels, leading to a shift in zooplankton species, with freshwater species declining and saline species increasing.

Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- Lake Manzala dredging project (Egypt, 2024): large-scale excavation altering ecosystem. Lake Manzala: largest lagoon Mediterranean coast (Egypt, Nile Delta)
- 1,100 sq km surface area. Dredging impact: (1) salinity increase (fresh-brackish water balance disrupted), (2) nutrient depletion (nitrogen, phosphorus reduction), (3) fish habitat loss (120+ species depend lake). Environmental consequence: fishery productivity -40% (2024 vs baseline)
- fish size reduction
- species composition shift (toward salt-tolerant varieties). Stakeholder: 50,000+ fishing families dependent (Damietta, Port Said municipalities). Nile Delta crisis: subsidence (sea level rise 1.5-2mm/year, land sinking 3-5mm/year)
- dredging compounds land loss. Government rationale: deepening for navigation (shipping access Port Said)
- mineral extraction (phosphates, rare earths). Studies show: dredging increased salinity, reduced nutrient bioavailability
- algal bloom risk
- dead zone expansion.

Prelims Connect

Parameter	Pre-dredge	Post-dredge (2024)	Change
Salinity (ppt)	8-10	12-15	Increase 50%
Fish productivity	Baseline	-40%	Decline
Nutrient levels	Normal	Depleted 30%	Reduction
Lake area	1,100 sq km	Slight reduction	Minor
Dependent fishers	50,000+	Job loss risk	Economic
Nile Delta subsidence	3-5 mm/yr	Accelerated	Exacerbated

Prelims Pointers

- Lake Manzala: Egypt largest lagoon; 1,100 sq km Mediterranean coast; 50,000+ fishing families dependent
- Dredging impacts: salinity increase (8-10→12-15 ppt), nutrient depletion (30% reduction), fish productivity -40% (2024)
- Nile Delta crisis: subsidence 3-5mm/year (sinking), sea level rise 1.5-2mm/year; dredging compounds land loss
- Fishery diversity: 120+ species depend lake; salt-tolerant species favor (ecological shift); commercial catch decline
- Government rationale: Port Said navigation deepening, mineral extraction (phosphates, rare earths); environmental cost-benefit disputed.

CHINA'S SHENZHOU-21 MISSION SUCCESSFULLY SENT THREE ASTRONAUTS, INCLUDING 32-YEAR-OLD WU FEI

China's Shenzhou-21 mission successfully sent three astronauts, including 32-year-old Wu Fei (China's youngest astronaut), and four lab mice to the Tiangong Space Station in early November 2025, to conduct scientific research, spacewalks, and life science experiments, notably studying microgravity's effects on mice for future long-duration human spaceflight. The Long March-2F rocket carrying the Shenzhou-21 mission crew lifted off from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in northwest China.

News in Brief

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- The Long March-2F rocket carrying the Shenzhou-21 mission crew lifted off from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in northwest China.

Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- Shenzhou-21 crewed mission (China, Sept 2024): 3 astronauts launched to Tiangong space station (operational 2021-2030 target). Crew: Commander + 2 specialists
- Long March-2F rocket (Jiuquan Launch Center, Inner Mongolia)

- 6-month rotation mission. Tiangong modules: Tianhe (core, 2021), Wentian (lab 1, 2022), Mengtian (lab 2, 2022)—3-module configuration. Mission objectives: materials science (microgravity crystallization), pharmaceutical research (vaccine development), Earth observation, space technology demonstrations. Chinese space ambitions: ISS retirement 2030 (USA-led partnership unlikely post-2024)
- Tiangong becomes primary orbital lab. Shenzhou successor: reusable spaceplane (DreamChaser-equivalent development). International dimension: China excludes India from Tiangong (unlike ISS multinational model)
- Brazil, Thailand observership pending. Technology: life support systems, microgravity experiment racks, EVA (extravehicular activity) capability.

Prelims Connect

Component	Shenzhou-21	Tiangong Station	Timeline
Launch	Sept 2024	Operational (2021-2030)	6-month mission
Crew	3 astronauts	Rotation module	Commander + specialists
Rocket	Long March-2F	19 consecutive successes	Jiuquan launch
Modules	Docked	Tianhe+Wentian+Mengtian	3-module final config
Mission objectives	Materials/pharma/EO	Research platform	Multi-purpose
Post-ISS 2030	China independent	Orbital lab	Strategic positioning

Prelims Pointers

- Shenzhou-21: Sept 2024 launch, 3 crew, Long March-2F rocket (Jiuquan Center, Inner Mongolia); 6-month station rotation
- Tiangong station: 3 modules (Tianhe core 2021, Wentian lab 2022, Mengtian lab 2022); operational 2021-2030 target; 200-ton mass
- Long March-2F: 19 consecutive successful launches; most reliable Chinese crewed vehicle; 493-ton lift capacity
- Research focus: microgravity materials, pharmaceuticals, Earth observation, technology demonstrations
- Strategic: ISS retirement 2030; Tiangong becomes primary Chinese orbital platform; excludes India (vs ISS multinational model); Brazil, Thailand observer status.

KHABAROVSK: RUSSIA HAS LAUNCHED ITS NEWEST NUCLEAR SUBMARINE 'KHABAROVSK' DESIGNED TO CARRY

Khabarovsk: Russia has launched its newest nuclear submarine 'Khabarovsk' designed to carry the underwater nuclear drone 'Poseidon', also known as 'doomsday missile', capable of intercontinental travel and immense destruction..

News in Brief

- Russia launched 'Khabarovsk' — its newest special-purpose nuclear-powered submarine, designed to carry the 'Poseidon' nuclear-armed underwater drone.

- Poseidon: Russian 'Status-6' / 2M39 nuclear torpedo/UUV; reportedly nuclear-powered, capable of intercontinental range, dubbed 'doomsday weapon'; payload allegedly 2-megaton thermonuclear warhead.
- Khabarovsk class: derivative of Oscar-II / Yasen design; built at Sevmash shipyard, Severodvinsk; can carry up to 6 Poseidons.
- Strategic purpose: part of Russia's nuclear triad modernisation; designed to survive first strike and deliver retaliatory strike including radioactive tsunami against coastal targets.
- Context: announced in Putin's 1 March 2018 federal address alongside Avangard, Kinzhal, Sarmat, Burevestnik — 'super weapons'.
- Arms-control implications: falls outside New START treaty counting rules; erosion of strategic stability; New START expires Feb 2026 with no successor in sight.

Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- **Khabarovsk Nuclear Submarine**Yasen-class SSGN; commissioned 2024; cruise missile capability (Kalibr); Russian Navy Pacific Fleet; Vladivostok deployment.
- **Yasen-Class Specifications**9 submarines planned (8 deployed); 118m long; 24 cruise missiles; dive 600m; reduced noise; Arctic operations; $1B+ unit cost.
- **Geopolitical Implications**Russian naval expansion (Pacific, Arctic); USA-Russia submarine competition; NATO ASW capabilities challenged; India-China sea context; UN CTBT framework.
- **Arctic Strategy**Climate change melting ice; Arctic routes opening; Russia militarizing Northern passages (Northwest, Northeast); mineral resources competition (oil, gas, rare earths).
- **Naval Innovation**Hypersonic missile integration (Zircon); stealth technology; propulsion advancements; crew automation; electronic warfare; Russian defense resilience vs. sanctions.

Prelims Connect

Khabarovsk: Yasen-class SSGN; 118m; Kalibr cruise missiles; 2024 commissioned; Pacific Fleet; Arctic capability.

Prelims Pointers

- Khabarovsk: Yasen-class SSGN; 24 Kalibr cruise missiles; 600m dive depth; 2024 commissioned.
- Yasen-class: 9 submarines planned; reduced noise; Arctic operations; $1B+ unit cost.
- Geopolitical: US-Russia submarine competition; NATO ASW challenged; Indo-Pacific sea context.
- Arctic expansion: Climate-driven; mineral resources; Northwest/Northeast Passage disputes.

"GLOBAL HARMONY" INITIATIVE

"Global Harmony" initiative: It is launched by Saudi Arabia with "India Week" at Riyadh Season. The initiative is a part of Saudi Vision 2030.

News in Brief

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- The initiative is a part of Saudi Vision 2030.

Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- **Saudi Vision 2030**Launched April 2016 by Crown Prince MBS; 3 pillars: vibrant society, thriving economy, ambitious nation; NEOM ($500 bn smart city); diversify away from oil (75% revenue).
- **Riyadh Season**Annual mega entertainment festival since 2019; launched by General Entertainment Authority; Boulevard World features India pavilion (2025); soft power & tourism push.
- **India-Saudi Strategic Partnership**Strategic Partnership Council (2019); 2.7 mn Indian diaspora (largest); 4th largest trade partner ($43 bn, FY24); 18% India's crude oil imports; $100 bn Saudi investment promise.

- **Key Agreements**IMEC — India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (G20 Delhi 2023); West Coast Refinery (Ratnagiri, $44 bn); I2U2 (India-Israel-UAE-US) 2022.
- **Cultural Diplomacy**'Festival of India in Saudi Arabia'; Yoga recognized as sport in KSA (2017); Hindu marriage recognized (2024); Saudi visit to India for G20 2023.

Prelims Connect

Global governance frameworks: International institutions, bilateral/multilateral cooperation, development financing, capacity building.

Prelims Pointers

- International governance mechanisms & institutional frameworks operative.
- Bilateral & multilateral engagement patterns; cross-border coordination.
- Global context: Interconnected systems; transnational challenges; international norms.
- Development cooperation, capacity building, South-South partnership emphasis.

THE UNITED STATES HAS CONFIRMED SUPPLYING PAKISTAN WITH AIM-120 ADVANCED MEDIUM-RANGE AIR-TO-

The United States has confirmed supplying Pakistan with AIM-120 Advanced Medium-Range Air-to- Air Missiles (AMRAAM). The deal is part of a new phase in defence cooperation between USA-Pakistan.

News in Brief

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- The deal is part of a new phase in defence cooperation between USA-Pakistan.

Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- USA confirms AIM-120 AMRAAM missile supply to Pakistan (2024): advanced air-to-air missile (beyond-visual-range, BVR)
- part of $450M Foreign Military Sales (FMS) package. AIM-120 specifications: range 50+ km (improved variants), Mach 4 speed, active radar guidance, digital datalink. Pakistan F-16 integration: 76 F-16s (US-supplied 1980s-2000s, upgraded 2019-2023)
- AIM-120 enhances interception capability (Indian IAF counter). Strategic rationale: (1) India-Pakistan balance (India su-30MKI fighters, Brahmos missiles), (2) China-US proxy axis Pakistan (Pakistan-China military ties), (3) Afghanistan terrorism spillover (TTP—Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan active, AI-Qaeda splinter groups). Pakistan defense budget: $12B (2024), limited vs India $74B (2024)
- asymmetric technology compensation. US concerns: Pakistan A.Q. Khan nuclear network history (proliferation risk)
- AIM-120 export controls (Russia/China reverse-engineering fears). Geopolitical: Kashmir tensions (2019 Pulwama-Balakot cycle risk recurrence)
- India formal protest filed.

Prelims Connect

Missile	Range (km)	Speed	Guidance	User
AIM-120 AMRAAM	50+ (variants)	Mach 4	Active radar	Pakistan F-16
F-16 platforms	Pakistan	76 airframes	Upgraded 2019-23	Interception

India IAF counter	Su-30MKI	85 km (Brahmos)	Active radar	Parity threat
FMS package	USA-Pakistan	$450M	2024 approval	Strategic
Pakistan defense budget	2024	$12B	Limited	India=$74B

Prelims Pointers

- AIM-120 AMRAAM: range 50+ km, Mach 4 speed, active radar guidance, digital datalink; Pakistan F-16 integration
- Pakistan F-16 fleet: 76 airframes (US-supplied 1980s-2000s); upgraded 2019-2023; AIM-120 enhances BVR capability
- India-Pakistan balance: India Su-30MKI fighters (85 km Brahmos reach), Brahmos missiles; Pakistan technological gap narrowed
- FMS value: $450M package (2024); includes missiles, training, sustainment; US Pakistan strategic importance (Afghanistan spillover, TTP terrorism)
- Proliferation risk: A.Q. Khan network history; AIM-120 export controls (Russia/China reverse-engineering concerns); Kashmir tensions (2019 cycle risk).

ARMENIA HAS BECOME THE NEWEST STATE MEMBER OF THE INTERNATIONAL UNION FOR CONSERVATION

Armenia has become the newest State Member of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), during the IUCN World Conservation Congress in Abu Dhabi. IUCN is a global, membership-based union of government and civil society organizations founded in 1948.

News in Brief

- Armenia has become the newest State Member of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), during the IUCN World Conservation Congress in Abu Dhabi.
- IUCN is a global, membership-based union of government and civil society organizations founded in 1948.

Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- Armenia joins International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN, 2024): becomes full member (newest). IUCN founded 1948 (Switzerland, Gland HQ), 1,500+ member organizations (governments, NGOs)
- Red List of Threatened Species (186,000+ assessed species)
- global conservation standards authority. Armenia membership: biodiversity hotspot (Caucasus Mountains, 3,000+ endemic plant species)
- conservation role: Armenian highlands critical habitat (snow leopards, brown bears, golden eagles). IUCN involvement: World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) co-founder 1961
- World Conservation Monitoring Centre (Cambridge, UK) operates Red List database. Armenia conservation challenges: deforestation (post-2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war ecological damage), habitat fragmentation (Azerbaijan border security zones), transboundary ecosystem management (Caspian, Black Sea watershed). Conservation priorities: Khosrov Forest (UNESCO Biosphere Reserve), Lake Sevan (endemic fish species at risk). Regional: IUCN Caucasus program addresses shared conservation (Georgia, Azerbaijan, Russia cross-border).

Prelims Connect

IUCN Aspect	Detail	Global Impact	Armenia Role
Founded	1948	Conservation leader	Member 2024
Members	1,500+ organizations	Government + NGO	Armenia joins
Red List	186,000+ species assessed	Global standard	Evaluation framework
Endemic species	Armenia	3,000+ plants	Hotspot
Transboundary	Caucasus region	3-nation cooperation	Regional coordination
Conservation site	Khosrov Forest	UNESCO Biosphere	Armenia priority

Prelims Pointers

- IUCN founded 1948 (Gland, Switzerland); 1,500+ member organizations; global conservation authority
- Armenian membership: 2024 full member; Caucasus biodiversity hotspot (3,000+ endemic plants)
- IUCN Red List: 186,000+ species assessed; flagship database (extinct, extinct-in-wild, critically endangered categories)
- IUCN co-founding: WWF (1961), World Conservation Monitoring Centre (Cambridge, UK); conservation research networks
- Armenia conservation: Khosrov Forest (UNESCO Biosphere Reserve), Lake Sevan (endemic fish); transboundary Caucasus program (Georgia, Azerbaijan, Russia).

TENSIONS FLARED IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA AFTER A COLLISION BETWEEN A CHINESE COAST GUARD SHIP

Tensions flared in the South China Sea after a collision between a Chinese coast guard ship and a Philippine government vessel near the disputed Spratly Islands. The Philippines accused China of deliberately ramming the vessel while Beijing denied the claim.

News in Brief

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Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- South China Sea collision (2024): ship collision between Chinese Coast Guard vessel and Philippine civilian vessel (near Second Thomas Shoal/Ayungin). Context: 2016 PCA (Permanent Court of Arbitration) ruling favored Philippines (9-dash line invalid)
- China rejects tribunal, maintains extensive claims (SCS 80% claim). Shoal status: disputed (Philippines civilian supply missions, China military presence)
- UNCLOS Article 121 debate (rocks vs islands—jurisdictional implications). Collision toll: minor injuries, vessel damage
- diplomatic tensions spike. Regional trade: SCS $3+ trillion annual shipping (20% global maritime trade)
- Malacca Strait choke point (21 miles). US freedom-of-navigation (FON) operations: quarterly US Navy challenges (USS destroyers transiting 12nm zones claimed by China). Trilateral dimension: Philippines-USA

(Mutual Defense Treaty 1951), Vietnam (UNCLOS alignment), ASEAN-China tensions (2024 COC—Code of Conduct negotiations stalled). Escalation risk: accidental collision triggering naval confrontation.

Prelims Connect

Aspect	Detail	Strategic Value	Status
Shoal	Second Thomas/Ayungin	Philippines position	Disputed 2024
2016 PCA ruling	Philippines favor	UNCLOS arbitration	China rejects
9-dash line	China claim	80% SCS area	Invalid per PCA
Trade value	SCS shipping	$3+ trillion annual	20% global
FON operations	US Navy	Quarterly challenges	Ongoing tension
Collision 2024	Chinese/Philippine vessels	Diplomatic spike	Low-intensity

Prelims Pointers

- Second Thomas Shoal: disputed (China occupies, Philippines civilian supply missions); 2016 PCA arbitration favored Philippines
- China 9-dash line: covers 80% SCS; 2013 official map (expanded from 1947 11-dash); PCA ruled invalid (2016)
- SCS trade: $3+ trillion annual shipping; 20% global maritime traffic; Malacca Strait bottleneck
- US FON operations: quarterly Navy destroyers challenge China claims (12nm zones); Seventh Fleet deployment
- ASEAN-China COC: Code of Conduct negotiations stalled 2024; Philippines, Vietnam alignment friction; escalation risk (collision trigger naval response).

THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS IS PLANNING TO INTRODUCE JAPANESE SHINKANSEN E-10 TRAINS ON INDIA'S

The Ministry of Railways is planning to introduce Japanese Shinkansen E-10 trains on India's first bullet train corridor between Mumbai and Ahmedabad, with a targeted debut in 2030. These trains are being built with Japanese technology and funding.

News in Brief

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Static Background — Concepts & Terms

- **Shinkansen Technology Transfer**Japanese E-10 series bullet train; 320 km/h; 18-car, 900-seat; energy-efficient; earthquake safety; India-Japan tech cooperation.
- **India Railway Modernization**Ministry of Railways 100% electrification target (2023-30); semi-high-speed corridors (Delhi-Mumbai 300+ km/h); Japan partnership (DFCCIL).

- **Indian Railway Challenges**Overcrowding (1.3B passengers/year); freight congestion; aging infrastructure; grade crossing elimination; level crossing accidents (50K+/year).
- **Semi-High-Speed Plans**Delhi-Mumbai 1,400 km corridor; 2-hour target (vs. 15h conventional); Bangalore-Chennai proposed; electrification + modern signaling; $50B+ investment.
- **Japanese Cooperation**JICA financing; Shinkansen consortium (Hitachi, Mitsubishi); technology licensing; Indian workforce training; domestic manufacturing component expansion.

Prelims Connect

Shinkansen E-10: Japanese bullet train (320 km/h); India semi-high-speed project; Delhi-Mumbai; Japan-India partnership (JICA, DFCCIL).

Prelims Pointers

- Shinkansen E-10: Japanese rail tech; 320 km/h; 900-seat capacity; earthquake safety systems.
- India target: 100% electrification (2023-30); semi-high-speed corridors (Delhi-Mumbai 300+ km/h).
- Delhi-Mumbai: 1,400 km; 2-hour target (vs. 15h conventional); $50B+ investment.
- JICA financing; Hitachi, Mitsubishi partnership; Indian workforce training; manufacturing.