

Daily Current Affairs





5
The Hindu



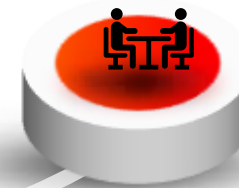
1
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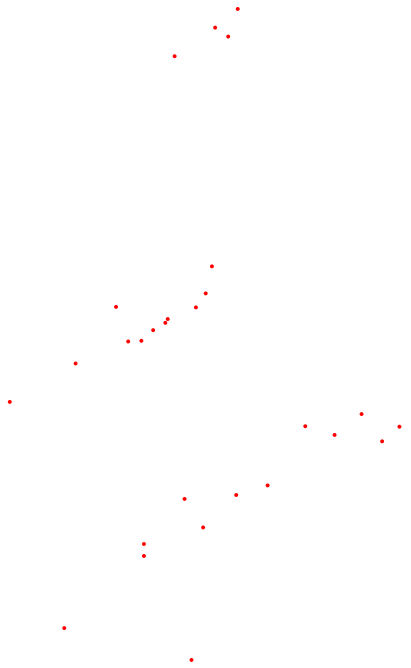


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10 MCQ QUIZ

A black and white photograph featuring a microphone on a stand in the foreground, angled towards the right. To the left, a portion of a piano keyboard is visible. In the background, a hand is seen playing the piano. The image has a soft, bokeh-like background with out-of-focus light sources.

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Three Maoists killed in Sukma encounter

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POST-POLL BUBBLE
Nitish likely to submit his resignation today

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Bangladesh tense ahead of ICT verdict

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POCSO Act is gender neutral by design
It must be read as it was legislatively intended

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THE EDEN MASTERS
South Africa pulls off a sensational win

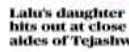
INSIDE



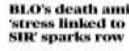
Chinese Coast Guard ships sail through Senkaku
A China Coast Guard ship formation passed through the Senkaku Islands on a "rights enforcement patrol", the China Coast Guard said, as Beijing ramps up tensions with Japan over the PRC's remarks on Taiwan. > PAGE 14



Minister issues apology over Ram Mohan Roy slight
BJP Minister and BJP leader under Singh Parmar apologized for his remarks on social reformer Raja Ram Mohan Roy, whom he had termed a "British agent" while accusing him of aiding missionaries. > PAGE 4



Lalu's daughter hits out at close aides of Tejashwi
After quitting politics and distancing herself from her family, Rajshree Yadav, daughter of RJD chief Lalu Prasad, on Sunday renewed her criticism of the close aides of party leader and her brother Tejashwi Yadav. > PAGE 8



B.L.O.'s death amid 'stress linked to SIR' sparks row
The death of alleged aide of a booth level officer (BLO) in Kanpur district of Uttar Pradesh, Sunday, has intensified calls from political parties and service organisations to extend the deadline of the Election Commission's special intensive revision (SIR). > PAGE 8

NIA confirms Red Fort attacker was a 'suicide bomber'; arrests 'accomplice'

Devesh K. Pandey
NEW DELHI

A week after a car explosion killed 13 people near the Red Fort in Delhi, the National Investigation Agency said on Sunday that the driver of the car, Umar ul Nabi — a doctor by profession — was a "suicide bomber". The agency has arrested a Kashmiri as an accomplice for allegedly conspiring with the doctor to carry out the terror attack.

The NIA's statement confirms that this was the first car-borne suicide attack in the national capital.

and only the second since the 2009 Pulwama terror attack, when a suicide bomber rammed his car carrying explosives into a bus, killing 40 Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel in south Kashmir.

Soon after the November 10 blast, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) source said that the initial investigation seems to suggest that the blast was premeditated and did not cause as much damage as it could have, as the suspect was acting hastily due to the pressure of police raids

that had already led to the arrest of two of his colleagues.

The NIA said on Monday that Amir Rashid Ali, in whose name the car involved in the attack was registered, was arrested from Delhi and the agency had launched a massive search operation after taking over the case from the Delhi Police on November 11.

The NIA said its investigations revealed that the accused, a resident of Saini boora in Pampore, had conspired with the alleged suicide bomber, Dr. Nabi, to carry out the terror at-



Campaign banners: Underlines thinned after different political parties here Thursday city's High Road, adding reference to the election season as candidates file nominations and the poll battle heats up. > PAGE 10

deceased driver as Dr. Nabi, who hailed from Pulwama, and was Assistant Professor in General Medicine Department at Al Fakhri University at Fardabul.

Another vehicle seized
"The anti-terror agency has also seized another vehicle belonging to Dr. Nabi. The vehicle is being examined to include in the case, in which NIA has so far examined 77 witnesses including those injured in the blast that rocked the Red Fort on November 10," it said.

Working in close coordi-

nation with the police forces of Delhi, Jammu and Kashmir, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh, besides other agencies, the NIA is continuing its probe across several states.

The J&K Police said they have stepped up checks with car dealers and kerfuffle officers, especially those who deal with ammunitions, in Kashmir.

The police said shopkeepers were being sensitised about maintaining proper documentation following mandatory guidelines, and cooperating

with law-enforcement agencies in monitoring suspicious bulk purchases.

"Such inspection drives will continue in the coming days to strengthen oversight and ensure compliance across all units dealing with sensitive materials," the police said.

The drive comes as the J&K Police recovered around 1.5-2,000 kg of explosives, including ammonium nitrate, during raids in Baramulla, Fardabul on November 9-10.

The inputs from Akhla Dutta and Veerendra Ashik, New Delhi/Strasbourg

Three workers killed, several feared trapped in U.P. quarry collapse

Local persons say at least 10 labourers were present when part of a rock cracked and collapsed. FIR lodged against Krishna Mines for negligence NDRF and SDRF teams assist rescue operations

Mayank Kumar
LUCKNOW

Three workers were killed and at least eight more were trapped after a stone quarry collapsed at Ohra in Sonbhadra district of Uttar Pradesh on Saturday evening.

State and national disaster response teams were assisting rescue operations and efforts were under way to continue to remove debris from the spot, officials said.

Ohra MLA and Minister Sanjeev Singh Girdi, as well as senior officers including the District Magistrate and the Superintendent of Police, were monitoring rescue operations.

Locals said at least 10 labourers were present at the quarry when the incident occurred. "The process of drilling holes in the rock using machines was under way when a portion of a



Through search rescue operations under way at the stone quarry in Sonbhadra district, Uttar Pradesh. > PAGE 10

rock cracked and collapsed," one eyewitness said.

An FIR was lodged at the Ohra police station against a company named Krishna Mines, alleging negligence and non-adherence to mining safety protocols.

"The body of a labourer was recovered during the incident when the rescue NDRF/SDRF team, and we have registered a case under relevant sections at Ohra police station," said

Commandant Naveen Sharma, along with other police officers, have been at the spot since last night," he added.

The Congress slammed the government, blaming the tragedy on the "partnership" between the mining mafia and those in power.

The spike in deletions coincides with the Centre's push to conduct e-KYC on an electronic know your customer process — for all workers, to weed out ineligible beneficiaries.

The estimated rate of deletions from the database was flagged by Lib Tech, a consortium of activists and academicians. Over the last six months, deletions added up to about 18 lakh, but in just one month, they shot up to 27 lakh — nearly double the earlier six-month total.

In the first six months of the financial year 2023-26, the scheme recorded net additions of 83.6 lakh workers, as 18 lakh workers were added, against 18.2 lakh deletions. By mid-November, however, net additions had fallen to 66.5 lakh, effectively wiping out 17 lakh workers in a single month.

The analysis also noted that 8 lakh of these beneficiaries were active workers, defined as those who have worked at least one day in the past three years.

Highest in A.P.
States with high e-KYC completion rates are leading the trend in deletions. In Andhra Pradesh, where 48% of workers have completed e-KYC, there were 18.62 lakh deletions. Tamil Nadu (67.6%) saw 30,829 deletions, and Chhattisgarh (66.6%) reported 1.04 lakh.

Senior officials at the Union Ministry of Rural Development, however, ruled out any correlation between the e-KYC drive and the deletions. A senior official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said that verification of the gender composition of workers was found at

27 lakh workers removed from MGNREGS database as Centre conducts e-KYC

Sukhansu K. Nait
NEW DELHI

Nearly 27 lakh workers' names were removed from the database of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), the Centre's rural jobs scheme, between October 10 and November 14, for exceeding the 10.3 lakh additions during the same period.

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Hard labour: MGNREGS beneficiaries under a supply channel at a work site in Sivaganga district of Tamil Nadu. November 8.

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Senior officials at the Union Ministry of Rural Development, however, ruled out any correlation between the e-KYC drive and the deletions. A senior official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said that verification of the gender composition of workers was found at

process and the onus is on State governments and ultimately, the gram panchayats, to carry this out. Additionally, every five years, job cards must be renewed. This exercise is currently underway. "We have also issued a standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the deletion of any job card, which includes putting out the job cards finalised for deletion in public domain, allowing time for the beneficiaries to file an appeal, and a final approval from the gram sabha," a top official at the Ministry said.

Prevent 'invasion'
The e-KYC process requires the matrix, or MGNREGS supervisors, to click pictures of each of the workers and upload them on the MGNREGS digital attendance application. This was also introduced to eliminate "ghost and duplicate job cards" but led to the exclusion of many genuine workers as well.

"The current deletion pattern echoes the roll out of the Aadhaar-based payment system, which too saw deletions (as by 24% between 2021-22 and 2022-23," said Chakrabhar Baidya, senior researcher at Lib Tech.

"Each time a new Aadhaar-linked technology is introduced, whether it was ABE's earlier or e-KYC now — it is brought in to strengthen verification, but ends up creating new hurdles for genuine workers and triggering large-scale exclusions. This means in deletions shows that new technologies should not be introduced indiscriminately, without assessing their impact on workers," he said.

27 lakh workers removed from MGNREGS database as Centre conducts e-KYC

Sobhana K. Nair
NEW DELHI

Nearly 27 lakh workers' names were removed from the database of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), the Centre's rural jobs scheme, between October 10 and November 14, far exceeding the 10.5 lakh additions during the same period.

The spike in deletions coincides with the Centre's push to conduct e-KYC – an electronic know your customer process – for all workers, to weed out ineligible beneficiaries.

This "unusual" rate of deletions from the database was flagged by Lib Tech, a consortium of activists and academicians. Over the last six months, deletions added up to about 15 lakh. But in just one month, they shot up to 27 lakh – nearly double the earlier six-month total.

In the first six months of the financial year 2025-26, according to the analysis, the scheme recorded net additions of 83.6 lakh workers, as 98.8 lakh workers were added, against 15.2 lakh deletions. By mid-November, however, net additions had fallen to 66.5 lakh, effectively wiping out 17 lakh workers in a single month.

The analysis also noted that 6 lakh of these beneficiaries were active workers, defined as those who have worked at least one day in the past three years.

Highest in A.P.

States with high e-KYC completion rates are leading the trend in deletions. In Andhra Pradesh, where 78.4% of workers have completed e-KYC, there were 15.92 lakh deletions. Tamil Nadu (67.6%) saw 10,529 deletions, and Chhattisgarh (66.6%) reported 1.04 lakh.

Senior officials at the Union Ministry of Rural Development, however, ruled out any correlation between the e-KYC drive and the deletions. A senior official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said that verification of the MGNREGS job card is a continuous



Hard labour: MGNREGS beneficiaries widen a supply channel at a work site in Sivaganga district of Tamil Nadu. MOONRI G.

process and the onus is on State governments and ultimately, the gram panchayats, to carry this out.

Additionally, every five years, job cards must be renewed. This exercise is currently underway. "We have also issued a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the deletion of any job card, which includes putting out the job cards finalised for deletion in public domain, allowing time for the beneficiaries to file an appeal, and a final approval from the gram sabha," a top official at the Ministry said.

Prevent 'misuse'

The e-KYC process requires the mates, or MGNREGS supervisors, to click pictures of each of the workers and upload them on the MGNREGS's digital attendance application, the National Mobile Monitoring System (NMMS), to match these photographs with their Aadhaar data.

One of the reasons the government introduced e-KYC as an additional layer of verification was the discovery that the NMMS platform was being "misused".

On July 8, the Ministry issued a 13-page note to State governments on the issue. Under NMMS, geo-tagged photographs of the workers are to be uploaded twice a day. It was found that "irrelevant or unrelated photographs" were being uploaded. In many cases,

"photo-to-photo capturing instead of live work images" was being done. There was also "mismatch in actual vs recorded count", according to the Ministry note.

It said that a mismatch in the gender composition of workers was found at

several worksites. The same photo of workers in multiple muster rolls, mismatch in workers in morning and afternoon photos, and non-uploading of photos in afternoon sessions were also identified as problems.

The Ministry had directed States to ensure that these photographs and the attendance of workers were verified at the gram panchayat, block, district and State levels.

The Ministry had also made the Aadhaar Based Payment System (ABPS) mandatory from the beginning of 2023. Using a worker's unique 12-digit Aadhaar number as her financial address, this system requires a worker's name and other demographic details to match exactly on her Aadhaar, job card, and bank account. This was also introduced to eliminate "ghost and duplicate job cards" but led to the exclusion of many genuine workers as well.

"The current deletion pattern echoes the roll out of the Aadhaar based payment system, which too saw deletions rise by 247% between 2020-21 and 2022-23," said Chakradhar Buddha, senior researcher at Lib Tech.

"Each time a new Aadhaar-linked technology is introduced – whether it was ABPS earlier or e-KYC now – it is brought in to strengthen verification, but ends up creating new hurdles for genuine workers and triggering large-scale exclusions. This surge in deletions shows that new technologies should not be introduced indiscriminately, without assessing their impact on workers," he said.

1. What Happened?

- Between **October 10 and November 14**, nearly **27 lakh MGNREGS workers** were removed from the national database.
 - This is far higher than the **10.5 lakh deletions** during the same period in the previous year.
 - Deletions linked to the Centre's **mandatory e-KYC (Aadhaar-based)** verification for all beneficiaries.
-

2. Pattern of Deletions

2.1 Last Six Months Trend

- Over the last six months, deletions reached **15 lakh**.
- But in just **one month**, the number shot up to **27 lakh** → a 6-fold increase compared to the six-month total.

2.2 Financial Year 2025-26 (first six months)

- **83.6 lakh additions** vs **86.5 lakh deletions**.
- Net result: **2.9 lakh reduction** in job cards.
- Indicates significant cleansing of the database.

3. Why Are Job Cards Being Deleted?

3.1 e-KYC Requirements

- The e-KYC process verifies:
 - Beneficiary's Aadhaar
 - Bank account
 - Job card
 - Address & demographic details
- Data must match across MGNREGS digital attendance system (NMMS app) and Aadhaar.

3.2 Other Reasons for Deletions

- **Mismatch in photographs** on NMMS app.
 - **Ghost workers** detected:
 - Same photo appearing in multiple muster rolls
 - Workers marked present in morning & absent in afternoon
 - Photos not uploaded for afternoon session
 - **Five-year card renewal** requirement (mandatory for all).
-

3.3 Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)

- Job cards to be deleted if:
 - Worker is dead
 - Migrated
 - Not worked in the previous three years
 - Gram Sabha approval required before deletion.
-

4. State-wise Completion of e-KYC

- Andhra Pradesh: 78.4% (highest)
- Tamil Nadu: 67.6%
- Chhattisgarh: 66.6%
- Lower completion → higher likelihood of deletions.

Aadhaar-based Payment System (ABPS) Impact

ABPS made mandatory from Jan 2024.

If Aadhaar does not match:

- Workers cannot get wages
- Job cards flagged for deletion

Led to a spike in deletion numbers.

6. Concerns Raised by Researchers & Activists

6.1 Exclusion Errors

- Workers being wrongly deleted due to:
 - Software mismatch
 - Aadhaar errors
 - Connectivity issues
 - Faulty face recognition in NMMS app
- Migrant, elderly, disabled workers at high risk of exclusion.

6.2 Transparency Issues

- Activists call the current deletion pattern:
 - "Invisible removals"
 - "Misuse of verification"
 - "Administrative overreach"

6.3 "Photo-to-Photo Copying"

- Supervisors uploading **stolen images** to meet NMMS photo deadlines.
- Such actions create mismatches, resulting in deletions.

7. Union Government's Position

- Government says:
 - e-KYC eliminates fraud
 - Removes fake job cards
 - Improves transparency and payment reliability
 - Deletion decisions ultimately lie with **States and Gram Panchayats** (decentralised process).
-

8. Why e-KYC Was Introduced?

- To curb:
 - Fake job cards
 - Duplicate beneficiaries
 - Fraudulent attendance
 - Wage leakages
- To ensure:
 - Clean database
 - Aadhaar-authenticated payments
 - Accountability for supervisors

B. NMMS App (2021)

- Used for real-time attendance
- Requires:
 - Morning & afternoon photos
 - Geotagging
 - Face verification
- Criticized for poor internet connectivity in rural areas.

C. Ghost Worker Problem in MGNREGS

- Audit reports show:
 - Fake attendance
 - Proxy workers
 - Misuse by field functionaries
- e-KYC aimed at addressing these systemic failures.

Q. Consider the following statements regarding the recent deletions from the MGNREGS database:

1. The sharp rise in deletions is linked to mandatory Aadhaar-based e-KYC and NMMS attendance requirements.
2. Job cards can be deleted only after obtaining approval from the Gram Sabha, as per Standard Operating Procedure.
3. The Aadhaar-Based Payment System (ABPS) has been optional for all MGNREGS workers since January 2024.
4. Ghost workers and mismatched photographs were among the reasons cited for large-scale deletions.

Which of the above statements are correct?

- (a) 1, 2 and 4 only
- (b) 1 and 3 only
- (c) 2, 3 and 4 only
- (d) 1, 3 and 4 only

India to spruce up mechanisms for accessing climate finance

A new 'country platform' is expected to help India tap Green Climate Fund resources more easily; the fund has faced criticism from developing countries for its complex disbursement procedures and lack of technical support to avail it

Jacob Koshy
BELEM, BRAZIL

India was among the 13 countries and a regional alliance of African countries that announced plans to set up a national platform for "climate and nature finance" at a ministerial event during the COP30 under way in Belem, Brazil, on Saturday. This would be coordinated through the Green Climate Fund (GCF), an institutional mechanism that has been at work since 2015, to fund projects in developing countries to adapt to unfolding climate change and to invest in clean energy.

Despite being the world's largest institutional mechanism for disbursing funds for climate finance, with commitments worth \$19 billion, only a quarter of it has been properly allocated as of 2024. The GCF faces criticism from developing countries that its disbursement mechanisms are often difficult to comply with and there is limited technical support to avail these funds.

A stated goal of the GCF is to ensure that its funds are evenly split between adaptation and mitigation.

The Belem ministerial event, co-hosted by Brazil's Ministry of Finance and



The ministerial event on climate finance under way in Belem, Brazil, on Saturday. X/@THEGCF

the GCF, brought together Ministers and other senior government officials as well as international, national, public, and private climate finance leaders.

New 'country platform'

While India already engages with the GCF, it is believed that a new "country platform" for "climate and nature finance" would help the country move away from a "fragmented approach" towards accessing funds.

This is especially significant in a year when calls from developing countries for prioritising adaptation and improving access to climate finance are particu-

larly resonant, especially at the ongoing proceedings of COP30. *The Hindu* reached out to the Environment Ministry for more clarity on the country platform but did not receive a comment until press time.

Halfway through negotiations on Saturday, India was leading developing countries' clamour for a focused discussion and road map on a section of the Paris Agreement called Article 9.1, which mandates that developed countries provide funds for mitigation and adaptation.

The announcement of such a platform also ties in with expectations that negotiators may finalise a list

of indicators that can be used to measure progress towards the so-called Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA). Progress on producing an agreed list of indicators has been difficult, with nearly 90 experts working over two years to narrow down a list of almost 10,000 potential indicators to a final set of just 100, which is supposed to be adopted at COP30, according to a report by Molly Lempriere, an analyst for Carbon Brief, an agency that tracks climate negotiations.

However, with India, among other countries expected to announce National Adaptation Plans,

there is greater vocal support and interest in having a concrete outcome on the GGA.

Announcing their country and regional platforms, representatives from the African Islands States Climate Commission (AISCC) – Cambodia, Colombia, India, Kazakhstan, Lesotho, Mongolia, Nigeria, Oman, Panama, Rwanda, the Dominican Republic, Togo, and South Africa – shared their vision and strategies for leveraging country platforms to accelerate climate action. This brings the number of platforms to 16, with the previously established Brazil Country Platform and Caribbean Regional Platform, according to a note from the GCF.

GCF support for India

As of August 2024, India has received commitment from the GCF for 11 projects worth \$782 million to mitigate and adapt to climate change in sectors, including water, clean energy, coastal, livelihood, transport, medium and small enterprises and climate start-ups. A bulk of the financing is in the form of concessional loans.

India's Environment Ministry is the primary access point (or the Nodal Designated Authority) for GCF-linked funding.

1. What is the News?

- India, along with **12 other countries** and a **regional African alliance**, announced setting up a **"national platform" for climate and nature finance** at a ministerial event during **COP30 in Belém, Brazil**.
 - Aim: To **improve access** to funds from the **Green Climate Fund (GCF)**.
-

2. Why a New "Country Platform"?

2.1 Problems with GCF disbursement

- GCF commitments → **\$19 billion** so far.
- But **only 25%** has been disbursed as of 2024.
- Developing countries complain:
 - **Complex application process**
 - **Slow approvals**
 - **Insufficient technical capacity**
 - **Fragmented approaches** within countries
- India believes a coordinated platform will:
 - Streamline proposals
 - Enhance technical readiness
 - Improve adaptation and mitigation financing

2.2 Global Momentum

- Strong call for climate finance ahead of COP30.
 - The platform aligns with **Paris Agreement Article 9.1**:
 - Developed countries must provide finance for adaptation and mitigation in developing countries.
-

3. Context: Green Climate Fund (GCF)

3.1 What is GCF?

- Established in **2010** under the UNFCCC.
- Mandate:
 - Finance climate adaptation & mitigation in developing nations.
- Largest global climate finance mechanism.

3.2 India's Current Support from GCF

- As of Aug 2024:
 - India received commitments for **11 projects**
 - Totaling **\$782 million**
 - Focus areas:
 - Water
 - Energy
 - Ecosystems
 - Transport
 - Agriculture
 - Livelihoods
 - Small enterprises
-

4. Global Push for Country Platforms

4.1 Regional Announcements at COP30

Countries forming similar climate finance access platforms include:

- **African Islands States Climate Commission (AISCC)**
- **Cambodia**
- **Colombia**
- **India**
- **Kazakhstan**
- **Lesotho**
- **Mongolia**
- **Nigeria**
- **Oman**
- **Panama**
- **Rwanda**
- **Togo**
- **South Africa**
- **Dominican Republic & others**

Total platforms now: **16**.

4.2 Why Now?

- Developing countries want:
 - More adaptation funds
 - Simpler processes
 - Predictable finance
 - Clear metrics for Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA)
-

5. The Adaptation Finance Crisis

5.1 Adaptation Gap

- Only **\$21 billion** of climate funds globally are for adaptation.
- Developing countries require **\$200–300 billion annually** by 2030.

5.2 Progress on GGA (Global Goal on Adaptation)

- GGA aims to:
 - Improve adaptation planning
 - Reduce climate vulnerability
 - Measure progress through indicators
- Progress slow: negotiating **1000+ potential indicators**, difficult to finalise.

6. India's Position

- India's Ministry of Environment is the main coordinator (also NFP for GCF).
 - India supports:
 - Simplifying GCF process
 - More adaptation financing
 - GGA as a concrete measurable framework
 - India especially needs climate finance for:
 - Coastal vulnerability
 - Water scarcity
 - Agriculture resilience
 - Heatwaves
 - Renewable energy transition
-

A. Climate Finance Basics

- Climate finance involves international financial flows to support:
 - **Adaptation** (building resilience)
 - **Mitigation** (cutting emissions)
 - Major sources:
 - GCF
 - Adaptation Fund
 - Global Environment Facility (GEF)
 - Multilateral Development Banks (World Bank, ADB)
-

B. Paris Agreement Finance Commitments

- Developed countries pledged **\$100 billion/year** by 2020.
 - Target not met; push to meet financing by 2025.
 - New collective quantified goal expected post-2025.
-

C. Why India Needs Climate Finance

- India is **one of the world's most climate-vulnerable nations**.
 - Climate shocks impose annual economic loss of **~\$87 billion**.
 - To meet Net Zero 2070 targets → requires **\$10 trillion** (CII estimate).
-

D. COP30 Context (Belém, Brazil)

- COP30 expected to focus on:
 - Global Stocktake follow-up
 - Adaptation financing
 - Loss & damage fund
 - Finalising post-2025 finance framework
-

Q. Consider the following statements regarding India's new climate finance initiatives:

- 1.** India plans to create a national "country platform" to ease access to the Green Climate Fund (GCF).
- 2.** Only about one-fourth of the GCF's total committed funds have been disbursed so far.
- 3.** The proposed platform aims to implement Article 9.1 of the Paris Agreement, which requires developing countries to finance climate action in developed nations.
- 4.** Several countries, including African island states, Kazakhstan, and Colombia, have also announced similar platforms.

Which of the above statements are correct?

- (a)** 1, 2 and 4 only
 - (b)** 1 and 3 only
 - (c)** 2, 3 and 4 only
 - (d)** 1, 2, 3 and 4
-

THE EDITOR

Too little, much later

The Digital Personal Data Protection Rules undermine right to information

Over eight years have passed since the Supreme Court of India held privacy to be a fundamental right. In the intervening years, three separate drafts for a data protection law have been floated with little clarity on how the final contours of the Act took shape. The 2023 law achieved simplification of the 2018 draft, with some important protections for user data baked into law. But this was at the cost of giving a wide berth for government organisations to handle the data of Indians, putting in place an anemic Data Protection Board of India (DPBI), and quietly amending the Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005, setting back major advances in transparency achieved over the last two decades. The Digital Personal Data Protection Rules, 2025, notified on November 14, 2025, do little to repair the glaring gaps and damage from the parent Act. In fact, they delay the implementation of practically all key provisions to 2027, while implementing the dilution of the RTI Act immediately. Public information officers are now authorised to decline any personal information, except what is already required to be published by other laws — an all-too-thin slice of the pie for citizens seeking accountability. This is after the government dragged out a three-month consultation period for draft rules which were already delayed, and launched the final form in the heat of the day the Bihar Assembly election results were announced.

The delays to reach this point were unfortunate, in January, when the draft Rules were put out, and are irreversible now. Little has been changed in the Rules' final form, and the 18 months of a compliance timeline, even for giants in the technology industry, have few reasons to be upset with Friday's Rules, as they will have over a year to fully implement the document's limited aspirations. But for the citizens seeking the aim in the Act and Rules' title — privacy and accountability from public and private entities — sharing data has become an implicit and unavoidable condition of modern digital existence. They will now find that their status quo largely continues: of being open books to the state and Big Tech, on the reflective side of a mirror that hides what is behind it.

Swing, but do not miss

India's battle against tuberculosis will need renewed vigour and focus

The World Health Organisation's Global Tuberculosis Report 2025 was a mixed bag for India. While the tuberculosis (TB) incidence had the highest decline rate, globally, by 25% from 237 per lakh population in 2015 to 177 per lakh population in 2024, India remains among the countries with the highest rates of TB, bearing 25% of the world's burden. This also means that India recorded the maximum number of cases of TB in 2024. Within the country, Uttar Pradesh has the highest number of TB cases followed by Maharashtra, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh. Delhi had the highest TB infection prevalence rate, though its actual case numbers are not that high. As far as multidrug-resistant TB (MDR-TB) is concerned, India has the most challenging, India, as per the report, also recorded the highest number of drug-resistant TB cases in 2024 — accounting for 15% of total TB cases and rifampicin-resistant (RR-TB) cases. With a treatment success rate for new and treated cases hovering at 90%, and at 77% for MDR-TB cases on second line treatment, the saga of the mixed bag continues. The decline in TB incidence rate dropped from 28 deaths per one lakh population in 2018 to 21 deaths per one lakh population in 2024. Despite this improvement, the burden is still over three times higher than the government's elimination target of 10 deaths per one lakh population.

India has missed the target it set for itself, having advanced for itself the aim to eliminate TB — by 2025, five years before the global target of 2030. While incremental gains have not shored up to a dramatic result, this indeed has meant several million lives saved over the years. In this, then, there is hope for a successful TB control programme in a country that has been battling TB for decades. Among the factors that have contributed to the gains include: harnessing advanced technologies, including AI and machine learning for modular diagnosis and rapid detection of infection and resistance, facilitating digital health to prevent TB in susceptible populations, a scheme tailored to address drug-resistant forms of TB and the introduction of newer therapies including BPaLMo. The National TB Elimination Programme has set a target of 10 deaths per one lakh population for the future, but unless crucial issues such as gaps in diagnosis (particularly in rural areas), taking care of stark socio-economic disparities and the high MDR/RR-TB case burden, frequent drug shortages and housing malnutrition, are addressed with vigour, Indian efforts will continue to stay in the realm of saving and miss.

Delhi's air, a 'wicked problem' in need of bold solutions



Shaali Tharoor
is a fourth-term Member of Parliament from Lok Sabha, representing the Thiruvananthapuram constituency from the Indian National Congress. He is also the author of 27 books, mainly about modern India.

geographical, meteorological, and man-made that together create a toxic haze. To solve it, we must first understand its complexity. Delhi's geography itself is a liability. The city lies in a basin the formation, flanked by the Aravalli hills, which restrict air flow and prevent pollutants from dispersing easily. During October to January, high pressure systems settle over northern India, and the already-unbreathable air, but this is not a seasonal nuisance; it is a chronic public health emergency. And yet, year after year, we treat it as a passing misfortune rather than a structural failure.

Since 2015, I have personally convened and conducted an annual Round Table on Clean Air with different stakeholders — public health experts, environmentalists, science journalists, members of Parliament, and even Ministers. Every year I seek different institutional partners and a wider circle of attendees in the hope of enlarging the number of those determined to do something about the air we breathe. Yet, little seems to have.

The consequences of breathing the national capital's foul air are devastating. Long-term exposure to Delhi's toxic air can reduce life expectancy by up to 10 years, especially in areas with consistently high PM_{2.5} levels. There is a sharp rise in asthma, bronchitis, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), and lung infections, particularly during winter months. Fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) penetrates the bloodstream, increasing the risk of heart attacks, strokes, and hypertension. Delhi residents, and prolonged exposure to airborne toxins is linked to chronic damage due to oxidative stress and DNA damage. Air pollution has even been associated with cognitive decline, depression and anxiety, especially in children and the elderly, as well as in rheumatoid arthritis, glaucoma and multiple sclerosis, due to systemic inflammation and auto-immune dysregulation. People are relocating from Delhi, even at the cost of their careers, in order to avoid exposing their families and themselves to such risks.

The complexity of Delhi's problem. Air pollution costs India an estimated 1.36% of its GDP annually — roughly \$15 billion — due to health care expenses, lost productivity and premature deaths. Delhi's reputation as one of the world's most polluted cities deters international tourists and investors. And yet, resources are being diverted to non-urgent response such as cloud seeding to precipitate rain, and domestic air purifiers, including for government offices, rather than investing in long-term sustainable solutions. Delhi's air pollution is not born of a single source. It is the sum of many small catastrophes.

Delhi can breathe cleaner air again if its citizens act with urgency, coordination and courage, and follow a sustained and science-led strategy.

Global measures to emulate. But this year presents a unique opportunity. For the first time, Delhi and its neighbouring NCR states — Haryana, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh — are governed by the same political party, the Bharatiya Janata Party. This alignment can end years of intergovernmental friction and enable Joint Clean Air Missions, backed by scientific expertise and empowered implementation and driven by the central government — which is from

the same party. For an actionable plan, the three states need look no further than those places that have resolved very similar problems successfully in the not-too-distant past. London, once known for its notorious "pea-souper" smog, introduced an Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ), changing polluting vehicles and incentivising electric mobility. It also invested in green public transport, including low-floor buses, and retrofitted buildings for energy efficiency. Los Angeles overcame its smog crisis through strict vehicle emission standards, clean fuel technologies, and regional coordination across counties. The worst was Beijing, once infamous for its "airpocalypse", where on a visit, two decades ago, I literally could not see out of my hotel window, so thick was the smog. It implemented a multi-year action plan, relocating polluting industries, banning coal in urban areas, and deploying real-time air monitoring. The result: a 35% drop in PM_{2.5} levels over five years.

Delhi must adopt similar measures — not as isolated experiments, but as part of a sustained, science-led strategy. Delhi urgently needs a Unified Airshed Management Plan that treats Delhi NCR as a single pollution zone. The three states must pool resources, align regulations, and coordinate enforcement across their borders. This must be accompanied by real-time monitoring and public "dashboards" announcing figures and achievements. Transparency builds trust. Citizens must know what they are breathing and when to wear masks about it. We must also incentivise EV adoption, electric public transport, expand metro networks, and deploy electric buses, to reduce reliance on private fuel-burning vehicles. With political will, it should not be impossible to regulate construction and waste, enforce dust-control norms, ban open waste burning, and penalise violations. True, the measures will need to be supported with alternatives governments must scale up in Happy Enders and bio-decomposers, to make sustainable management economically viable.

A behavioural issue. Citizen engagement is key. Pollution is not just a governance issue — it is a behavioural one. Campaigns, school programmes, and community initiatives must make clean air a shared responsibility. The persistence of Delhi's air pollution is not an act of nature. It is a consequence of choices — and a reflection of our priorities. If we continue to treat it as a seasonal inconvenience, with headlines every Deepavali and Haryana's Dussehra, Rajasthan's Bihu, we will continue to chronicle illness, economic loss, and environmental degradation. But if we act, with urgency, coordination and courage, we can rewrite the narrative. Delhi can breathe again. The question is whether we will do it, or what to do, it is whether we will do it.

The PCCSO Act is gender-neutral by design



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The provision also covers situations where a person makes a child perform any of the listed penetrative acts with themselves or even with a third person, further underscoring its gender-neutral scope.

A deliberate legislative choice. Second, reliable official sources confirm the legislative intent of keeping the PCCSO Act gender-neutral. For instance, the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India in a written response to a question in the Lok Sabha dated December 28, 2024, stated unambiguously that PCCSO is a gender-neutral Act. Similarly, when the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (Amendment) Bill, 2019 was tabled in the Lok Sabha, its 'Statement of Objects and Reasons' also established that PCCSO was 'gender neutral'.

Nevertheless, it may be possible to argue that gender neutrality here is only meant to apply to the minor victims of sexual offences (i.e., boys and girls) and not to the perpetrators. This is especially because one of the written answers of the Ministry of Women and Child Development, dated February 7, 2025, to a question raised in the Rajya Sabha, was that the PCCSO Act "covers sexual abuse of boys also as it is a gender-neutral Act".

However, such a reading would misrepresent the legislative intent. Consider the provision on 'rape', found in Section 63 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023 (the erstwhile Section 375 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860). It specifies that 'a man' commits rape if he commits certain forms of penetrative sexual acts against a 'woman'. This is clearly a gender-specific provision which envisages that only women may be victims of rape and only men may be perpetrators of

rape. If Parliament intended to make the PCCSO Act gender-specific, the wording of Section 3 of the PCCSO Act, which covers substantially the same sexual acts as Section 63 of the BNS, would also contain the same gender-specific language.

That the PCCSO Act does not make any such specification should be seen as a deliberate legislative choice, reflecting the intent to make the PCCSO Act more broadly applicable.

It serves the law's purpose. Finally, there are strong normative reasons for interpreting the PCCSO Act as gender-neutral for both victims and perpetrators. The Supreme Court, in *Satyajit Chandra Prasad v. State of Odisha*, 2024, highlighted the diversity of abuse that any law aimed at protecting children must encompass. It stated that child sexual abuse often involves a wide range of sexual conduct beyond penis-vaginal intercourse.

Although patterns of child sexual abuse can differ depending on the genders of the victim and perpetrator, such abuse is fundamentally rooted in imbalance of power, trust and vulnerability. Thus, the majority of cases reported under the PCCSO Act still involve male perpetrators and female victims, but research and survivor accounts reveal that women can and do commit sexual offences against children. A gender-specific reading of the PCCSO Act would render these experiences invisible and deny justice to certain victims.

The law's objective should be to safeguard children from sexual abuse, irrespective of the sex or gender identity of the person inflicting it. To read the PCCSO Act as gender-neutral, when it concerns both victims and perpetrators, is thus to remain faithful to its text and to its purpose.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Bihar election result. The Bihar Assembly election may be over but its conduct highlights a troubling trend: the use of pre-poll cash transfers to influence voters. If left unchecked, this will set a dangerous precedent. The Election Commission must take a proactive stance and consider a rule that prohibits governments from announcing or disbursing new welfare schemes within six months of an election, so that public money does not become an electoral instrument.

In an analysis of the result, the fact is that the Opposition struggled to communicate effectively. Rahul Gandhi's "vote that" campaign, while well-received by the less-educated electorate with clarity, Praashant Kishor, despite his own after two decades of Nehru and Gandhi's leadership, now it is politics that is anchored in long-term models. The Rashtriya Janata Dal, too, revealed internal disunity. Amid this, Chirag Paswan's instinctive grasp of Bihar's

political pulse makes him the lifeblood of his constituency and a decisive force in the State's electoral arithmetic. But the larger concern is how the Opposition continues to sit at the bottom of the Human Development Index even after two decades of Nehru and Gandhi's leadership. It is time to ask: how is politics that is anchored in long-term models. The Rashtriya Janata Dal, too, revealed internal disunity. Amid this, Chirag Paswan's instinctive grasp of Bihar's

the thumping victory of the National Democratic Alliance highlights two things. First, Bihar is the real 'user' of Bihar and the argument needs to be made of using the 'Modi factor' in win elections, especially in Bihar. On the other hand, the Congress' leadership has weakened its position as a national party and an anchor of political understanding and support of its leader Rahul Gandhi in forging sustainable alliances and leading the

the Bihar bloc — and more specifically the Indian National Congress — is losing because of a leadership that does not know how to win. The only dignified political course left for Rahul Gandhi is to yield the regional assembly to defeat the communal nationalism of the other national party.

S. Panambanathan,
Letters emailed to editor@thehindu.co.in. Content does not reflect the editorial address.

Delhi's air, a 'wicked problem' in need of bold solutions

Each winter, as Delhi wakes under a grey sky and the air thickens with smoke, the city relives a familiar crisis. Schools close, flights are delayed, and citizens scramble for masks as the Air Quality Index (AQI) routinely breaches 400 – the “severe” mark. Deepavali prompts a fresh round of breast-beating as the spate of firecrackers adds more smoke and pollutants to the already-unbreathable air. But this is not a seasonal inconvenience; it is a chronic public health emergency. And yet, year after year, we treat it as a passing nuisance rather than a structural failure.

Since 2015, I have personally convened and conducted an annual Round Table on Clean Air with different stakeholders – public health experts, environmentalists, science journalists, Members of Parliament, and even Ministers. Every year I seek different institutional partners and a wider circle of attendees in the hope of enlarging the number of those determined to do something about the air we breathe. Yet, little seems to move.

The consequences of breathing the national capital's foul air are devastating. Long-term exposure to Delhi's toxic air can reduce life expectancy by up to 10 years, especially in areas with consistently high PM_{2.5} levels. There is a sharp rise in asthma, bronchitis, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), and lung infections, particularly during winter months. Fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) penetrates the bloodstream, increasing the risk of heart attacks, strokes and hypertension in Delhi residents, and prolonged exposure to airborne toxins is linked to lung damage due to oxidative stress and DNA damage. Air pollution has even been associated with cognitive decline, depression and anxiety, especially in children and the elderly, as well as to rheumatoid arthritis, lupus and multiple sclerosis, due to systemic inflammation and auto-immune disruptions. People are relocating from Delhi, even at the cost of their careers, in order to avoid exposing their families and themselves to such risks.

The complexity of Delhi's problem

Air pollution costs India an estimated 1.36% of its GDP annually – roughly \$36.8 billion – due to health-care expenses, lost productivity and premature deaths. Delhi's reputation as one of the world's most polluted cities deters international tourists and investors. And yet, resources are being diverted to emergency responses (such as cloud-seeding to precipitate rain, and domestic air purifiers, including for government offices), rather than investing in long-term sustainable solutions.

Delhi's air pollution is not born of a single source. It is the sum of many small catastrophes



Shashi Tharoor

is a fourth-term Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha, Thiruvananthapuram) from the Indian National Congress, and the author of 27 books, mainly about modern India

Delhi can breathe cleaner air again if its citizens act with urgency, coordination and courage, and follow a sustained and science-led strategy

– geographical, meteorological, and man-made – that together create a toxic haze. To solve it, we must first understand its complexity. Delhi's geography itself is a liability. The city lies in a basin-like formation, flanked by the Aravalli hills, which restrict air flow and prevent pollutants from dispersing easily. During October to January, high-pressure systems settle over northern India, leading to temperature inversion – a phenomenon where cooler air near the surface is trapped beneath warmer air above. This inversion, coupled with low wind speeds, locks pollutants close to the ground, turning Delhi into a bowl of poison. This meteorological trap is not unique to Delhi. Cities such as Los Angeles, surrounded by mountains, have faced similar challenges. But they responded with aggressive policy, technological innovation and public engagement. Delhi must do the same.

In Delhi's case, the natural disadvantages are compounded by human negligence. Delhi NCR has over 3.3 crore registered vehicles. Diesel trucks, two-wheelers, and ageing buses spew nitrogen oxides and PM_{2.5} particles into the air. Despite BS-VI (Bharat Stage 6) norms, enforcement remains patchy. Rapid urbanisation has also led to unregulated construction, with debris and dust contributing nearly 27% of PM_{2.5} levels. Covering sites and enforcing dust-control norms are routinely ignored. Factories and power plants in neighbouring States release sulphur dioxide and other toxins. Many still use outdated technologies and lack emission filters.

And then there are the well-known villains everyone likes to blame. Stubble-burning is a hardy perennial: each autumn, farmers in Punjab and Haryana burn crop residue, sending plumes of smoke into Delhi's skies. Despite court orders and subsidies for alternatives, the practice persists due to economic constraints and a lack of viable machinery. Deepavali celebrations and open waste burning add short-term but severe spikes in pollution. Even “green crackers” have proven ineffective when used en masse.

Delhi's air crisis is a textbook example of a “wicked problem” – a challenge too complex, cross-cutting, and politically fraught for any single solution. The causes are interlinked, the stakeholders are fragmented, and the consequences are unevenly distributed.

Global measures to emulate

But this year presents a unique opportunity. For the first time, Delhi and its neighbouring NCR States – Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan – are governed by the same political party, the Bharatiya Janata Party. This alignment can end years of intergovernmental friction and enable a joint Clean Air Mission, backed by scientific expertise and empowered implementation and driven by the central government – which is from

the same party. For an actionable plan, the three States need look no farther than those places that have resolved very similar problems successfully in the not-too-distant past. London, once known for its notorious “pea-souper” smog, introduced an Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ), charging polluting vehicles and incentivising electric mobility. It also invested in green public transport and retrofitted buildings for energy efficiency. Los Angeles overcame its smog crisis through strict vehicle emission standards, clean fuel technologies, and regional coordination across counties. The worst was Beijing, once infamous for its “airpocalypse”, where on a visit, two decades ago, I literally could not see out of my hotel window, so thick was the smog. It implemented a multi-year action plan: relocating polluting industries, banning coal in urban areas, and deploying real-time air monitoring. The result: a 35% drop in PM_{2.5} levels over five years.

Delhi must adopt similar measures – not as isolated experiments, but as part of a sustained, science-led strategy. Delhi urgently needs a Unified Airshed Management Plan that treats Delhi NCR as a single pollution zone. The three States must pool resources, align regulations, and coordinate enforcement across their borders. This must be accompanied by real-time monitoring and public “dashboards” announcing figures and achievements. Transparency builds trust. Citizens must know what they are breathing – and what is being done about it. We must also incentivise EV adoption, electrify public transport, expand metro networks, and deploy electric buses, to reduce reliance on private fuel-burning vehicles. With political will, it should not be impossible to regulate construction and waste: enforce dust-control norms, ban open waste burning, and penalise violators. True, farmers will need to be supported with alternatives: governments must scale up access to Happy Seeders and bio-decomposers, to make stubble management economically viable.

A behavioural issue

Citizen engagement is key. Pollution is not just a governance issue – it is a behavioural one. Campaigns, school programmes, and community initiatives must make clean air a shared responsibility. The persistence of Delhi's air pollution is not an act of nature. It is a consequence of choices – and a reflection of priorities. If we continue to treat it as a seasonal inconvenience, with headlines every Deepavali and inaction thereafter, we will condemn millions to chronic illness, economic loss, and environmental degradation.

But if we act, with urgency, coordination and courage, we can rewrite the narrative. Delhi can breathe again. The question is not whether we know what to do. It is whether we will do it.

1. Delhi's Annual Air Pollution Crisis

- Each winter, Delhi is enveloped in a toxic haze driven by:
 - Stubble burning
 - Firecracker use (around festivals)
 - Vehicular pollution
 - Industrial emissions
 - Construction dust
 - Meteorological inversion
- AQI often crosses **400+ (Severe)** category.
- This leads to:
 - School closures
 - Health emergencies
 - Reduced visibility
 - Economic disruption

2. Health & Socio-economic Impacts

2.1 Health Effects

- Air pollution reduces life expectancy in Delhi & NCR by **up to 10 years**.
- Linked to:
 - COPD (Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease)
 - Asthma, bronchitis
 - Heart attacks & strokes
 - Hypertension
 - Cancers
 - Cognitive decline, anxiety, depression
 - Rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, autoimmune disorders
- Children and elderly are disproportionately affected.

2.2 Economic Impact

Air pollution costs India
₹3.8 lakh crore/year
(~1.36% of GDP) in:

- Health expenditures
- Productivity loss
- Tourism impact
- Emergency responses

Delhi's poor air quality
harms:

- Foreign investment
- Tourism & hospitality
- Public health spending

3. Why Delhi's Pollution is a 'Wicked Problem'

A "wicked problem" = complex, interconnected, no easy solution.

3.1 Unique Geography

- Delhi lies in the **Indo-Gangetic basin**, surrounded by Himalayas → restricts dispersion.
- Temperature inversions trap pollutants close to the ground.
- Low wind speeds in winter worsen stagnation.

3.2 Multiple Sources of Emissions

- Vehicular pollution (3.3 crore registered vehicles in Delhi NCR).
- Dust from rapid urbanisation & construction.
- Coal-based power plants in neighbouring states.
- Industries using outdated technologies.
- Stubble burning in Punjab & Haryana.
- Waste burning & open landfills.
- Firecrackers during festivals.

Administrative Fragmentation

Delhi NCR spans **Delhi + 3 surrounding states** (Haryana, UP, Rajasthan).

Coordination failures between central, state, and local agencies.

Enforcement gaps despite CAQM (Commission for Air Quality Management).

4. What Has Been Tried Before?

4.1 Some Successful Interventions

- Odd-even scheme (limited impact).
- BS-VI fuel rollout.
- Shut down of Badarpur coal plant.
- Bans on construction dust (often poorly implemented).
- Introduction of GRAP (Graded Response Action Plan).

4.2 Examples from Other Cities

- Beijing:
 - Moved polluting industries
 - Banned coal in urban areas
 - Used real-time monitoring
 - Result: **35% drop in PM2.5 levels in five years**
- London:
 - ULEZ (Ultra Low Emission Zone)
 - Strict congestion charges

Delhi has not implemented such sustained, multi-year strategies.

5. What Should India & Delhi Do Now?

5.1 Heavy Structural Solutions Required

- Multi-state coordination through CAQM.
- Year-round implementation (not just winter emergency).
- Shifting industries away from NCR.
- Retrofitting power plants with emission scrubbers.
- Strict dust control norms.
- Real-time emissions monitoring.

5.2 Address Agriculture Burning

- Provide sustainable alternatives:
 - In-situ stubble decomposers
 - Financial incentives for farmers
 - Subsidies for happy seeders & mechanization

5.3 Public Health & Citizen Safety

- Air quality advisories.
- Cleaner public transport & EV transition.
- Indoor air purification infrastructure for schools/hospitals.

Delhi's "Opportunity"



The article argues that despite being a crisis, Delhi's pollution is also an *opportunity*:



To pioneer technological innovation.



To create a model for other Indian cities suffering the same fate.



To reimagine urban planning, transport, waste management & energy systems.

- 
- **Consider the following statements regarding Delhi's air pollution crisis:**
 - Delhi's geography in the Indo-Gangetic basin contributes significantly to trapping pollutants due to temperature inversions.
 - The biggest share of Delhi's PM2.5 pollution comes from industrial emissions within Delhi.
 - The Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) is responsible for coordinating air quality action across Delhi, Haryana, UP, and Rajasthan.
 - Beijing's long-term air pollution strategy resulted in a reduction of PM2.5 by more than 30% in five years.
 - **Which of the above statements are correct?**

- **(a) 1, 3 and 4 only**
 - **(b) 1 and 2 only**
 - **(c) 2 and 4 only**
 - **(d) 1, 2, 3 and 4**
- 
- 

DELHI AIR POLLUTION CRISIS

As wearable air purifiers find takers, experts sound caution

Sophiya Mathew &
Ankita Upadhyay

New Delhi, November 16

AS DELHI'S air quality index (AQI) continues to hover between the 'Severe' and 'Very Poor' categories, residents are increasingly turning to quick fixes in the form of wearable air purifiers.

An AQI of 301–400 is classified as 'very poor', while 401–500 falls into the 'severe' category. As per the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), prolonged exposure to very poor air may cause respiratory illness, particularly among those with lung and heart disease. At severe levels, even healthy individuals may experience respiratory impacts, while vulnerable groups face serious health risks.

Although not as popular as masks, wearable air purifiers are gradually finding more takers in Delhi. Against this backdrop, here is a look at how this technology works and whether it is actually feasible.



A wearable air purifier.

What are wearable air purifiers?

Wearable air purifiers are compact, portable devices designed to deliver cleaner air directly to the wearer's breathing zone. They are available in two main forms: mask-type purifiers and compact devices worn around the neck. The latter are small, battery-operated units that release charged ions. These ions attach themselves to fine particulate matter (PM2.5 and smaller), increasing the particles' mass and causing them to settle out of the air.

In essence, these devices aim to create a "personal clean air

zone"—a bubble of purified air around the mouth and nose.

Do they work in outdoor environments?

A December 2024 study at the National Aerosol Facility, IIT Kanpur, led by Professor Sachidanand Tripathi, tested wearable air purifiers in controlled indoor environments. The researchers recorded up to a 90% reduction in airborne particles within 30 minutes in a 35-cubic-foot chamber, and over 80% reduction within five minutes in a smaller 2.35-cubic-foot enclosed space.

"The study was conducted under a limited scope," Professor Tripathi told *The Indian Express*. "Under the conditions we tested indoors, we found it does lead to removal of pollutants."

However, he cautioned that outdoor environments — with constantly changing aerosol loads and wind movement — introduce "several complexities", making these devices suitable

strictly for enclosed spaces. "In a room environment, if the fan is off and ventilation is limited, the air is relatively quiescent... the device performs effectively," he explained.

Can they match protection offered by N95 Masks?

Experts caution against viewing wearable air purifiers as a solution to the pollution crisis. Sunil Dahiya, lead analyst and founder of Envirocatalysts, an independent environmental research organisation, said, "Wearable air purifiers are merely an added cosmetic accessory that can spark conversations about poor air quality, but they are definitely not a solution. Even the reduction in exposure to pollutants is very limited." Most wearable devices cannot match the level of protection offered by certified N95 masks. "An N95 mask is a much better protection device than a wearable purifier," Dahiya said.

1. Why Are Wearable Air Purifiers Becoming Popular?

- Delhi's AQI remains in "**Severe**" (401–500) and "**Very Poor**" (301–400) range.
 - Residents seek "quick fixes" amid toxic air.
 - Wearable air purifiers—small, battery-operated devices worn around the neck or attached near the mouth—are increasingly being used.
-

2. What Are Wearable Air Purifiers?

2.1 Types

- **Mask-type purifiers:** integrated into wearable masks.
- **Neckband-type purifiers:** worn around the neck.

2.2 How They Work

- Create a "**personal clean air zone**" by emitting ions or filtered air around the wearer.
- Many use **ionizing technology** to neutralize fine particulate matter:
 - PM2.5
 - PM10
- They increase particle mass, making pollutants settle faster.

3. Do They Work Outdoors?

3.1 Findings from IIT Kanpur Study (Dec 2024)

- Tests done in controlled indoor environments:
 - **90% reduction** in airborne particles within 30 minutes in a 35-cubic-foot chamber.
 - **80% reduction** in 2.35-cubic-foot zone.
- However, results apply **only to closed, still-air rooms**.

3.2 Limitations Outdoors

- Outdoors = constant wind, large aerosol load, turbulence → devices become **ineffective**.
- Expert conclusion:
 - Suitable primarily for indoor spaces with limited air movement.

-
- **Can Wearable Purifiers Replace N95 Masks?**
 - **Expert Consensus: NO**
 - Wearable purifiers:
 - Are “**cosmetic accessories**”
 - Reduce exposure only **marginally**
 - Cannot handle high pollution loads outdoors
 - **N95 masks offer significantly higher protection**, as they:
 - Filter **95% of particles ≥ 0.3 microns**
 - Provide a proper seal—something wearable purifiers cannot

- **Key Concerns Highlighted by Experts**

- **5.1 Limited Efficacy**

- Significant pollutant reduction only indoors, not outdoors.

- **5.2 Public Misconception**

- People may assume they are fully protected, leading to unsafe exposure.

- **5.3 Not a Replacement for Systemic Solutions**

- Experts warn:

- Wearable purifiers distract from urgent need for **policy-level & structural air pollution control**.

-

A. Air Quality Classification (CPCB)

- 0–50: Good
 - 51–100: Satisfactory
 - 101–200: Moderate
 - 201–300: Poor
 - 301–400: Very Poor
 - 401–500: Severe
 - **500+: Severe+ Emergency**
-

B. Why N95 Masks Are Superior

- Multi-layer (polypropylene) filtration
 - FFP2 & N99 provide even higher protection
 - Certified under **NIOSH (U.S.)** standards
-

Q. Consider the following statements regarding wearable air purifiers:

1. Wearable air purifiers create a small “personal clean air zone” around the mouth and nose.
2. Studies show that wearable air purifiers can reduce PM2.5 pollution by over 90% in outdoor urban conditions.
3. N95 masks provide better and more consistent protection compared to wearable air purifiers.
4. Wearable air purifiers function effectively only in enclosed and relatively still-air environments.

Which of the above statements are correct?

- (a) 1, 3 and 4 only
 - (b) 1 and 2 only
 - (c) 2, 3 and 4 only
 - (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4
- 



Operation SOUTHERN SPEAR

- 
- The United States has launched Operation SOUTHERN SPEAR in Latin America, aimed at “removing narco-terrorists.”

- **About the Operation**

- **SOUTHCOM** stands for the **U.S. Southern Command**, whose area of responsibility includes **31 countries across South America, Central America and the Caribbean.**

- According to the U.S., the mission aims to:
 - Defend the U.S. homeland
 - Remove narco-terrorist threats from the Western Hemisphere
 - Prevent drug flows that the U.S. says are harming its population.



-

GI tag to Ambaji
Marble



-
- The Ambaji Marble has received a Geographical Indication Tag (GI Tag) by the Union government. The certificate is being given by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) of the Union government

- **Ambaji Marble**

- Ambaji's marble mines date back **1,200–1,500 years**, around the time the **Dilwara Jain Temple in Mount Abu was constructed**.

- It is known for its **milky white colour**, durability, high calcium content and natural beauty. It is found in Banaskantha district of north Gujarat.

- It is believed to have been used in the construction of the **Ram Temple in Ayodhya**.

- The marble has also been used in temple construction abroad.

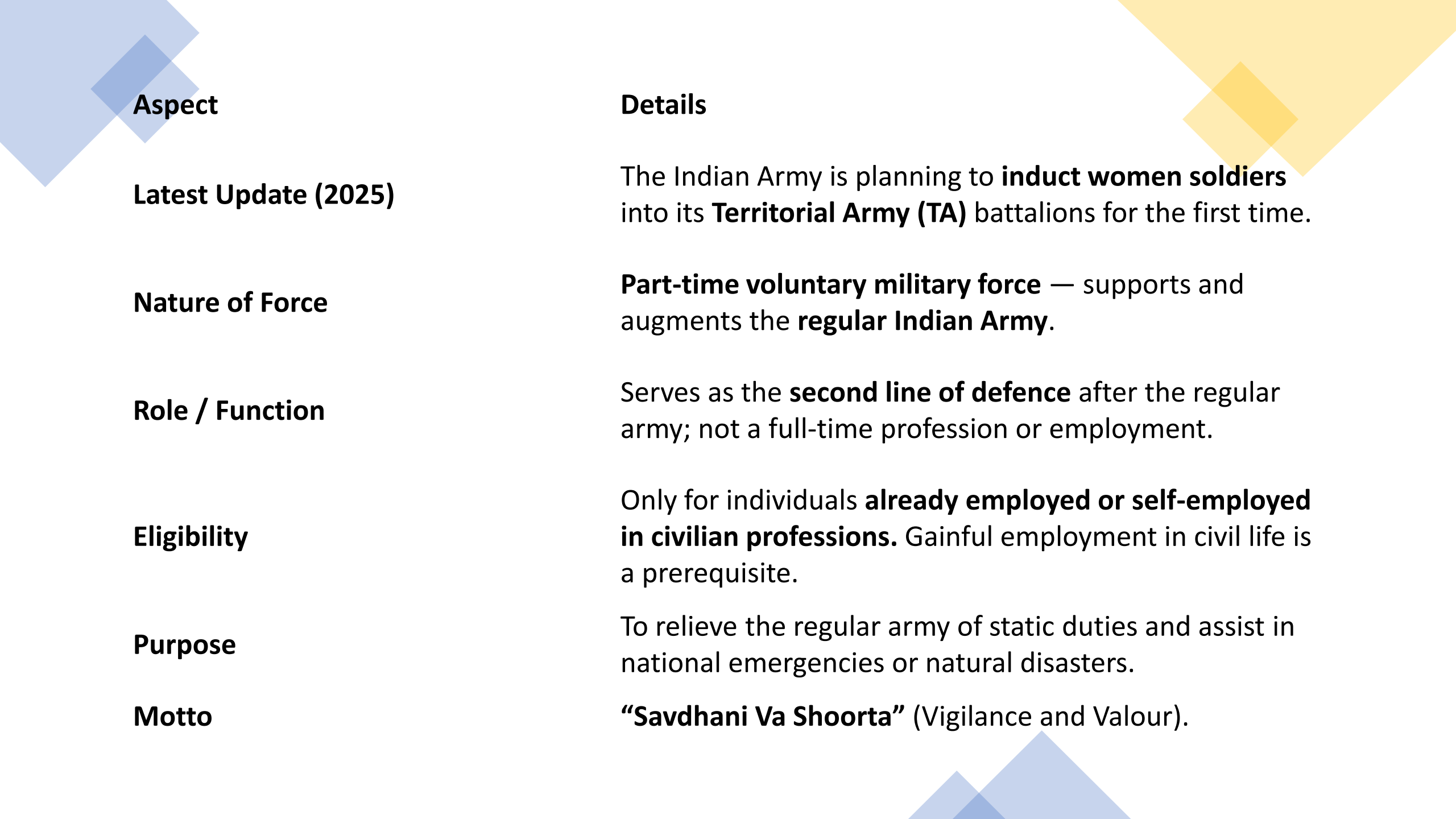






A person wearing a full-body protective suit, including a helmet and gloves, stands on a dark, rocky outcrop. The person is facing away from the camera, looking towards a dramatic sky filled with large, billowing clouds. The sky is a mix of orange and yellow, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The overall mood is one of vigilance and readiness.

The Army is planning to induct women
soldiers in its Territorial Army (TA)
battalions



Aspect

Latest Update (2025)

Nature of Force

Role / Function

Eligibility

Purpose

Motto

Details

The Indian Army is planning to **induct women soldiers** into its **Territorial Army (TA)** battalions for the first time.

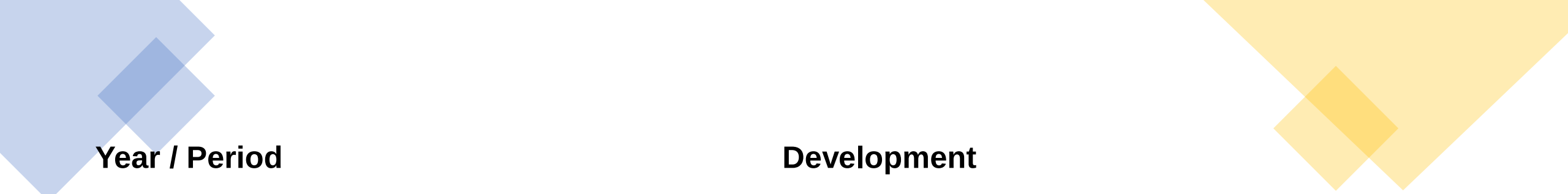
Part-time voluntary military force — supports and augments the **regular Indian Army**.

Serves as the **second line of defence** after the regular army; not a full-time profession or employment.

Only for individuals **already employed or self-employed in civilian professions**. Gainful employment in civil life is a prerequisite.

To relieve the regular army of static duties and assist in national emergencies or natural disasters.

“Savdhani Va Shoorta” (Vigilance and Valour).



Year / Period

1920

Structure (1920)

Post-Independence (1948)

Inauguration

Significance

Development

Raised by the **Britishers** under the **Indian Territorial Act of 1920**.

Divided into: - **The Auxiliary Force** (for Europeans & Anglo-Indians) - **The Indian Territorial Force** (for Indian volunteers).

Territorial Army Act, 1948 passed by the Indian government.

Officially inaugurated on **9 October 1949** by **Shri C. Rajagopalachari**, India's first Indian Governor-General.

Provides trained units for emergencies and national defence while enabling civilians to serve the nation part-time.





RuTAG Initiative (Rural Technology Action Group)



Aspect

Details

Full Form

Rural Technology Action Group (RuTAG)

Launched By

Office of the Principal Scientific Adviser (OPSA) to the Government of India

Year of Launch

2004

Objective

To bridge the **gap between rural needs and scientific solutions**, promoting **rural innovation and technology-based development**.

Focus Area

- Identification of **region-specific rural problems** - Development and **upscaling of simple, cost-effective technologies** - Facilitation of **linkages between R&D institutions and rural communities**

Implementing Agencies

Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) and other premier R&D institutions act as **RuTAG Centres** at the state/zone level.

Category (UPSC Tag)

Science & Technology / Rural Development / Innovation and Governance (GS Paper 3)





Target Beneficiaries

Rural artisans, farmers, micro-entrepreneurs, and NGOs working in rural technology dissemination.

Core Themes

- Agriculture and livestock improvement - Rural livelihood generation - Renewable energy - Water and sanitation - Rural machinery and tools

Unique Features

- Works on **grassroots innovation** identified through **bottom-up approach** - Provides **technological support, training, and design improvement** for traditional sectors.

Example Projects

- Bullock-drawn tractor attachments - Improved looms for handloom weavers - Low-cost sanitary napkin units - Water filtration and rural energy solutions

Recent Development (2025)

RuTAG projects being **integrated with Atmanirbhar Bharat and rural skill development missions** for wider impact.





Greenland's Parliament has adopted legislation limiting foreigners' right to own property on the island



CANADA

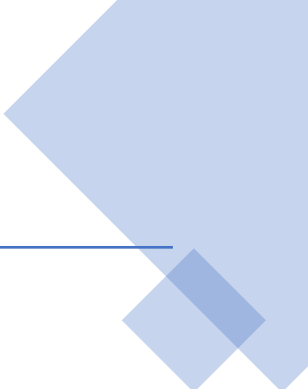
Baffin Bay

GREENLAND

□ Nuuk

ICELAND





Aspect	Details
Latest Update (2025)	Greenland's Parliament has passed legislation limiting foreigners' right to own property on the island — a step aimed at protecting local interests and sovereignty amid growing international interest in Arctic regions.
Geographical Location	Situated between North America and Europe in the North Atlantic Ocean .
Geographical Classification	Geographically part of the North American continent , but politically associated with Europe (Denmark).
Political Status	Once a Danish colony , Greenland is now an autonomous province of Denmark with self-rule in domestic affairs.
Borders	- North: Arctic Ocean - East: Greenland Sea - Southeast: North Atlantic Ocean - Southwest: Davis Strait - West: Baffin Bay
Capital	Nuuk

Physical Features

- Around **80% covered by ice sheet**, making it the **world's largest island** (non-continent). - Rich in **minerals, rare earth elements**, and **potential oil reserves**.

Strategic Importance

- Located in the **Arctic Circle**, key to **climate research, polar shipping routes**, and **geopolitical competition** (notably U.S. and China).

Economic Relevance

Emerging focus on **sustainable mining, tourism, and fisheries**. Concerns exist over **foreign land ownership and resource exploitation**.

International Concern (2025)

The property law aims to **prevent excessive foreign influence**, especially from countries investing heavily in Arctic infrastructure and mining.



confirmed Ethiopia's
first-ever outbreak of
Marburg Virus Disease.

Aspect	Details
Latest Update (2025)	World Health Organization (WHO) confirmed Ethiopia's first-ever outbreak of Marburg Virus Disease.
Nature of Disease	A severe and often fatal hemorrhagic fever caused by the Marburg virus.
History & Origin	- First identified: 1967 - Location: <i>German city of Marburg</i> - Initial outbreak linked to: Laboratory monkeys imported from Uganda.
Causative Agent	- Marburg virus (MARV) and Ravn virus (RAVV) — species of <i>Orthomarburgvirus marburgense</i> .
Natural Host / Reservoir	<i>Rousettus aegyptiacus</i> (African fruit bat, family Pteropodidae).
Transmission	- Zoonotic transmission: From infected bats to humans. - Human-to-human: Through direct contact with blood, secretions, or contaminated surfaces.

Symptoms

High fever, headache, vomiting, diarrhea, bleeding (internal/external), multi-organ failure.

Fatality Rate

Typically ranges from **24% to 88%**, depending on outbreak and treatment access.

Treatment

No specific antiviral treatment; supportive therapy (hydration, oxygen, blood replacement). Experimental vaccines are under development.

Prevention

Avoid contact with fruit bats and infected individuals; implement strict isolation and protective measures in healthcare.

Similar Diseases

Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) — both are **filoviruses** causing hemorrhagic fevers.

WHO Classification

Category-A **priority pathogen** under WHO R&D Blueprint for epidemic preparedness.



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Word of the day

Entourage:

the group following and attending to some important person

Synonyms: cortege, retinue, suite

Usage: *The actor and his entourage had the best table in the restaurant.*

Pronunciation:

newsth.live/entouragepro

International Phonetic

Alphabet: /ˈɒn.tʊ.ɹɑːʒ/, /ˈɑː.tʊ.ɹɑːʒ/



Thank you 😊

