

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

>>> 19 JUNE 2025

NATIONAL AFFAIRS / GOVERNMENT SCHEME

1. Union Environment Minister Bhupendra Yadav Presides Over First Assembly of IBCA in New Delhi.



On 16 June 2025, New Delhi hosted the inaugural assembly of the International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA). The meeting, chaired by Union Environment, Forest and Climate Change Minister Bhupendra Yadav, marked a significant milestone in global cooperation for the conservation of seven major big cat species.

- Launched in April 2023 by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the 50th anniversary of Project Tiger, the IBCA is a coalition formed through India's National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) and the Ministry of Environment. It includes nearly 95–97 member countries devoted to preserving Tigers, Lions, Leopards, Snow Leopards, Cheetahs, Jaguars, and Pumas.

- Representatives from nine Big Cat range nations—Bhutan, Cambodia, Eswatini, Guinea, Liberia, Suriname, Somalia, Kazakhstan, and India—attended the assembly to endorse foundational agreements and commit to joint conservation strategies.

- The Assembly unanimously elected Bhupendra Yadav as President of IBCA, and Dr. S.P. Yadav was endorsed as the Director General, establishing the organization's leadership structure.

Key Points:-

- (i) Participants ratified the IBCA–India Headquarters Agreement, adopted internal rules of procedure, approved financial protocols and staff manuals, and confirmed the outcomes of the steering committee.
- (ii) Minister Bhupendra Yadav highlighted India's monumental progress in wildlife conservation—such as protecting over 70% of the world's wild tigers and reintroducing cheetahs. He called on member nations to adopt a collective conservation approach to combat poaching, safeguard habitats, and improve ecosystem resilience in the face of climate change.
- (iii) With a seed grant of ₹150 crore allocated for five years (2023–24 to 2027–28), IBCA aims to build technical capacity, share conservation best practices, and mobilize global resources. Priority actions include anti-poaching measures, habitat restoration, and community-driven wildlife protection initiatives.

2. Anantha Chandrakasan Named First Indian-Born Provost of MIT, to Assume Office on July 1, 2025.



On June 18, 2025, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) announced that Dr. Anantha P. Chandrakasan, originally from Chennai, India, has been appointed as the institute's 14th Provost. This

historic appointment makes him the first Indian-American to hold this top academic position at MIT.

- Born in Chennai and relocated to the U.S. during high school, Chandrakasan earned his BS (1989), MS (1990), and PhD (1994) in Electrical Engineering & Computer Science from the University of California, Berkeley. In 1994, he joined MIT's faculty and steadily rose through leadership roles.
- He served as the Director of the Microsystems Technology Laboratories (2006–2011), led the EECS Department (2011–2017), and became Dean of the School of Engineering in July 2017. He introduced notable programs supporting entrepreneurship, diversity, and student-faculty collaboration.
- Appointed MIT's first Chief Innovation and Strategy Officer in 2024, Chandrakasan spearheaded university-wide initiatives such as the MIT Climate & Sustainability Consortium, MIT-IBM Watson AI Lab, Human Insight Collaborative, and Generative AI Impact Consortium.

Key Points:-

(i) Dr. Anantha Chandrakasan is globally recognized for his pioneering work in low-power and energy-efficient circuit design, a field that plays a vital role in modern portable electronics and Internet of Things (IoT) devices. His innovations have helped reduce power consumption in electronic systems, making technologies like smartphones, wearables, and embedded sensors more efficient and sustainable. At MIT, he leads the Energy-Efficient Circuits & Systems Group, where his research has resulted in several influential patents and high-impact publications that continue to shape the future of electronics and semiconductor design.

(ii) Chandrakasan has earned prestigious accolades, including (Institute of Electrical and

Electronics Engineers)IEEE fellow (2015), member of both the National Academy of Engineering and the American Academy of Arts & Sciences, and awards from IEEE, Semiconductor Industry Association, and multiple honorary doctorates.

(iii) Beginning July 1, 2025, as provost—MIT's chief academic and financial officer—he'll oversee faculty affairs, academic planning, and budget strategy. President Sally Kornbluth highlighted his "nimble, entrepreneurial spirit" and vital role in guiding MIT through financial and global research challenges.

3. Hyderabad Becomes Google's Cybersecurity Hub with GSEC Launch.



On 17–18 June 2025, Google inaugurated its first Google Safety Engineering Centre (GSEC) in Hyderabad, Telangana, marking its maiden facility in the Asia-Pacific (APAC) region and fourth globally, with Telangana CM and IT Minister present.

- The GSEC was inaugurated on 18 June 2025 by Telangana Chief Minister Anumula Revanth Reddy and IT & Industries Minister D. Sridhar Babu. Google's Country Manager Preeti Lobana and senior officials emphasized this as a milestone in India's Digital Safety

Blueprint aimed at strengthening user trust in AI and cybersecurity.

- This centre is Google's first in APAC and its fourth worldwide, joining facilities in Munich, Dublin, and Málaga. It builds on an announcement made at Google for India 2024, reinforcing Hyderabad's attraction for global tech investments.
- GSEC India will translate Google's Safety Charter into action by addressing online fraud, malware, enterprise security, and responsible AI deployment. It integrates privacy engineering, security infrastructure, and advanced digital tools tailored to India's rapidly evolving online ecosystem.

Key Points:-

- (i) Using AI-powered tech such as Gemini Nano for real-time scam alerts on Android, SynthID watermarking to detect misinformation, improved Google Pay safety, and red-teaming, the centre aims to strengthen proactive defence mechanisms against AI-driven threats.
- (ii) With Google's 7,000-strong workforce already in Hyderabad, GSEC is expected to generate thousands of jobs directly and indirectly. It will promote collaboration with academia (like IIT-Madras), startups, and state programs such as T-Fiber, helping Telangana reach its goal of contributing 10% to India's GDP by 2047.
- (iii) During the launch, Google and Telangana discussed future projects—Cloud Centre of Excellence, AI-based traffic management systems, intelligent cities design, a Google Startup Hub, and cybersecurity skilling initiatives—indicating long-term strategic cooperation between the private sector and government.

4. Maharashtra Declares Hindi as Optional Third Language in Primary Schools under NEP 2020.



On 18 June 2025, Maharashtra government changed its school language policy by making Hindi an optional third language in primary classes, instead of compulsory, under the National Education Policy 2020.

- The Maharashtra Education Department recently issued a new Government Resolution (GR) stating that students from Class 1 to 5 can now choose any Indian language as their third language. Hindi will no longer be compulsory, but an optional or 'general' subject. This new rule follows the three-language formula suggested in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.
- Earlier in April 2025, the government had announced that Hindi would be compulsory from Class 1, which led to heavy criticism from various political and social groups. Many people said this decision ignored the importance of regional languages and was unfair to non-Hindi-speaking students.
- Political parties like Shiv Sena (UBT), Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS), and several Marathi language groups protested the April decision. They argued that this move could weaken the role of Marathi language, which is the state's mother tongue. After this pressure, the government rolled back the decision.

Key Points:-

- (i) The state government explained that the updated GR is completely in line with the NEP

2020, which says that students must study three languages—one regional language, English, and one more Indian language of their choice. In Maharashtra, Marathi remains compulsory, and the third language can be Hindi, Kannada, Tamil, Telugu, or any other Indian language.

(ii) The change has created some challenges for schools and education departments. Textbooks and study material for multiple language options need to be printed, and syllabus planning must be revised. Institutes like Balbharati and SCERT (State Council of Educational Research and Training) are now working to implement this change smoothly.

(iii) This decision shows how the state government is trying to balance national education policies with local language identity. Maharashtra has now set an example for other states that want to follow NEP 2020 while also respecting their own regional languages and cultural values.

August 2025, ending a near three-year suspension due to alleged irregularities.

- A division bench led by Chief Justice T.S. Sivagnanam and Justice Chaitali Chatterjee ruled that suspending MGNREGA indefinitely violates its legislative purpose; the court allowed the Centre to set safeguards against fraud but mandated the scheme's reinstatement statewide from August 1.

- MGNREGA funding was frozen in March 2022, following alleged large-scale financial irregularities in several districts—including Hooghly, East Bardhaman, Malda, and Darjeeling—leading to non-payment of wages and loss of rural livelihoods.

- The HC permitted the Centre to resume disbursement with special conditions—such as district-level exclusions pending investigations, transparent direct bank transfers, and regular audits—while stipulating that past erring accounts be probed but current workers should not suffer.

Key Points:-

5. Calcutta High Court Directs Centre to Resume MGNREGA Scheme in West Bengal from August 2025.



On 18 June 2025, the Calcutta High Court directed the Central Government to restart the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) scheme in West Bengal from 1

(i) While the scheme is fully funded by the Centre, the HC stressed that withholding allocations based on pending allegations—when no funds were released since 2022—was disproportionate. The Centre must file affidavits explaining its decision and the status of fund recovery before the next hearing post-15 August.

(ii) West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee welcomed the ruling but highlighted that over ₹2,700 crore had already been paid by the state to nearly 30 lakh MGNREGA workers, creating 1.5 crore man-days through alternative schemes. She urged faster reinstatement and criticized the Centre for withholding rural development funds.

(iii) The scheme provides 100 days of guaranteed work annually to rural households, crucial for wage security, poverty alleviation, and rural infrastructure. Its resumption is expected to

reinvalidate the rural economy, curb distress migration, and restore financial stability for millions of workers in West Bengal.

6. Union Minister Amit Shah Launches ICR-ER, NDEM Lite 2.0 & Flood Hazard Zonation Atlas at Assam Conference.



On 16 June 2025, Union Home Minister Amit Shah inaugurated three cutting-edge disaster-management platforms in Guwahati, Assam—during the Annual Conference of relief commissioners and State Disaster Response Forces. These are the Integrated Control Room for Emergency Response (ICR-ER), National Database for Emergency Management (NDEM) Lite 2.0, and the Flood Hazard Zonation Atlas of Assam. All were launched to improve response speed, coordination, and precision in handling natural disasters.

- **NDEM Lite 2.0 upgrades the existing geo-portal with a mobile-friendly interface, giving NDRF, SDRF, and district-level personnel access to critical GIS maps, real-time hazard alerts, and unified operational data—even in remote locations—to act cohesively and swiftly during disasters.**

- **Flood Hazard Zonation Atlas – Assam’s Flood Blueprint: Using satellite data (1998–2023) and near-**

real-time flood-mapping, the atlas identifies flood-prone areas down to the village level, covering 28.5% of Assam’s districts. It provides immediate visibility into river water levels, inundation zones, and precise risk maps—empowering authorities with data for flood mitigation, agriculture planning, and relief operations.

- **National “Zero-Casualty” Disaster Vision:** Amit Shah emphasized a shift from reactive relief to proactive, zero-casualty disaster strategy, crediting institutions like NDMA, NDRF, and CDRI for enhancing India’s disaster readiness over the past decade. He stressed enabling every district relief commissioner to develop a District Disaster Management Plan within 90 days to ensure robust district-level infrastructure.

Key Points:-

(i) The ICR-ER platform, under the Ministry of Home Affairs, integrates live satellite imagery from ISRO to provide real-time situational awareness across India. It enables instant data sharing between central and state agencies—accelerating coordination and informed decision-making during emergencies.

(ii) Tools like AI analytics, drone surveillance, IoT sensors, and satellite communication are now central to government disaster strategy. Amit Shah highlighted that these technologies, combined with platform coordination, are making rescue operations faster, safer, and more efficient—extending preparedness down to the tehsil level.

(iii) Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma praised the flood atlas for aiding floodplain development control, promoting flood-resilient agriculture, and guiding crop-insurance schemes. He noted its value in community education, evacuation mapping, and revising disaster response plans based on precise scientific inputs.

7. ECI Launches New SOP to Deliver EPICs Within 15 Days.



On 18 June 2025, the Election Commission of India (ECI) introduced a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) ensuring Elector Photo Identity Cards (EPICs) reach voters within 15 days of any new registration or electoral roll update. This marks a major upgrade in voter-centric services.

- Under the new SOP, both newly registered voters and those updating their details will receive their EPIC within 15 days, significantly reducing the previous waiting period of over a month.
- Each stage—from generation by the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) to final delivery by India Post—is tracked in real time, with voters receiving timely SMS alerts at every step to ensure transparency.
- ECI has launched a specialized IT module within its advanced ECINet platform, which is now seamlessly integrated with the Department of Posts' (DoP) Application Programming Interface (API). This integration streamlines the entire EPIC delivery process through automated workflows, enhances real-time tracking capabilities, and ensures greater data security, accuracy, and integrity across all stages of voter card issuance.

Key Points:-

(i) The new SOP strengthens integration between the Election Commission's ECINet platform and the India Post system by enabling real-time data exchange through Application Programming Interfaces (APIs). This ensures that delivery updates of Elector Photo Identity Cards (EPICs) are instantly shared, creating a seamless and efficient nationwide tracking and distribution network.

(ii) This fast-track system reflects Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar's push for "citizen-first" electoral services. The aim is to boost voter satisfaction, reduce administrative delays, and promote accountable electoral governance.

(iii) This SOP follows earlier ECI reforms like addressing duplicate EPIC numbers and better EVM verification procedures. Alongside these, the 15-day delivery promise is part of a broader push to modernize and digitize the electoral ecosystem.

INTERNATIONAL

1. UNGA Declares 4 December as International Day Against Unilateral Coercive Measures and Elects 34 Members to UNCITRAL (2025–2031).



On 16–18 June 2025, the UN General Assembly designated 4 December annually as the International Day Against Unilateral Coercive Measures and elected 34 member states to the

United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) for 2025–31.

- On 16 June 2025, the UNGA passed a resolution declaring 4 December as the International Day Against Unilateral Coercive Measures, receiving 116 votes in favour, 51 against, and 6 abstentions. The resolution condemns using sanctions and economic pressure outside UN mandates as coercive tools against sovereign nations.

- Although majority support came from developing and Global South nations, opposition came from the United States, European Union members, Australia, Canada, Japan, and others citing concerns about politicisation and resource diversion within the UN framework.

- The new observance highlights how unilateral coercive measures—such as sanctions, tariffs, or banking restrictions—can violate human rights, disrupt economic development, and undermine international rule of law. China, Belarus, and others emphasized its role in supporting multilateral governance and fairness.

Key Points:-

(i) Within the same UNGA session, 34 member states were elected to UNCITRAL for a six-year term (2025–2031). These include a mix of African, Asian–Pacific, Eastern European, and Latin American countries. This commission develops harmonised frameworks for international trade law.

(ii) Notable elected UNCITRAL members include Zambia (Africa), Sri Lanka and Vietnam (Asia-Pacific), Russia (Eastern Europe), and others like Malaysia, Philippines, Japan, China, and South Korea—strengthening global legal cooperation.

(iii) The observance reinforces UN norms against unilateral economic coercion as a human rights

and development issue. Meanwhile, UNCITRAL's newly elected members will drive harmonisation of trade laws, dispute resolution frameworks, and legal aid, especially benefiting developing and least-developed countries.

BANKING & FINANCE

1. CCI Approves Delhivery's ₹1,407 Cr Acquisition of Ecom Express and M&M's ₹555 Cr Stake in SML Isuzu on June 17, 2025.



On 17 June 2025, the Competition Commission of India (CCI) cleared two major acquisitions: Delhivery's ₹1,407 crore takeover of Ecom Express and Mahindra & Mahindra's ₹555 crore purchase of a controlling stake in SML Isuzu.

- The CCI approved Delhivery's acquisition of a 99.4% stake in Ecom Express for ₹1,407 crore. Delhivery's MD & CEO Sahil Barua stated that the merger enhances cost efficiency, delivery speed, and network reach, reinforcing its leadership in India's e-commerce logistics.

- Mahindra & Mahindra (M&M) received CCI approval to acquire 58.96% of SML Isuzu for ₹555 crore, including an upcoming open offer for up to 26% additional shares. The transaction aims to double M&M's presence in the heavy commercial vehicle segment (above 3.5 tonnes).

● Following the CCI clearance, Delhivery's share price rose roughly 1.6% on the BSE to ₹364.7, reflecting investor optimism regarding logistics consolidation. M&M shares also gained nearly 3%, driven by expectations of expanded market share and synergies.

Key Points:-

(i) Under Section 31(1) of the Competition Act, 2002, CCI reviews mergers for potential anti-competitive impact. Both deals were found not to harm consumer welfare or market competition, aligning with the regulator's pro-growth approach.

(ii) These approvals reflect ongoing consolidation in India's logistics and automotive sectors. Delhivery aims to strengthen its logistics network and operational efficiency, while M&M reinforces its dominance in China's and global CV markets via synergies with SML Isuzu.

(iii) Post-merger, Delhivery's expanded footprint supports automation and asset utilisation, while M&M targets a 10–12% market share in >3.5 tonne CVs by FY 31 and upwards of 20% by FY 36. Both companies view the CCI nod as crucial for scale and competitiveness.

ECONOMY & BUSINESS

1. ICRA Forecasts India's FY26 GDP Growth at 6.2% Amid Slowing Momentum.



In mid-June 2025, credit agency ICRA (Investment Information and Credit Rating Agency) projected India's real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth to moderate to 6.2% in FY26, marking a slowdown from the estimated 6.5% in FY25, with inflation expected to rise moderately.

● ICRA's latest outlook estimates real GDP growth at 6.2% for FY26, easing from 6.5% in FY25, while real Gross Value Added (GVA) growth is projected at 6.0%, a dip from 6.4% last year.

● The agency attributes the slowdown partly to weak merchandise exports and lingering global trade uncertainties. However, positive contributors include sustained rural demand, rabi harvest proceeds, fiscal support via tax relief, and below-inflation EMI payments.

● ICRA expects Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation to exceed 3.5%, with Wholesale Price Index (WPI) inflation above 1.8% in FY26. The fiscal deficit is forecast at 4.4% of GDP, with a moderate current account deficit (CAD) in the range of 1.2%–1.3%.

Key Points:-

(i) The Centre's capital expenditure is projected to rise by around 10%, supporting investment activity. Nonetheless, private sector capex remains subdued amid export weakness and policy uncertainty.

(ii) FY25 ended with 6.5% GDP growth, driven by construction, services, and rural consumption. But softening global trade and industrial demand have tempered prospects for FY26.

(iii) While ICRA forecasts 6.2%, other sources offer slightly varied projections: Nomura also expects 6.2%, and the Economic Survey estimates a 6.3–6.8% range for FY26. Earlier in March, ICRA had been more optimistic at 6.5%, though later revised its stance downward.

AWARDS

1. Padma Bhushan Awarded to Veteran Journalist Ram Bahadur Rai at IGNCA Ceremony.



In June 2025, veteran journalist Ram Bahadur Rai—President of the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA)—was honoured with the Padma Bhushan, recognising his distinguished contributions to journalism, literature, and education.

- During a felicitation ceremony at IGNCA, Member Secretary Dr Sachchidanand Joshi announced that President of IGNCA, Shri Ram Bahadur Rai, received the Padma Bhushan. The event highlighted Rai's exceptional association with the institute and was attended by trustees, scholars, and fellow awardees.

- Born in 1946 in Sonari, Ghazipur, Uttar Pradesh, Ram Bahadur Rai began with Hindustan Samachar before becoming Bureau Chief and News Editor at Jansatta. He also served as Special Correspondent for Navbharat Times, covering major events like the Bangladesh Liberation War with field reports.

- Ram Bahadur Rai authored influential biographies—including Manjil se Jyada Safar (VP Singh), Shashwat Vidrohi Rajneta (Acharya JB Kripalani), Rahvari ke Sawal (Chandrashekhar)—and scholarly works on the Constitution and socialism. As a student leader, he

joined the JP Movement and was among the first jailed under MISA during the Emergency.

Key Points:-

(i) Since 2015, Rai has been President of the IGNCA Board, promoting arts, cultural heritage, and interdisciplinary dialogue. He also serves as Chancellor of SGT University, educating future leaders and endorsing academic conferences addressing national educational reforms.

(ii) Prior to the Padma Bhushan, Ram Bahadur Rai was honoured with the Padma Shri in 2015 for journalism and literature. He also earned journalism awards like Madhavrao Sapre, Manikchandra Vajpayi, Bhagwandas, and Satyagrahi Samman, confirming his influence and longevity in the field.

(iii) The Padma Bhushan, India's third-highest civilian award, recognises distinguished service in any field. Rai's recognition in literature and education—journalism underscores his role in shaping public discourse, preserving democratic values, and mentoring intellectual thought leaders.

2. Sahitya Akademi Announces 2025 Bal Sahitya Puraskar Winners Across 24 Indian Languages.



On 18 June 2025, the Sahitya Akademi, India's National Academy of Letters under the Ministry of

Culture, announced 24 recipients of the Bal Sahitya Puraskar (Children's Literature Award) across all recognised languages.

- The awards were approved during a Sahitya Akademi Executive Board meeting chaired by President Madhav Kaushik. A three-member jury per language evaluated works published between January 2019 and December 2023, ultimately selecting 24 outstanding titles for recognition.
- Authors from the North-East achieved significant success: Surendra Mohan Das received the award in Assamese for Mainaahatar Padya (poetry), and Binay Kumar Brahma in Bodo for Khanthi Bwswn Arw Akhu Danai (story collection). Additional honours went to writers from Manipur.
- In the Gujarati language, poet Kirtida Brahmabhatt was honoured for her children's poetry book Tinchak, first published in 2022. The Akademi commended the work's capacity to convey cultural values through simple yet expressive verses.

Key Points:-

- (i) Alongside the Bal Sahitya Puraskar, the Sahitya Akademi also announced 23 winners of the Yuva Puraskar for young writers. Notable recipients include Advait Kottary (English) and Parvati Tirkey (Hindi), following the same evaluation process.
- (ii) Each Bal Sahitya Puraskar awardee receives an engraved copper plaque and a cash prize of ₹50,000, with a ceremonial presentation planned later in New Delhi alongside the Yuva Puraskar awardees
- (iii) Instituted in 2010 by the Sahitya Akademi, the Bal Sahitya Puraskar has grown into a prestigious honour that encourages children's authors across all 24 recognised Indian languages, promoting linguistic diversity and enriching India's literary heritage.

SUMMITS & CONFERENCE / COMMITTEES & MEETINGS

1. India and Ukraine Hold First Joint Working Group Meeting on Agriculture Cooperation under 2024 Bilateral Agreement.



In June 2025, India and Ukraine convened their inaugural Joint Working Group (JWG) on agricultural cooperation, following the 2024 bilateral agreement, to outline collaborative research, trade, and technology exchanges for the next five years.

- Following the August 2024 signing of an Agreement on Cooperation in Agriculture and Food Industry, ratified by PM Narendra Modi and President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, both countries constituted a Joint Working Group (JWG). This body meets biennially to steer cooperation across agriculture, research, trade, and food safety.
- The JWG's mandate covers a wide spectrum: exchange of legal standards, crop genetics, plant protection methods, irrigation techniques (especially micro-irrigation), fertiliser usage, and seed certification. It will also facilitate joint research into aquaculture, livestock improvement, mechanisation, and agri-biotech.

- The meeting was co-chaired by India's Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare representatives—supported by scientists from ICAR (Indian Council of Agricultural Research)—and Ukraine's Ministry of Agrarian Policy, led by Acting Minister Taras Vysotskyi, reaffirming high-level commitment.

Key Points:-

- (i) A core objective of the JWG is to create “favourable market conditions” by exchanging information on standards, packaging, and food safety norms, and by promoting joint ventures. The goal is to expand bilateral agricultural trade and strengthen each country's food security.
- (ii) The JWG has outlined a roadmap for joint scientific efforts in areas like genomics, plant breeding, biotechnology, aquaculture and fishery technology, soil productivity, water management, and modern farm mechanisation. These initiatives will be jointly piloted and later scaled up.
- (iii) The current JWG meets under an agreement valid for five years, automatically extendable in five-year increments. Meetings will alternate between India and Ukraine every two years. Upcoming tasks include drafting work plans, setting research priorities, and identifying pilot projects in micro-irrigation, dairy breeding, and seed certification.

IMPORTANT DAYS

1. International Picnic Day 2025 – June 18.



Every year on June 18, picnic enthusiasts worldwide celebrate International Picnic Day, a day that honours the simple joy of dining outdoors—a tradition originating from 18th-century France.

- The picnic—from French pique-nique—became popular after the French Revolution when royal parks opened to the public. By the 19th century, it had evolved into a leisurely social event. Picnics later served as peaceful gatherings and even minor protest venues, such as the 1989 Pan-European Picnic near Austria–Hungary.

- Though this is an unofficial global observance, International Picnic Day is celebrated annually on June 18, marked on calendars worldwide. In 2025, it falls on a Wednesday, offering a mid-week opportunity to break routine.

- In the Northern Hemisphere, June marks the early summer season, making it ideal for outdoor dining. For those in Southern Hemisphere locales, indoor or sheltered “picnics” in homes or community halls also celebrate the day's spirit.

Key Points:-

- (i) Celebrate by packing a basket with cheese, fruits, bread, salads, and refreshing drinks. Spread a blanket in a park, beside a lake, or even a school lawn. Include light games like frisbee or badminton and engage in collective meals,

potlucks, or charitable picnics for underprivileged children.

(ii) Today's picnics are simple yet meaningful—some go low-stress with comfort food on a neighborhood bench, while others pack elaborate seasonal treats. They serve as informal social bonding rituals and a brief escape from daily busyness.

(iii) The Guinness World Record for the largest picnic was set in 2009 in Lisbon, Portugal, with over 22,000 participants. Bollywood actor Sharman Joshi, now in Toronto, celebrated International Picnic Day with family at Riverdale, enjoying cheese, dark chocolate, and the sunset outdoors.

- The 2025 theme “Unapologetically Autistic” calls for self-acceptance and challenges masking—the practice of concealing autistic traits to fit norms. It encourages autistic individuals to live authentically and proudly.

- Worldwide events include virtual meetups, art exhibitions, panel discussions, picnics, and social media campaigns featuring the rainbow-infinity symbol, which celebrates infinite neurodiversity and is led by autistic voices.

Key Points:-

(i) This day highlights inclusion and rights, insisting that autistic individuals shape narratives about themselves (“nothing about us without us”). It calls for better access to education, employment, and accommodations across society.

(ii) World Autistic Pride Day spotlights unique talents—from pattern thinking and creativity to precision, focus, and alternative problem-solving methods. It affirms that autistic strengths enrich society, not just compensate for challenges.

(iii) More than an annual observance, the day seeds change in schools, workplaces, healthcare, and media. Following the 2025 theme, communities are urged toward year-round acceptance, allowing autistic people to live unapologetically in all aspects of public life.

2. World Autistic Pride Day 2025 – June 18.



Celebrated every June 18, World Autistic Pride Day honours the strengths, identities, and rights of autistic individuals, shifting the narrative from deficit to difference in alignment with the global neurodiversity movement.

- Initiated in 2005 by Aspies for Freedom, the date marks the birthday of the youngest member in the group and models the LGBTQ+ Pride movement. This autistic-led event asserts pride, not pity, emphasizing that autism is a natural variation, not a disease.

DEFENCE

1. First India-US Special Forces Exercise “Tiger Claw 2025” Held in Uttar Pradesh.



From 26 May to 10 June 2025, the IAF's elite Garud Commandos and the USAF's Special Tactics Squadrons executed Tiger Claw 2025 — India and America's first-ever independent bilateral Air Force Special Forces drill, hosted at the Garud Regimental Training Centre in Chandinagar, UP, and conducted across high-altitude and urban zones in North India .

- In a landmark departure from previous multi-domain exercises, Tiger Claw focused exclusively on Special Forces interoperability, involving airborne and heliborne insertions (static-line and free-fall), CQB and hostage rescue, airfield seizure with JTAC integration, night-time high-value target drills, combat casualty care, and ISR-drone coordination.
- Over two intense weeks, commandos navigated terrains ranging from the plains of Punjab and Uttarakhand to the rugged heights of Himachal Pradesh, simulating real-world contingency scenarios.
- Central to the exercise was a mutual exchange of doctrine and tactics: war-gaming, after-action reviews, and live communications drills sharpened battlefield synergy. The USAF praised the Garuds' terrain acumen and resilience, while Indian forces lauded the precision strike and tech-savvy methods of their American counterparts.

Key Points:-

(i) Beyond training tactics, Tiger Claw took on strategic significance, reinforcing Indo-US defence cooperation amid South Asia's shifting geopolitical climate. While the US continues security assistance to Pakistan, this drill underscores its growing strategic trust in India and commitment to a Free and Open Indo-Pacific.

(ii) Institutional momentum now favors making Tiger Claw an annual, rotational event, potentially incorporating the Indian Army's Para-SF, the Navy's MARCOS, and US SOCOM units. It aligns closely with India's budding Armed Forces Special Operations Division (AFSOD), based in Agra, and dovetails with the India-US Defence Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI)—opening avenues for shared comms tech, drones, and electronic-warfare systems.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. Starlink Receives Official Licence in India as Airtel and Jio Join Forces with SpaceX.



In mid-June 2025, India's Department of Telecommunications granted an official licence to Starlink (SpaceX's satellite internet service), as Bharti Airtel and Reliance Jio signed partnership deals to distribute and support it.

- On 17 June 2025, Communications Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia announced via X that Starlink had

secured its licence to provide internet services in India. He hailed it as a transformative step, calling satellite connectivity the “next frontier” and a catalyst for bridging the nation’s digital divide.

- With over 40% of India’s 1.4 billion population residing in areas lacking reliable broadband, Starlink’s LEO-based architecture—using satellites approximately 550 km above Earth—promises high-speed (25–220 Mbps), low-latency internet even in mountainous and forested regions.

- In March 2025, Airtel and Reliance Jio each signed Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with SpaceX to co-market Starlink. Under these partnerships, telcos will handle sales, kit installation, customer support, and bulk enterprise distribution via their existing retail networks.

Key Points:-

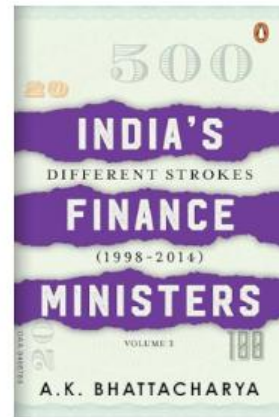
(i) Starlink’s hardware kit (dish, modem, tripod) is expected to cost around ₹33,000. Monthly unlimited plans may be priced at ₹3,000, with a potential low-cost promo plan near ₹840.

(ii) Following the licence grant, the Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Center (IN-SPACe) is expected to allocate trial spectrum within 15–20 days. Full commercial services are anticipated late 2025 or early 2026, once all technical and security clearances are complete.

(iii) Telecom incumbents Airtel and Jio, via COAI, have raised concerns about proposed low satellite spectrum fees—currently around 4% annual revenue—which they argue may disadvantage terrestrial operators that pay over 20% through auctions.

BOOKS & AUTHORS

1. **A.K. Bhattacharya’s Third Book Explores India’s Economic Journey (1998–2014).**



Published in March 2025, A.K. Bhattacharya’s third volume titled India’s Finance Ministers: Different Strokes (1998–2014) traces economic policymaking by four finance ministers, spotlighting budgets, coalition politics, and reform trajectories after 1998.

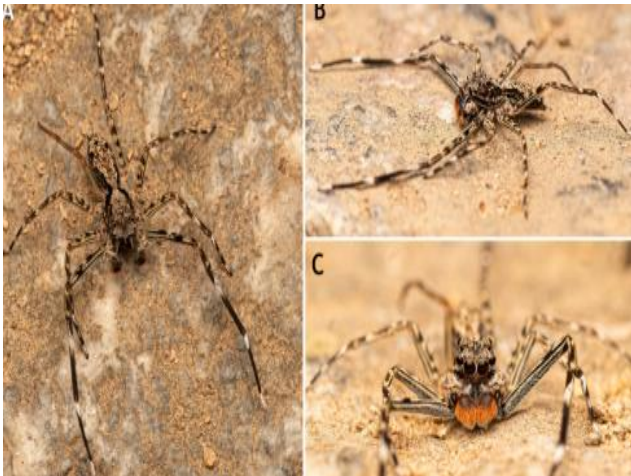
- This third instalment follows Bhattacharya’s 2023 and 2024 volumes covering 1947–1977 and 1977–1998. It documents how the 1998–2014 period, under coalition governments, featured four finance ministers steering budgets amid political fragility—exploring how each shaped India’s path through reform, stability, and crisis management.

- The book provides deep profiles of the four finance ministers: Yashwant Sinha, P. Chidambaram, Pranab Mukherjee, and P. Chidambaram (second tenure). It charts their ideological backgrounds, professional journeys, policy priorities, and how they navigated coalition constraints, global economic shocks and domestic pressures.

- By blending anecdotes and rigorous research, the book highlights the delicate interplay between budgetary decisions and coalition politics. Bhattacharya shows how the ministers balanced reform agendas—like disinvestment, fiscal consolidation, banking reforms—with the demands of coalition leaders and fragmented parliamentary mandates.

Key Points:-

- (i) This book analyzes major economic developments in India between 1998 and 2014, including the Asian Financial Crisis, the 2003 tax reforms, the 2008 global recession, and the early groundwork for the Goods and Services Tax (GST). The author explores the policy responses and economic resilience during these critical phases.
- (ii) 2. Structured around the tenures of different Finance Ministers and budget cycles, each chapter features summary tables, comparative data, and case studies on key reforms such as bank recapitalization, FDI liberalization, and fiscal policy shifts. The book also offers relevant insights for today's economic debates.

ENVIRONMENT**1. New Jumping Spider Species *Spartaeus karigiri* Discovered in Southern India.**

In June 2025, scientists discovered *Spartaeus karigiri*, a new jumping spider species of the Salticidae family, in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu—marking the first record of genus *Spartaeus* in India.

- Researchers from Chennai identified *Spartaeus karigiri* in the *Spartaeinae* subfamily—the first

Spartaeus species confirmed in India, previously known only across Southeast Asia and parts of China.

- Named after Karigiri (Elephant Hill) in Devarayanadurga, Karnataka, the species was also detected in the Villupuram district of Tamil Nadu, expanding its known habitat beyond the type locality.
- This agile hunter showcases advanced vision and intelligent hunting tactics—using web invasion and prey mimicry for capturing insects—typical of jumping spiders (Salticidae).

Key Points:-

- (i) Found in rocky terrain and forested enclaves, occupied microhabitats such as crevices and litter. The male holotype and female specimens were collected from shaded rock surfaces and ground litter.
- (ii) With its discovery, India's known native *Spartaeinae* jumping spiders increase to 15 species across 10 genera. This extends the geographical distribution of both *Spartaeus* and related genus *Sonoita*.
- (iii) Documented in peer-reviewed journals, *S. karigiri* sheds new light on arachnid diversity, biogeography, and predatory adaptations in Southern India. It also prompts further ecological surveys in rocky habitats.

Static GK

Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC)	Union Minister: Bhupender Yadav	Headquarters: New Delhi
Uttar Pradesh	Chief minister: Yogi Adityanath	Governor: Anandiben Patel
Google	CEO : Sundar Pichai	Headquarters: Mountain View, California, United States
Maharashtra	Chief minister: Devendra Fadnavis	Governor: C. P. Radhakrishnan
Ukraine	Prime minister: Denys Shmyhal	Capital: Kyiv
UNGA	President: Annalena Baerbock	Headquarters: New York
Assam	Chief minister: Himanta Biswa Sarma	Governor: Lakshman Acharya
the Election Commission of India (ECI)	Established : 1950	Chief Election Commissioner: Gyanesh Kumar
ICRA Limited	CEO: Ramnath	Headquarters:

	Krishnan	India
CCI	Chairperson: Ravneet Kaur	Headquarters: New Delhi